

Citizens get land ownership documents

Many citizens have already received ownership document of lands, which they chose electronically on Sunday, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning announced on its Twitter account. The land documents are residential, chosen via an online process launched earlier this week through the ministry's 'choose your land' initiative, the announcement said. **DETAILS ON P3**



P11

HISTORY-MAKER  
LEDECKA WINS  
THIRD GAMES  
GOLD IN CHINA



P13

OIL PRICES FALL  
ASTENSIONS  
EASE, STOCKS  
ADVANCE



P20

OMANI SHORT  
FILM THAT  
TACKLES  
DEPRESSION



MUSCAT

OMAN, EU REVIEW  
JOINT COOPERATION

The second meeting of senior officials between the Sultanate of Oman and the European Union (EU) on the level of technical work teams began at the General Diwan of the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday. The two-day meeting comes within the framework of the cooperation arrangement agreement, signed in 2018 between the Foreign Ministry and the EU's External Action Service. The meeting covered topics related to the joint cooperation in various fields.

VIENNA

IRAN N-TALKS RESUME  
WITH DEAL 'IN SIGHT'

Talks to revive a deal with Iran on its contested nuclear programme resumed on Tuesday in Vienna after officials signalled an agreement was "in sight". The negotiations — attended by Britain, China, France, Germany, Iran, Russia and indirectly the United States — were halted at the end of last month for diplomats to return to the capitals to get further instructions. The resumption comes after parties cited progress in seeking to revive the accord. **DETAILS ON P6**

Now get news on the go



INSIDE



PHILIPPINES KICKS OFF CHAOTIC ELECTION CAMPAIGN SEASON

P6



ANGRY CANADA TRUCKERS BLOCK BUSIEST BRIDGE WITH THE US

P7



His Majesty to visit  
Germany on Thursday

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq will go on a private visit on Thursday to the Federal Republic of Germany. A statement was issued on Tuesday by the Diwan of Royal Court, reading as follows: "His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq will go on a three-day private visit to the Federal Republic of Germany, with effect from this Thursday (February 10). May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan wherever he might be and grant him continued good health and well-being!" — ONA

Spinal cord implant to help  
paralysed patients walk again

**TOKYO:** In 2017, Michel Roccati was in a motorbike accident that left his lower body completely paralysed. In 2020, he walked again, thanks to a breakthrough new spinal cord implant. The implant sends electrical pulses to his muscles, mimicking the action of the brain and could one day help people with severe spinal injuries stand, walk and exercise. It builds on long-running research using electrical pulses to improve the quality of life for people with spinal cord injuries, including a 2018 study by the same team that helped people with partial lower-body paralysis walk again. "It was a very emotional experience," Roccati told journalists of the first time the electrical pulses were activated and he took a step. He was one of three patients



A patient with chronic spinal cord injuries is monitored. — AFP

involved in the study, published on Monday in the journal *Nature Medicine*, all of them unable to move their lower bodies after accidents. The three were able to take steps shortly after the six-centimetre implant was inserted and its pulses were fine-tuned. "These electrodes were longer and larger than the ones we had previously implanted, and we could access more muscles thanks to this new technology," said Jocelyne Bloch, a neurosurgeon at the Lausanne University Hospital who helped lead the trial. Those initial steps were difficult and required support bars and significant upper body strength. — AFP

FIRST IN INVESTMENT GROWTH RATE IN ARAB WORLD

Investments to touch  
\$18.2 billion this year

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate of Oman was ranked first in the growth rate of total investments in the Arab world, in the 2021 report of the Arab Investment and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Daman). The final Quarterly Investment Guarantee report for 2021 issued by Daman indicated that the Sultanate of Oman's total investments grew by 37.3 per cent to \$16.5 billion (RO 6.3 billion) in 2021. The figure is expected to hit \$18.2 billion (RO 7 billion) this year. The Sultanate of Oman was ranked second among the Arab countries in the highest increase in GDP per capita in 2021 with a percentage of 23.7. GDP per capita increased by 23.7 per cent from \$14,200 in 2020 to \$17,600 in 2021. Per capita GDP is expected to grow to \$18,200 in 2022. Total Arab countries per capita GDP rose by 1.3 per cent to \$9,300 on average. The report indicated that the Sultanate of Oman's GDP increased by 2.5 per cent in 2021 and the growth in GDP is expected to reach 2.9 per cent in the current year. The Omani rial was among the eight Arab currencies that

Industrial sector to  
boost diversification

**MUSCAT:** The Industry Day celebration is an incentive as well as a motivation for industrialists to develop the sector, which is one of the priority sectors in supporting the Sultanate of Oman's directions towards economic diversification. This was stated by Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). He pointed out that the partnership with the private sector starts with the role entrusted to it in stimulating economic growth, especially since the celebration of Omani Industry Day coincides with the economic

stimulus plan that includes many incentives, whether related to taxes or improving the business environment, investment and support for small and medium enterprises. He said that the 72 investment opportunities that were presented to the industrial sector represent an incentive for the private sector to enhance the sector's different contributions in the industrial sector as well as the development of the national industries. He added that the role of the OCCI includes a number of pillars that enable the private sector to contribute to the advancement of the sector. **TURN TO P5**

recorded an increase against the dollar in 2021. The report said that despite the challenges that faced the world economy in 2020 and 2021, the national currencies of four Arab countries including Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, Bahrain and Jordan, remained higher against the dollar.

Ministry set to assess  
variation in vehicle  
prices in Oman, GCC

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH  
[@patkaushal](#)

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has decided to study variation in vehicle prices between Sultanate of Oman and other GCC countries to assess market dynamics and competitive challenges of the automotive market. It has sought experts' view on the market dynamics to understand the reasons for discrepancy and ensure fair play in the sector. The ministry on Tuesday issued a tender for consulting services from interested parties to understand the factors leading to the discrepancy and "to assess market dynamics and competitive challenges

in the spare parts sector," an announcement of the ministry said. The ministry called upon the companies, interested in doing the job, to procure documents from E-sanad services and file before March 3, 2022. Agreeing with the ministry's decision, Mohammed Baomar from Sohar said the discrepancies were there not only between the Sultanate of Oman and some GCC countries, but also within the country. "I appreciate the government's decision for a study and standardise the prices of repair and spare parts." He cited his own example when he checked three workshops for repair of his vehicle and at all the three places he got three quotes. **TURN TO P5**

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3

# Oman, Iran ministers discuss cooperation



**MUSCAT:** Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister received here today Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade of Iran. They reviewed the bilateral relations and spheres of cooperation between the two countries. They also underscored their keenness in boosting cooperation to achieve the joint interests for the good of the two countries' peoples. Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, also received Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade of Iran. The meeting highlighted projects of economic diversification that are ready for investment. It also reviewed areas of trade and economic cooperation of common interest. The meeting also explored ways of boosting trade exchange to increase the entry of goods and services between the two countries. — **ONA**

## In brief

### MUSCAT

**2,303 NEW  
COVID CASES,  
8 DEATHS**

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Tuesday reported 2,303 new cases and 8 deaths in the last 24 hours. The total number of cases registered in the Sultanate has now reached 356,900, including 4,188 deaths. The total number of recoveries is 329,747 while the recovery rate is 92.4 per cent. In the last 24 hours, 104 patients were admitted to hospitals across the Sultanate of Oman, and the total number of inpatients is 409, including 69 in the Intensive Care Units (ICU).

### OMAN MARKS SAFER INTERNET DAY

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman National Computer Emergency Readiness Team is joining the world in marking the Safer Internet Day, which falls on February 7 every year. This year's anniversary is themed "Together for a Better Internet". The Safer Internet Day aims to develop a safer environment on the Internet.

## Oman-Iran Business Forum explores investment ties

**MUSCAT:** The Oman-Iran Business Forum, organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), discussed investment opportunities provided by the Sultanate of Oman to investors as part of a media initiative launched by the OCCI.

The forum is convened on the

sidelines of the current visit of an Iranian trade delegation to Oman under the auspices of Mohsin Zarabi, Chairman of the Oman-Iran Joint Chamber of Commerce. Eng Ridha bin Jumaa al Saleh, Chairman of the OCCI, said that commercial exchange between Oman and Iran by the end of June 2020 stood at \$306,043,454. The

figure comprises Omani exports worth \$175,207,219 and Iranian imports of \$130,836,260. He described the opportunities made available in sectors of Oman Vision 2040 as promising and capable of opening vistas for firms operating in the sectors of industry, mining, food security and health. Zarabi laid emphasis on

the importance of promoting economic ties and augmenting the volume of commercial exchange to serve the interests of the two countries. He added that such meetings assume significance for the rapprochement of views among companies from both sides.

The forum saw the screening of

visual displays, notably about the industrial estates in Suhar, Salalah, Al Mazyouna and the Special Economic Zone in Duqm and the advantages offered by the strategic location of each estate.

The two sides mulled the conclusion of agreements and partnerships to help expand bilateral cooperation. — **ONA**

## Land ownership documents go online

**AFRAH AL BALUSHI**  
MUSCAT, FEB 8

Many citizens have already received ownership document of lands, which they chose electronically on Sunday, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning announced on its Twitter account.

The land documents are residential, chosen via an online process launched earlier this week through the ministry's 'Choose Your Land' initiative, the announcement said.

The ministry noted that the submission was conducted in the ministry's departments. The entitled citizens were given

ownership papers after they fulfilled the terms specified by the ministry's new Lands Law.

'Choose Your Land' service allows a citizen to obtain and select land electronically in the places priority specified by the ministry.

The ministry had announced to distribute about 23,066 plots in 2022. The online service aims to provide a digitally safe environment within digital geographical maps, through which the beneficiary is entitled to three different attempts based on the most appropriate land for him.

The ministry announced that the text messages were delivered

to the eligible ones from the first batch to enter the system through the 'Choose Your Land' service and start the electronic selection process.

In the same context, the annual media press conference for 'Housing' will be held on Monday next based on the comprehensive transformation of prosperous communities that the ministry adopts. The conference will talk about the developments of housing in terms of the most important projects aspired in 2022 in light of the government's digital transformation programme, which is accompanied by excellence in electronic services.

## Ambassador plants sapling to mark Sri Lanka's 74th Independence Day

**MUSCAT:** Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman Ameer Ajwad planted a Sri Lankan fruit sapling called "wood apple fruit" (Kaith fruit) at the Directorate General of Agricultural and Animal Research, at Rumais, Barka in Muscat on the occasion of the 74th Independence Day of Sri Lanka which was celebrated on February 4.

Ambassador Ameer Ajwad together with his spouse Asmiya Ameer Ajwad planted the Sri Lankan fruit sapling in the presence of Director of Date Palm and Plant Production Centre of Oman Dr Saif bin Ali al Khamisi, Head of the West Asia Department of the Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman, Shaikh Mohammed bin Ahmed al Shanfari and the officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources of the Sultanate of Oman. First Secretary



of the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Muscat Dilini Abeysekara also participated during the occasion.

Speaking during the event Ambassador Ameer Ajwad said that Sri Lanka and Oman have huge potential in agriculture cooperation and that he looked forward to work for further enhancement of this cooperation between the two countries in the days ahead. Ambassador also

extended his sincere appreciation to the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources of the Sultanate of Oman for making special arrangements to plant the Sri Lankan fruit sapling in the Directorate General of Agricultural and Animal Research of Oman to mark the 74th anniversary of Sri Lanka's Independence.

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This advertisement should be read in relation to the Prospectus of the IPO. All abbreviations have the same meaning as mentioned therein. Investing in shares involves certain risks as described in Chapter 13 (Risk Factors and Methods of Mitigation) of the Prospectus which is available on the company website www.barkadesalination.com.



**LAKSHMI KOTHANETH**  
@lakshmioman

When the sun sets, we must rest, but lucky are the people who get a ‘goodnight’ sleep as it is a sign of wellness. Sleep is an important part of our life, and it can be an indicator of a person’s mental health.

Sometimes it can be a reflection of something, said Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Senior Psychiatrist. “Sleep disturbances can be a sign of mental health problems. For example, people with depression find it difficult to fall asleep or have interrupted sleep or stay awake the whole night feeling miserable. And people who are anxious, it takes them longer to sleep because the moment they put their head on the pillow, all the worrying thoughts come racing in their heads”, explained Dr Hamed.

Then there are people who wake up too early in the morning. According to Dr Hamed, the experience is the same with depressed people or people going through hypomanic episodes.

“They don’t feel the need to sleep; they become hyperactive. So this is a sleep disturbance in the context of mental health problems. But also, if a person goes through days without sleeping, they find it difficult to concentrate, and

they make rash and unwise decisions. They can even cause accidents when they are driving because they’re unable to focus and concentrate on what they are doing.”

So What is actually happening when we don’t sleep enough? To know that, we need to understand what happens when we are sleeping.

“When one is sleeping, it is like switching off the machine, but it’s also time for our brain to restructure or for our body to build up the metabolic process. Scientists believe that memories are stored, so think about your brain like a computer when you are sleeping. That is when your brain is processing the information you learned and getting it stored in the hard drive as locked-in-memory. This is why students, for example, are advised to have a good night’s sleep”, explained Dr Hamed.

What counts is the sleep during the night-time because of the circadian rhythm — your body’s ability to have its internal biological clock.

An adequate amount of sleep for an adult would be a minimum of seven hours. While people over the age of 65 could do it within five hours.

“This is what we know. Just the more we grow older, the less sleep we need.

This is why babies sleep for almost 22 hours per day. Then as they grow up, they need fewer hours. It is essential for your brain to do all this clearing, all those building processes. So if one is not sleeping, they are depriving the brain of that chance of resetting; it is a different function.

All this proves that late-night video games and television are not healthy habits, and those addicted to them probably need to reschedule the activities, according to the psychiatrist.

“What happens is that when you are playing video or watching action movies, they impact what we call sleep hygiene. We advise people who have difficulty sleeping to avoid doing this because sometimes you feel more reactive to what is happening. When you watch an action movie, you feel as if you are part of that. In return, this can make it difficult for your body to rest and sleep. The same thing with video games when you are worried or anxious about scoring, you want to play more and more”, pointed out Dr Hamed.

This affects the sleep pattern and sleep cycle as well. Some people find it difficult to get to what we call a deep sleep as individuals might have more dreams.

To maintain a healthy sleep hygiene

especially for people who find it difficult to fall asleep, individuals should avoid coffee, caffeine containing drinks or just coffee, tea and soft drinks.

“Go to bed at the same time as much as possible, avoid staying up late and going to bed with a full stomach, because the blood goes to your stomach to absorb food so it does not get the time to focus on the brain and get your body relaxed. That’s why some people get into having bad dreams or nightmares. It is also not healthy because experts say we need to have at least a three-hour gap between meal and the bedtime”, he advised.

For getting good sleep, exercise is significant because it always helps one feel tired. The body feels naturally tired and makes one fall asleep quickly. Having a warm bath also helps the process of falling asleep.

“Make sure not to have heavy meals and have it earlier. Also, try to avoid consuming too much fluid because every time you want to use the toilet, you would wake up in the middle of the night.

Avoid using WhatsApp in bed or follow up with work because this can keep your mind active and does not help it go to sleep”, said Dr Hamed al Sinawi.

“Go to bed at the same time as much as possible, avoid staying up late and going to bed with a full stomach, because the blood goes to your stomach to absorb food so it does not get the time to focus on the brain and get your body relaxed. That’s why some people get into having bad dreams or nightmares

**DR HAMED AL SINAWI**  
Senior Psychiatrist



# More steps to counter commercial frauds

QASIM AL MASHANI  
MUSCAT, FEB 8

As part of its efforts to ensure a safer market, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has stepped up measures to combat commercial fraud. In an interview, a senior official at the Authority told the *Observer* that laws were being reviewed to increase the penalty applicable on the violators.

“The law in the Sultanate of Oman prevents frauds of all kinds in the market. Laws will be reviewed to ensure a fair market for consumers,” said Khalid bin Ali al Rashdi, Communication & Media Director at Consumer Protection Authority.

He said that the CPA had already launched a campaign to create awareness among consumers about their rights and identify counterfeit products on the market. “Commercial fraud is an international issue which takes place in different ways. The Consumer Protection Law in Oman is clear as there is zero-tolerance if the law is violated”, he said.

The unified GCC Anti-Commercial Fraud Law, which was rolled out last year through Royal Decree No.56/2021, will help to combat commercial fraud in the region, he said.

“This will strengthen the legal system to protect the Sultanate of Oman’s markets from harmful practices and provide more protection to them”, he said.

The law has a lot of balance in the process of trading goods at all stages and provides the necessary protection for

the consumer and the merchant and the Omani market as a whole, he said.

According to him, under the new law, fraudsters will face a penalty between RO 10,000 and RO 100,000 depending on the size of the fraud.

If the offence is repeated, the penalty will be doubled, Al Rashdi said. “We have seen many forms of commercial fraud, and to make sure we are able to stop such practices, we jointly operate with other authorities to stop the sale of fraudulent goods.

The Consumer Protection Authority will release a programme which will cover all the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman in a time of eight weeks to give the consumer different awareness and experience in which they will be able to differentiate between original and fake products.

Al Rashdi revealed that CPA would launch a campaign in accordance with an innovative media plan next week to increase awareness about the unified law, acquainting consumers and traders with the commercial practices that are considered commercial fraud. He said the department mainly focuses on the idea that consumer awareness is the first line of defence for consumer rights.

“The Authority pays great attention to raise awareness about the dangers of commercial fraud by organising this campaign and other upcoming campaigns, all of which deal with commercial fraud and other practices that endanger the health and safety of the consumers”, he added.

# Boosting diversification

FROM PAGE 1

These pillars, he said, include the study of legislation, regulations, plans and policies related to the industrial sector, and forwarding the different suggestions and recommendations to the competent authorities, as well as studying and researching the problems and issues presented to the committee by the industrialists, including the proposed draft laws related to the industrial sector, and proposing the appropriate solutions in this regard, as well as conducting field visits to the industrial projects to identify their problems, if necessary. — ONA

# Variation in vehicle prices in Oman, GCC

FROM PAGE 1

“It was mostly due to variation in the rates of spare parts. This needs to be standardized,” he said.

Mohammed Aqeel, who works in Buraimi for a private company, endorsed the move by saying that people have started comparing prices after introduction of VAT (Value Added Tax) and they go for purchase where the price is less.

“Discrepancy in vehicle and spare parts prices force people to look for other markets,” he said.

The move to study the discrepancy matters because there is a big market for automobile in the country. The total number of vehicles registered in the Sultanate till the end of August 2021 increased by 0.12 per cent to reach 1,544,707 compared to 1,542,860 till the end of last July 2021.



# SQU Hospital deploys TAMIS to save a patient

MUSCAT: A medical team from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) has applied a new method of surgical technology, TAMIS, for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman and saved the life of a cancer patient. TAMIS (transanal minimally invasive surgery) is a modern, specialised technology using endoscope for detecting and removing rectal

tumours, with resort to surgery.

The advantage of TAMIS is that it often spares the patient the need to go for full scale rectum surgery via the abdominal cavity. It is used for spotting and treating benign tumours, as well as malignant diseases of the rectum. The SQUH figures among few Middle East hospitals where TAMIS is available. — ONA

## SCRAP FOR SALE

Sealed Bids are invited for the Yearly Price Agreement for Purchase of scrapped equipment associated with oil drilling rig operations, consisting of:

- A) General Scrap items
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- C) General Wooden Scrap
- D) Tubulars of various sizes
- E) Caravan / Portable Cabins
- F) 20 ft. Containers
- G) 40 ft. Containers

Please collect the tender documents from KCA Deutag Rumais reception between Monday 14<sup>th</sup> February to 17 February 2022. For more information, call Phone +968 26895200 (10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday to Thursday).

Tenderers will be required to transfer an amount of OMR 5,000 (Riyal Omani five thousand only) as a security deposit to the KCA Deutag Energy LLC bank account.

Tenders should be submitted in sealed envelopes marked “**SCRAP SALE – YEARLY PURCHASE PRICE OFFER 2022**” and dropped off in the bid box placed at KCA Deutag's Rumais office reception on or before the close of business **Sunday, 27 February 2022** marked for the attention of **Tender Board, KCA Deutag Energy LLC, PO Box:74, PC 328, Sultanate of Oman.**

**KCA Deutag Energy LLC reserves the right to accept or reject any bids without any explanation.**

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## TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

THE TENDER COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER:

| Tender No.           | Subject                                                                                                                                                                              | Document Fees | Tender Bond     | Closing Date               |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| MJN-KWM-PM-TED-00019 | Invitation for submission of bids for facilities management, food, laundry, waste management, cleaning & pest control services at the Karwa Motors Factory Portable Cabin Facilities | OMR 100/-     | 1% of Bid Value | 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2022 |

### CONDITIONS:

- The tender documents package can be obtained from the Finance Department of the company from the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 from 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM, upon payment of the non-refundable document fees to the following bank account and providing proof of deposit and signed authorisation letter to collect the tender document with a company stamp.
- Qualification criterion: a minimum of two years' proven experience in managing similar facilities with a minimum of 200 employees.**
- Payment should be processed by bank transfer or deposit to the following bank coordinates or by cash:  
Account Name: **Karwa Motors**  
Bank Name: **Meethaq Islamic Banking**  
Bank Branch: **Al Khuwair Islamic Branch**  
Account Number: **0625500193570001**  
Swift Code: **BMUSOMRXISL**
- KEY DATES:**
  - Issue Tender Package – 7<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (Weekdays)
  - Compulsory Tender Briefing - 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022, Time: 12 NOON (Karwa Motors, Duqm Factory)**
  - Last Date for Queries – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022
  - Last Date for Submission – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022
- Tender should be submitted not later than 12.00 Noon on the closing date and must be deposited at Karwa Motors Tendering Office located at Office No 5-25, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Finaa Al Fardan Building No.254, Way 4204, Plot No 836, North Al Ghubra, Postal Code: 1115, Muscat, and should be in a sealed envelope addressed to 'Tender Committee, Karwa Motors', quoting the 'Tender No.' and subject.
- Offers arriving after the closing date and time shall not be accepted
- For queries please e-mail: **tendercommittee@karwamotors.com**

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

| Tender No.           | Description of Work                                                                      | Tender Fee (non refundable) | Start Date for Selling Tender | Last Date for Selling Tender | Site Visit Date   | Return Date         |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| PRS/21/026 Re-Tender | Supply of Cartridges, Toners & Maintenance of Computer's, Printer's, Scanning Machines   | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 24/02/2022          | -                 | Tuesday 01/03/2022  |
| PRS/21/029 Re-Tender | Propose of Lathe Works                                                                   | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 24/02/2022          | -                 | Tuesday 01/03/2022  |
| PRS/21/033 Re-Tender | Hire of Mechanic                                                                         | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 24/02/2022          | -                 | Tuesday 01/03/2022  |
| PRS/21/035 Re-Tender | Supply of Cloths                                                                         | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 24/02/2022          | -                 | Tuesday 01/03/2022  |
| PRS/21/041 Re-Tender | Maintenance of Traffic Lights                                                            | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 24/02/2022          | -                 | Tuesday 01/03/2022  |
| PRS/21/053 Re-Tender | Insurance of Vehicles & Equipments, Accident Insurance for Staff, Buildings & Properties | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 24/02/2022          | -                 | Tuesday 01/03/2022  |
| PRS/21/058 Re-Tender | Maintenance of Internal Roads                                                            | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 24/02/2022          | -                 | Tuesday 01/03/2022  |
| PRS/22/002           | Renewal of Fire Extinguishers at Suhar Municipality Buildings                            | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 24/02/2022          | -                 | Tuesday 01/03/2022  |
| PRS/22/003           | Rehabilitation & Maintenance of Friday Market at Suhar                                   | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 03/03/2022          | Sunday 06/03/2022 | Sunday 13/03/2022   |
| PRS/22/004           | Maintenance of CCTV Camera System in Suhar Municipality Buildings                        | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 24/02/2022          | -                 | Tuesday 01/03/2022  |
| PRS/22/005           | Construction of Animal Shads (Cattle) at Suhar                                           | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 03/03/2022          | Sunday 06/03/2022 | Sunday 13/03/2022   |
| PRS/22/006           | Supply and Installation of Decorative Lighting Poles                                     | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 13/02/2022             | Thursday 03/03/2022          | -                 | Sunday 13/03/2022   |
| PRS/22/007           | Dismantling and Convert of Existing Vehicle Body (Vacuum Tanker)                         | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 20/02/2022             | Thursday 10/03/2022          | -                 | Thursday 17/03/2022 |

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

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

**Comments:**

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



## Talks to salvage Iran nuclear deal resume in Vienna

VIENNA: Indirect talks between Iran and the United States on salvaging Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers resumed on Tuesday after a 10-day break, but envoys gave little away as to whether they were closer to resolving various thorny issues.

Delegates say the talks have made limited progress since they resumed in November after a five-month hiatus prompted by the election of hardline Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

Negotiations accelerated last month but a number of vital issues remain unresolved and Western powers say little time remains before Iran's nuclear advances make the 2015 deal restricting them redundant. Envoys went home 10 days ago seeking decisions from their political bosses to hurry things along.

As officials from Iran, the US, Russia, China, France, Germany, Britain and the European Union began meeting in various formats on Tuesday, it was not immediately clear how much progress had been enabled by any political decisions.

The talks' coordinator, Enrique Mora, declined to comment to reporters as he



Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani arrives at Palais Coburg where closed-door nuclear talks with Iran take place in Vienna. — Reuters

crossed the road between two luxury hotels hosting negotiations on a blustery day in Vienna, where the negotiations began 10 months ago. Hours later Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, arrived for talks.

"After a short break, 8th round of #ViennaTalks is resumed," Iran's mission to the United Nations in Vienna said on Twitter with a picture of Bagheri Kani meeting Mora.

The 2015 deal imposed restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities that extended the time Tehran would need to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear bomb, if it chose to, to at least a year from around two to three months. Most experts say that time is now shorter than when the deal was struck. — Reuters

## 32 soldiers killed as fighting rages around Yemen city

DUBAI: Dozens of Yemeni pro-government fighters have been killed in a new offensive to take a city, loyalist sources said on Tuesday, following a surge in violence including missile attacks on the UAE.

Thirty-two soldiers have died and at least 100 have been wounded in three days of fighting to drive the fighters from Haradh, north of the capital Sanaa and near the Saudi border, the sources said.

Yemen has been embroiled in a civil war between the government and Ansar Allah who control much of the north, since 2014.

The latest clashes come after Ansar Allah fighters killed three oil workers in a series of drone and missile attacks on Abu Dhabi.

Fighting was still raging around Haradh on Tuesday, the pro-government sources said, adding that the loyalists have besieged the area but are yet to seize the city.

One loyalist source said at least 56 fighters were killed in the fighting and accompanying coalition air strikes. The Ansar Allah rarely report casualties in their ranks. The Yemeni conflict has intensified in recent weeks, with the coalition and loyalist forces launching a series of offensives to recover territory lost to the fighters further south.



Fighters affiliated with Yemen's Southern Transitional Council (STC) man a position as they deploy amid tensions in Aden. — AFP

Meanwhile, Ansar Allah have stepped up their missile and drone attacks on neighbouring Saudi Arabia and have launched similar assaults on the UAE, a member of the military coalition.

General Frank McKenzie, commander of the US Central Command who is in Abu Dhabi as part of efforts to bolster UAE defences, said US forces were

looking at ways to combat the fighters' low-tech, low-flying drones, which are notoriously hard to spot and intercept.

"We are working with our partners here in the region and with the industry back in the US to develop solutions that would work against drones," McKenzie told the official WAM news agency.

"We would like to work against

drones what we call 'left of launch', (which means) before they can be launched... And if you can't do that, you will certainly be able to shoot them down as they reach their intended target.

"In all of those areas we're working with our friends internationally as well as with industries in the US to become more effective at that." — AFP

## Philippines kicks off chaotic election campaign season

BOCAUE: The race to lead the Philippines kicked off on Tuesday, with the son and namesake of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos the favourite to succeed authoritarian firebrand Rodrigo Duterte and return his clan to the presidential palace they once fled.

Candidates hit the hustings for the three-month campaign season in a chaotic and colourful charm offensive aimed at wooing millions of voters typically more interested in personality than policy.

More than 35 years after the country emerged from his father's dictatorship, polls showed Ferdinand Marcos Jr heading towards a landslide victory in the May 9 elections. Boosted by a massive social media campaign and a formidable alliance with first daughter and vice-presidential candidate Sara Duterte, Marcos Jr — one of the most polarising figures in the Philippines — has vowed to "unify the country".

Thousands of supporters chanting "Bongbong, Sara"

### Polls showed Ferdinand Marcos Jr heading towards a landslide victory in the May 9 elections

crowded into an indoor stadium owned by an influential church near Manila for a noisy, rock concert-like campaign launch of the running mates.

"When I first declared my intention to run as leader, as president of the Philippines, my only wish was to make our country united again," Marcos Jr told cheering fans.

"Unity is my cause because of my firm belief that unity is the first step towards getting out of this crisis we are now in."

Incumbent Vice-President Leni Robredo — a former lawyer for the disadvantaged and a rival of Marcos Jr and Duterte — is a distant second in voter surveys.



Philippine presidential candidate Ferdinand Marcos Jr, along with his family, running mate and senatorial candidates, during the first day of campaign period for the 2022 presidential election in Bulacan province. — Reuters

Kicking off her pink-coloured campaign in Lupi town in the central province of Camarines Sur, Robredo told supporters she was "filled with courage because you

are with me".

Robredo is ahead of celebrity mayor Francisco Domagoso, boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao and ex-police chief Panfilo Lacson.

"The overwhelming presidential favourite remains Marcos," said Eurasia Group analyst Peter Mumford, giving the former senator "70 per cent odds" of

winning. "Many of Duterte's 'pro-authoritarian' supporters see Marcos as the continuity 'strongman' candidate," Mumford said.

Outgoing presidents usually identify their preferred successor, who they hope will keep them out of prison as much as protect their legacy. Duterte, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a second six-year term, had chosen loyal aide Senator Christopher Go to replace him, but he pulled out of the contest.

On the eve of the campaign season, Duterte, who has previously accused an unidentified presidential contender of snorting cocaine and described Marcos Jr as "weak," said all candidates "are my friends" and he would not endorse anyone "at this time".

Victory for Marcos Jr would be the ultimate comeback for the controversial family, which was chased into US exile after the patriarch's humiliating downfall in 1986. — AFP

### SHORT TAKES

#### AHMEDABAD

##### 49 convicted in India over 2008 bomb attacks

India convicted 49 people over a 2008 attack in Ahmedabad that left dozens dead, in what perpetrators said was retaliation for earlier deadly communal violence. The string of bombings killed 56 people and wounded more than 200 others as shrapnel ripped through markets, buses and other public places in Gujarat state's commercial hub.

A group had claimed responsibility, and said the act was revenge for 2002 religious



riots in the area that left thousands dead.

Nearly 80 people were charged but 28 were acquitted, prosecutor Amit Patel told reporters outside an Ahmedabad court. — AFP

#### PALU

##### Crocodile freed after five years trapped in tyre

A wild crocodile in Indonesia who was trapped in a tyre for more than five years has been rescued, freed from its rubber vice and released back into the wild, officials and residents said.

Conservation workers have been trying to lure the stricken saltwater crocodile from a river since 2016.

But it was a local resident who snared the 5.2-metre long reptile — who was regularly seen sunbathing in the Palu river in



Central Sulawesi.

"I just wanted to help, I hate seeing animals trapped and suffering," Tili, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, said. — AFP

#### BAGHDAD

##### Lebanese museum returns antiquities to Iraq

More than 300 ancient cuneiform writing tablets were returned to Iraq on Monday from a private Lebanese museum, as part of Baghdad's widespread efforts to restore antiquities looted during years of war. Sealed wooden boxes transported the 331 tablets bearing ancient cuneiform script from the Nabu Museum in northern Lebanon to Baghdad, a journalist said.

Iraq has seen its historical artifacts looted for decades, including since the invasion by



the US in 2003. "Today, Iraq has restored 331 cuneiform tablets," the director of the Iraqi council of antiquities and heritage, Laith Majid Hussein, told reporters.



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WEDNESDAY | FEBRUARY 9 | 2022

7

## In brief

ROME



### GERMAN MINISTER VISITS ROME FOR MIGRATION TALKS

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser travelled to Rome to discuss migration policy with her Italian counterpart, Luciana Lamorgese.

The Italian Interior Ministry said the two held talks but did not give further details. The trip was kept low key but it is assumed that Faeser, who took office as part of Germany's new centre-left coalition government in December, wants to find out whether Rome will join a "coalition of the willing." This refers to an informal association of states willing to take in migrants who are seeking protection.

PARIS



### FRANCE SUMMIT SEEKS ACTION ON OCEAN PROTECTION

World leaders, scientists and major companies gather in France this week to boost efforts to protect the oceans, which cover 70 per cent of the planet but receive far less attention than land ecosystems. The One Ocean Summit in the northwestern port city of Brest on February 9-11 seeks to raise the international community's ambitions to protect sealife, cut plastic pollution and tackle the impact of climate change. The world's five connected oceans regulate the climate, nurture millions of species, feed the world and enable trade but are still badly understood and lack protection.

NABLUS



### TROOPS KILL 3 PALESTINIANS IN WEST BANK RAID

Israeli forces killed three Palestinians during a daytime raid against what Israel described as a "fighter cell", leaving a vehicle in the West Bank city of Nablus riddled with bullet holes. Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz praised the raid and said he had ordered an increase in "counter activities" due to recent shootings in the West Bank, a Palestinian territory occupied by Israel's army since the 1967 Six Day War.

The Palestinian health ministry and Israel's security forces both confirmed the three deaths.

# Macron calls for calm to resolve Ukraine crisis

KYIV: French President Emmanuel Macron, the first leader of a major Western power to meet Vladimir Putin since Russia massed troops near Ukraine, said on Tuesday he believed steps can be taken to de-escalate the crisis and called on all sides to stay calm.

Macron, who in contrast to the US and British leaders, has played down the likelihood that Russia may soon invade its neighbour, shuttled from Moscow to Kyiv on Tuesday in a high-profile bid to act as a mediator.

The French president had no breakthroughs to announce — his office rowed back on Tuesday after an official said overnight that Putin had promised him Russia would not stage military manoeuvres near Ukraine for the time being.

But Macron said he thought his talks had helped prevent the crisis from escalating further. Both Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy had told him they were committed to the principles of a 2014 peace agreement, he said, adding that this deal, known as the Minsk accords, offered a path to resolving their ongoing disputes.

"This shared determination is the only way allowing us to create peace, the only way to create a viable political solution," Macron told a joint news conference with Zelenskiy.

"Calm... is essential from all



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and French President Emmanuel Macron attend a news briefing following their talks in Kyiv. — Reuters

parties in words and in deeds," Macron said, praising Zelenskiy for "the sangfroid that you are showing, and which the Ukrainian people are showing, in the face of military pressure on your borders and on your country".

Zelenskiy, for his part, made clear he was sceptical of any assurances Macron may have received from Putin.

"I do not really trust words, I believe that every politician can be transparent by taking concrete

### Macron says Putin, Zelenskiy both back 2014 peace deal as France plays down likelihood of Russian invasion

steps," the Ukrainian leader said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Macron defended the outcome of his talks in Moscow on Monday, which brought no major breakthrough, telling reporters he had never expected "for one second" that Putin would make concessions.

Western countries led by the United States fear Russia is preparing to invade Ukraine. Moscow says it is planning no invasion but could take unspecified "military-technical

# Angry Canada truckers block busiest bridge with US

OTTAWA: Angry Canadian truckers were blocking the busiest crossing with the United States on Tuesday, as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau prepared to face legislators later in the day to discuss the growing crisis.

Drivers demanding an end to federal Covid-19 vaccine mandates for cross-border traffic first arrived in Ottawa on Jan 28 and gradually took over the center of the Canadian capital.

As police slowly started to take back control the protesters — many of whom are demanding that Trudeau quit — moved their focus to the Ambassador Bridge linking Detroit and Windsor.

Trucks started blocking traffic late on Monday and a Canadian government website showed that the bridge was shut in both directions at 7:11 am ET. Canada sends 75 per cent of its goods exports to the US and trucks play a crucial role. The bridge

### Canada sends 75 per cent of its goods exports to the US and trucks play a crucial role

usually handles around 8,000 rigs a day, underlining the economic significance of the blockade.

"We got sent here to send a message and the message isn't getting through," Ottawa protest spokesman Tom Marazzo told reporters on Monday night.

Trudeau, who has spent 10 days in isolation after catching Covid-19, is due to return to the House of Commons later on Tuesday to face opposition legislators who are demanding he do more to end what one aide called a "national humiliation."

His government, though, says police forces should be able to restore order.

"Individuals are trying to blockade our economy, our democracy, and our fellow citizens' daily lives. It has to stop," Trudeau told an emergency debate in the House of Commons on Monday night. "Those who are shouting at others because they're wearing a mask do not define what it is to be the majority of Canadians."

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson, facing the growing anger of residents, wants a mediator to be appointed but ministers say this is a non-starter.

The opposition groups have no unified leadership and appear to have an imperfect knowledge of the Canadian constitution.

Some believe they can remove Trudeau simply by asking Governor General Mary Simon, the representative of Queen Elizabeth, the head of State. She has no power to do so.

— Reuters



A person carries a fuel can after police said they will be targeting the truckers' fuel supply as truckers and their supporters continue to protest Covid-19 vaccine mandates in Ottawa. — Reuters



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson

# UK's Johnson under fire over 'Trumpian' attack

LONDON: Britain's embattled Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced renewed pressure on Tuesday to apologise to opposition leader Keir Starmer for what critics have called a misleading "Trumpian" attack on him last week. Johnson — already facing calls to step down after months of scandals — accused Starmer of failing in 2013 as head of the country's prosecution service to take action against notorious celebrity paedophile Jimmy Savile.

Labour leader Starmer, who led the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) from 2008 to 2013, was not personally involved in the case but has previously apologised on behalf of the CPS for its failures. Critics, including numerous Conservative MPs, have decried Johnson's claim — made during a fractious parliamentary session — noting it has been propagated by far-right conspiracy theorists.

Johnson later clarified the remark, saying he accepted Starmer played no direct role in the decision but noting his apology and apparent acceptance

measures" unless a number of security demands are met, including a promise from Nato never to admit Kyiv.

The United States and the European Union have threatened Russia with sanctions if it attacks Ukraine. Moscow, still Europe's biggest energy supplier despite already being under sanctions since seizing Ukraine's Crimean peninsula in 2014, has largely dismissed new sanctions as an empty threat.

US President Joe Biden warned on Monday that if Russia invades Ukraine, "there will be no longer Nord Stream 2" referring to a newly built, as yet unopened gas pipeline to Germany. He did not specify how he would halt it.

While Western countries have stood together to back Ukraine, they disagree about the likelihood of war. French officials have suggested they think Washington has overstated the threat, and Kyiv itself has also played down the likelihood of a large-scale invasion. Macron, who is expected to stand for re-election in April, said before he left on his trip to Moscow that he believed Russia did not have designs on Ukraine but wanted to renegotiate European security arrangements.

But whatever Moscow's true aims, Western countries say they cannot safely assume the crisis will end without war unless Russia pulls back its troops. — Reuters

of responsibility. The prime minister has refused to apologise or to retract his accusation. However, it has come under fresh scrutiny after several dozen anti-lockdown demonstrators mobbed Starmer outside parliament on Monday, with one protestor heard claiming he was "protecting paedophiles". A video posted online showed the Labour leader being jostled before police, who arrested two people, intervened and escorted him to a car. Within hours, Tory and other lawmakers were repeating calls for Johnson to say sorry. "PM — apologise please," Conservative MP Tobias Ellwood wrote on Twitter. "Let's stop this drift towards a Trumpian style of politics from becoming the norm. We are better than this." Green Party MP Caroline Lucas said on Tuesday that Johnson's attack was "utterly shameful" and "straight out of (the) Trumpian playbook".

"Words have consequences — we saw that on (the) streets of Westminster yesterday evening. He's poisoning our politics & must apologise or go." — AFP

# Building strong school communities with compassion



Massrat Shaikh

The writer is an educational psychologist

At a time of continued anxiety when students and educators alike are feeling the strains of pandemic and losses of all kinds, how do we build a strong community in our schools?

How do we make our schools a space of welcome, inclusion, safety and care? The answer is easy: We model, teach and practice compassion, as compassion is a measure of strength.

Our work as educators has important implications for our students’ well-being and future. When we lead with compassion, our students feel safe, valued and empowered at school. They will excel academically socially and grow into capable, confident adults who will share their voices, take action and serve others.

Empathy plus action equals compassion. Compassion education efforts begin the

moment students arrive at school and continue throughout the school day.

Compassion includes both ourselves and our students. For us as educators, it means knowing ourselves better, taking the time to check our own biases and leading with inquiry. Having compassion for our students would mean knowing them and their stories. When we lead with compassion, we know that the greatest resource in our classroom is our students themselves.

There are many ways of bringing compassion to our schools. These are some strategies that educators can use: 1) Before students cross the classroom threshold, teachers greet them by name to help connect with them and get instant feedback on how they are feeling.

2) Intentionally using literature to help students embrace

## ONE WAY OF TEACHING COMPASSION IN OUR SCHOOLS IS ALSO TO TEACH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

diversity and understand varying perspectives. This develops their empathy bank.

3) Teachers can facilitate class circles to build community, which becomes a space for students to practice compassion by listening to their classmates’ dilemmas and challenges and collaboratively brainstorming solutions.

4) Students can engage in community service projects and diverse activities such as feeding stray animals, helping in times of disaster and community

beautification projects. When students can lend a helping hand, it provides them with knowledge about current events and ways to help aid and create change for others.

5) Involving students in helping the needy builds their self-esteem, motivation and confidence. Students begin to see themselves as part of the solution rather than be bystanders to the world’s problems and the suffering of others.

6) Teachers can model compassion and acts of compassion daily by complimenting students on their successes, inquiring about their day or weekend activities and consistently addressing all bullying behaviours at school.

7) One way of teaching compassion in our schools is also to teach social-emotional learning (SEL). When we embed SEL into the fabric of instruction, we see a

ripple effect on our school climate; it will affect how students, staff, and parents connect and contribute on campus. However, when SEL is treated as an extracurricular activity, it fails to achieve its goals.

To create an environment where students can thrive socially and academically means prioritising SEL — integrating it across all content areas and building it into the routines of everyday.

In our efforts of educating our young people, a shift towards lessons encompassing love, compassion and kindness is a priority. Such lessons must become a focal point in academic communities to promote and inspire significant change. We can only imagine our students growing up and applying these skills and how much happier, connected, and helpful our world will be as a result.

## Glassblowers scorched by blazing energy bills

GILDAS LE ROUX

The blown glass creations forged in the furnaces on Venice’s Murano islands are prized around the world — but soaring gas prices are threatening the centuries-old craft. “It’s a huge problem... A hurricane has hit the economy”, Luciano Gambaro, head of the Promovetro glass association, said, describing bills that have risen a whopping 600 per cent.

Murano’s artisans fashion everything from tiny, coloured animals to majestic chandeliers, seven days a week. To do so, they need one key thing: Heat. Energy is their second biggest expense, after labour costs and they are suffering from record gas prices worldwide.

They were paying 20 cents (\$0.23) per cubic metre until September. “On the December bill, the price was €1.27, a rise of over 600 per cent”, said Gambaro, who employs six people and is feeling the strain. There have been glassmakers on Murano — a series of islands linked by bridges — since the 13th century, when they were moved from Venice proper after devastating fires which began in their furnaces.

Some have kept their creations in vogue by partnering with renowned designers. Others have seen their glass included in art displayed in major museums. In a bid to stave off a crisis, the Veneto region forked out €3 million in November to help compensate for the glassmakers’ spiralling energy costs.

“Unfortunately, that will all be used up by the end of February”, said Gambaro, who admitted to being “very worried” about the prospect of “paying the full price from March”. It is “a bigger problem than Covid”, he said, in reference to the coronavirus pandemic which hit Italy in 2020, forcing a series of financially-punishing lockdowns, and emptying Venice of its big-spending tourists.

Cristiano Ferro, whose company Effetre Murano employs 32 people and makes semi-finished products — brightly coloured blocks, rods and sheets to be shaped and crafted by glassmakers — in 16 kilns, says gas prices are “just the tip of the iceberg”. “All the raw materials have increased by 20, 30, 40, 50 per cent: sand, soda and all the mineral oxides used to colour the glass”, he said.

Companies like his have few solutions, apart from upping their own prices. “We have increased the costs by 15 to 30 per cent, now we’ll see how the market reacts”, Gambaro said. Manufacturers and consumers across Italy are being hit by soaring gas and electricity bills, and the government has so far pledged 5.5 billion euros in support. Despite the threat to Murano and its glassmakers, Gambaro refuses to despair. — AFP



Benjamin Novak  
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A reporter focusing on Hungary for *The New York Times*

## A music museum opens in the heart of Hungary’s culture wars

A polarising project by the government of Viktor Orban, Hungary’s far-right Prime Minister, to transform the historic City Park here into a museum district has produced its first building: The House of Music, Hungary.

Designed by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto, the cultural centre, which opened January 23, offers exhibitions, education and concerts. An interactive permanent show guides visitors through the historical development of Western music; celebrates the contribution of Hungarian composers such as Liszt, Bartok and Kodaly; and traces Hungary’s folk music tradition to its Central Asian roots. One room, painted in the colours of the Hungarian flag, features video displays on the country’s political history and famous athletes, with the national anthem as a soundtrack.

Yet beyond the House of Music’s glass walls, which are animated by reflections of construction elsewhere in the park, this new building is mired in controversy.

Critics have said that the government’s plans to develop the 200-year-old City Park into a museum district disturbs the natural environment, deprives locals of much-needed public space and raises concerns about corruption. But those behind the project say that the site has always been more than a public park and that the undertaking is Europe’s largest urban development project. In a speech, Orban described the transformation as an “unfinished work of art.” In 2012, Orban’s government announced an ambitious plan to transform the park, in disrepair after decades of neglect, into a district of five museums. The estimated cost at the time was about \$250 million, but that had ballooned to nearly five times the original projections by 2017.

There had been a virtual consensus that the park needed work, but the government and park conservationists disagreed about the fate of the park’s natural features.

A special legal designation allowed the project to skirt existing development rules, meaning the

## AT CITY PARK IN BUDAPEST, A BUILDING PROJECT HAS COME TO EXEMPLIFY THE POLITICS OF VIKTOR ORBAN, THE COUNTRY’S FAR-RIGHT PRIME MINISTER

municipality of Budapest had little say over the government’s plans. And legislation adopted by Orban’s party placed the park under the purview of a newly created, state-owned company controlled by his allies. Sandor Lederer of K-Monitor, an anti-corruption watchdog, said public records indicate the House of Music alone had cost Hungarian taxpayers as much as \$100 million.

“The project is a good example of how public investments work under Orban”, Lederer said. “There are no real needs and impact assessments done; citizens and affected parties are excluded from consultations and planning.”

He said poor planning and corruption have benefited companies widely seen as Orban’s clientele,

saying, “Not only present, but also future generations, will pay the costs of another Orban pet project.”

Laszlo Baan, the government commissioner overseeing the project, declined to be interviewed, but a spokesperson said in a statement that the government had so far spent 250 billion Hungarian forints, about \$800 million, on the project. Fujimoto’s office did not respond to an interview request.

In 2016, private security guards clashed with park conservationists at the future site of the House of Music. Gergely Karacsony, an opposition politician who was elected mayor of Budapest in 2019, did not attend the House of Music’s January 22 unveiling, which took place on the Day of Hungarian Culture, a national celebration. The building, he wrote on social media, was born not of culture but of violence.

In a radio interview, Karacsony recently likened construction in a public park to urinating in a stoup of holy water: “You can do it, but it ruins why we are all there.”

“The Hungarian nation never forgets the names of those who built the country”, Orban said in a speech at the ceremony, adding that detractors are not remembered, “because the Hungarian nation simply casts them out of its memory.”

—The New York Times



Visitors at the House of Music, Hungary, designed by the Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto in Budapest.

# A vacuum in music lovers’ hearts



Samuel Kutty  
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The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

singers are huge fans of the internationally decorated singer, whose voice journeyed through generations of people across the Indian subcontinent. No doubt, she was a veritable personification of melody in its untainted form!

If the late singer was the queen of Bollywood for her sweet melodic voice, she was “Devi”, a term used for a goddess, for the lovers of Hindi music. And many of her fans who were not fortunate to meet her but are familiar with her mesmerising voice, are still in mourning for the death as if she has been a family member.

I was fortunate to have met and attended a concert by the late legendary singer in the central Indian city of Indore during my grooming as a journalist in December 1983.

I WAS FORTUNATE TO HAVE MET AND ATTENDED A CONCERT BY THE LATE LEGENDARY SINGER IN THE CENTRAL INDIAN CITY OF INDORE IN 1983

was invited to conduct the concert to raise funds for a stadium. It was an incident that brought pain in the sensitive and loving heart of the playback singer.

Music lovers will always cherish her memories and the divine voice that stirred millions of hearts. From the late 1940s when India was savouring its dew-fresh Independence, her illustrious career spans over six decades.

She was listed in the *Guinness Book of World Record* as the most recorded artist in history, with more than 30,000 songs credited to her in multiple languages. Honoured with India’s highest civilian honour, the legendary singer’s achievements and records remain unmatched.

In an interview, a few years ago, she said, “I will continue to sing till my last breath. Music is the essence of my existence. We Mangeshkars are a family devoted to music. Take music away from our lives and we are nothing.”

Lata Mangeshkar remained a household name in all Indian families all over the world. Mortally she is gone, but her rich and lovely voice will always linger in everyone’s mind through her evergreen songs. A voice India loved to lip-sync both in times of joy and sorrow, separation and reunion, or love and heartbreak!

Tears still fall when we listen to the all-famed *Ae mere watan ke logon*, a patriotic tribute that she sang to the fallen Indian soldiers. Her recitation of *Vande Mataram* and the national anthem *Jana Gana Mana* are still the main versions used at most public gatherings across India.

It will not be an exaggeration to say Lata Mangeshkar is a name synonymous with Indian culture. Her passing away is a loss that will be felt by every music lover as there can’t be a South Asian person who has not heard at least one song by her. A vacuum in the hearts of all music-loving people!

The music world lost a voice this week. No words will suffice writing a tribute to the legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar, the Nightingale of India, who at one time was a formidable name in music and influenced almost five generations with her incredibly mellifluous voice.

Not only the connoisseurs of singing but even established playback



A BUBBLE IN THE AIR

A little girl enjoys bubble soap at the Vieux-port, in Marseille, France, on Tuesday. — AFP

# Philippines shifts election battle to social media amid Covid curbs

NEIL JEROME MORALES & KAREN LEMA

Campaigning for the Philippines’ general election got under way officially on Tuesday, with Covid-19 curtailing the traditional fanfare and big rallies and turning the focus to social media as the key battleground for the May 9 contest.

As with the 2016 polls that catapulted Rodrigo Duterte to the presidency, social media will be crucial in the three-month election buildup, while platforms will be under pressure to combat the rampant misinformation that has intensified in the Philippines in recent years, driving hate campaigns and deepening social divisions. The pandemic has upended campaigning for thousands of positions, from the president down to city council posts, with candidates shifting activities online to reach a population that ranks as one of the world’s biggest social media consumers.

Marie Fatima Gaw, communications research professor at the University of the Philippines, said social media was crucial democratic space but had become “hyper partisan”, with hidden political content everywhere and insufficient blocking of inauthentic material.

“The significance of social media now has been exponential,” she added.

It has been a vital tool in particular for Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the son and

namesake of the former dictator of the 1970s and 1980s, whose harsh rule defined the Philippines’ recent history.

Marcos is clear favourite for the presidency and is drawing support from a massive social media campaign, one that critics say is attempting to rewrite the family’s controversial history.

### LIMITS ON MASS RALLIES

The limits on big rallies comes with the Philippines lagging behind with its Covid-19 vaccinations outside of urban centres, with half of the 110 million population inoculated so far, and campaigning under way just weeks after a run of record daily infections.

Roughly 67.5 million Filipinos are eligible to vote, including 1.7 million overseas, in an election for a president, vice-president, about 300 lawmakers and roughly 18,000 local government positions.

Apart from Marcos, others vying for the presidency include boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao, Vice-President Leni Robredo, Manila mayor Francisco Domagoso and senator Panfilo Lacson.

Duterte is not allowed to seek a second term but his popular daughter, Davao mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio, could see some of his support shifted to Marcos, with whom she will run alongside in her bid for the vice-presidency.

The election to choose who runs the country for the next six years will be closely watched by investors too, with a huge task ahead in rebuilding an economy that went from being one of Asia’s fastest growing to recording one of its steepest contractions at 9.6 per cent in 2020.

“What investors really want is we have a clean and honest election where people will actually accept the outcome, that there is no cheating, it is the will of the people,” said April Lee Tan, head of research of stockbroker COL Financial.

Outgoing presidents usually identify their preferred successor, who they hope will keep them out of prison as much as protect their legacy.

Duterte, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a second six-year term, had chosen loyal aide Senator Christopher Go to replace him, but he pulled out of the contest. On the eve of the campaign season, Duterte, who has previously accused an unidentified presidential contender of snorting cocaine and described Marcos Jr as “weak”, said all candidates “are my friends” and he would not endorse anyone “at this time”.

Victory for Marcos Jr would be the ultimate comeback for the controversial family, which was chased into US exile after the patriarch’s humiliating downfall in 1986. — Reuters



Philippines Vice-President and opposition presidential candidate Leni Robredo speaks from a truck during a campaign rally in the town of Libamanan, Camarines Sur province, on Tuesday. — AFP

# sport

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## TOUR OF OMAN RETURNS AFTER TWO YEARS

# CAVENDISH TO MAKE SEASON START IN OMAN



ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH  
MUSCAT, FEB 8

Tour of Oman, back after two years, will showcase the abilities of the world class cyclists on the unique terrains that the Sultanate of Oman will offer with its picturesque backdrops.

Sprinters such as the British icon Mark Cavendish, climbing talents like the rising German champion Marco Brenner and all-rounders such as the 2014 World Champion Rui Costa headline the startlist of the 11th edition of the much-popular race from February 10 to 15.

Classics experts such as Kragh Andersen will aim to show their leg strength while Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain) will provide a major test for climbers like Masnada.

Tour of Oman's previous winners include top riders like Fabian Cancellara, Vincenzo Nibali and Chris Froome.

The six-day race starts on February 10 and includes stages on different terrain.

It will be the first championship for Cavendish, who will make his return from injury in the Sultanate of Oman.

Cavendish has been out of action since November when he crashed

heavily at the Six Days of Ghent event, an incident which left him with two broken ribs and a punctured lung.

In 2011, Cavendish won the final stage of the Tour of Oman on the Matrah Seafront. He is likely to have sprint opportunities on stage 1 to Muscat, on stage 2 to the Suhar Corniche and stage 6 on the Mutrah Corniche.

Stage 5 finishes on the tough Green Mountain Jabal al Akhdar climb (5.7km at 10.5%), with a short and steep finish in Qurayyat (2.8km

at 6.5%) on stage 3.

Costa (UAE Team Emirates) is another contender who have eight top-5 stage finishes in the Tour of Oman, with strong overall results (2nd in 2017, also in the top 5 in 2016 and 2019).

### VERSATILE TOUR

Sprinters and climbers alike will get their chances at the Tour of Oman 2022. Fast riders are expected to get a kick start in the first two stages leading to the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre and the Suhar Corniche.

Young gun Kaden Groves (BikeExchange-Jayco), along with Arnaud Demare (Groupama-FDJ) and Fernando Gaviria (UAE Team Emirates) are expected to give a run for money for Cavendish (QuickStep

Alpha Vinyl) in the race.

The British superstar, who shares the record for most wins in the Tour de France (34) with Belgian legend Eddy Merckx, won the final stage of the Tour of Oman in 2011, on the Matrah Corniche.

Fernando Gaviria, 27, of UAE Team Emirates is also in the reckoning since he sprinted to the prestigious yellow and pink jerseys on the roads of the Tour de France and the Giro d'Italia.

Italian climber Fausto Masnada (Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team) should be among Costa's main rivals on the slopes of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

In 2019, French climber Elie Gesbert (Team Arkea-Samsic) showed his worth with fifth spot alongside Costa. German teenager Brenner (Team DSM) will also be looking forward to show his abilities at the iconic climb.

The Sultanate of Oman's young national champion Said al Rahbi will try to get the most of it in his debut Tour. He will be joined by second placed Mohammed al Wahibi and bronze medallist Husam al Rawahi in the seven-man Oman team who will be competing in the race for the first time in its history.

|                                                                      |                                                |                                                                     |                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Stage 1   Al Rustaq Fort - Muscat (138k) — Feb 10</b>             |                                                | <b>Stage 4   Al Sifah - Muscat (119.5k) — Feb 13</b>                |                                                   |
| <b>Stage 2   Naseem Park - Suhar Corniche (167.5k) — Feb 11</b>      |                                                | <b>Stage 5   Samail - Jabal Al Akhdhar (150.5k) — Feb 14</b>        |                                                   |
| <b>Stage 3   Sultan Qaboos University - Qurayyat (180k) — Feb 12</b> |                                                | <b>Stage 6   Al Mouj Muscat - Matrah Corniche (135.5k) — Feb 15</b> |                                                   |
| <b>TEAMS (18)</b>                                                    | <b>France</b>                                  | Development: Henao (Col)                                            | <b>Russia</b>                                     |
| <b>Australia</b>                                                     | B&B Hotels-KTM: Liettaer (Bel)                 | <b>Netherlands</b>                                                  | Gazprom-Rusvelo: Canola (Ita)                     |
| Team BikeExchange-Jayco: Groves (Aus), Campbell (Nzl)                | Cofidis: Walscheid (Ger)                       | Team DSM: Kragh Andersen (Den), Pedersen (Den)                      | <b>Spain</b>                                      |
| <b>Belgium</b>                                                       | Team Arkea-Samsic: Gesbert (Fra), Capiot (Bel) | <b>Norway</b>                                                       | Euskaltel-Euskadi: Angulo (Esp)                   |
| Intermarché-Wanty-Gobert Matériaux: Taaramäe (Est)                   | Groupama-FDJ: Scotson (Aus)                    | Uno-X Pro Cycling Team: Eg (Den)                                    | Burgos-BH: Bol (Ned), Raim (Est)                  |
| Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team: Cavendish (Gbr), Masnada (Ita)          | <b>Italy</b>                                   | <b>Oman</b>                                                         | <b>United Arab Emirates</b>                       |
| Bingoal Pauwels Sauces WB: Menten (Bel)                              | Bardiani CSF Faizane': Zana (Ita)              | Oman National Team: Said al Rahbi                                   | UAE Team Emirates: Rui Costa (Por), Gaviria (Col) |
|                                                                      | <b>Kazakhstan</b>                              |                                                                     | <b>USA</b>                                        |
|                                                                      | Astana Qazaqstan Team                          |                                                                     | Team Novo Nordisk: Planet (Fra)                   |



# Winter Olympic history-maker Ledecka wins third Games gold

**ZHANGJIAKOU, China:** Dual winter sports champion Ester Ledecka successfully defended her snowboard parallel giant slalom title at the Beijing Olympics on Tuesday — even if she did not immediately realise it.

The 26-year-old Czech became the first woman to win a gold medal in two different sports at a Winter Olympics when she took skiing and snowboarding titles in Pyeongchang four years ago.

She won snowboard parallel giant slalom gold again in the Chinese capital when she cruised to victory in the final against Austria's Daniela Ulbing.

But Ledecka did not immediately realise that she was an Olympic champion again.

"I was concentrating on each run and I was still thinking about what I could do better in the next run," she said.

"And then I realised that there wasn't going to be any other run."

Ledecka will now switch to skis as she attempts to stamp her name all over the Beijing Games.

She will compete in the women's super-G starting on Friday, before going for gold in downhill and Alpine combined.

"For me it's natural and I've been doing this since I was a child," she said of competing in both snowboarding and skiing.

Asked whether she would grab her skis or her snowboard if she was in a hurry, she hedged her bets and said: "I'll just call my tech guy — he's strong, he can carry both."

Ledecka will not have much



Czech Republic's Ester Ledecka (L) and Russia's Natalia Soboleva compete in the snowboard women's parallel giant slalom qualification run. — AFP

time to switch from one sport to the other.

At the Pyeongchang Olympics she had a week between events but in Beijing she will have only two full days to practice.

She admitted there was "a very unique and funny situation" in her head after Tuesday's final.

"Part of my head is still racing right now on this course, and the other side of my head is already trying to get through the line of the skiing course," she said.

"And then a small part is celebrating in between."

Slovenia's Gloria Kotnik took

**I was concentrating on each run and I was still thinking about what I could do better in the next run. And then I realised that there wasn't going to be any other run**

**ESTER LEDECKA**

*Snowboard parallel giant slalom champion*

bronze at Genting Snow Park, where a small crowd of local fans watched the fast and furious action under a clear blue sky.

Austria's Benjamin Karl won gold in the men's competition, beating Slovenia's Tim Mastnak in the final.

The 36-year-old Karl claimed silver at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics but had never won gold to go with his five world titles.

"As a child of 10 I wrote that I would be world champion, I would be the fastest racer in the world and I would be Olympic champion," said Karl. — AFP



Gold medalist Czech Republic's Ester Ledecka celebrates during the victory ceremony of the snowboard women's parallel giant slalom. — AFP

## ■ 'BAHR MUSCAT' WINS ARAB TRIPLE CROWN



Omani horse Bahr Muscat has won the Arab Triple Crown Cup in the first round race for 1,600 metres at the Abu Dhabi racetrack. 'Bahr Muscat' is owned by the Muscat Stud for purebred Arabian horses and under the supervision of the Omani coach Ibrahim al Hadrami and rode by the jockey Antonio Friso.

## 'Al Tamayaz' camel festival tomorrow

**WALEED AL JAHWARI**  
MUSCAT, FEB 8

Camel racing lovers are on the lookout for surprises in the biggest event in Oman for camel racing at the Al Batha camel racing track in Al Mudhaibi on Thursday.

The organisers have announced top prizes of Mercedes-Benz and 'golden sword' provided by Desert Sand Oil and Gas LLC, owned by Ali bin Salim bin Aldham al Wahibi.

A record number of 700 camels will compete in the ninth edition of the race, which runs for four main races and 25 sub-races for a distance of 1,500 metres each.

Competitions will be held in 'Bkar' (female category) and 'Gadan' (male).



The organising committee of the festival held four qualifying races in different sections to finalise the 40 participants for this run.

The winner in the general 'Bkar' section, the main race, will get the Mercedes-Benz and 'golden sword'.

The winner in the second race will get a dagger. The third race prize will be Cup and the fourth

run will have an 'icon' as award.

Attractive trophies and prize money are on offer for other races as well. The organising committee said they are fully prepared with all Covid-19 protocols for the participants. Fans are not allowed to the championship due to the Supreme Committee instruction for sports events.

# Victories for Al Jadidi, Design Group, Ideal, Danmark

**MUSCAT:** Aneermon Abdulrahman's strokeful 54 off 31 and Wasim Ismail's 4 for 11 were the highlights of Al Jadidi Stars' 83-run victory against ABL Task in an A Division T20 League game at Oman Cricket Turf 2 ground in Al Amerat on Saturday.

Al Jadidi's 174 for 5 also included 48 from Pradeep Kumar and 30 from Nishanth Meethalveedu. Mohammed Abbas picked up 3 for 33 whereas Prathiesh Hema grabbed 2 for 35.

ABL Task was shot out for a disappointing 91 in 19.1 overs due to brilliant bowling by Wasim, Ali Mohammed (2 for 11) and Parameswaran Shankar (2 for 13).

Waseem ton lifts Design Group Design Group rode on Sayeed Waseem's magnificent 57-ball 117 to thrash OCT Al Amerat by 155 runs in a C Division T20 League match at Muscat Municipality ground 2 on Friday.

Waseem's 117 included 20 fours and one six as Design Group posted 238 for 9 on the board. Rafeeq Mohammed and Nasser Haider claimed three wickets each.

After a forgettable day with the ball, OCT Al Amerat failed to impress with the bat too, scoring a lowly 83 for 8 in 20 overs due to superb spells by Satham Hussain (3 for 5) and Mohammed Althaf

(3 for 13). Rafeeq Mohammed top-scored with 26).

**IDEAL THRASH NIBRASS**

In another C Division game at Muscat Municipality ground 1, Ideal International trounced Nibrass Tech by 9 wickets thanks to Ruban Durai's top knock of 57 and Salman Khan's 3 for 20.

Salman was instrumental in Nibrass getting bowled out for 115 in the 18th over with Shahrulk Varus and Deepak Bhandari taking two wickets each.

Riding on Ruban's fantastic fifty, Ideal raced to the target in only 11.5 overs, scoring 116 for 1. Wasim Jamadar chipped in with a

fluent 30 off 17.

**SANKARLAL HELPS DANMARK TO VICTORY**

Sankarlal Sasidharan's outstanding all-round display powered Danmark CT to an impressive 53-run win over Safara International in a D Division T20 match at Muscat Municipality ground 3 in Amerat on Friday.

Danmark did well to reach 180 for 8 in 20 overs thanks to Sankarlal's 42-ball 64 and Mohammed Basheer's 36 off 22. Aksaar Sardar took 3 for 22 whereas Nadeem Pewekar claimed 2 for 7.

Sankarlal was brilliant with the ball too, taking 3 for 21 as Safara

International was restricted to 127 for 9 despite Hardik Toprani's unbeaten 45.

**BRIEF SCORES**

**A Division T20**

Al Jadidi Stars 174 for 5 in 20 overs (Aneermon Abdulrahman 54 – 2x4, 6x6, Pradeep Kumar 48 – 3x4, 1x6, Nishanth Meethalveedu 30 – 3x4, 1x6, Mohammed Abbas 3-33, Prathiesh Hema 2-35) beat ABL Task 91 all out in 19.1 overs (Ravi 29 – 4x4, 1x6, Wasim Ismail 4-11, Ali Mohammed 2-11, Parameswaran Shankar 2-13) by 83 runs. C Division T20

**Design Group Engineering**

Consultants 238 for 9 in 20 overs (Sayeed Waseem 117 – 20x4, 1x6, Parvez Beg 35 – 5x4, Rafeeq

Mohammed 3-24, Nasser Haider 3-45) beat OCT Al Amerat 83 for 8 in 20 overs (Rafeeq Mohammed 26 – 4x4, Satham Hussain 3-5, Mohammed Althaf 3-13) by 155 runs.

Nibrass Tech 115 all out in 17.2 overs (Waqas Khalid 23 – 4x4, Salman Khan 3-20, Shahrulk Varus 2-19, Deepak Bhandari 2-30) lost to Ideal International 116 for 1 in 11.5 overs (Ruban Durai 57 – 10x4, Wasim Jamadar 30 – 5x4, 1x6) by 9 wickets.

**D Division T20**

Danmark CT 180 for 8 in 20 overs (Sankarlal Sasidharan 64 – 9x4, Mohammed Basheer 36 – 7x4, Aksaar Sardar 3-22, Nadeem Pewekar 2-7) beat Safara International 127 for 9 in 20 overs (Hardik Toprani 45 – 3x4, Sankarlal Sasidharan 3-21) by 53 runs.

# Oman tie third ODI with UAE

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ  
MUSCAT, FEB 8

UAE and Oman played out a tie in the third and final ODI of the three-match series, part of ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2, as UAE wrapped up the ODI series 2-0 at the Al Amerat Ground, here on Tuesday.

Batting first, Oman were bowled out for 214 in 49.3 overs by UAE.

Kashyap Prajapati was the top scorer for the hosts as he smashed 57 off 89 balls while Zeeshan Maqsood struck 36 off 53 balls.

Star batter Jatinder Singh played a handy innings of 26.

Two half-century partnerships ensured Oman reached the total of 214. The first was the opening wicket partnership between Kashyap Prajapati and Jatinder Singh of 53 runs in 78 balls.

The second was the third wicket partnership between Zeeshan Maqsood and Prajapati of 56 runs in 85 balls.

The ninth-wicket partnership of 30 runs between Naseem Khushi and Nester Dhamba ensured Oman crossed the 200-run mark and reached a respectable total of 214.

UAE bowlers Kashif Daud (3/41) and Zahoor Khan (3/57) were the pick of the bowlers who helped restrict Oman to 214 runs.

Basil Hameed chipped in with 2/26.

In reply, UAE were in deep trouble at 34/3



after Bilal Khan and Kaleemullah struck early in the innings.

Khan bowled Chirag Suri in the seventh over and Kaleemullah claimed the wickets of C Rizwan and Vriitya Aravind off consecutive deliveries in the 10th over.

After Muhammad Waseem was scalped by Khawar Ali for 35, Muhammad Usman and Basil Hameed stitched together a 58-run partnership for the fifth wicket that set them on course for victory.

Rohan Mustafa and Usman's 30-run partnership for the sixth wicket gave the innings further momentum when needed.

Just when it appeared UAE was losing direction in their chase came the ninth-wicket partnership of 43 runs between Kashif Daud and Zahoor Khan.

UAE thought they almost had the game in their grasp but Akif Raja's run out off the last ball of the match ensured Oman and UAE shared the honours.

With the tie, Oman's tally in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 increased to 30 points from 23 matches as they remained table-toppers while UAE are on 12 points from 10 games.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Oman: 214 all out in 49.3 overs (K Prajapati 57, Zeeshan Maqsood 36; Kashif Daud 3-41, Zahoor Khan 3-57) tied UAE: 214 all out in 50 overs (Kashif Daud 52, Muhammad Usman 47; Nestor Dhamba 3-20, Khawar Ali 3-49, 2-56)

# Shonal bags another podium finish in UAE

Muscat-based racer bounces back from a fifth spot in fifth round to take third place in the next round at Yas Marina circuit in UAE



**MUSCAT:** Setbacks don't deter him. In fact, he loves to accept challenges and at the recently-concluded sixth round of the UAE Rotax Max Challenge Series at the Yas Marina circuit in Abu Dhabi, UAE, Muscat-based go-karting racer Shonal Kunimal displayed his potential to overcome setbacks in abundance as he claimed yet another podium finish in the micro max category of the ongoing 2021-22 series after finishing fifth in the fifth round.

The back-to-back races were held at the Formula One Yas Marina circuit and 10-year-old Shonal, who has pushed out by a rival in the fifth round, came back strongly to take the third place in the next round.

The UAE Rotax Max Challenge Series features some of the best young drivers in the region and Shonal, a student of the Indian School Ghubra in Muscat, has now been on the podium on four occasions in the six rounds held.

Russian Maxim Bobreshov continues to dominate the series as he picked up yet another win to lead the overall standings while Greek racer Leonidas Peruzzi, who was found guilty of pushing Shonal out of the track with a contact in the fifth round, is overall second.

Despite the setback in the fifth round on Sunday, Shonal, coached by former Oman go-

karting star Sanad al Rawahi, fought back to a podium place in the next round on Monday.

Bobreshov was the fastest in the sixth round and Leonidas was behind by 0.882 second and Shonal trailed the winner by 1.520 seconds.

However, it was the comeback by Shonal in the fifth round that was remarkable. Having spun out of the track in lap three, he rallied to a fifth-place finish in the remaining 13 laps.

Later the race jury penalised Leonidas for his contact with Shonal and was given a penalty of ten seconds pushing him to sixth and Shonal keeping the fifth spot.

Maxim won round five while Pierre Abou Diwan was second and Emilen Boul third.

After six rounds and with three more rounds remaining in March, the series top honours seems to be going Maxim's way as he leads with 585 points. Only 32 points differentiates Leonidas and Shonal with the former currently placed second with 507 points and Shonal 475.

Each round a racer can pocket a total of 100 points with 40 for a race win and 30 each for a win in the pre-final and a heat race.

Speaking after his podium finish in the sixth round, Shonal said, "It was a great experience racing on a Formula One track. It is a very fast track than the circuits we usually race on."

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## Oil prices slip from 7-year highs

BEIJING: Oil prices eased on Tuesday morning ahead of the resumption of indirect talks between the United States and Iran which may revive a nuclear deal that could lead to the removal of sanctions on Iranian oil sales, increasing global supplies.

Brent crude was down \$2.02, or 2.2 per cent, at \$90.76 a barrel after hitting a seven-year high of \$94 on Monday.

US West Texas Intermediate crude fell \$1.60, or 1.8 per cent, to \$89.63.

Both oil contracts have touched recent seven-year tops, supported by strong global demand, ongoing tensions

in Eastern Europe and potential supply disruptions due to cold US weather conditions.

The talks on reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which are taking place in Vienna, will resume on Tuesday after a 10-day pause.

The United States has restored some sanctions waivers, while Iran is demanding a full removal of sanctions and a US guarantee of no further punitive steps.

— Reuters



## Investments in Raysut Industrial City rise to RO 479 million

EXPRESS SERVICE: Application process completed in two hours

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, FEB 8

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) is exploring options to expand the capacity of Raysut Industrial City, as well as move ahead with the establishment of the proposed Thamrait Industrial City – both located in Dhofar Governorate – to cater the demand growth.

According to Eng Ali al Maashani (pictured), Acting Director-General of Raysut Industrial City, as many as 207 industrial projects are currently operating within the cluster with a further 40 projects signed up for development over the past two years.

“By the end of 2021, the total investment volume in Raysut



Industrial City amounted to more than RO 479 million and the national manpower touched 1,197.

“Moreover, Madayn is currently aiming at obtaining new expansions in Raysut Industrial City to keep pace with the growing demand, in addition to the development of the newly announced Thamrait Industrial City,” he said.

On Tuesday, Raysut Industrial

City has signed an investment pact with Sahari Qatbeet Trading and Transport Company to set up a factory for industrial salt production as part of an Omani-Emirati partnership.

The application for investment, selection and examination of requested plot, signing of the lease contract and completion of payments, was processed in two



hours. Investment in the project, which will be developed on 12,248 sq metres of land, is about RO 1 million.

Al Maashani explained that investors can submit investment applications and complete the procedures electronically through Masar Service Centre. “In fact, the promptness of electronic investment procedures happens with the support of Masar Service Centre and the other digital services employed by Madayn, which jointly play a significant role in facilitating these procedures for investors in the industrial cities,” he added.

## Tethys Oil net results up by more than 400 per cent

DESCRIBES BLOCK 56 AS ‘SMORGASBORD OF OPPORTUNITIES’; PLANS TO INVEST \$91M FOR 2022

JOMAR MENDOZA  
@jmObserver

Tethys Oil, a Swedish oil company which holds interests in the Sultanate of Oman's Blocks 3 and 4, Block 49, Block 56 and Block 58, announces that its net result is up by more than 400 per cent. This was revealed by the company's Managing Director, Magnus Nordin.

Fueled by the oil price increase, its key financials soared, its operating result increased by close to 180 per cent and year-end cash position is up 22 per cent compared to last year, leaving the company with \$68.6 million of cash as it enters 2022.

This record cash balance was reached whilst both investing in the company's assets but also returning more than \$16 million to its shareholders by way of dividends, redemptions and share buybacks in the year.

In fact, since 2015 Tethys has distributed more than \$135 million to its shareholders while contributing over \$1 billion to the Sultanate of Oman's economy.

The Board of Director's dividend and distribution proposal for 2022 will add a further \$25 million to that already impressive shareholder return tally.

The source of this cash distribution and the force behind the company's strong results in



2021 is its stake in 'star' asset onshore Oman – Blocks 3 and 4. Over the last three years the share of production from the Blocks has amounted to close to 13 million barrels of oil whilst maintaining 2P reserves of more than 26 million barrels.

In other words, it consistently replaced its production with new reserves. 2021 is the first year in which the company have replaced less than 100 per cent of it production and also saw a small drop in production compared to the year before ( -1.7 per cent). For 2022, the company sees signs of under-investment.

“This will be remedied by a major increase in capital spending during 2022. Don't forget, these investments are

subject to cost recovery. The majority of these investments on Blocks 3 and 4 will be repaid to us almost immediately in the form of increased Net Entitlement with only a small 'haircut'. Considered the drop in investments our production and reserves development in 2021 is indeed a sign of the tremendous resilience and robustness inherent in Blocks 3 and 4. And just to make this point even stronger. The overall asset base of 2P reserves and 2C contingent resources increased during 2021,” Nordin added.

The Managing Director is confident that Blocks 3 and 4 will continue to be the backbone of the company's financial strength for several years to come.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Sultanate of Oman  
سلطنة عُمان  
وزارة التجارة والصناعة وترويج الاستثمار  
Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion



Tender 8/2022

The Internal Tenders Committee at Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion announces the following tenders:

| Tender No | Title of the Tenders                                                                                                                                                             | Company rate | Tender document price R.O (Un refundable) | Deadline for Tender Document collection | Deadline For Offers Submission    |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 8/2022    | Providing consultancy services to study variations in car prices in Oman and some GCC countries and assessment of market and challenges of competition in the spare parts sector | Specialized  | 25/. R.O                                  | Wednesday 16/2/2022                     | Thursday 3/3/2022 Before 10:00 am |

Terms and conditions documents can be obtained through the ESNAD service via <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> in which they will be available until the date mentioned in the table above, provided that the document's price is paid through the website's payment gateway. All companies shall submit their offers with a temporary insurance in the form of Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank in the Sultanate of Oman values not less than (1%) of the offer, Addressed to H.E Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee at Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, and valid for (90) days from the date of offer submission. Any offer that does not meet the required temporary insurance shall not be considered. A copy of the Bank Guarantee or Certified Check must be attached with the offer submitted by the company on the website (ESNAD service) and the original Bank Guarantee or Certified Check must be kept until it is requested by MOCiIP. Offers shall be submitted through the ESNAD service on the above-mentioned website before 10 o'clock on the morning of the day mentioned for offers submission. Offers submitted after this date will not be considered, regardless of the reasons of the delay.

The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other submitted offer.

Note: Priority shall be given to companies and institutions whose bid has the highest Organisation rate.

Correspondences:

- Tender inquiries; All correspondence pertaining to TENDER Inquiries shall be online through E-Tendering System . ( <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> )
- E-Tendering System inquiries : All correspondences pertaining to the technical support of E-Tendering System shall be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number .  
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## Own the Lincoln Nautilus with exclusive benefits



**MUSCAT:** The attractive and luxurious Lincoln Nautilus is bold, stylish and powerful. It sets a new benchmark for luxury SUVs with its range of features and technology that enhance every experience in it. Enthusiasts can now look forward to service 5 years/100,000 kms, 1 year registration and 3M window tint. (Conditions apply. For details visit a Lincoln showroom.) The campaign is valid until March 9, 2022.

Delivering a luxurious driver environment with SUV flexibility, the Nautilus offers a stunning exterior design with a new Lincoln signature grille, new tail lamps, and applique light bar, spoiler and upper rear fascia.

Complementing the new design features and affording the Nautilus a more luxurious stance, is an all new 20" bright machined aluminium with premium painted pockets available for the reserve trim.

Inside, the cabin is welcoming and keeps all occupants comfortable. Lighting outside and in embraces the driver and passengers, softening the edges and keeping the environment calm.

Acoustic side glass reduces wind noise for rear passengers, while advanced engineering solutions decrease sound

from the road.

Soft to touch and eminently customisable, the seats ventilate, massage and adjust for a soothing experience, with controls found where the hand falls.

The steering wheel is completely unique to Lincoln and elevates the driving experience by offering an increased wheel rim circumference, providing a large, sporty and comfortable grip and premium supple, refined, Wollsdorf leather that also features chic European-style stitching.

The leather-wrapped, hand stitched steering wheel is mounted ahead of a 12.3-inch fully configurable digital instrument cluster that displays driver information crisply and clearly. The cabin's sleek centre console is uninterrupted by a standard shifter, which has been replaced by a vertically-oriented Push-Button Shifter on the instrument panel.

In the Sultanate of Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC. Please log on to [www.lincolnoman.com](http://www.lincolnoman.com), or [www.facebook.com/lincolnoman](http://www.facebook.com/lincolnoman) or [www.instagram.com/lincoln\\_oman](http://www.instagram.com/lincoln_oman) for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

## Zain announces launch of Murooj Al Zain project in Salalah

**MUSCAT:** Zain Property Development announced the launch of Murooj Al Zain project which will be developed in Salalah. The project, which was announced at a virtual event through the company's social media channels, will be a valuable addition to Zain Property Development projects and will support its vision to expand its projects across the Sultanate of Oman.

The event also saw the launch of Zain's Mobile App, which is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman.

Mish'al bin Mohammed al Raisi (pictured), Executive Manager of Zain Property Development, noted, "Murooj Al Zain project will be our first project in the Governorate of Dhofar, and we are confident that the project will add value to the real estate sector in the Sultanate of Oman and it will meet the growing demands in Salalah. As we all know that Salalah not only attracts tourists, but also opens large investment opportunities. We look ahead to see the completion of the project successfully."

Murooj Al Zain is located nearby the Millennium Hotel and Salalah Grand Mall, and it is only 15 minutes' drive away from Salalah Airport. It is one of Zain Property Development projects that aims to create a distinctive community environment.



The Murooj Al Zain project contains 292 apartment units with a variety of spaces ranging from 78 square metres to 133 square metres at competitive prices starting from RO 27,000 to RO 42,500.

Each apartment has a garden or a private external space. Ground floor apartments have a private garden, upper floor apartments with spacious balconies and a terrace on the top floors. All apartments have

stunning views, and a car park is allocated for each apartment.

The project also features a 2,500-square-metre public park, with playgrounds and a pool for children, as well as a cafe, local fruits shop and sitting areas throughout the park.

In addition to other services and facilities on the project, including two gyms and two separate private swimming pools for men and women, and a 24-hour security service is available.

With the aim of providing all Zain Property Development updates at the fingertips, the company has developed a mobile application which was announced at the ceremony. The first of its kind App in the Sultanate of Oman is designed to facilitate executing real estate transactions, which translated

Zain's vision towards digital transformation.

Elaborating on the App, Mish'al al Raisi, commented: "The mobile App is a very positive step towards digitalising our services. Through the App, the users will be able to search our property listing, book, buy and pay at their convenience. We are introducing a new concept in the real estate sector, where the users may view the full details and facilities of the listed units 24/7."

Expressing its recognition to the customers for being part of Zain's family through the purchase of a property, Zain announced the "Zain Partners" Rewards Programme. Designed with various benefits and offers, the programme provides rewards and special discounts to the customers.

## Ooredoo App offers awesome on-the-go service

**MUSCAT:** Giving its customers total control at their fingertips, the Ooredoo App is bigger and better than ever.

Designed to make life easier, it allows users to manage their subscriptions, whether using Hala prepaid, Shahry postpaid or Home Internet services.

Users can also get instant updates on

Ooredoo's promotions and services, access to the Nojoom rewards programme, and so much more! The award-winning App, which now has more than 1.8 million downloads, gives customers convenient access to services and transactions that would normally be done through the Contact Centre or an Ooredoo store.

No more waiting on the phone or in queues. And if you need help, Saeed and Saeeda, the first-of-their-kind Artificial Intelligence Chatbots, are on hand to answer queries in both English and Arabic. It's a simple, fast and stress-free service, wherever and whenever. Download now for free from the App Store or Google Play.

## Despite Covid-19, optimism persists in the boardroom



KENNETH MACFARLANE

Even as we enter the third year of the global pandemic, challenged now by multiple variants and rising cases, there is a remarkable and reassuring shift in optimism among business leaders – globally as well as in the Sultanate of Oman, who are turning the crisis into an opportunity for growth.

The Omani government's response to the pandemic over the past 24 months, including mass testing, vaccinations at speed and scale, as well as proactive steps on reforms, has led to a resurgence in the confidence of investors, businesses and residents in the Sultanate of Oman.

Recently, the Sultanate of Oman allocated RO 12.13 billion (\$31.5 billion) to its annual budget for 2022, with a focus on stimulating investment, improvement of basic public services and attempts to boost the confidence of lenders.

These proactive measures are aligned with Oman Vision 2040, aimed at achieving financial sustainability and stimulating economic diversification in the country.

This optimism has cascaded into the echelons of the business community in the country and is also reflected in our annual report, KPMG 2021 CEO Outlook. It gauges how leadership strategies and concerns have shifted during these demanding times of economic turbulence.

The survey revealed that 87 per cent of CEOs are confident about their company's growth prospects. They are looking to make acquisitions in the next three years to help grow and transform their businesses.

In 2022, organisations in the Sultanate of Oman will need to



make sure they have the right talent with the right skills to realise their growth plans. Talent risk has been a primary concern for leaders, challenged with accelerating digital transformation across the value chain, while ensuring talent pipelines meet new, unanticipated demands.

The C-suite's focus is once again on important operational issues and aggressive growth strategies, as well as longer-term issues such as climate change and disruptive technology risk, though pandemic-related threats like supply chain risk and high

interest rates persist.

Leaders are hiring, exploring tie-ups, especially mergers and acquisitions, and proactively investing in disruptive technology. Notably, environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategies are moving up the business agenda, and CEOs are striving to help build a more equitable and sustainable future – a laudable development, especially in terms of gender equality.

The Sultanate of Oman is also working on an ESG framework to help widen its funding base.

The other significant evolution

has been in the nature of work. CEOs recognise that the future of work is about more than where people are based.

Nearly a quarter of CEOs around the world plan to downsize (or already have downsized) their physical footprint or office space because of the pandemic and changing working habits; a steep decline from the 2020 CEO pulse survey (July/August 2020) when 69 per cent were aiming to downsize.

More than one third (37 per cent) said that their organisation will have most employees working remotely at least two or more days a week. More than half of global CEOs are recognising the demands created by a rapidly evolving future of work and will be looking to invest in shared office spaces to allow for increased flexibility. The global economy is still challenged by vaccine inequity, travel restrictions, and new coronavirus variants.

This is fostering some concerns about fulfilling overall growth potential.

Supply chains are still being disrupted; affecting, for example, the supply of semi-conductor chips used in key manufacturing sectors. Another potential impediment to growth lies in the shortage of skilled, available labour, accompanied by rising wages in a number of sectors.

Despite these factors, I share the optimism of the Oman leaders we interviewed.

As the Sultanate of Oman looks to the next 20 years as part of its Oman Vision 2040, we have before us incredible opportunities to build sustainable businesses, as well as a resilient national and regional economy.

Leaders will have to be plugged-in, people-first, and purpose-led to drive profitability and long-term growth, while having a positive impact on the planet and society. The opportunity to build a stronger, more sustainable future exists only if everyone works together, for a better tomorrow.

(The writer is Office Managing Partner – Oman, KPMG Lower Gulf)



## Fitch upgrades OETC to 'BB'; outlook stable



**BUSINESS REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, FEB 8

International ratings agency Fitch Ratings has upgraded Oman Electricity Transmission Company SAOC (OETC) Long-Term Issuer Default Ratings (IDR) and senior unsecured rating to 'BB' from 'BB-'. The Outlook on the IDR is Stable.

The ratings have been removed from Under Criteria Observation (UCO).

The upgrade follows the implementation of Fitch's updated Parent and Subsidiary Linkage (PSL) Criteria, published on December 1, 2021, said Fitch.

"Under the new criteria, we view OETC as the 'stronger subsidiary', based on its Standalone Credit Profile (SCP) of 'bb+', which is higher than the sovereign rating of Oman (BB-/Stable).

Our assessment leads to OETC being rated one notch

THE OUTLOOK CHANGE REFLECTS A RECENT SIMILAR ACTION ON OMAN'S LONG-TERM FOREIGN CURRENCY IDR TO STABLE FROM NEGATIVE

higher than the sovereign rating (i.e consolidated plus one approach)", it stated.

The Outlook change reflects a recent similar action on Oman's Long-Term Foreign Currency IDR to Stable from Negative. OETC, a subsidiary of Nama Group, owns, operates and manages the main transmissions systems serving north and south Oman.

Chinese state-owned State Grid International Development Limited has a 49 per cent stake in OETC.

## Oman jumps to 6th in Emerging Markets business fundamentals

**TRENDING UPWARDS:** Ranks 14th overall among world's 50 top emerging economies in annual Agility report

**BUSINESS REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, FEB 8

The Sultanate of Oman jumped to 6th in the area of business fundamentals and ranks overall as the 14th most competitive emerging market, according to the 2022 Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index. The UAE (3), Saudi Arabia (6) and Qatar (7) ranked among the top 10 emerging markets in the 2022 Index, which was led by China (1) and India (2). Also performing well: Bahrain (15) and Kuwait (17).

The 2022 Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index is the company's 13th annual ranking of the world's 50 leading emerging markets.

The Index ranks countries for overall competitiveness based on their logistics strengths, business climates and for the first time, their digital readiness — factors that make them attractive to logistics providers, freight forwarders, air and ocean carriers, distributors and investors. The Index includes a survey of 756 supply chain industry professionals.

The UAE out-performed all 50 countries in business fundamentals, an area where Gulf and MENA countries are clear leaders. Others near the top globally: Saudi Arabia (3),



Bahrain (5), Oman (6), Morocco (9), Jordan (10) and Kuwait (12). The UAE also ranked highest for digital readiness, a new category in the Index.

Digital readiness assesses digital skills, training, Internet access, e-commerce growth, investment climate and ability to nurture start-ups, as well as sustainability factors such as renewable energy mix, lower emissions intensity and green initiatives.

Top 10 in digital readiness: UAE, Malaysia, China, Saudi Arabia, India, Thailand, Qatar, Indonesia, Chile and Philippines. Kuwait (12) and Oman (15) also ranked highly.

"The connection between a country's digital capabilities and growth prospects is undeniable",

Agility CEO Tarek Sultan said. "The competitiveness of emerging markets countries will be determined by their ability to develop digitally skilled businesses and talent pools, and find the resolve to lower their emissions in ways that spur growth rather than sacrificing it."

The importance of digital readiness was apparent in the survey. Logistics executives identified adoption of technology as the leading driver of economic and business growth for emerging markets.

The top focus areas for their companies: Technology and sustainability. Most logistics industry executives see moderate-to-strong economic growth and little or no chance of recession in 2022, even without

immediate relief from the snarled supply chains and sky-high ocean and air freight rates triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Roughly two-thirds of the 756 industry professionals surveyed for the Index believe shippers will see cargo rates come down by the end of the year.

Eighty per cent see port bottlenecks, air capacity shortages and trucking issues easing by year end.

"The industry's optimism reflects the fact that emerging economies are getting more resilient and figuring out ways to weather supply chain disruption", Sultan said. "If emerging markets can get better access to vaccines and give small business a boost, they can help power a broad, dynamic global recovery."

## OPAZ issues guidelines for design of buildings in Duqm SEZ

**BUSINESS REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, FEB 8

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has announced the issuance of the Structural Guidelines and Regulations Manual of Buildings at Duqm, which consists of the minimum structural design requirements for projects within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and its general provisions. The manual provides detailed technical guidance and guidelines for the structural design of buildings.

Eng Abdullah bin Salem al Hakmani (pictured), In Charge of Managing the Operations of the Building Permits Department of OPAZ, explained that the guidelines comprise several key items, which are the general guidelines for building designs, structural submission procedures, and the best internationally applicable and approved codes and standards in the Sultanate of Oman, to comply with SEZAD regulations, design programmes, data analysis, structural design criteria, durability and performance criteria, geotechnical examination requirements (soil tests) and building supervision requirements.



Al Hakmani said that the guidelines aim to provide instructions, requirements and the minimum requirements for building designs which will give the engineers a general idea and

appropriate guidance on the basic requirements of structural designs. It is anticipated that the use of these guidelines will increase the quality of designs and construction, and provide information to architects, consultants and engineering offices dealing with SEZAD.

Al Hakmani added that the Structural Guidelines and Regulations of the Buildings at Duqm were prepared by a team of engineers from SEZAD and were reviewed by several expert houses, including a team from

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). The Guidelines will be circulated to all investors, developers, engineering design companies, consultants and contractors, for the Structural Guidelines to be applied in SEZAD.

He added that OPAZ is working on preparing an integrated Manual for the urban and architectural requirements at the special economic zones and free zones, which will serve as a reference for the urban and architectural requirements in the areas affiliated with the Authority.

## Tethys Oil net results up by more than 400 per cent

**FROM PAGE 13**

A few years back, Tethys Oil added other onshore Blocks to its portfolio in the Sultanate of Oman. One of them, in particular, is looking very promising.

More than a decade ago, the company describes Blocks 3&4 as 'a smorgasbord of opportunities.' Block 56 today offers a similar smorgasbord of opportunities of various shapes, sizes and value potential.

The company have started to evaluate the first of these opportunities on Block 56, the Al Jumud trend of leads and prospects in the North-western part of the Block. The initial work programme calls for establishing commercial viability through the drilling of a horizontal well Al Jumud-2 and putting this on a long-term production test while drilling two more wells to establish the reserve base in the area.

In the central part of the Block, the company is halfway through a 2,000 km2 seismic survey which should give a state-of-the-art 3D seismic data over three different petroleum plays and more than a dozen potential leads. Nordin believes the central part of the Block holds the tastiest dishes of the smorgasbord, but said to await the results later in 2022.

For 2022, the company's investments in oil and gas properties is expected to amount

to \$91 million.

The majority of oil and gas investments relating to the Blocks operated by Tethys Oil are expected to be incurred in the first half of 2022 with resulting cash flow impact. The 2022 investments in oil and gas properties are expected to be funded by the Group's cash flows as well as cash on hand.

Investments on Blocks 3&4 are expected to be \$62 million.

The expenditures are due to the full year operation of three drilling rigs, upgrade and expansion of production facilities, field infrastructure improvements and 3D seismic acquisition.

For Block 49, investments are expected to be \$ 0.5 million with expenditure focusing on a feasibility study of the application of unconventional completion and production techniques on the Thameen-1 well.

For Block 56, Tethys Oil's 2022 investments, including carry arrangements, is expected to amount to a total of \$20 million.

The expenditure includes the drilling of the three wells in the Al Jumud area, subsequent well testing and the 3D seismic survey on the central area of the Block.

For Block 58, Tethys Oil's 2022 investments are expected to amount to \$8.5 million to cover the expense related to seismic processing and the drilling of one exploration well.

Failed deals illuminate red lines for chip buys

Regulators have drawn red lines for chip deals. The failed cross-border takeovers of UK-based Arm and Germany's Siltronic, acquisitions worth \$45 billion when they were first announced, says more about scarce technology than the prospects for industry consolidation.

SoftBank's sale of Arm to Nvidia has been met with fierce opposition from the start. The British company, dubbed the Switzerland of semiconductors, licences out critical designs to everyone from Qualcomm to China's Huawei, so fears that its new owner may restrict access to Arm's intellectual property look valid.

In December, the US Federal Trade Commission sued to block the deal, arguing that a takeover would hurt competition in chips used in self-driving cars and networking.

Regulators in the EU and UK were also fretting about price increases and less choice and innovation

Regulators in the EU and UK were also fretting about price increases and less choice and innovation.

News of deal's collapse comes just days after Taiwan's GlobalWafers was forced to walk away from its planned \$5 billion purchase of German group Siltronic after failing to secure Berlin's approval in time.

The combination would have created the world's second largest maker of 300-millimetre silicon wafers — a vital building block for semiconductors.

But a foreign buyout of Europe's only major wafer supplier would have made the continent even more dependent on Asian supply chains at a time of crippling chip and component shortages.

Despite the two high-profile setbacks, industry consolidation still looks appealing.

Even with chip prices soaring on the back of a global shortfall, making microprocessors is getting increasingly expensive and technologically harder: semiconductor capital spending was forecast to surge by more than a third to a whopping \$152 billion in 2021, according to IC Insights. Larger and more diversified companies will be more competitive and scaling up through acquisitions may be less risky than adding to a potential future supply glut.

Looking past the latest headlines, governments are mostly on board so long as the targets don't own critical technology. Officials greenlighted mega deals last year including Renesas Electronics' \$6 billion swoop for Dialog Semiconductor and Marvell Technology's \$10 billion purchase of Inphi. Humdrum mergers are still ticking along. — Reuters



STELLANTIS ENGINE

An employee works on an electric engine assembly line at automaker Stellantis plant in Tremery, eastern France. Stellantis, a company from the merger of Fiat Chrysler and PSA, creates the 4th largest automobile group in the world. — AFP

Equality Group pushes for diversity



ANDY JALIL andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

THE LONDON-BASED EQUALITY GROUP IS A CONSULTANCY THAT FOCUSES ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE FINANCIAL AND TECHNOLOGY SECTORS

With emphasis on diversity, businesses are urged to give increasing priority to gender equality and ethnicity. With the importance of it, the Chief Executive of Equality Group in UK, Hephzi Pemberton, said that pay and bonuses should be linked to diversity and inclusive targets.

Pemberton said: "I think in an industry where people are incentivised financially to achieve targets and if leadership is taking it seriously and they want to see progress on it, they should be linking incentives to diversity and inclusive targets."

Pemberton's comments come amid broad consultation by regulators, over plans to boost the representation of under-served groups in the financial services sector. Using remuneration as an incentive to achieve diversity targets is among the options being considered.

It is interesting to note that an investment bank, State Street, aims to triple the number of black, Asian and other minority staff in senior roles by next year and has mandated lower bonuses for executives if they do not hit those targets.

Furthermore, their recruiters will need to ensure that women and ethnic minority candidates are interviewed by a diverse panel.

The bank's diversity head, Jess

McNicholas said: "All of our leaders have to demonstrate at their annual appraisals what they have done to improve female representation and the number of colleagues from ethnic minority backgrounds."

Back in July last year, the Bank of England, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulation Authority published a joint discussion paper on their plans to monitor, track and improve diversity and inclusion in regulated companies. One of the policy options included linking executive pay to metrics on diversity and inclusion.

This, the regulators' paper said would be possible with "granular diversity data that can be linked to a range of performance metrics, including pay and promotion, just like any other business objective."

It would help drive accountability and incentivise progress, according to the regulators. "I think it is effective but needs thought", added Pemberton, who made the comments during an FT100 Most Influential Women in Finance event on January 27. The London-based Equality Group is a consultancy that focuses on diversity and inclusion in the financial and technology sectors.

"It needs nuance around it. It is not one-size-fits-all, but linking whatever incentive systems are there and looking at how equality, diversity and inclusion can be embedded into that in an effective way", she

said. The FCA has said it will be publishing a consultation paper on diversity and inclusion in the second quarter of this year, inviting firms to respond with feedback.

Experts, however, have warned that there could be downfalls to that. Some diversity data, such as an employee's sexual orientation or their ethnicity, has to be voluntarily disclosed by individuals.

Employment lawyers Bradley Richardson and Laurie Ollivent of Linklaters wrote: "Without sound, robust figures, decisions may be made that are not truly representative or proportionate to the workforce."

Pemberton also discussed the importance of data when measuring firms' progress. "It does feel a little bit like we have got stuck on a few metrics like gender diversity on boards", she said.

"When organisations do that, they think, 'Oh, well, we've done it, but it is not enough."

She added: "There is a risk that if you have a focus on too few metrics then that will become a bad target and people can game the system. There are a few examples where the same woman is on multiple boards and then organisations are claiming that all these companies have increased female board members. This then limits the expansion of the talent pool and means companies are not thinking about the pipeline of upcoming talent either."

A balanced response to inflation



JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

The author, a Nobel laureate in economics and University Professor at Columbia University, is a former chief economist of the World Bank (1997-2000), chair of the US President's Council of Economic Advisers and co-chair of the High-Level Commission on Carbon Prices

Although some supply shortages were anticipated as the global economy reopened after the Covid-19 lockdowns, they have proved more pervasive and less transitory, than had been hoped. In a market economy that is governed at least in part by the laws of supply and demand, one expects shortages to be reflected in prices.

And when individual price increases are lumped together, we call that inflation, which is now at levels not seen for many years.

Nonetheless, my biggest concern is that central banks will overreact, raising interest rates excessively and hampering the nascent recovery. As always, those at the bottom of the income scale would suffer the most in this

scenario.

Several things stand out in the latest data. First, the inflation rate has been volatile.

Last month, the media made a big deal out of the 7% annual inflation rate in the United States, while failing to note that the December rate was little more than half that of the October rate.

With no evidence of spiralling inflation, market expectations — reflected in the difference in returns on inflation-indexed and non-inflation-indexed bonds — have been duly muted.

One major source of higher inflation has been energy prices, which rose at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 30% over the last month. There is a reason why these prices are excluded from "core inflation."

As the world moves away from fossil fuels some transitional costs are likely, because investment in fossil fuels may decline faster than alternative supplies increase. But what we are seeing today is a naked exercise of oil producers' market power.

Knowing that their days are numbered, oil companies are reaping whatever returns they still can.

High gasoline prices can be a big political problem, because every commuter confronts them constantly. But it is a safe bet that once gasoline prices return to more familiar pre-Covid levels, they won't be fuelling any remaining inflation momentum.

Again, sophisticated market observers already recognise this.

Another big issue is used-car

prices, which have highlighted technical problems with how the consumer price index is constructed. Higher prices mean that sellers are better off vis-à-vis buyers. But the consumer price index in the US captures only the buyer's side.

This points to another reason why inflation expectations have remained relatively stable: People know that higher used-car prices are a short-term aberration that reflects the semiconductor shortage currently limiting the supply of new cars.

This much we do know: A large across-the-board increase in interest rates is a cure worse than the disease. We should not attack a supply-side problem by lowering demand and increasing unemployment. That might

dampen inflation if it is taken far enough, but it will also ruin people's lives.

What we need instead are targeted structural and fiscal policies aimed at unblocking supply bottlenecks and helping people confront today's realities. For example, food stamps for the needy should be indexed to the price of food, and energy (fuel) subsidies to the price of energy.

Beyond that, a one-time "inflation adjustment" tax cut for lower- and middle-income households would help them through the post-pandemic transition. It could be financed by taxing the monopoly rents of the oil, technology, pharmaceutical, and other corporate giants that made a killing from the crisis.

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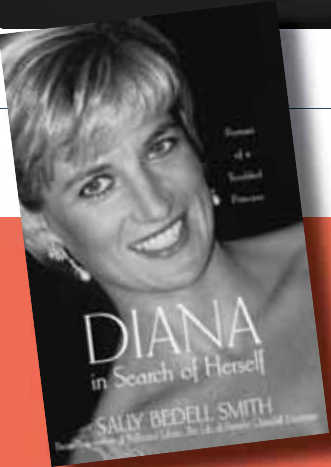
# features



## This 4-minute Omani short film that tackles depression is a must-see

While silence prevailed in “Empty”, the four-minute short film, it effectively shed the light on the daily struggles of the depressed. Here’s why director Al Miqdam al Sulaimani thinks it was important to finally address it... **P20**

### READ



**DIANA IN SEARCH OF HERSELF**

BY SALLY BEDELL SMITH

The Handmaid's Tale was published in 1985. The book, set in New England in the near future, posits a Christian fundamentalist theocratic regime in the former United States that arose as a response to a fertility crisis.

### LIFESTYLE

## Lithuania delivers letters 50 years after they were posted

**A LETTER WRITTEN** to a 12-year-old girl in Lithuania was delivered in December, almost 51 years after it was sent by a pen pal in Poland.

"I thought that someone was pranking me," said Genovefa Klonovska after being handed the letter, which included a handmade coloured rose and two paper dolls.

The letter, together with 17 others, fell out of a ventilation hole this summer, dirty and crumbled, as a wall was demolished in a former

post office on the outskirts of Vilnius.

"The workers suggested we throw the old letters away, but I called the post office instead," said Jurgis Vilutis, the owner of the building. "I'm so happy they got interested."

The letters, from the late 1960s and early 1970s, were likely hidden by an unscrupulous postal worker after he searched them for cash or valuables, Vilutis said.

Lithuania was part of the Soviet

Union then, and the senders were emigrant relatives or pen pals from places such as Australia, Poland, or Russia.

Street names and their numbering have changed in Vilnius, and post office workers spent months looking for the right houses and talking to current tenants and neighbours, tracking down where the recipients moved to.

Only five recipients were found. In several cases children of deceased recipients were handed a lost letter. "We felt a moral duty to do this," said Deimante Zebrauskaite, head of the customer experience department at Lithuania Post.

"One lady compared the experience to receiving a message from a bottle thrown into sea. People were emotional. Some felt they saw a part of daily life of their deceased parents," Zebrauskaite said.

In the letter to Klonovska, sent from Koczary in Poland and stamped in 1970, a girl named Ewa complaints buses no longer reach her village, so she has to walk in -23 degrees



Celsius cold, and asks for pictures of actors.

Now in her 60s, Klonovska has no memory of Ewa. She probably wrote Ewa after finding her address advertising for pen-pals in a newspaper, and the relationship ceased after

the letter got undelivered.

"So good that the letter was inconsequential. The loss was not life-changing," said Klonovska. "What if they delivered a lost letter from a suitor to his love, and their wedding never happened?" — **Reuters**



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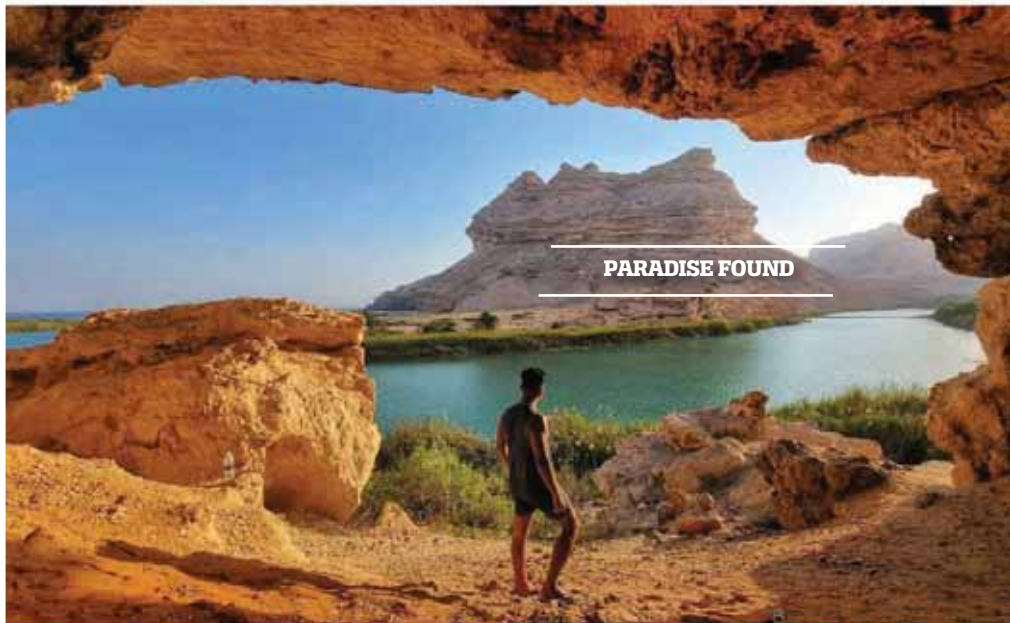
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## AROUND THE WORLD

### MEMORIES

## 'Nightingale of India' legacy lives on at superfan's museum



Gaurav Sharma holds a book as part of his collection at his home museum where he has meticulously catalogued thousands of compact discs, films and books featuring the singer in Meerut. — **AFP**

**MEERUT:** India: Beloved Bollywood superstar Lata Mangeshkar's legacy has been kept alive at a home museum in India curated by one of the much-mourned singer's biggest admirers.

Mangeshkar was known as the "Nightingale of India" and her high-pitched melodies were an instantly recognisable feature of the country's cinema, with her work appearing in more than 1,000 films.

The 92-year-old died Sunday and her body was cremated later that day in a Mumbai park, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi among the mourners laying flowers on her funeral pyre.

News of her death devastated Gaurav Sharma, a lifelong superfan who recalled meeting the songstress at her home nearly a decade ago.

"When I saw her for the first time, I felt she had some kind of incandescent glow around her," the 38-year-old said.

Sharma maintains what could be the world's largest collection of Mangeshkar memorabilia at his house in the city of Meerut

"She was so simple and down to earth. We talked for a long time. I got a lot of love from her."

Sharma maintains what could be the world's largest collection of Mangeshkar memorabilia at his house in the city of Meerut, where he has meticulously catalogued thousands of compact discs, films and books featuring the singer.

A teacher by profession, Sharma also has samples of the singer's perfume, movie posters and almost every article on Mangeshkar that has ever appeared in print.

"I even have the recording from 1974 when she sang at London's Royal Albert Hall," Sharma said in an interview.

"She appeared in only one advertisement, which was for a cough syrup in the early days of her career, and I have that."

The singer's death cast a pall of gloom over the Sharma home, and he said he could barely contain his tears at the news.

But Sharma said he was taking heart from the fact that she would "continue to live amongst us" through the thousands of songs she sang over her storied career.

"Obviously I am devastated... But the show must go on," he said.

"The body has its limits. But she will remain with us until this universe exists." — **AFP**

### CULTURE

## A fusion of colours and music



By Kabeer Yousuf  
Photos by VK Shafeer

**WHAT BETTER WAY** can someone find to keep oneself enthralled during the Covid-19 days other than listening to some soul-rendering music and watching some classic movements of traditional dance forms?

One such venue was the lawns of the Indian Embassy and, the occasion? The Republic Day of the country where some scintillating performances of dancers were staged as part of the celebrations under Covid protocols gave the audience not just some patriotic zeal and fervour but an occasion to rejoice and enjoy some of the brilliant performances of a fusion of the national dance forms. It was an evening packed with a repertoire of riveting classical dance performances showcasing the cultural diversity of India which enthralled the audience from different ethnic origins.

Those in attendance cherishing the glimpses of true Indian culture and tradition were Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, as Chief Guest, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs, Foreign Ministry, and members of State Council and Majlis Ash'shura, chairperson and members of the Oman-India Friendship Association, other senior government officials, ambassadors resident in Muscat as well as distinguished members of Omani and Indian communities, media and other key people who were hosted by Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate.

Adding cream to the cake, there were two exhibits showcasing the rich shared past of India and the Sultanate of Oman which were jointly unveiled during the event by the chief guest and the ambassador. The exhibits have recently arrived at the National Museum of Oman from India on loan and they shall be on display for three months. An added attraction was two 'Selfie with India' corners enabling the attendees to experience the architectural wonders of India.

The colourful evening was conducted in full compliance with all Covid-19 related protocols.

A kaleidoscopic view of different dance forms on display.

Odissi  
Odissi, from the beautiful land of Odisha is one of the eight classical dance forms of India. The history of Odissi dance has been traced to the 2nd century BCE proving that it is also the oldest surviving dance form of India. Odissi dance form can be broken down into the movement of the head, bust and torso and the accompanying gestures and expressions. The soulful expressions accompanied by graceful gestures and deft movements punctuated with intermittent moments of stillness appropriate watching Odissi Dance to "Poetry in Motion".

Mohiniyattam  
Mohiniyattam literally means the dance of the enchantress. Born in Kerala, in the 16th century CE, Mohiniyattam is the female counterpart of the male-dominated Kathakali. The term Mohiniyattam comes from the words "Mohini" meaning a woman who enchants onlookers and "aattam" meaning graceful and sensuous body movements. The appearance of Mohiniyattam, which is a Lasya style, is characterised by feminine, graceful and characterised body movements, marked by the very fine sway of the torso from side to side, the circular swinging motion of the body creating an 8 (Eight) and far sweeping steps.

Kathak  
Kathak is the major classical dance form of northern India. The word kathak means, "to tell a story". It is derived from the dance dramas of ancient India. The movements of hands (mudra) and body along with facial expressions (abhinaya) were used to tell a story with song and music and this gave birth to Kathak and Kathakars. Kathak is found in three distinct forms, called "gharanas", named after the cities where the Kathak dance tradition evolved - Jaipur, Banaras and Lucknow.

Bharatnatyam

Bharatnatyam literally means the dance of Bharata (India) or it can be broken into its syllables: Bha- bhava or expression, Ra- raga or melody, Ta- tala or rhythm. Bharatnatyam is also referred to as artistic yoga and Natya yoga. The name Bharatnatyam is derived from the word "Bharata" and is thus associated with the Natyashastra. Though the style of Bharatnatyam is over two thousand years old, the freshness and richness of its essence has been retained even today.

The talented dancers on stage:

Aishwarya Hegde  
Aishwarya Hegde started her training in Odissi at the early age of seven in Muscat under Guru Deepak Roy. She has followed her calling with discipline, rigorous training and a passion for her art. Following her Guru's dream to establish Odissi in the Sultanate of Oman, Aishwarya is now the director and Odissi instructor at 'Deepam Odissi Academy'. With a strong sense of social consciousness, Aishwarya tries to bring in a relevant message through her choreographies.

Srikala M Menon  
Started her dance training at the age of 5, Srikala Menon today is an eminent dancer and teacher in 3 Indian classical dance styles, Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi and Mohiniyattam. Of the 3 styles, she specialises in Mohiniyattam. With over 30 years of teaching dance, Srikala's contribution to the world of art has been immense. Additionally, she is also trained in Karnatic music as well as in veena.

Anu Shinai  
A hardworking choreographer, a dynamic teacher and an engaging performer. Anu strives to create art that reflects her cultural influences. Anu has evolved a unique personal style based on blending the plus points of all three Gharanas - Lucknow, Jaipur and Banaras.

Nandana Krishnamurthy  
Nandana is a disciple of Gurusri Srikala Menon for the past 8 years. She is a promising Bharatnatyam dancer and considers dance her passion. She is a student of grade 9 at Indian School Muscat (ISM).

## A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi  
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

## My Homeland

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

### TWO MORNINGS TO MY HOMELAND

My Homeland  
Good morning!  
O that moment  
When Loqman bin  
Aadiya awaited  
For the decision of  
Heaven  
About "Labad"!\*

O fist from the trace of  
an old prophet  
Who crossed the  
oceans to sing  
For the herdsmen who  
Moved from "Marib"\*\*\*  
in the evening.  
And shortly before  
dawn  
He'd head up the warriors  
leaving  
For the East  
And saying the prayers  
of absence\*\*\*  
For the last prophet  
That would come after  
him.

2-  
Good morning!  
Whenever a tear rolled  
down  
The cheek of a villager  
Studying history  
At the School of "Abu  
Zaid Al Riyami"\*\*\*\*  
And recollecting  
The will of his mother  
ascending the mountain:  
"O my son ride with us".  
Good morning!  
Whenever the Al Alaan  
tree rustled  
In a breeze  
Spurred by the summits  
of "Al Kor",\*\*\*\*  
Not polluted by  
The breath of the lazy.

Good morning!  
Whenever an old farmer  
Bowed on your sacred  
plateau  
Kissed in you the  
cypress roots  
And bet on their survival.

### TO MALIK BIN FAHM\*\*\*\*\*

What harm would you  
have brought  
If you'd budged your  
steed a little  
From this land,  
Which the skies would

Never  
Marry?

No, Malik,  
I swear by your steed's  
shaggy mane  
Not so easily will exile  
be put out  
Give it to me  
Or else neither earth  
nor heaven  
Will be wide enough for  
me!

\*According to legends,  
Loqman had seven  
eagles. He took each  
young eagle to a mountain  
where it lived for  
about five hundred  
years. All of the eagles  
died, except the last  
one, Labad, which lived  
the longest (the translator).

\*\*A Dam in Yemen. It is  
believed that after its  
collapse, Arabs began  
to spread to the various  
parts of the Arabian  
Peninsula (the translator).

\*\*\*Prayers of absence  
in Islam refer to those  
Muslims say if someone  
dies in a place far from  
home. There are  
schools within the  
Islamic tradition that  
question the validity of  
such prayers, though  
(the translator).

\*\*\*\*Name of a school  
on Jabal Al Akhdhar in  
the interior of Oman  
(the translator).

\*\*\*\*\*Name of a mountain  
in Bahla, in the  
interior of Oman (the  
translator).

\*\*\*\*\*Malik bin Fahm is  
thought to have led the  
Azd Arab to Oman after  
the collapse of the  
Marab Dam in Yemen.  
He fought the Persians,  
expelling them from  
Oman in a famous battle  
in Salut (hence  
known as the Salut  
Battle) (the translator).



# FILMRZ PRODUCTION

## This 4-minute Omani short film that tackles depression is a must-see

By Mai al Abri

**W**ould a four-minute film be enough to show the agony and pain experienced by people with depression? For a group of young Omani filmmakers and creatives, it can be done just as effectively as any full-length film can.

"Empty" is a short documentary on Depression and Anxiety in which sufferers of depression express their deep thoughts and mental well-being as this documentary aims to find internal emotions from the worlds fast-growing mental illness, which affects many people. It also sheds light on this challenging mental health condition and lifts the curtain on the stigma surrounding it.

While silence prevailed in "Empty", it effectively shed the light on the daily struggles of the depressed. Starting from waking up sluggishly and the heavy moments before finally lifting the heavy head from the pillow to driving the car to work and then coming back to the darkroom in the evening to sleep, the pain continues.

"Having struggled with depression their entire life, some of the team members of "Empty" shares their experiences about depression to help erase the stigma and make the topic more accessible and understandable", shared Al Miqdam al Sulaimani, Director of the film.

He explained that this short film delves into the reasons why "many adults in this country experience a mental health issue that stands in the way of happiness. He described rash and risky behaviours that put themselves and others in danger and how this was related to emotional pain and a sense of worthlessness.

Al Sulaimani addressed topics such as symptoms, suicidal thoughts, stigma and how depression can arise and challenge anyone – regardless of age, race, or socioeconomic background.

The whole idea of the film, Al Miqdam explained, is to get people to understand why people with depression act the way they do. He said, "The depressed are tired of listening to "Why are you acting like this?" and "What's wrong with you?". None of those questions is comfortable to hear. There is a psychological war happening inside of them. They strive to change but they can't."

Al Miqdam is sad about the condition that many people reach when trying to live a normal life in their societies but they fail. "Depression affects many individuals and families in debilitating and sometimes even devastating ways, but one of the most difficult things about it is that it is so highly personal to each person who suffers from it – and such a mystery to many of the people who do not".

Just as there is no one-size-fits-all explanation for how people experience depression, there is no single perfect method for how to explain depression to someone. But the important thing to remember is that making an effort to explain depression to others can help them understand the way they feel, and it can help them know how to best give love and support as they work through mental illness and seek help for it.

The team includes: Al Miqdam al Sulaimani, Jihad Adel, Buthaina al Habsi, Shaikha al Abri, Hamad al Ghalabi, Jabir al Hakamani, Zayid al Busaidi and Nasir al Harthi



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