



P11

ROHIT HAPPY TO GROOM FUTURE LEADERS



P15

GCC REQUIRES \$50BN GRID-RELATED INVESTMENTS: REPORT



P20

FLOWERS AS A HOBBY FOR RELAXATION



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO ESTONIA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Alar Karis of the Republic of Estonia on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Karis and the people of his country further progress and prosperity. — ONA

MOC TO ENHANCE SCIENTIFIC STUDY

A memorandum of cooperation (MoC) was signed in Muscat on Wednesday between Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and Prince Mohammed bin Fahd University (PMU). As per the MoC, the two universities will cooperate in scientific and research fields, as well as in developing and preparing studies for joint projects. The MoC also includes exchanging expertise and utilising human resources, research abilities and available facilities in both universities. SQU and PMU will also cooperate in the field of futures studies, and the exchange of academic expertise, faculty and students.



INSIDE



ONE DEAD, 10 MISSING IN AUSTRALIA FLOODS

P6



FRANCE'S MACRON TO KICK OFF RE-ELECTION BID

P7

HM MESSAGE TO IRAN PRESIDENT



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to Dr Ibrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The message is related to the advanced bilateral relations binding the two countries and their peoples. The message was handed over by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, when the Iranian President received him at the presidency headquarters in Tehran on Wednesday. **DETAILS ON P2**

OIA cost-rationalisation drive saves RO 80 million

MUSCAT: A rejig of employee salaries and perks undertaken by the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and its subsidiaries has yielded savings to the tune of RO 80 million in 2021, with further benefits amounting to RO 120 million anticipated during 2022 and 2023, top officials of the

integrated sovereign wealth fund announced.

Addressing media, Nasser bin Suleiman al Harthy, Acting Vice-President for Operations, said the initiative led to the reductions of benefits and allowances from a total of 80 item-heads to 12 items.

DETAILS ON P13

Muscat book fair opens today

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will inaugurate the 26th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair 2022 (MIBF) in the presence of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, other dignitaries

and representatives from public and private entities at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on Thursday.

The Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah is the Guest of Honour at the book fair, which will remain open till March 5.

As a key attraction in the cultural events section, life

in the governorate will be showcased through 29 art forms.

As many as 715 publishing houses with over 361,230 titles from 27 countries are taking part in the 10-day long fair, which will host nearly 114 cultural activities, besides 85 children's activities aimed at inculcating the habit of reading in the young minds.

National Museum displays Royal possessions of Late Sultan Qaboos

MUSCAT: The National Museum displays a statue likely to be a senior administrative official, religious official, or military commander in the 'Oman and the World Gallery', and a model of the satellite station in the Wilayat of Al Amerat in the Timeline Gallery.

The displayed items are from the Royal possessions of late Sultan Qaboos, as they were given for the National Museum to be available to all visitors.

The statue dates back to the Iron Age, the period known as the Kingdom of Southern Arabia (Yemen), specifically from the areas of Qataban, Ma'rib, or Al-Jawf region and it is carved from pure marble, which indicates the ingenuity of ancient Yemeni craftsmen.

As for the model, it was presented by the Higher Committee for the National Day Celebrations to the



late Sultan Qaboos, on the occasion of the 6th National Day (25 Thil-Qi'dah 1396 AH/18 November 1976) and it is made of gold, silver, coloured enamel, marble and velvet.

It is worth mentioning that the National Museum announced earlier that it would display a number of the late Sultan's Royal possessions in a number of the National Museum's galleries, to be available to all visitors. — ONA

MAJLIS TO HOST MINISTER OF ECONOMY

Focus on economic diversification plans

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

The Majlis Ash'shura will hold its eighth regular session on Sunday, for the third annual sitting (2021-2022) to discuss the statement of the Ministry of Economy, the first of the current annual session in the list of ministerial statements to be discussed successively by the Majlis Ash'shura.

This was stated by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of the Majlis Ash'shura.

"The statement of the Ministry of Economy will discuss five main themes, topped by the assessment of the economic diversification process in the Sultanate of Oman through Oman Vision 2040 and through the Tenth Five-Year Plan, evaluating the performance of diversification sectors in the plan, the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the national economy, which includes the ministry's role in policies and stimulus programmes in mitigating the repercussions of

The statement of the Ministry of Economy will discuss five main themes including the assessment of the economic diversification process

SHAIKH AHMED BIN MOHAMMED AL NADABI

the pandemic and the results achieved in this regard, its role in facing the effects of the pandemic, the size of the pandemic's impact on small and medium enterprises, and the integration of the role of government institutions in facing the economic effects of the pandemic," Shaikh Al Nadabi said.

He added that the third theme will discuss the performance of the strategic programmes of the Tenth Plan (2021-2025), which includes 340 strategic programmes and 14 national

priorities distributed over various sectors, the ministry's role in following up the implementation of the performance of these programmes according to the strategic plan followed with the authorities concerned. The fourth one will discuss the evaluation of the performance of the development budget for the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) and the most prominent features of that budget during the current five-year plan.

Regarding the fifth one, Shaikh Al Nadabi said that it will discuss the ministry's economic vision during the current plan on several issues, including job-seekers, supply and demand balances in the short and medium-term, population changes in the medium and long-term, economic cooperation which includes agreements, memoranda of understanding and impact measurement and developing governorates in terms of programmes, partnership projects, besides comparative and competitive advantage.

TURN TO P2

APRICOTS OPEN ITS BLOSSOMS



Heralding the spring season, the apricot trees in the Wakan village are in full bloom. The village, which is located 2,000 metres above sea level in Wadi Mistal, is ideal for planting fruits such as apricots, grapes, pomegranates and crops such as garlic and onions.

DETAILS ON P3



HM sends message to Iranian President

TEHRAN: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to Dr Ibrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The message is related to the advanced bilateral relations binding the two countries and their peoples.

The message was handed over by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, when the Iranian President received him in Tehran on Wednesday.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr conveyed greetings and best

wishes of His Majesty the Sultan to President Raisi and the Iranian people.

On his turn, the Iranian President asked Sayyid Badr to convey his appreciation to His Majesty and his best wishes of further progress and prosperity for the Omani people.

The meeting stressed the special relations between Oman and Iran in various spheres and means of promoting them to serve the joint interests. It also touched on the latest developments at

regional and international arenas.

They underlined their keenness to enhance pillars of security and stability in the region, as well as adopting the approach of dialogue in addressing different issues and challenges.

The meeting was attended by the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Iran, members of the delegation accompanying Sayyid Badr and some officials from the Iranian side. — ONA

Oman, Iran ministers hold political talks

TEHRAN: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister of the Sultanate of Oman and Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Islamic Republic of Iran, held political consultations and talks at the headquarters of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran on Tuesday.

During the session, they discussed cooperation in trade, economic and cultural affairs, expertise exchange and investment opportunities to serve the joint interests of the two friendly countries.

The two sides welcomed the outcomes of the 19th session of the Omani-Iranian Joint Committee, which was held this month in Muscat under the chairmanship of the Minister

of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion from the Omani side and the Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade from the Iranian side. At the political level, Sayyid Badr and his Iranian counterpart reviewed a range of issues and developments, particularly the Vienna talks on returning to the nuclear agreement “The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)”.

The two ministers also underscored the plan’s strategic importance within the context of enhancing regional and global security and stability. The meeting was attended by Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Maeeni, the Sultanate of Oman’s ambassador to Iran and officials from both sides. — ONA



Focus on economic diversification plans

FROM PAGE 1

“The Majlis upcoming sessions will witness discussion of four ministerial statements, including the statement of Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Minister of Social Development, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in addition to the statement of the Minister of Housing and Urban Planning,” he noted.

Discussion of the ministerial statements is organised by the Law of Majlis Oman in accordance with Article (69), which stipulates “The Council decides, at the beginning of each annual session, the programme of ministerial statements and their discussion themes, based on a joint proposal by the Council’s office and the heads of its permanent committees.

The Council chairman shall inform the government of this, defining what each statement should include from the elements and themes according to the topic or sector to which the statement is specialised.

The secretary-general said that the session will be open for media and citizens.

GUtech students expo to shed light on life in Turkey

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The architectural students of GUtech, Muscat are busy putting together an exhibition to be held on Saturday to share with the public their experience of their study tour that focused on architecture of Turkey.

“We went on an amazing trip to Turkey in December 2021. It is not just about browsing around, but it includes workshops, teaching, sketching and so on. The students were so impressed that they wanted to hold an exhibition based on it. The students have been working hard on it,” said Associate Professor in Architecture and Urban Planning, Ercan Agirbas.

The exhibition is expected to be inaugurated at 7pm and will go on until March 19. The event titled Extra Muros Istanbul Exhibition will have sound installation, visual installation, 3 D printed modelling etc. The venue is Matti Sirvio Art Galleria at Jawharat Al Shati Complex.

The works by the seventh semester students of Urban Design and Architecture at GUtech will depict visuals emerging between the dense neighbourhoods and high-rise buildings, Mimar Sinan style minarets speckling the skyline. According to the students their long commutes through the metropolis were enriched with views of ancient and contemporary architecture, an odd, yet fitting mix for the city of Istanbul.

“To us, it was a refreshing unfamiliarity. As we toured the city in the initial days of the excursion, we were blown away by the complexity of it. Different spaces have been formed as consequences of Turkey’s history, each niche in the urban space having a unique atmosphere,” students said.

“Art is an intrinsic part of Turkish culture. This was evident to us as we found it in elaborate palaces while also being incorporated into common places and items. This bound to the arts shows how the creation of it was viewed by Turkish people as the preservation of the soul and praise to the beauty bestowed by God on earth.

“Decorative arts, which are arts that focus on producing objects both beautiful and functional, are the most popular in Turkish culture. Ceramics, mosaics and textile arts are only a few of the many arts that we came across. All of which lay between the categories of craft and art,” the students point out.



The students also had the opportunity to explore the distinction between a practice such as making mosaics and Ebru art, also known as “paper marbling”. One is based on either a grid or geometric shapes, the other cannot be constricted to a system.

“We had the unique opportunity to learn the basics of Ebru art and the chance to create a couple of paintings through the guidance of the expert artists in Sanat Hane studio, Located in Beyoğlu in Istanbul,” they noted.

The students were also intrigued by the different means of transport and how they are proficiently connected to provide multiple routes.

“We travelled through sea by ferries, across the mainland using buses, modern trams and even taxis. We were able to go underground to take the Metro and have been lucky to go above the ground with cable cars. A variety of options are available within the city,” they reflected.

“Most of us were complete strangers in the Turkish food territory, while a few were hoping to find dishes they had in previous trips to Turkey. Split opinions are what remained after our first feast and lots of salad plates. A dish to keep you warm is what we seek on such a cold windy night. Hence, all the traditional soup and freshly made divine bread was cleared in a blink.” These are the experiences students want to share through their exhibition.



Experience India

THE GREAT INDIAN RECIPE CONTEST

3rd Jan - 27th Feb '22



Create a traditional Indian recipe using Indian produce and win big!

Participate Now!

Email your recipe photos/videos at experienceindia@ibef.org, post on your social media handles and tag us

 @IBEFIndia  ibef_india  @Brands_India

To know more, log on to:
www.ibef.org/experience-india
#ExperienceIndia

To participate Scan QR code





In brief

PARIS



OMAN PARTICIPATES IN MINISTERIAL FORUM

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Ministry, took part in the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, which was held in Paris on Tuesday.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was led by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs.

The forum was inaugurated by Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Foreign Minister and Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission.

FUJAIRAH



OCCI TAKES PART IN MEET ON MINERALS

An Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) delegation took part in the 16th Arab International Conference on Mineral Resources, being held in Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The delegation was led by Dr Salim bin Sulayum al Junaibi, OCCI First Deputy Chairman, Head of the OCCI branch of the Governorate of Al Wusta.

During the sessions of the conference, the Sultanate of Oman presented specialised papers in the field of mineral wealth. As many as 300 participants from more than 35 countries took part in the conference.

MUSCAT



OMAN TO TAKE PART IN AMERICAN EXPO

The Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the American Travel and Adventure Exhibition, to be held in Washington from February 26 to 27.

The participation in the 18th edition of the American Travel and Adventure Exhibition is in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Royal Oman Police, Oman Airports, Omantel, Arabian Oryx Camp.

More than 80,000 people are expected to visit Oman pavilion as the country showcases tourism potential, investment opportunities and the liberal tourist visa regime.

Transport minister reviews projects in North Sharqiyah

IBRA: Eng Said bin Hamood al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, on Wednesday, visited North Al Sharqiyah Governorate accompanied by Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamaki, Transport Under-Secretary and a number of the ministry's officials.

At the beginning of the visit, the minister met with Shaikh Ali bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Governor of North Al Sharqiyah in his offices in the Wilayat of Ibra in the presence of walis.

A number of developmental and organisational projects in the



transport field were discussed during the meeting.

The minister stressed the importance of road networks in enhancing social communication, facilitating traffic and movement of citizens and residents between the wilayats and governorates, and underpinning the economic, tourism and investment sectors.

The minister said the ministry is currently preparing a matrix of national priority roads envisioned for the current five-year plan as

well as initiatives that were announced during the ministry's ninth media forum most notably the logistic land bridge initiative and the initiative for linking tourist areas with main roads. This is in addition to a programme aimed at repairing flood-damaged roads.

The minister also visited a number of areas in the wilayats of Ibra, Al Qabil and Bidiya and met with citizens and members of Majlis Ash'shura representing the wilayats of North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, members of the Municipal Council, and listened to their needs and suggestions about road projects.

Three Omanis win British Council Awards

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Three Omani youths who did their higher studies in the UK have been conferred with Study UK Alumni Awards 2021-22, according to the officials of the British Council officials.

The Science and Sustainability Award was presented to Dr Lamya al Haj, while Muatasam al Aulaqi was chosen for the Social Action Award. Qais al Tobi bagged the award in the Business and Innovation category.

Dr Al Haj holds a PhD in Structural and Molecular Biology from University College London. She is an executive coach, a researcher on biodiesel alternatives to oil, an associate professor at the Sultan Qaboos University, and a TEDx motivational speaker.

Al Aulaqi graduated from the University of Manchester with a degree in Chemical Engineering and is the co-founder of NomuHub, a social enterprise that aims to evolve the way people explore the world by introducing the concept of 'travel with a purpose' which lies in giving back to the communities through educational projects. The idea has successfully attracted



more than 2,000 travellers and built more than 100 classrooms across Zanzibar, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Morocco, giving educational access to primary school kids who did not have access to school due to capacity limitation.

Al Tobi holds an MSc in Entrepreneurship and Innovation from the University of Essex. Qais has over eight years of experience in innovation, emerging technology, and leading transformational national initiatives and programmes that directly impact youth development, empowerment, and entrepreneurship. He is the

founder of a regional e-learning platform called Edlal which has over 260,000 users worldwide and has received His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Award for Excellence in eGovernment as Best SME E-Service.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Helen Mehta, Country Director at the British Council in Oman, said the Study UK Alumni Awards provide a platform to recognise and celebrate the success of Omani alumni of UK Universities.

In total, 39 participants who made commendable achievements as business professionals, entrepreneurs and

community leaders and their contribution to strengthening ties between the UK and Oman were recognised for their outstanding contribution to society.

The Alumni Awards were developed by the British Council and UK universities and are open to alumni currently residing in any country outside the UK.

Applications were invited from those who have studied in the UK at an officially recognised university at degree level for a minimum of a term or semester, or who have been awarded a full UK degree level qualification or higher, by a UK university within the last 15 years for the three award categories.

The award categories are Science and Sustainability, Social Action, Business and Innovation. The selection process includes a series of in-depth interviews with a judging panel.

The prestigious international award celebrates UK higher education and the achievements of UK alumni worldwide. Now in its eighth year, the award received more than 1,500 applications from international UK alumni in more than 100 countries, representing more than 140 UK higher education institutions across the UK.

Big reprieve as coronavirus infections fall

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Wednesday reported 974 new cases and zero deaths in the last 24 hours. The figures are welcome as the country will be hosting big events like Muscat Book Fair and IronMan, starting from Thursday.

The Sultanate of Oman last reported no death was on January 18 and less than 1,000 cases were on January 12 (718 cases).

Also, in the last 24 hours, only 46 patients were admitted to hospitals, taking the number of inpatients to 299, including 67 in intensive care Units (ICU).

The total number of cases registered in the Sultanate is 378,922, including 4,238 deaths.

The total number of recoveries is 360,795, while the recovery rate is 95.2 per cent.

Meanwhile, the authorities said there is no truth in reports about exempting citizens travelling to UAE from PCR tests. Citizens coming to the Sultanate of Oman must present a certificate of receiving two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine and a negative PCR test certificate not exceeding 14 days from the date of taking the sample.

Meanwhile, with several countries easing travel restrictions, especially for vaccinated travellers, the ITA has reported a jump in ticket sales.

Nearly 18 destinations are open to vaccinated travellers without quarantine or pre-departure testing requirements; 28 of them are open to vaccinated travellers without quarantine requirements (including the 18 markets mentioned above).

Apricots open its blossoms in Wakan village

YAHYA AL SALMANI

Heralding the spring season, the apricot trees in the Wakan village are in full bloom. The village, which is located 2,000 metres above sea level in Wadi Mistal is characterised by a climate similar to that of the Mediterranean basin, where the temperature is moderate in summer and in winter.

This is why the village is ideal for planting fruits such as apricots, grapes, pomegranates and crops such as garlic and onions in terraced farms overlooking the magnificent mountains above and Wadi Mistal below.

Wakan is part of Nakhl Wilayat in the South Al Batinah Governorate, although its located right in the border with Al Dakhiliyah Governorate through Al Hajar mountain range.

Despite the rough roads leading to this small village, it is witnessing a great tourist turnout



Photo by Adnan al Balushi

to enjoy the spring season in the mountains.

Once you reach the village, there are a couple of hiking tracks

that start at the village, and they are marked by the familiar yellow, green and red flag that mark most hiking tracks in Oman.

The track that goes through the village is the easiest and most accessible, comprising 700 steps across the terraced gardens and

along a falaj stream ending at the watchtower at the top of the village.

If you love hiking and trekking this village has a trekking path marked with yellow, green and red flags that mark most hiking tracks in Oman.

This path will take you to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, a mountain that is part of Al Hajar Mountains.

On the hills and on the slopes of the mountain, there are Al Alalan, Al boot and Al Atm trees. All these trees are used to extract many types of natural oils that are used to treat many diseases.

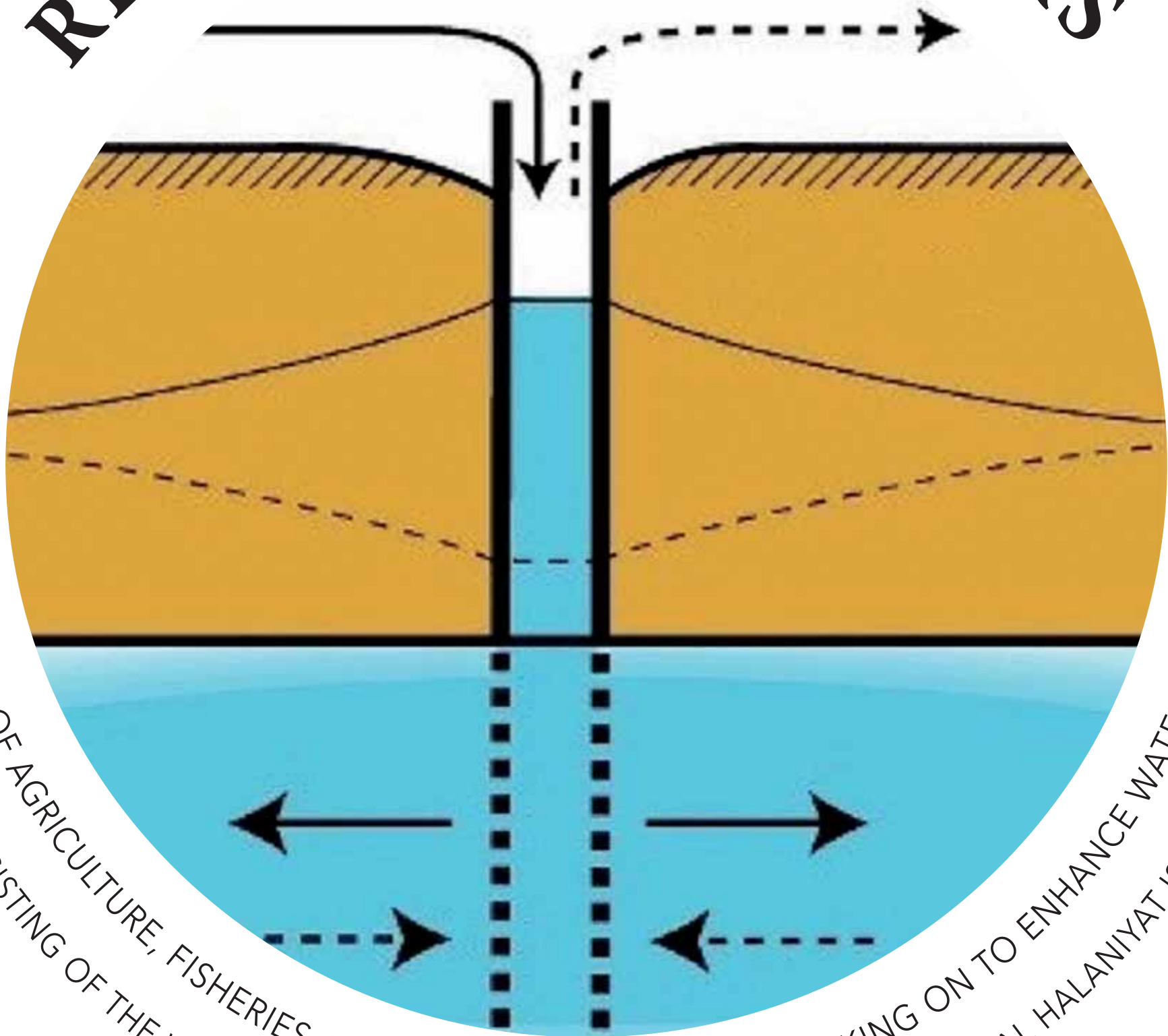
The village also has many archaeological sites and small caves that shed light on the ancient life and architecture.

The falaj that extends along the mountain path is used by the villagers to irrigate their farms throughout the year.

The falaj is also the primary source of clean drinking water.



RECHARGING AQUIFERS



THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND WATER RESOURCES IS WORKING ON TO ENHANCE WATER AVAILABILITY IN AL NAJD AREA CONSISTING OF THE WILAYATS OF THAMRAIT, AL MAZYOUNA, SHALEEM AND AL HALANIYAT ISLANDS AND MAQSHAN



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Communities in Al Najd area have always had farming practised on a small scale one way or the other. In the 1980s, farmers obtained water by digging wells. But it was limited due to the high cost of diesel as there was no electricity. So the farms almost disappeared except for a few. Later, in the 90s, the farms started using renewable energy — windmills to draw water from the bore well and solar power for lighting at night. The electricity connection changed the area in a big way.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has declared Al Najd the agricultural development area consisting of the wilayats of Thamrait, Al Mazyouna,

Shaleem and Al Halaniyat Islands and Maqshan.

Interestingly, Dr Khalid bin Salim al Mashaikhi's PhD Dissertation in 2011 evaluated groundwater recharge in Al Najd aquifers using hydraulics, hydrochemical and isotope evidence. Today he is the Assistant DG for dams affairs and is also in charge of Al Najd agricultural development area.

A closer look at the study area and the mountain range shows that the area covers about 89,000 sq km.

There was a need and concern to know about the aquifers of Al Najd area as there were reports stating there are about two to three aquifers.

"We wanted to know if the aquifers were connected or whether they had the same source; we also wanted to know if the aquifers were renewable

We wanted to know if the aquifers were connected or whether they had the same source; we also wanted to know if the aquifers were renewable or whether it was fossil water... We hope to work together with the people from the community, the government sector, and hopefully, we will succeed in the end

DR KHALID AL MASHAIKHI
Assistant DG, MoAFWR

or whether it was fossil water," said Dr Khalid, whose PhD looked into these questions and the ministry accepted him as a candidate to conduct the research.

Water is indeed one of the main components of this project.

"We hope to work together with the people from the community, the government sector, and hopefully, we will succeed in the end," said Dr Khalid.

Looking at Al Najd area, the existence of underground water might not be realised — there is an opportunity and challenge at the same time.

"It is fossil water in most of the area, but part of this can be renewable as freshwater is coming through floods. It mostly comes from the wadis of the northern part of the mountain area in Dhofar," he explained.

He added that various studies had been done previously to assess the amount of water. The hope is that, in the future, to enhance the amount of water, there could be different levels of development such as dams to recharge the groundwater in the area.

"People feel that when there are formations of small lakes in the flooded area, the aquifer will be recharged. It is not so; the water cannot seep through because these aquifers are under pressure. The pressure of the aquifer and the surface probably reach about three to four bars. But the pressure on the top is probably around .2 to .3 bars. So it cannot work. In this case, we have to focus on the south area near the mountains to recharge the aquifer to avoid losing water in the desert ending up being evaporated," Dr Khalid said.



OJA forum discusses developments in new media

AMER AL ANSARY&
BASHAIR AL SULAIMIYAH
MUSCAT, FEB 23

The Omani Media Makers Forum was held at the Oman Journalists' Association (OJA) under the auspices of Shaikh Shaikh Abdullah bin Shuwain al Hosni, State Council member and Chairman of Oman Human Rights Commission, on Wednesday.

Speaking to the media at the event, Al Hosni said "Digital media is a new, important field. The traditional media always remains important. However, the current situation requires us to create a more appropriate environment that enables the media to carry out their duty properly. There is no doubt that the development of digital media is going to continue. Therefore, we always need such



forums and conferences in order to shed light on this field."

Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak al Araimi, Chairman of OJA said: "The communications technology revolution has produced a new media style that differs from

mainstream media in terms of concept, features, characteristics. The emergence of social media has created channels for direct communication with the audience in a development that changes the essence of communication

theories, and prevents monopoly of the media industry transferring it to a broader scope with great effectiveness and interaction never imagined by media experts.

"The digital media has achieved a great breakthrough and imposed

strong sovereignty in terms of proliferation, and penetrating all barriers. However, the great successes achieved by the digital media also face several setbacks including challenges related to financing and legislation."

Hatim bin Hamad al Taei touched on the subject of the influence of digital media on mainstream media citing a number of examples including the New York Times, which, he said, came to the brink of bankruptcy before resorting to modern media rolling out free-of-charge digital copies then with a nominal subscription. Today, it achieves about \$441 million in yearly revenues which is equivalent to more than double revenues from print subscriptions and advertisements.

He added: "My opinion is to abandon the idea of conflict

between traditional media and modern media and to become part of the future. In this forum we are trying to focus on the points of strength and weaknesses and experiences in employing the technical revolution to serve the media and media professionalism with values and principles in the first place and a purposeful message, then the matter of profitability comes next."

The forum included two working paper presentations; 'The standards for setting the compass of digital media performance' by Dr Obaid bin Said al Shaqsi and 'The Ministry of Information's Experience in Electronic Media Platforms (Ain Platform); by Mona bint Sulaiman al Kandiyah from the Directorate-General of Electronic Media at the Ministry of Information.

PASI gets Certificates of Merit

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) has received certificates of merit for five projects from the International Social Security Association.

The first project was aimed at promoting e-payment channels and underling the significance of the same in terms of speed and accuracy.

The second project, on "Implementing the Quality Management System", sought to improve transactions carried out at the PASI and to provide sustainable services with high quality and efficiency.

The third project, titled "Co-operation Programme with

Academic and Educational Institutions in the Sultanate of Oman", was designed to inculcate a culture of social protection and its importance among children and students, job seekers and parents.

The fourth project, titled "PASI's experience in implementing a system of business continuity management", dealt with potential threats to assets at PASI and their impact on basic operations.

A fifth titled "Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of Performance and Risks of PASI's Investment Portfolio", was aimed at measuring the level of risks quantitatively and qualitatively.

— ONA

Wheat output in Al Dhahirah tops 500 tonnes



types of seeds that are resistant to agricultural pests and diseases.

Al Shamakhi further added that the Directorate General

provides wheat harvesting machines, as a number of harvesting and plowing machines have been distributed

for the farmers to fast harvesting of the cultivated wheat crops on large areas.

— ONA

Omani SME sets up postal touchpoint

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 23

Oman Post & Asyad Express, a member of Asyad Group, signed an agreement with 'One Way Travel Tourism LLC', to provide a service touchpoint, making it the first small and medium enterprise in the Sultanate of Oman to open its doors to Oman Post's broad spectrum of postal and logistics services' customers.

The signing ceremony held on Tuesday feeds into Oman Post & Asyad Express's sustainability agenda that aims to enhance the business ecosystem, creating growth opportunities for Omani SMEs, supporting entrepreneurship, and activating the participation of SMEs in the logistics sector.

On this occasion, Oman Post & Asyad Express CEO, Nasser al Sharji commented, "We have always taken it upon ourselves to empower SMEs. Since the day we launched "Tomoooh", as a niche incubator programme, our goal has been to create the right infrastructure and opportunities for SMEs and startups, allowing them to maximise their quality of service and ramp up their revenues to grow and expand their customer base."

"As part of Asyad Group's sustainability strategy for the year 2022, we will continue to provide our logistics support and identify key areas of growth for these enterprises to expand our retail presence across the Sultanate, exploring channels that help us add

value to our customers and unlock Oman Post's potential while fulfilling our ICV commitments", he added. One Way Travel and Tourism Agency CEO Khamis al Kharusi stated, "As a tourist company, our partnership with Oman Post & Asyad Express's translates our customer-focused approach that puts our customer experience first. Setting a postal services touchpoint in our premises is an opportunity for us to offer market-ready and viable services that optimise logistics value chains".

Oman Post & Asyad Express has so far succeeded, in record time, to commission 55 new touchpoints in partnership with private sector institutions, and more service touchpoints are expected to be launched in 2022.



Tender Number

T-06-2022

Tender Announcement

"Mwasalat" invites professional firms for the following tender:

Tender Name

Supply of Main Engine MTU 16V 4000 M71 for Vessel HSC Hormuz.

Project Summary

Within the framework of this tender, MWASALAT would like to have an authorized and a certified dealer by an IACS class to supply following item or items for the MTU 16V 4000 M71 for the engine of Vessel HSC Hormuz based on the terms and conditions stipulated in the tender document.
Option#01: Supply of Remanufactured Engine.
Option#02: Supplying a Crankshaft & Block.
Option#03: Supplying a Short-Block.
Option#04: Supplying a Long-Block.

Tender Fee

Free

Grade & Specialty

Authorized and a certified dealer by an International Association of Classification Societies (IACS).

Start date for tender document distribution

SUN, 27 February 2022

Last date for tender document distribution

THU 03 March 2022

Last date for submission

MON 14 March 2022

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00A.M - 2:00 P.M.
Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email.
Tender Document shall be shared by email.
The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.
Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head- quarter National Ferries Company, L.L.C (MWASALAT) at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor). Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.

"Mwasalat"
Head Quarter, Ghala Tel: +968 24121500/24121555
P.O.Box: 911, Al Khuwair, PC: 133, Sultanate of Oman

For more information
please send to:
tenders@mwasalat.om



الشركة العمانية لإنتاج الذخائر
Oman Munition Production Company

Bidding Announcement

Oman Munition Production Company announces the following bid:

Bid NO	Bid Name	Companies that are eligible to participate	Document fee (Omani Rial)	Last date for submitting bids
2022/OMPC/1/B	Bidding for scrap Copper and Steel	Local	100	14/03/2022

Receipt of the bid: All companies wishing to participate must pay the price of the bid document in the amount of (100 Omani Riyals) not refundable by bank transfer to the following account as a prerequisite for receiving the bid document electronically:

Beneficiary bank Account Details:	
Beneficiary Name	Oman Munition Production Company
bank	Sohar Islamic
Branch	Main Branch
SWIFT CODE	BSHROMRUISL
Account No	708-010018947-01

Preview date: Will be on 28/02/2022 at 10:00 am, with a copy of the visitors' ID cards (not to exceed two people from each company) to the e-mail below.

Required Documents:

1 – Commercial registration of local companies.
2- Bank transfer receipt.
3- Business card for 2 staffs with the condition of having an email.

Submission: All bids must be submitted at the company's headquarters shown below in sealed envelopes and must be sealed with red wax with a statement of the bid number addressed to the Head of Contracts and Procurement Department.

Provided that the name of the bidder is not mentioned or referred to, the envelopes will be delivered to Gate number one, and any bid received by the company after the deadline will not be accepted.

Company address:
Oman Munition Production Company
Samail - Lizugh area

Please send inquiries to the following E-mail :-
tenders@ompc.om
TEL: +968 22354484/ 22354477
Sultanate of Oman.

The official working hours of the company: Sunday to Thursday 7:30 am to 3:30 pm.



Iran says nuclear talks at ‘critical’ stage

TEHRAN: Negotiations to revive the Iran nuclear deal have entered a “critical” stage during which some key issues still need to be resolved, Tehran’s top diplomat said on Wednesday.

The 2015 accord had offered Iran sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear programme, but the US unilaterally withdrew in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump.

Western powers that have been locked in nuclear talks with Iran have said in the past week that a deal was within reach while stressing the ball was in the Islamic republic’s court.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Wednesday that the negotiations had “reached a critical and important stage”.

“We hope that some sensitive and important issues remaining in the negotiations will be resolved in the coming days with realism from the Western side,” he said at a joint press conference.

Amir-Abdollahian said he was “optimistic” about a deal, while insisting Iran would not give up its “red lines” in the negotiations. He did not elaborate.

The Vienna talks, which involve Iran as well as Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly, and the United



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian speaks during a joint press conference in Tehran. — AFP



We hope that some sensitive and important issues remaining in the negotiations will be resolved in the coming days

HOSSEIN AMIR-ABDOLLAHIAN
Irani Foreign Minister

States indirectly, resumed in November.

In recent days, progress in the

negotiations has been reported by France, Germany, the United States and even Iran.

Signs of an agreement coming together emerged over the past week, with France warning that Iran has just days left to accept a deal.

“It is not a question of weeks, it is a question of days,” said its Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian.

“We need political decisions from the Iranians. They have a very clear choice,” he told the French Senate on February 16.

Two days later, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the process had reached “the moment of truth”. — AFP

Protesting Pakistani fishermen block Karachi port

KARACHI: Protesting fishermen have blockaded Pakistan’s busiest port, in the country’s business capital Karachi, assembling trawlers across the main channel to halt all shipping in and out, officials said on Wednesday.

Karachi handles much of the country’s trade in commodities and vehicles. The government on Wednesday said it was negotiating with the protesters. “I hope talks to resolve the issue will resume on Wednesday afternoon,” Mahmood Maulvi, adviser to the Prime Minister Imran Khan on Maritime Affairs, said. An earlier round of talks failed on Tuesday, he said. The protesters are fishermen from Sindh province who oppose restrictions on them entering the waters off neighboring Balochistan province.

Port Qasim, which handles most container traffic and lies to the east of Karachi, was functioning normally. However the business community worried about losses.

“If this continues there are fears that some ships might return to the high seas,” Muhammad Idress, president of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), said in a statement. — Reuters



United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in North Korea, Tomas Ojea Quintana, during a press conference in Seoul. — AFP

Expert urges vaccines to help North Korea end Covid isolation

SEOUL: The world should provide millions of doses of Covid-19 vaccines to North Korea, where “draconian” anti-pandemic measures are worsening an already-severe food crisis, a UN human rights expert said on Wednesday.

The impoverished nation has been behind a rigid self-imposed coronavirus blockade since early 2020 to protect itself from the pandemic, with the economy suffering and trade all but stopped.

The country’s “draconian” anti-Covid measures, including border closures and further limits on domestic freedom of movement, have worsened the food crisis, Tomas Ojea Quintana, UN special rapporteur on human rights, said. Crucial domestic market activity has been cut off and international aid workers have been forced to depart, with

humanitarian operations all but halted, he said, adding that vulnerable populations were at risk of starvation.

The international community should “agree on a strategy to provide the DPRK with 60 million doses of vaccination to cover at least two shots for the entire population,” Quintana said at a press briefing in Seoul on Wednesday. Vaccinations are “the key to opening the DPRK’s border... and bringing it out of isolation,” he added, using the acronym for North Korea’s official name.

North Korea has yet to confirm a single case of the novel coronavirus.

According to the World Health Organization, North Korea had by the end of 2020 conducted 13,259 Covid-19 tests, which all came back negative. — AFP

One dead, 10 feared missing in Australia flash floods

BRISBANE: One person was found dead in a submerged car and 10 others were reportedly missing on Wednesday after heavy rain caused flash flooding in eastern Australia and set off a string of emergency warnings up and down the Pacific coast.

The body of the drowned 60-year-old was found early on Wednesday in the state of Queensland, premier Annastacia Palaszczuk told parliament, describing the incident as a “tragedy”.

Almost half a meter of rain has fallen on some parts of her state in the last 24 hours, causing multiple road closures and transport chaos.

Emergency services received more than a hundred calls for help and swift water rescue crews have been despatched to assist dozens of stranded residents.

Emergency services have



The overflowing Parramatta river at the ferry wharf in Sydney after heavy rain lashed eastern Australia, causing flash flooding and a string of emergency warnings up and down the Pacific coast. — AFP

received more than a hundred calls for help and swift water rescue crews have been despatched to rescue dozens of stranded residents.

“This has the potential to be a significant rainfall event for south-east Queensland,” Palaszczuk said.

A freight train overturned near the town of Gympie, although the driver was said to have minor injuries.

Local media quoted Sunshine Coast Police District Superintendent Craig Hawkins as saying 10 people were also missing.

Fifteen Queensland dams are at capacity and more rain is expected in the coming days.

“Locally intense rainfall is possible and since many catchments are now saturated there is an increased risk of dangerous and life-threatening

flash flooding over the coming days,” said Palaszczuk.

Police warned motorists to avoid driving through flooded roads and to stay at home.

“Flash flooding is occurring on roads and bridges — Re-consider your need to travel today,” police told residents.

Heavy rain has also pelted the state of New South Wales, where parts of Sydney were briefly submerged on Tuesday.

After several years of drought and climate-worsened bushfires, Australia’s east is wrapping up an extraordinarily wet antipodean summer, thanks to a La Nina weather pattern.

La Nina increases the chances of tropical cyclones off Australia’s Pacific coast and brings above-average rainfall, according to the country’s Bureau of Meteorology. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

DUBAI

UAE’s lone nuclear plant ‘well protected’

The UAE only nuclear power plant is “well protected” against security threats, the regulator said, following a series of unprecedented drone and missile attacks on the Gulf state. Yemen’s Ansar Allah said in 2017 they fired a cruise missile towards the Barakah plant, a report which the UAE denied. The group has repeatedly threatened to target critical infrastructure in the UAE.

“The nuclear power plant is designed according to high



security principles and we have issued regulations for physical and cyber security,” Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation (FANR) Director General Christer Viktorsson said.

BEIRUT

Lebanon thwarts IS bomb plot

Lebanon has thwarted a plan by the IS group to carry out three bombings targeting religious compounds in Beirut’s southern suburbs, the interior ministry said. “A fighter group had recruited young Palestinian men in Lebanon to carry out major bombing attacks using explosive belts” and other munitions, Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi told a press conference. “Three separate targets were to be hit at the same time,” the ministry said, in an operation



Mawlawi said would have caused significant loss of life. Lebanon’s Internal Security Forces (ISF) said the instructions for the bomb plot came from an IS operative based in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain al Hilweh.

CAIRO

Sudan’s Hemedti seeks deeper Russia ties

The deputy head of Sudan’s ruling council, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, headed to Moscow saying he hoped to bolster ties with Russia in the latest in a series of foreign visits.

Dagalo, who is widely known as Hemedti and commands Sudan’s powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, was part of an October 25 military takeover that plunged the country into political and economic turmoil and drew wide international condemnation.



The official visit comes at a testing time for both countries. The East African country, which is heavily dependent on foreign aid and investment, was largely cut off from both following the coup.



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 24 | 2022

7

In brief

■ BERLIN



GERMAN CABINET AGREES MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

Germany's cabinet approved an increase in the minimum wage to \$13.60 per hour, a flagship election campaign promise of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats.

"Many citizens of our country work a lot but earn little — this must change," Scholz said as he announced the decision on Twitter. "For me, this is one of the most important laws and a question of respect," he said.

Minimum pay will rise to 10.45 euros per hour from €9.82 on July 1 and then to €12 on October 1.

The increase will raise wages for about 6.2 million workers in Germany.

■ ROME



ITALY POLICE SEIZE 'MOB' ASSETS WORTH €800 MILLION

Italian police have seized over €800 million worth of assets from three brothers suspected of links with the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta mafia, including luxury villas and a large shopping centre.

The assets included numerous companies, supermarkets, bank accounts, luxury motorbikes, a Ferrari and real estate, including one of the largest shopping centres in the southern Italian region, police said. The brothers — one of whom is currently on trial following a previous anti-mafia sting — have been under investigation for several years, it said in a statement.

■ PARIS



MACRON TO KICK OFF RE-ELECTION BID IN MARCH

French President Emmanuel Macron will launch his re-election bid at a campaign rally on March 5, sources in his party said, opening a new phase in a contest that polls indicate he is likely to win. The 44-year-old has so far kept away from formal campaigning ahead of the first round of voting on April 10, most recently with a marathon effort to avert a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The declaration of his candidacy is now expected next week, just ahead of a March 4 deadline. Three sources in his centrist Republic on the Move (LREM) party said his first rally would then be on March 5 in Marseille.



Russian military trucks and buses are seen on the side of a road in Russia's southern Rostov region. — AFP

US, allies unveil more Russia sanctions

MOSCOW/DONETSK: The United States and its allies unveiled more sanctions against Russia on Wednesday over its recognition of two separatist areas in eastern Ukraine, while making clear they were keeping tougher measures in reserve in case of a full-scale invasion by Moscow.

European Union sanctions to take effect on Wednesday would add all members of Russia's lower house of parliament who voted to recognise the separatist regions in Ukraine to a blacklist, freezing their assets and banning travel.

Britain followed the United States in announcing new restrictions banning Russia from the issuing of new bonds in its security markets.

The steps follow measures announced on Tuesday, including freezing the approval of a new Russian gas pipeline by Germany and imposing new US sanctions on Russian banks.

But none of the measures announced so far directly targets President Vladimir Putin himself, or is expected to have severe medium-term consequences for Moscow, which is sitting on more than \$630 billion in international reserves.

Meanwhile, EU leaders will meet for a special summit in Brussels on Thursday to discuss the bloc's further response to



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy holds a joint news conference in Kyiv. - Reuters

Moscow after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered troops into breakaway regions of eastern Ukraine. "It is important that we continue to be united and determined and jointly define our collective approach and actions," the head of the EU Council grouping the bloc's member states, Charles Michel, said in a statement on Wednesday.

Oil prices eased from Tuesday's seven-year highs as it became clear the first wave of sanctions were unlikely to disrupt oil supplies. Global stocks broke a four-day slide and demand for safe-haven assets waned.

Western countries fear Russia plans a full-blown invasion of Ukraine after Putin announced on Monday he was recognising two small breakaway regions controlled since 2014 by separatists viewed by the West as Moscow's

- EU leaders to hold special summit
- EU adds Russian lawmakers to blacklist
- Britain to stop selling sovereign debt
- Ukraine calls up reservists
- Oil price falls, global stocks break 4-day slide

proxies. Putin also signed a decree allowing Russian forces to be deployed there.

Washington has described Russia's actions as the start of an "invasion" but because the massed military assault they predicted has not materialised, they have had to calibrate their response.

"There will be even more tough sanctions on key oligarchs, on key organisations in Russia, limiting Russia's access to the financial markets, if there is a full scale invasion of Ukraine," British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said.

She announced plans to bar Russia from issuing new foreign debt in London, a step taken years ago by the United States. Moscow said it would respond by issuing any new debt in roubles at home for now.

— AFP

Ukraine declares 30-day state of emergency

KIEV: Ukraine has declared a 30-day state of emergency in light of a feared invasion by Russia in the country's east, the secretary of the security council said on Wednesday. The move could mean Ukrainians would be ordered to stay home or placed under curfew, Oleksiy Danilov said.

It is the latest response to Russia's decision to recognise two separatist regions in eastern Ukraine as independent countries and authorise Russian military forces to enter to prevent what the Kremlin insists is attempted genocide against ethnic Russians there.

It is yet to be officially confirmed that Russian troops have arrived on Ukrainian soil.

Ukraine's border guard has issued new restrictions in the area bordering Russia, including a ban on approaching the border at night, restrictions for foreigners and the prohibition of video and photo recordings of border guard installations.

On the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov in the south of Ukraine, ships have been banned from leaving port at night.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry urged citizens living in Russia to leave the country "immediately." According to estimates, about 3 million Ukrainians reside in Russia. Many have family in both countries.

The West has responded to

Russia's actions vis-a-vis Ukraine with a rush of sanctions for what it calls a violation of international norms.

Britain announced sanctions against Russian oligarchs and banks, while Washington announced moves against Russian financial institutions and sovereign debt. The European Union agreed unanimously to its own package of measures.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry urged citizens living in Russia to leave the country "immediately." According to estimates, about 3 million Ukrainians reside in Russia

The US and European countries have been warning for weeks that Russia is preparing an invasion, pointing to the more than 100,000 troops gathered on the Russian side of the joint border and — more recently — Russia's refusal to withdraw troops stationed in Belarus for military drills. Russia repeatedly denied any such plan. — dpa



A civilian defence specialist shows a mockup of a cannon ammunition during emergency preparedness training for students at a local school in Kharkiv, Ukraine. — Reuters

Covid plays spoilsport for Indian rose exporters

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

@patkaushal

Flower growers and exporters failed to send the roses from India to desired markets during this year's Valentine's Day. They rued the coronavirus that robbed the whole excitement of the 'festival of love'. In terms of export, the Valentine's Day of 2021 and 2022 were 'years of tears' for them.

Indian marriages, however, proved saving grace for the flower traders, who with some twist in their business model, managed to sustain this year.

The flower growers from Pune and Bengaluru start preparing for the Valentine's Day on February 14, some six months before the actual date to meet the exporters' demand. In fact, their 'date' with roses begins and ends in the first week of February to ensure that



the 'roses with love' reach the most suitable hands globally on Valentine's Day.

This year, like the previous year, was hard both for the flower growers and exporters due to lack of connectivity, closure of large farms, loss of round the year export market for fresh cut flowers

and significant inflation in raw material and services related to horticulture.

According to data available with the Indian Commerce Ministry, the country exported 68,160 kg of roses to the world in December 2020. A decline of 10 per cent was recorded in 2021 (December) to

60,960 kg.

Overall, the 'flower power' or the Indian floriculture industry, has made great strides by exporting long-stemmed roses, known as the best in the world, to over 76 countries, including UK, US, the Netherlands and the UAE.

The losses to the sector were apparent in the given Covid-19 situation, but the flower growers have been saved, thanks to domestic demand during weddings.

Over the last few months, the Indian domestic flower market has been "on the bull run, thanks to the 2.5 million (25 lakh) weddings across the country in a month that started on November 14 last year," an NRI portal quoted Praveen Sharma, President, Indian Society of Floriculture Professionals (ISFP).

There were around 0.11 million

(1.1 lakh) weddings in Mumbai alone that month. Rose prices were unprecedented in November, in the Indian market and a flower bunch went for as high as \$5.30 (Rs 400) — the usual price is \$1.30 to \$1.90 (Rs 100 to Rs 140/bunch) a bunch.

Sharma said that every year flower growers prepare special production flushes for the Valentine Season, but this year that was not the case. The continued wedding season and better prices, since November, forced growers to take up regular production, instead of special flushes for the season. Praveen Yadav, a florist as well as a vegetable trader, asked for incentives and better market channels for agriculture products. "This sector proved to be an ingredient of sustainable economy even during crisis like Covid-19," he said.

Why Costa Rica is an investor friendly nation



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi
khalidalharibi@gmail.com

The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

How do you think can a country described in 1719 as ‘the poorest and most miserable colony in all America (Central, South & North)’ by a Spanish governor, become one of the most peaceful, talented and impact investing-friendly nations in the world?

I was fortunate to visit the Costa Rican Pavilion at Expo Dubai 2020 and learn more about the story of how modern Costa Rica, a country of over 5 million people and over 51,000 kms in area size focused on building four main strengths in the past 70 years; government, talents, environment and ecotourism, and investment.

These five strengths, Costa Ricans or Ticos as they refer to themselves will tell you, are just means to their desired end result, while realising their official nation brand ‘essential Costa Rica’ and

their unofficial nation brand ‘Pura Vida’ which literally means pure life.

Costa Rica is considered one of the most stable countries in the western hemisphere.

It has witnessed the peaceful transition of power between more than 15 administrations during the past 70 years. In addition, Costa Ricans decided in 1949 that they will dedicate their nation’s resources to investing more in education, health and environment with no resources dedicated to military conflicts.

Therefore, I would argue that the success of Costa Ricans in preserving their peace, stability and impact investing laid the ground for their success in achieving the national vision and brand.

In 2021, the winner of Unesco Sultan Qaboos Prize for

Environmental Conservation was Costa Rica’s University for International Cooperation (UCI) for their biodiversity and sustainable tourism initiatives.

CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST STABLE COUNTRIES IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, COSTA RICA GOES BY THEIR UNOFFICIAL NATION BRAND ‘PURA VIDA’ WHICH LITERALLY MEANS PURE LIFE

This is understandable given the fact that Costa Rica invests consistently almost 30 per cent of its annual budget on education and innovation.

This investment in education and innovation resulted in achieving 98 per cent adult literacy rate, one of the highest in the world, and becoming one of the top software development outsourcing destinations due its talents’ with high English language proficiency.

Around 100 per cent of the power Costa Ricans enjoy is generated using renewable energy, and the State invests in protecting more than a quarter of country’s land and marine territory, in order to make sure that this renewable energy generation is sustainable for their future generations.

With a population of more than five million people, Costa Rican culture’s emphasis on the values of friendliness and pure life help them attract almost the same number of tourists every year.

It’s worth mentioning that this

cultural investment is backed by more than 250 certified sustainable tourism companies leveraging the country’s biodiversity, which accounts for 6 per cent of the biodiversity of the whole world despite Costa Rica’s small land area.

None of the above national strengths would have been able to contribute to the vision of pure life without attracting both national and international impact investment partners.

In this regard, the connected positive impact of investing in peace, education, innovation and environment lead to a focus on a healthy balance between a strong ‘buying local’ policy and implementation and an attractive investment climate, where more than 250 international companies flourish, mainly in technology, logistics and ecotourism sectors.

Torture victim relives horror as dictator’s son rises

CECIL MORELLA

Ferdinand Marcos Junior’s quest for the Philippine presidency has Loretta Rosales recoiling in horror remembering the nightmare she went through standing up to his late father’s brutal rule.

Tortured by the elder Marcos’ troops under martial law in the 1970s, the former history professor, now 82, says she fears history will repeat itself. “I don’t want this to happen again to my people,” said Rosales, an activist turned politician who has asked the government to disqualify the younger Marcos, nicknamed “Bongbong”, from the May 9 poll.

She fears he would take after his late father, who shut down Congress and other democratic institutions as well as media outlets while ruling by decree. Bongbong, 64, is the clear leader in the polls, running on a campaign that steers public discourse away from the crimes of his father’s dictatorship while preaching unity and mapping a path out of the pandemic.

Amnesty International estimates the late strongman’s security forces either killed, tortured, mutilated or arbitrarily detained about 70,000 opponents, according to its Philippine vice-chairperson Aurora Parong. Rosales took part in street protests during the period as an activist with the Humanist League, a group aligned with the Philippines’ Communist Party that was the only serious opposition after Marcos crushed most opponents.

In 1976, she was secretly arrested and taken to an unmarked detention house, the former teacher said. Boiling-hot candle wax was poured on her arms and she was waterboarded as well as strangled with a belt. Her abusers delivered electric shocks to her fingertips and toes, leaving her trembling uncontrollably, and stripped off her clothes, she said. “Then they started playing protest songs that we sang at our street marches, to taunt you, to dehumanise you,” she recounted.

Rosales said her torturers wanted her to lead them to Jose Maria Sison, founder of the Communist Party which had begun waging a Maoist armed insurgency, as well as her fellow activists.

The younger Marcos has downplayed or disputed accounts of abuses committed under the rule of his father. Asked about Rosales’ specific allegations, Marcos spokesman Vic Rodriguez said: “There goes Ms Etta Rosales again, pushing very hard her lies to further her group’s gutter politics.” —AFP



Raymond Zhong

The writer is a climate reporter for the *NYT*

Climate forecasters warn of a ‘global wildfire crisis’

A landmark United Nations report has concluded that the risk of devastating wildfires around the world will surge in coming decades as climate change further intensifies what the report described as a “global wildfire crisis.”

The scientific assessment is the first by the organisation’s environmental authority to evaluate wildfire risks worldwide. It was inspired by a string of deadly blazes around the globe in recent years, burning the American West, vast stretches of Australia and even the Arctic.

The images from those fires — cities glowing under orange skies, smoke billowing around tourist havens and heritage sites, woodland animals badly injured and killed — have become grim icons of this era of unsettled relations between humankind and nature.

“The heating of the planet is turning landscapes into tinderboxes,” said the report, which was published on Wednesday by the UN Environment Programme.

The report, produced by more than 50 researchers from six continents, estimated that the risk worldwide of highly devastating fires could increase by up to 57 per cent by the end of the century, primarily because of climate change. The risks will not be distributed equally: Some regions are likely to see more fire activity, while others may experience less.

It is a stark warning about the

THE RISK WORLDWIDE OF HIGHLY DEVASTATING FIRES COULD INCREASE BY UP TO 57 PER CENT BY THE END OF THE CENTURY, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

increased heat and dryness that human-caused global warming is bringing about. Nations and localities need to prepare better for the dangers, the report’s authors said.

“There isn’t the right attention to fire from governments,” said Glynis Humphrey, a fire expert at the University of Cape Town and an author of the new report.

More societies worldwide are learning the value of prescribed burns and other methods of preventing wildfires from raging out of control, she said. Yet public spending in developed nations is still heavily skewed towards firefighting instead of forest management.

In some regions with long histories

of brush fires, such as eastern Australia and the western United States and Canada, they have become more intense over the past decade and are ravaging larger areas, the report found. But uncontrolled burning is also starting to occur in places where it had not been common before, such as Russia, northern India and Tibet.

In parts of the savannas of sub-Saharan Africa, by contrast, fire activity has declined over the past two decades, partly because drought has killed off more grass. While climate change is giving rise to more of the record warmth and dryness that have contributed to recent episodes of severe burning, the overall effect on fire risks is complex and can vary from place to place.

Researchers have determined that the extreme heat wave in the Pacific Northwest last year almost certainly would not have occurred without planetary warming caused by greenhouse-gas emissions. Scientists have also found the fingerprints of climate change on brush fires in Australia and extreme heat and burning in Siberia. But hot weather and weak rainfall can also decrease the amount of vegetation that is available to feed fires. In other places, the decreased humidity can make vegetation more flammable, helping fires spread more easily.

— *The New York Times*



A photo provided by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services of a plane spreading fire retardant near Wooroloo, Australia.

Winning hearts and minds



SONIA AMBROSIO
soniambrosio@gmail.com

It would be fascinating to learn what the Greek philosopher Aristotle thought about communication in the digital era. What could be his opinions on how rhetoric is used, particularly the persuasion paradigm? The visit to the topic is even more important now that everyone is a media specialist or expert. People's opinions and policies are being screamed louder all over the places. The worst-case scenario is when the messages are purposefully ambiguous. There is a lot of noise in the communication field, and no one is listening. Communication is central to all human interactions. To name a few, it is used in journalism, business, public relations, marketing, education and public administration. And this is only one reason — among many — to consider the topic: We need to take a step back and try to make sense of the future. Every message contains meaning, whether it is a handshake, a head nod, a song, gestures, or a look. We communicate even when we are silent. In the free-for-all scenario, there is an increased level of hate speech, rumours, lies and information manipulation circulating — primarily — on social media. Most of the ideas and opinions use the persuasion model. It is the core of politics, religion, health, marketing, dating and even parenting. Persuasion is one of the most important functions of communication.

IN THIS DIGITAL ERA, EVERYONE WITH A SMARTPHONE EMPLOYS ARISTOTLE'S THEORY TO ATTRACT FOLLOWERS, CUSTOMERS, AND POSITIVE REACTIONS SUCH AS LIKES OR HEARTS

from the past, as well as how emotions run high when people agree or disagree with anything on social media. From where we came in communication: Thousands of years back, during the "Talking Era" ranging from 180,000 BCE to 3,500 BCE, talking was the only medium of communication, aside from gestures, that humans had known. The "Manuscript Era", around 3,500 BCE, marked the turn from oral to written culture. During the near 5,000-year period of the "Manuscript Era", literacy, or the ability to read and write, didn't spread far beyond the most privileged in society. It wasn't until the 1800s that literacy existed in the world. The end of the "Manuscript Era" marked a shift towards a rapid increase in communication technologies. The "Print Era" from 1450 to 1850 was marked by the ability to mass-produce written texts. This 400-year period gave way to the "Audiovisual Era", which lasted from 1850 to 1990, and was marked by the invention of the radio, the telegraph, the telephone and the television. The "Internet Era" from 1990 until the present has introduced the most rapid and scattered new methods of communication. The spread of the Internet and the expansion of digital and personal media replaced the fundamental nature of communication — we are drawn to ourselves. In this Digital Era, everyone with a smartphone employs Aristotle's theory to attract followers, customers, and positive reactions such as likes or hearts — but also to manipulate information faster than ever thought possible. Individuals' character and the use of emotions are convincingly used. In today's corporate environment communication skills are essential in all fields — it is not merely a soft skill but a fundamental one. However, emails, texts, voice messages, or a communication reaction to events might easily be ignored. Is that rudeness? Or overwhelmed with work? Whatever the answer is, the 'no response' is a powerful reply. While communication technology innovation has provided society with tremendous opportunities, there is a need to recognise Aristotle's contribution and influence on media practice, in addition to the necessity to grasp media literacy.



KASHMIR IN SNOW

Snow covered vehicles during a heavy snowfall in Srinagar, India, on Wednesday. — AFP

Putin moves on Donbass but signals deeper designs on Ukraine

MARK TREVELYAN

WITH RUSSIA AFFIRMING THE RIGHT UNDER ITS NEW TREATIES TO SEND IN TROOPS AND BUILD MILITARY BASES, THAT OPENS UP THE RISK IT COULD ENTER AN OPEN WAR WITH UKRAINE TO EXTEND THE SEPARATIST TERRITORIES

President Vladimir Putin has shifted the Ukraine crisis into a new, more dangerous phase with a barrage of words and actions that suggest his ultimate aims go far deeper than extending Russian sway over two struggling separatist regions. Putin signed friendship treaties on Monday night with the so-called Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics proclaimed by Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, in a move denounced as illegal by the West and met with immediate sanctions, including on Russian banks and a major new gas pipeline. But it was the extraordinary televised speech preceding the signing that offered deeper clues to Putin's thinking, as he twisted centuries of history into an hour-long diatribe portraying Ukraine as an artificial nation with no tradition of statehood. Kremlin watchers said his lecture looked like an attempt to justify deeper aggression against Ukraine and a possible new invasion, eight years after he captured and annexed Crimea. "He has questioned the right to sovereignty of Ukraine and he's declared that this was a historic mistake, a historic accident that Ukraine is existing", said Gerhard Mangott, a professor at Austria's Innsbruck University and member of a group of Russia experts that meets yearly with Putin. "So it's most likely that his final ambition is to destroy this Ukrainian state, or at least make Ukraine divide into two separate halves", he said, with Russia controlling the eastern part of the country. In significant follow-up comments on Tuesday, Putin said he was recognising the entire Donetsk and Luhansk regions of east Ukraine, which together comprise an area known as the Donbass, as forming their breakaway "republics", even though only a fraction of that territory is controlled by the separatists. With Russia affirming the right under its new treaties to send in troops and build military bases, that opens up the risk it could enter an open war with Ukraine to extend the separatist territories. Putin has always denied planning to reinvade Ukraine but his huge military build-up on its borders since November has prompted brutal falls in Russian shares, government bonds and the rouble. His latest moves have heightened anxiety among the Russian elite.

"We're all at a loss. We're all very nervous. No one knows what the endgame is", said a former high-placed official. Putin's latest move has killed off any lingering hopes of ending the eight-year separatist war in Ukraine by reviving peace agreements signed in 2014 and 2015 — an ominous shift from diplomacy towards force. "By abandoning the Minsk agreements, Russia has deprived itself of one avenue of potential long-term political leverage over Ukraine and will now be seeking another one", said Oleg Ignatov, senior analyst for Russia at International Crisis Group. In his speech, Putin looked like a man who, after more than two decades as Russia's paramount leader, is thinking more about his legacy than about the casualties and economic costs that a full-scale war with Ukraine would entail. It followed comments from British Prime Minister Boris Johnson this week that Putin might not be thinking logically and sanctions might not deter an "irrational actor". Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte described him as "totally paranoid". "We've seen a shift from Putin (as) the

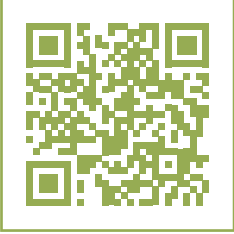
kind of pragmatic, rational calculating leader, to someone who is increasingly looking for their place in history, who sees himself on a historical mission to right injustices", said Neil Melvin of the RUSI think-tank in London. That led to a shift in Putin's risk calculus where the short-term costs of his actions paled into insignificance compared to the bigger historical picture, he said. Melvin, who recently returned from meetings with senior Russian officials in Moscow, said the Ukraine crisis was only beginning to unfold. "To be frank, you don't station 200,000 troops on the border with Ukraine and invoke the biggest crisis in European security for 40 years if all you're trying to do is extend your control over two small territories that you already control", he said. The next stage would be determined by the entry of Russian forces into Donetsk and Luhansk and possible moves to expand into wider territory, depending on how Ukraine responds. "I think that's what we need to look for now", Melvin said. "It's how will the trigger be pulled for this wider military incursion?" — Reuters



Russian President Vladimir Putin answers journalists' questions after a meeting with his Azerbaijani counterpart at the Kremlin in Moscow on Tuesday. — AFP

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



OMANI CLUBS ENTER QUARTERS OF ARAB VOLLEYBALL CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

SEEB, AL KAMIL W’AL WAFI ADVANCE IN TUNISIA

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 23

Oman’s representatives Seeb and Al Kamil W’al Wafi clubs delivered an impressive performance in the 40th edition of the Arab Volleyball Club Championship which is underway in Tunisia. The domestic teams managed to earn spot in the quarterfinals after advancing among the first two teams in the group.

The Muscat-based team ended their group matches in second place with seven points while Bahrain’s Dar Kulaib led the group with eight points. Seeb will meet Qatar’s Al Rayyan club which ended as topper of Group B and the match will take place on Thursday.

On the other side, Oman’s Al Kamil W’al Wafi confirmed their presence in the last-eight stage after accumulating nine points

from four games and ended second in the group. Qatar’s Al Rayyan topped the group with 12 points. Al Kamil W’al Wafi will face Bahrain’s Dar Kulaib in the quarterfinal on Thursday and will chase for the triumph to move forward in the Arab tourney.

Seeb were clubbed with Peshmerga (Iraq) in Group D besides Yemen’s Al Shoalah and Dar Kulaib (Bahrain) While Al Kamil W’al Wafi joined Group B

which also comprised Al Rayyan (Qatar), Kuwait Club, Sadaqa (Palestine) and Ahli Tripoli (Libya).

STRONG START

Al Kamil W’al Wafi commenced the group matches strongly with a 3-1 win over Ahli Tripoli (Libya) and the second successive win was over Sadaqa (Palestine) 3-0. The third match against Kuwait Club ended for the Sultanate of Oman’s

representative by 3-0. Al Kamil W’al Wafi suffered a 3-0 defeat against Al Rayyan (Qatar) in the concluding game.

Seeb, coached by the experienced national coach Jamal al Maamari, defeated Al Shoalah (Yemen) 3-0 in the opening game while they suffered a 3-2 loss against Dar Kulaib (Bahrain) in the following game. Seeb returned back to the winning ways as they edged Peshmerga (Iraq) 3-1 to

move into the quarterfinal.

This seven-day Arab tournament will conclude on Saturday and featured participation of 19 teams distributed into four groups.

Group A comprised of the following teams: ES Tunis, Kadhima Kuwait, Olympique Mili (Algeria) and Swehly (Libya) and Group C included AS Marsa, Senjal (Palestine), Khaybal (Yemen), Naft Al Janoob (Iraq) and Ahli (Qatar).

Real Madrid to launch Football Programme in Oman

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 23

The Real Madrid Foundation has signed a collaboration agreement with Ruznama Enterprises & Trading to run its Football Programme, an educational assistance project, in the Sultanate of Oman. The programme is designed to complete the academic curriculum for school students and has been carried out since 2017 alongside sporting and educational organisations throughout the world, putting a special focus on sports training.

The Football Programme is aimed at school children who already have some football experience. The goal is to drive

youth potential in Oman both in terms of sporting development and instilling the associated values in the community. The students, from 8 to 15 years of age, will be led by a Spanish head coach selected by Ruznama Enterprises & Trading, who will head to Muscat in March, alongside a further 10 qualified local coaches. The specialists will run four weekly sessions of 45 minutes for those younger than 11, and of 90 minutes for the older children.

The sessions will benefit over 150 boys and girls, who will make use of the facilities at Al Seeb Stadium. The programme will be presented in Muscat in March and training will begin in May, following Holy month



The students, from 8 to 15 years of age, will be led by a Spanish head coach selected by Ruznama Enterprises & Trading, who will head to Muscat in March, alongside a further 10 qualified local coaches

of Ramadhan. The goal is to have up to 1,000 students by the end of the 2022/23 season. Khamis bin Obaid al Ajmi, CEO of Ruznama Enterprises and Trading SPC, expressed his gratitude for the collaboration: “It’s a big milestone for us. Real Madrid is one of the greatest football clubs and we’re proud to be associated with its foundation. I’m sure this collaboration will bring great value to our youth in Oman.” The programme by Real Madrid Foundation is expected to contribute to creating a top-level football school that helps young people in their personal development from a social, physical and psychological perspective.

OMAN BEAT NEPAL IN JUNIOR DAVIS CUP

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 23

Oman beat Nepal 2-1 in the Davis Cup under-16 championship being held in Sri Lanka.

At the Sri Lankan Tennis Association (SLTA) in Colombo, Oman went ahead after the first rubber when Issa al Sulaimani defeated Nishal Kiasta 6-3,6-4.

In the second singles, Nepal made it 1-1 after Raj Bir Pradhan beat Ali al Busaidi 6-3, 6-1.

In the doubles,Issa al Sulaimani and Ali al Busaidi came back brilliantly after losing the first set to edge Nepali duo of Nissan Kiasta and Raj Bir Pradhan with a score of 2-6, 6-4, 10-5.

The under-16 national boys team lost its first match against the third-ranked Singapore team on the opening day 3-0.

Issa al Sulaimani went down to Luke Koh 6-0, 6-1 and Mikhail Khomenez beat Ali al Busaidi 7-5, 6-0 to claim the rubber. In the doubles, Al Sulaimani and Taha al Wahaibi suffered a 6-0, 6-0 loss against the Singaporean duo of Mikhail Khmenez and Maxmus.

Oman juniors will next play against the Maldives.

The under-16 Davis Cup for boys and the under-16 girls Billie Jean King Cup tournaments which began on February 19 will conclude on February 27. The tournament is conducted by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

In the Billie Jean King Cup, Oman lost their first two matches



against Iraq and Uzbekistan.

In the first match, the Omani girls were beaten 3-0 by Iraq.

Oman's Majda al Amriyah fought hard before going down 7-6, 6-2 against Iraq's Zalat Khalil.

In the second match, Iraq's Larry Hassan defeated Aisha al

Busaidiyah 6-2, 6-0.

In the doubles, Omani duo of Rayan al Busaidi and Majda al Amriyah lost 6-2, 6-3 against the Iraqi pair.

Oman also lost 3-0 against Uzbekistan.

Shakhnoza Marikova blanked

Majda al Amriyah, 6-0, 6-0 and Sabrina Olmjnova beat Aisha al Busaidiyah 6-2, 6-0. In the doubles, Rayan al Busaidi and Majda al Amriyah lost 6-2, 6-3 against the Uzbek pair.

Junior Davis and Fed Cups will go on at SLTA till Saturday

(February 26).

Two countries each, out of a total of 16 in both boys and girls, will qualify for the next round. Sri Lanka is neither taking part in the Junior Davis Cup nor the Billie Jean King Cup as they have already qualified for the Final



Qualifiers of the region according to their tournament results last year. Last year, Russia and the Czech Republic won the Junior Davis Cup and the Billie Jean King Cup, respectively, beating France and Japan in the finals held in Antalya, Turkey.

Afif, Mehidy sink Afghanistan

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh: Afif Hossain and Mehidy Hasan shared a record 174-run seventh-wicket stand as Bangladesh recovered from a top-order collapse to beat Afghanistan by four wickets in the first one-day international of a three-match series in Chittagong on Wednesday.

Afif hit an unbeaten 93 off 115 balls while Mehidy added 81 not out, helping Bangladesh reach 219-6 in 48.5 overs, after Afghanistan left-arm pace bowler Fazalhaq Farooqi's opening-spell burst reduced the hosts to 18-4 inside five overs.

Spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Rashid Khan took one wicket apiece to leave Bangladesh struggling at 45-6 before Afif and Mehidy turned the tide.

Earlier, Mustafizur Rahman took 3-35 with Shoriful Islam (2-38), Shakib Al Hasan (2-50) and Taskin Ahmed (2-55) all making an impact as Bangladesh bowled out Afghanistan for 215 runs.

Despite the modest target, Bangladesh were in all sorts of trouble when Farooqi dismissed openers Tamim Iqbal (eight) and Liton Das (one) in the third over before nabbing Mushfiqur Rahim (three) and debutant Yasir Ali (zero) in the next.

Things turned worse for Bangladesh after Shakib Al Hasan dragged onto his stumps off Mujeeb Ur Rahman to depart for 10 and Rashid dismissed Mahmudullah for eight to leave Bangladesh in a precarious



Bangladesh's Afif Hossain (R) bump fists with team-mate Mehidy Hasan Miraz after hitting a boundary during the first ODI against Afghanistan in Chittagong. — AFP

situation. But Afif, who hit 11 fours and a six in his career-best knock, and Mehidy ensured there was no further damage.

Mehidy struck nine fours in his third ODI fifty, also his personal best innings, which came off 120 balls.

Their partnership surpassed Imrul Kayes and Mohammad Saifuddin's 127 seventh-wicket record for Bangladesh, set against Zimbabwe in 2018.

"The way the youngsters played, unbelievable, (I am)

very happy and proud," said Bangladesh skipper Tamim.

"Afghanistan have a great spin attack and the way these two handled (them) was amazing."

Farooqi, the most successful Afghanistan bowler, finished with 4-54 playing only his second ODI. "Farooqi bowled well at the top. But I will give credit to their batsmen," said Afghanistan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi.

Afghanistan earlier lost regular wickets after they elected to bat first before Najibullah Zadran hit

67 runs to give their innings some respectability. Rahmat Shah (34), skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi (28) and Mohammad Nabi (20) got starts but could not convert them into a big score.

Zadran put on 63 runs with Nabi for the fifth wicket to help Afghanistan recover from 102-4.

The second match of the series was due to be held at the same ground on Friday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

AFGHANISTAN	
Rahmanullah Gurbaz c Tamim b Mustafizur	7
Ibrahim Zadran c Yasir b Shoriful	19
Rahmat Shah c Mushfiqur b Taskin	34
Hashmatullah Shahidi c Mushfiqur b Mahmudullah	28
Najibullah Zadran c Mahmudullah b Shoriful	67
Mohammad Nabi c Mushfiqur b Taskin	20
Gulbadin Naib lbw b Shakib	17
Rashid Khan b Shakib	0
Mujeeb Ur Rahman c sub b Mustafizur	0
Yamin Ahmadzai c Mahmudullah b Mustafizur	5
Fazalhaq Farooqi not out	0
Extras (lb 5, w13)	18
Total (all out; 49.1 overs)	215
Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-56, 3-79, 4-102, 5-165, 6-194, 7-194, 8-195, 9-214	
Bowling: Mustafizur 9.1-0-35-3, Taskin 10.0-55-2, Shakib 9.1-50-2, Shoriful 10-1-38-2, Mehidy 10-3-28-0, Mahmudullah 1-0-4-1	
BANGLADESH	
Tamim Iqbal lbw Farooqi	8
Liton Das c Gurbaz b Farooqi	1
Shakib Al Hasan b Mujeeb	10
Mushfiqur Rahim lbw Farooqi	3
Yasir Ali b Farooqi	0
Mahmudullah c Gulbadin b Rashid	8
Afif Hossain not out	93
Mehidy Hasan not out	81
Extras (lb 11, w4)	15
Total (six wickets; 48.5 overs)	219
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-14, 3-18, 4-18, 5-28, 6-45	
Bowling: Farooqi 10.1-54-4, Mujeeb 10-0-32-1, Yamin 5-0-35-0, Rashid 10-1-30-1, Nabi 10-1-32-0, Gulbadin 3.5-0-25-0	

Rohit happy to groom India's future leaders

LUCKNOW, India: Rohit Sharma said on Wednesday he was happy to help train possible successors following his recent appointment as India's cricket captain across all formats in place of Virat Kohli.

The star batsman was named Test captain on Saturday — he was already white-ball skipper — but since he will turn 35 in April pundits do not expect his tenure to be a long one.

India's cricket board has identified three possible candidates all in their 20s to follow him eventually — Jasprit Bumrah, KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant.

"I won't have that much of a role of telling them each and everything, obviously they are all mature cricketers but someone needs to be around them to help and guide them in difficult situations and (I am) more than happy to do that," Rohit told his first press conference after taking over the Test job. "We were groomed by someone else, so it's a natural process. If you talk of Bumrah, KL, Pant, they have a big role to play in India's success at the same time they are looked upon as leaders as well."

India's pace spearhead

Bumrah, 28, has been appointed vice-captain in the upcoming series of three T20s and two Tests at home to Sri Lanka beginning on Thursday.

KL Rahul, 29, who captained the ODI team in South Africa in January, remained unavailable due to injury.

The 24-year-old Pant, a wicketkeeper-batsman who leads Indian Premier League team Delhi Capitals, has also been earmarked as a future captain by pundits including batting great Sunil Gavaskar.

"Again we don't want to put pressure on these guys," Rohit said. "They are very critical to us and at the moment we just want them to enjoy their game, come out freely and execute (their) skills."

'GREAT MIND'
On Bumrah's elevation to the deputy's job in T20 and Tests, Rohit said the role would only add to his promise as a lethal fast bowler — with 113 Test wickets since his 2018 debut. "It doesn't really matter too much if it's a batter or bowler as the vice-captain, it's the mind that matters of that individual. And I think Jasprit Bumrah has a great mind of the game," Rohit said. — AFP





HAVERTZ, PULISIC ON TARGET AGAINST LILLE

CHELSEA

THRIVE WITHOUT LUKAKU

LONDON: Chelsea showed they can thrive without Romelu Lukaku as Kai Havertz scored after replacing the axed Belgium striker for the 2-0 Champions League last-16, first-leg win against Lille on Tuesday.

Thomas Tuchel's side took control of the tie thanks to Havertz's first-half header and Christian Pulisic's clinical finish after the break at Stamford Bridge.

The holders will expect to complete their progress to the quarterfinals when they travel to France for the second leg on March 16.

But Chelsea's sixth successive win in all competitions was more a referendum on their Lukaku conundrum than an indication of their chances of retaining the trophy.

Lukaku has scored just 10 goals since a club record £97 million (\$131 million) move from Inter Milan last year that was expected to launch a period of sustained dominance for Chelsea.

He touched the ball only seven times in Saturday's 1-0 win at Crystal Palace, the lowest total by a Premier League player since 2003-04.

Despite being infuriated in December by Lukaku's public questioning of the way he was being used, Tuchel had appeared to back him on Monday,

insisting his problems were no laughing matter.

But, tellingly, Chelsea were more potent in Lukaku's absence and it remains to be seen if Tuchel will trust his beleaguered star in the League Cup final against Liverpool on Sunday.

At least Tuchel knows Chelsea have the ammunition to damage opponents while their supposed leading man labours.

"For Kai, I'm very pleased. He's been very strong for several weeks now. He really stepped up. The work rate is immense. The areas of the pitch he covers for us is very good. He is never shy of defending," Tuchel said.

"Romelu struggled in the last game to deliver. Not only mentally tired, but physically, which I can understand. It was the moment to take a step back.

"Today we went with other players. For Sunday we have four days to recover and decide who plays."

Chelsea's Ben Chilwell, Reece James and Callum Hudson-Odoi paraded the Club World Cup around the pitch just before kick-off.

However, that victory in Abu Dhabi will be only a footnote in the story of Chelsea's season if they don't mount a strong finish to an inconsistent

campaign.

This was a step in the right direction and Havertz didn't take long to get involved.

FORCEFUL HAVERTZ

Cesar Azpilicueta's low cross was begging to be finished off, but the German forward poked his effort over the bar from six yards.

If that was a concern for Tuchel, he would have been relieved that Havertz looked more threatening as he cut inside for a fierce strike which Leo Jardim pushed away at full stretch.

From the resulting corner, Havertz gave Chelsea an eighth-minute lead.

Taking advantage of Lille's woeful marking, Havertz met Hakim Ziyech's corner with a downward header that bounced in for his seventh goal this season.

Havertz, more forceful and energetic than Lukaku on current form, needed just 15 minutes to record more touches than the Belgian managed in the entire Palace game.

After an initial bout of stage-fright, the French champions probed intelligently for openings, with Benjamin Andre's long-range drive held by Edouard Mendy.

Tuchel's agitated body language

betrayed his frustration at Chelsea's failure to build on their lead in the first half.

However, he got his message across and there was more urgency about Chelsea after the interval.

Marcos Alonso's goalbound drive was diverted to safety by Zeki Celik before Ziyech and Mateo Kovacic were forced off. Chelsea weren't hindered by the injuries and doubled their lead with a sweeping counter-attack in the 63rd minute.

Thiago Silva started the incisive raid with a superb pass to N'Golo Kante, who advanced at speed towards the Lille area before slipping a pass to Pulisic.

Taking two touches, Pulisic steadied himself and clipped a composed finish past Jardim from 10 yards. — **AFP**

Villarreal hold Juve despite Vlahovic strike

VILARREAL, Spain: Dusan Vlahovic scored the second-fastest goal ever for a Champions League debutant as his Juventus side were held to a 1-1 draw at Villarreal in a last-16 first-leg tie on Tuesday.

The Serbian striker, who joined the Turin side from Fiorentina in January, needed only 33 seconds to net a perfect cross shot.

Juventus dominated the game until a mistake by their defence in the 66th minute gave Dani Parejo the chance to score the equaliser.

Etienne Capoue spotted Parejo alone and unmarked behind defenders and sent a perfect pass over the top for the Spanish midfielder to tap into the net.

After the goal, Villarreal had a couple of clear opportunities and could have gone ahead if their forwards had been more efficient.

"I have a bittersweet taste in my mouth, I believe we deserved more," Capoue told reporters.

"It's not a bad result because of the end of the away-goal rule. We are confident that we can go there and get the result we need to advance."

The 22-year-old Vlahovic lived up to expectations, posing a constant danger to the Villarreal defence and hitting Juve's only two shots on target in the game. On the second one, late in the second half, goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli made a great save.

"He is very young, was making his debut and managed to score. That says everything about who he is," Juventus striker Alvaro Morata said of Vlahovic.

"One can only imagine the career he has in front of him. He is an extraordinary kid; in one week he has completely adapted to the club. It looks like he has been with us for months now. We are delighted to have him."

Juventus could have ended the game with 10 men after a bad, studs-up foul by midfielder Adrien Rabiot on Nigerian winger Samuel Chukwueze but the Video Assistant Referee took the controversial decision to let a yellow card stand. — **Reuters**

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RESULTS ON TUESDAY:

LAST 16, FIRST LEGS
In London
Chelsea (ENG) (Havertz 8, Pulisic 63) 2 Lille (FRA) 0
In Vila-real, Spain
Villarreal (ESP) (Parejo 66) 1 Juventus (ITA) (Vlahovic 1) 1

Juventus' Dusan Vlahovic celebrates scoring his first goal against Villarreal. — **Reuters**



Transfer your salary and enjoy attractive interest rates starting from

HOUSING LOAN

4.95%

PERSONAL LOAN

4.99%

CAR LOAN

4.95%

بنك ظفار

BankDhofar

For more information:

https://bit.ly/ShortTermPersonalLoanEN

the best bank for you

24/7

www.bankdhofar.com

OIA cost-rationalisation drive yields RO 80 million in savings in 2021

STRONG MEASURES: New Code of Governance to boost performance and productivity across OIA subsidiaries

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

A rejig of employee salaries and perks undertaken by the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and its subsidiaries has yielded savings to the tune of RO 80 million in 2021, with further benefits amounting to RO 120 million anticipated during 2022 and 2023, top officials of the integrated sovereign wealth fund announced on Wednesday.

Addressing media on the new governance structure now in force across the Authority and its subsidiaries, Nasser bin Suleiman al Harthy, Acting Vice-President for Operations, said the initiative led to the reductions of benefits and allowances from a total of 80 item-heads to 12 items.



Key items that were subject to the revamp included end-of-service bonuses, personal and residential loans, cars and other perks. “Through governance, we identify the responsibilities and duties of all business stakeholders to ensure efficiency and adherence,” said Al Harthy in his presentation.

“Specifically, we worked on regulating the decision-making process from drafting

to implementation and from this materialised, the Code of Governance for OIA entities. We have also issued a number of policies, like the tendering and procurement policy, to increase ICV, empower SMEs and enhance the role of the private sector.”

Further, in an effort to empower the private sector and attract foreign investment, the Authority has developed a general framework for a divestment policy focusing on optimal return of investment and its utilisation to enter new

investments that boost the local economy, and enhance job opportunities, the official said. “Another policy in the works is an investment policy that will regulate the stages of investment decision-making and enact best practices when evaluating and selecting investments. This policy will naturally contribute to reducing risk and improving investment performance,” he stated.

According to Ayad bin Ali al Balushi, Deputy Vice-President of Finance and Accreditation, who also oversees the Rawabet programme, the new governance structure will help enhance the financial and operational performance of OIA subsidiaries, increase their productivity and create

an integrated decision-making system.

Performance monitoring is a key objective of the new code, he explained. “We implemented a system that ensures accountability and regular monitoring of overall performance. For example, company boards are tasked with preparing objectives and KPIs to assess the company’s performance in key areas.”

Likewise, the Code regulates the relation between the boards, executive managements and stakeholders by defining their respective roles. “The Code addressed a number of principles that ensure effective performance.

For example, having independent members in the Board and having a list of basic qualifications for board members created by shareholders. Companies are required to prepare an annual report on compliance to OIA’s Code of Governance, policies, and guiding principles. Companies adopt a policy to disclose financial and non-financial outcomes.”

OIA, he further stressed, will continue its focus on improving the business environment and enabling companies for a promising future for Oman and its continuing endeavour to empower companies for a promising future for the Sultanate of Oman.

Road toll systems set to be a reality in Oman



NEW SCHEME: Truck roads procured on PPP model likely to be first to implement road user charges

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Road toll systems, the introduction of which have long been bandied about in the Sultanate of Oman, are likely to be a reality, although their application will likely be initially limited to dedicated truck roads, the first of which is planned in Dhofar Governorate.

At their annual media briefing earlier this week, officials of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said a system of road user charges is being contemplated as part of a raft of initiatives to drive the growth of the country’s multimodal transportation network.

Experts believe the proposed move accords with the Omani government’s current fiscal sustainability policies which envision, among other things, a more prominent role for the private sector in infrastructure development based on the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model.

First mulled during the construction of the Muscat-Sur coastal road, which opened in 2008, toll systems were also subsequently envisaged as part of the Batinah Expressway and Sharqiyah Expressway projects. But authorities shelved plans for their implementation as a gesture to the country’s sizable motoring population.

However, with the enactment of a PPP Law in 2020, coupled with the government’s advocacy of private finance in future infrastructure projects, toll systems are set to be an inevitable part of the transportation landscape in the Sultanate of Oman, according to a well-known expert on urban transportation. “Toll systems on highway projects are usually implemented in the PPP mode, which are seen as effective measures for risk and benefit-sharing between the government and the private sector,” says Prof Rakesh Belwal of Sohar University’s Business Department.

“There are scientific methods, such as the optimal values of the Minimum Revenue Guarantee and Toll Revenue Cap, to optimise the revenues and risks arising from such ventures. The same toll road can charge differential toll rates according to the type of vehicles, purpose (for example ambulance, school buses etc), and time (for example, toll-free time).”

In remarks to the *Observer*, Prof Belwal also noted that toll systems will help improve, among other things, the overall road user experience for motorists.

“The introduction of tolls will help in dealing with the problems associated with population growth and the huge penetration of vehicles and associated traffic congestion problems. This could help in inducing drivers to take alternative routes, and thus better distribute traffic across the road network.

INVITATION TO ATTEND
EXTRA ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of **Oman Fisheries Co. SAOG** (Company) is pleased to invite the shareholders of the Company to an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) scheduled to be held at 03:00 pm on Wednesday, 9 March 2022 at the Ghala Head Office of the Company and through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which you can login through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that quorum for holding the EGM was not achieved, the second EGM shall be held at 03:00 pm on Thursday, 10 March 2022 to discuss the following agenda:

- To increase the authorized share capital from OMR 12,500,000 to 20,000,000 and respectively change the Article 5 of the Articles of Association as per annexure 1.
- To increase the issued capital from OMR 12,500,000 to 16,307,700 through private placement in favor of Aqua Holding Company for a issued price of 0.06671 Baisa per Share as set out in Annexure 2.
- To approve the amendment to Article 5 of the Articles of Association of the Company after completing all procedures required to increase the share capital as set out in Annexure 3.
- To approve the amendment to Article 6 of the Article of Association of the company as per annexure 4.
- To authorize the Board of Directors of the Company to complete all procedures and obtain all approvals required to implement the decisions undertaken in relation to the above agenda items.

As per the regulations of the convening of the general meetings through electronic platforms, issued by the Capital Market Authority (CMA), we would like to attract your kind attention to the following:

- Only juristic persons have the right to authorize a natural person to attend the general meeting and vote on their behalf through the electronic systems, provided that this natural person has an investor number at Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
- Voting on the subject items offered for voting in the agenda starts before a period of not more than three (3) days and until the end of the voting process on day of the general meeting. If the shareholder’s shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the general meeting.

For any queries please contact to **Mr. Khalil Ali Ahmed Al-Amri** on
Phone No 99317115 or e-mail at: khalil@omanfisheries.net

Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditor

OMAN FISHERIES

GS Inima

Announcement of the tender TND GS BV /01/2022 for the supply on monthly hire basis a male nurse and set up site first aid clinic

GS INIMA (Barka)SPC have been awarded with the Engineering, Procurement and Construction of Barka V Desalination Project in Oman, for the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC.

Omani companies and hospitals are invited to quote their most competitive price for supply

- Medic in the site. Nurse with M.O.H License / B.L.S/A.C.L.S - Require one Medic 10 Hours with one weekly off at Barka 5 site.
- Medical Equipment’s & Furniture for first aid clinic in site of Barka 5 Project.
- Clinic Licensing - Combined Scope - Initial approval, Plan Approval, Equipping the Clinic, Medicine storage license, Final Approval.
- Clinic Software, Medical waste Beah Contract & Transportation - One year.
- Consumables & Medications.

Bid closing time : 27 February 2022 1:00PM
Validity of offer : One month
Currency: OMR or USD
Commercial Offer shall be sent to : mohamed.farid@inima.com
For any technical information contact e-mail: senthilkumar793@yahoo.com
GS Inima (Barka)SPC General Terms and Condition for Purchasing are applied.

Maisarah branches offer premium customer experience

MUSCAT: Stemming from its customer-centric approach, Maisarah Islamic Banking Services — BankDhofar's Islamic banking window — continues to offer premium customer experience, customised products and innovative financial solutions for corporate and retail customers through its branch network across the Sultanate.

Nasser bin Said al Bahantah, DGM & Chief Retail Banking Officer at Maisarah, noted: "Whether it is an individual customer or a business owner, Maisarah understands their aspiration, the nature of their financial requirements and business operations. Our existing 10 branches continues to serve customers nationwide, and we are planning to open new branches this year to reach out to a larger customer base in different parts of Oman."

Maisarah's expansive range of Sharia-compliant financing products, world-class services and creative financial solutions are based on Islamic principles of Diminishing Musharakah, Mudarabah,



We are planning to open new branches this year to reach out to a larger customer base in different parts of Oman

Murabahah, Ijarah, Wakalah, Takaful and Qard Hassan.

"We tailor our products and services to meet our customers' needs, and we have a dedicated team of highly qualified and professional relationship managers who are specialised in Islamic finance and bring in a substantial experience in diverse industries and commerce across the local, regional and international markets", added

Al Bahantah.

For retail customers, Maisarah offers a diverse bundle of Personal Banking solutions such as High Yield Saving Account, Mudarabah Saving Account, Current Account and Ameen Investment Account.

Meanwhile, there are various finance options that include Auto Finance, Home Finance, Property Finance, Goods Finance, Personal Finance, Education Finance, Travel Finance and Commercial Finance.

Additionally, Maisarah's Fixed Deposit and Ameen Term Deposit services are tailored to meet the specific needs of those who look for a suitable saving investment scheme. Furthermore, BancaTakaful products are offered for critical illness and personal accidents, powered by Al Madina Takaful.

Maisarah branches also offer seamless banking experience to corporate customers through a customised Business Account for large corporates and SMEs, which is designed with

consideration to customers' business needs, nature of operations and financial requirements.

That includes an expansive offering of working capital finance, import finance, export finance, long-term finance, contract finance, documentary credit requirements and project finance, treasury services, foreign exchange, investment and capital markets, management and execution of complex transactions, corporate Internet banking, payroll bulk processing and PDC Warehousing.

It also encompasses a numerous options of Term Finance (Diminishing Musharakah), Term Finance (Ijarah), Working Capital Finance (Murabahah), Working Capital Finance (Mudarabah), Working Capital Finance (Wakalah), Transaction Finance and Inventory Finance, as well as Trade Finance services that include letter of credit, letter of guarantee advance against import and term finance against import.

Managing corporate transactions a breeze with ahlibank's e-channels



MUSCAT: Ahlibank's digital banking channels are setting the pace for corporate transactions, with an inherent 'anytime, anywhere' option to enhance the everyday banking experience of clients seeking to promote the new global normalcy, while enjoying the benefits of safe and secure business dealings.

Its bouquet of corporate e-channel platforms designed and developed specially to optimise banking experiences of clients who are hard-pressed for time and are weary of physical visits to their branches for corporate transactions.

Through its e-channels — ahliNET, ahliB2B and ahliRDC — ahlibank has well demonstrated its intent to offer innovative products and services; it has diligently curated its services and facilities to cater to specific requirements of its corporate clients, thereby affirming its impressive growth trajectory in the

local corporate banking sector.

Hilal Saleh al Ghannami, Head of corporate e-channels, ahlibank, said, "Aligning with the government's digitalisation drive, we have introduced innovative options to facilitate ease and convenience of banking for all our corporate customers. Our operational excellence is hinged on our customer-centric approach to banking and our tech-savvy clients are privy to our products and services that are at par with global standards."

According to Al Ghannami, this growth has amply projected the bank's concerted efforts to enhance its footprints in the country and become the bank of choice for both individual and corporate clients. Explaining further, he said, "Our digital platforms are our growth drivers; they are the parameters that establish our customer-centric approach to banking."

Lexus LX: The most awaited luxury SUV launched in Oman

As part of its relentless pursuit to create amazing experiences and meet the diverse and growing aspirations of discerning customers in the Sultanate of Oman, the all-new 2022 Lexus LX was launched. Since its establishment in 1989, Lexus has been committed to the spirit of innovation. The brand has always risen to the occasion with new technologies that provide limitless value to new and existing customers.

The Lexus LX was introduced less than a decade later in 1996 and has since become Lexus' flagship SUV due to its high build-quality, ride comfort and driving performance fit for roads the world over, no matter the condition. This has been achieved by refining the LX's founding concepts — reliability, durability, and off-road driving performance. The LX has sold a cumulative total of more than 500,000 units in over 50 countries and regions.

Whatever the driving conditions, the 2022 LX delivers a constant, rewarding sense of connection, control and vehicle response with the Lexus driving signature. An electric power steering system has been adopted for the first time, together with electronically controlled braking to guarantee optimum on and off-road performance.

The suspension systems have also been redesigned and feature both active height control and adaptive variable suspension for agility, stability and comfort in all driving scenarios.

"The all-new LX promises "ease and quality on any road in the world" and is ready to meet the diverse needs of our global customers. The LX is redefining



what it means to truly travel in comfort and style", said Takami Yokoo, Chief Engineer of the all-new Lexus LX. "We have achieved this by refining the LX's traditional off-road performance through rigorous field testing, and through the outstanding efforts of our development team and drive-meister to refine on-road performance with a fully-optimised Lexus driving signature that delivers the kind of linear response our drivers want and need. We invite you to experience the all-new LX on real roads, built by the hands and aspirations of real people."

The all-new LX is available with a choice of two powertrain options, including two newly developed V6 twin-turbo engines. The V6 twin-turbo 3.5-litre petrol engine achieves class-leading performance that surpasses that of a conventional V8, producing

409 hp and up to 66.28 kgm torque. Meanwhile, the V6 twin-turbo engine 3.3-litre diesel variant is capable of 302 hp and up to 71.38 kgm torque. Both versions are mated to a 10-speed automatic transmission. The all-new LX's updated Tazuna cockpit organizes the principal controls and information displays within the driver's immediate sight-line for easy, intuitive operation. Its slim instrument panel creates a sense of balance, particularly in off-road driving, giving the cabin a wide and open feel.

The cabin offers a range of advanced features such as dual-centre displays, which include an upper 12.3-inch multimedia touchscreen display that is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and a lower 7-inch display for navigation, audio and climate controls as well as other driver support function.

It features a colour head-up display, an 8-inch colour Multi-information Display (MID) in the cluster gauge, wireless charging for smartphones, and a 4-zone automatic climate control system with rear control switches. Owners also benefit from enhanced security with Lexus' first fingerprint-authentication push-button start switch.

Additional features include a 25-speaker Mark Levinson sound system with Quantum Logic Immersion QLI, Clari-Fi & PurePlay technology for precise, lossless audio and amazing 3-D surround sound experience. As with any Lexus vehicle, safety is a top priority for the all-new Lexus LX.

Drivers can enjoy complete peace of mind thanks to the Lexus safety system+, an advanced safety and driver assistance system that includes a Pre-Collision System

(PCS) with new features and expanded detection range. The system also includes Full-Speed Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC) with Curve Speed Reduction (RSR) that suppresses vehicle speed when entering a curve to offer additional acceleration upon exit.

Drivers also benefit from Lane Tracing Alert (LTA), Lane Departure Alert (LDA) and Adaptive High-beam System (AHB). In addition the car features a comprehensive array of safety features such as all-round SRS airbags including side-curtain airbags for the rear seats, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Traction Control (TRC), Anti-lock Brake System (ABS), Brake Assist (BA), Parking Support Brake (PKSB), Blind Spot Monitor (BSM), Multi-terrain Monitor (MTM) including Panoramic View Monitor (PVM),

Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA), Downhill Assist Control (DAC), Tyre Pressure Warning System (TPWS) and Drive Start Control (DSC) among many others.

For customers in pursuit of even greater comfort and luxury, the all-new LX has also been made available for the first time in its new Grandeur. The LX Grandeur model boasts exclusive interior features, including two large heated rear seats with ventilation and massage functions, up to 48 degrees of reclinability, a Rear Seat Entertainment (RSE) system with an 11.6-inch anti-reflective screen, and built-in ottoman support for the lower legs and calves.

For those seeking peerless responsiveness and exhilarating performance, the all-new LX is also available as 'Sport Edition'. The LX Sport Edition boasts exclusive interior and exterior features, including a distinctive black 'F' mesh-pattern grille trimmed in satin chrome, and 22-inch forged Black Premium Metallic alloy wheels that clearly set the Sport Edition apart from the rest of its range. The cabin comes with Aluminium Hadori ornamentation, a unique meter, textured steering wheel, custom-crafted Sporty seats, and aluminium pedals and scuff plates. Owners can choose from a range of six exterior colours including one exclusive to the LX Sport Edition model, namely White Nova GF. The interior is available in flare red and black variants.

For more information, please visit www.lexusoman.com or www.youtube.com/lexusoman or www.facebook.com/LexusOmanSBA or instagram.com/oman.lexus/. For further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Lexus Showroom.



OPAZ clean-up yields 1 tonne of fish net waste

BUSINESS REPORTER
DUQM, FEB 23

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), represented by the Environmental Awareness Team in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, organised a clean-up campaign on the theme, "Together for a Sustainable Environment in Duqm". The campaign supported the clean-up of the seabed near the Hamar Rock, opposite Nufoon Village in the Wilayat of Duqm, with the participation of 12 divers and volunteers.



In a bid to activate the partnership and cooperation between the public and private sectors, several entities participated in this initiative, namely, the Environment Authority, Royal Navy of Oman, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Royal Oman Police, Port of Duqm, Asyad Dry Dock and Renaissance Services Company.

Commenting on this campaign, Marwa bint Hamdoon al Hashmi, Environmental Inspector and Head of the Environmental Awareness Team in the Environmental Regulatory Department at SEZAD, said: "The continuous clean-up campaigns adopted by OPAZ, represented by SEZAD, are aimed to raise environmental awareness among the community about the impacts of wastes to the sea and land. The amount of waste that was extracted from the sea by the diving team, weighing over 1 tonne."

"The Environmental Regulatory Team of SEZAD seeks to organise such campaigns within an annual programme targeting many environmental aspects and instilling the environment conservation culture. This comes in the form of awareness programmes, clean-up campaigns and other programmes that come in partnership and cooperation with government bodies and companies operating in Duqm, with the support of the local community", Marwa explained.

Leading experts to chart aviation industry's roadmap to recovery at key summit

HAMMAM AL BADI
MUSCAT, FEB 23

The ninth edition of the Arab Aviation Summit (AAS), the region's leading aviation and tourism industry event, set to take place from February 28 to March 2 at Al Hamra International Exhibition & Conference Centre in Ras Al Khaimah, will feature a top-notch panel of global experts.

Following the overwhelming success of the eighth edition, which was also the first in-person aviation industry event held after the pandemic in the region, this year's summit focuses on the theme, "The Roadmap to Recovery".

With the global aviation and tourism sector gaining traction, the high-level event will underline the opportunities and challenges in ramping up the sector's growth,



with a particular focus on the Middle East region.

Ahead of the Summit on March 1, extensive workshops will be held to discuss the regional trends in aviation and tourism. Referred to as the 'voice of the industry', this initiative will also bring the largest assembly of Arab media together and top executives

GCC requires \$50 billion worth grid-related investments: Report

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 23

The GCC could require nearly \$50 billion of grid-related investments to support proposed capacity additions from renewables, according to Clean Energy – Going Beyond the Grid, a whitepaper prepared by Frost & Sullivan for Middle East Energy, the MENA region's most reputable and comprehensive event for the energy sector.

The whitepaper revealed that for the GCC to diversify its power mix, investment in large-scale renewables capacity additions is required and would need corresponding increased investment in transmission and distribution networks to eliminate inadequacies.

In line with the expected increase in grid-related investments, a report titled Global Power Transmission and Distribution Equipment Industry has highlighted the transmission and distribution equipment industry is expected to top \$312.8 billion globally by 2026, further underscoring its importance as a central theme when Middle East Energy returns to the Dubai World Trade Centre from 7-9



March 2022.

Azzan Mohammed, Exhibition Director, Global Energy & Utilities Forum and Middle East Energy, said: "At the very centre of harnessing renewable energy and making it available for consumers is effective transmission and distribution networks, which is why the sector continues to play a prominent role at the Middle East Energy exhibition and during dedicated conference sessions.

"With the value of the transmission and distribution equipment industry continuing to grow exponentially, a range of market leaders have already confirmed their attendance at Middle East Energy and will be showcasing the latest technologies and innovations supporting the delivery of renewable energy to end-users and, ultimately, delivering on the regions net-zero commitments."

In addition, a range of in-depth sessions as part of the Global Energy & Utilities Forum, including Grids of the Future, will address pressing industry issues, such as digital technologies for stabilising grids during the energy transition; the role of machine learning and AI in future grids; and the rise of the 'prosumer', someone who both produces and consumes energy, and their impact on grid development.

Road toll systems set to be a reality in Oman

FROM PAGE 13

Besides, it will help in developing and maintaining the road infrastructure sustainably," he stated.

The first toll system is anticipated to come up on a new truck road proposed to connect Thamrait with Salalah in Dhofar Governorate. It envisions the construction of an efficient, all-weather alternative to the current 85-km carriageway that, as part of the arterial Adam – Salalah, currently serves as the only lifeline connecting the north of Oman with Dhofar Governorate.

The latter's sharp bends and steep gradients, as its twists and turns through the Dhofar

Mountains, makes it prone to accidents and frequent traffic snarls. Furthermore, an upsurge in mining, quarrying and farming activity in the Thamrait area in recent years has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of heavy trucks and commercial vehicles headed to Salalah city and its transshipment hub.

According to Prof Belwal, technological advancements mean that modern toll roads will likely be equipped with seamless virtual electronic toll gates that do not require vehicle to pause at any barrier for payment of the user charge. Electronic toll systems will ensure smooth and congestion-free traffic flows, he added.

Madayn's investment opportunities highlighted at Expo 2020

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 23

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) is promoting the available investment opportunities in its network of industrial cities at Expo 2020 in the UAE. This comes in line with its vision in enhancing the Sultanate's position as a leading regional centre of manufacturing, ICT, innovation and entrepreneurship excellence, and its mission in attracting industrial investments and providing continued support, through regionally and globally

competitive strategies, good infrastructure, value adding services, and easy governmental processes.

Madayn officials are present at the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion at Expo 2020 to promote Madayn Investment Complexes in four industrial cities. At Sur Industrial City, investment opportunities are available in food investment complexes on an area of 42,000 sqm, and multiple industries investment complexes on an area of 41,000 sqm.

Moreover, Samayil Industrial City is offering investment opportunities in food investment



complexes (53,000 sqm), multiple industries investment complexes (22,000 sqm), and logistics investment complexes (61,000

sqm). The available investment opportunities at Suhar Industrial City include food investment complexes (60,000 sqm), multiple

industries (60,000 sqm), and plastic industries investment complexes (50,000 sqm).

Al Buraimi Industrial City also offers investment opportunities in food investment complexes (27,000 sqm) and multiple industries investment complexes (32,000 sqm).

Madayn is also promoting investment opportunities for industries derived from feasibility studies at Expo 2020, as Madayn in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, identified the investment opportunities in the industrial sector based on

preliminary feasibility studies on the local and international markets. As these opportunities have been identified, the investor need to carry out detailed feasibility studies for the targeted sectors such as plastic industries, food industries, building materials industries, among others.

Additionally, Madayn officials are highlighting the opportunities available in developing and operating infrastructure, with the aim of strengthening Public-Private Partnership in the development and operation of new industrial cities or strategic projects.

Credit Suisse leak is blow to bank’s wealth appeal

Credit Suisse’s private bankers are getting used to making difficult phone calls to their clients. Last year, massive trading losses briefly raised doubts about the Swiss bank’s solidity as a counterparty. Now, ultra-rich customers are probably wondering whether their account information is safe after a massive international reporting project based on leaked data. It’s the latest in a drip-drip of scandals that erode the bank’s appeal to the wealthy. Dozens of news organisations on Sunday published coordinated investigations that alleged Credit Suisse had served human rights abusers and sanctioned businessmen.

Examples included a spy chief implicated in torture, and officials accused of looting the country’s oil wealth. The bank said it “strongly rejects” allegations of historic wrongdoing and that 90% of the accounts in question were already closed or being closed, with 60% shut before 2015. There are good reasons to believe that Credit Suisse’s client roster has fewer unsavoury characters than in the past. Swiss banking’s appeal as a haven for hidden wealth has severely diminished since 2018, when the country started sharing account information with 100 other tax authorities under an international agreement. Besides, a string of recent scandals has prompted Credit Suisse Chief Executive Thomas Gottstein to frantically try to “de-risk” the bank — code for dumping clients that might cause financial or reputational harm.

Gottstein and his army of 3,500 wealth managers cannot breathe easy, though. Swiss financial watchdog FINMA is in contact with Credit Suisse, and said on Monday that “compliance with money laundering regulations has been a focus of our supervisory activities for years now”. It would be logical to ask how many of the bankers involved in opening shady accounts still work at the group. — Reuters

A string of recent scandals has prompted Credit Suisse CEO to frantically try to “de-risk” the bank — code for dumping clients that might cause financial or reputational harm



EXCHANGE RATE FALLS
A man walks past a board showing currency exchange rates of the US dollar and the euro against Russian ruble in Moscow. Russian stock indexes fell sharply, after Moscow recognised the independence of Ukraine’s two separatist regions and President Vladimir Putin sent troops into the Western-backed country. The dollar-denominated RTS index was down 10.8 per cent, and 32.5 per cent since the start of the year. The ruble-based MOEX fell by 8.8 per cent. The Russian currency also slid, with the ruble trading at more than 91 to the euro and 80.7 to the dollar. — AFP

Safeguarding public funds is a national duty



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

The decision of the State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution (SAI) to make public for the first time its annual report about instances of embezzlement, administrative and financial corruption in public institutions is welcome indeed. The latest report highlights corruption cases that persisted for several years that were detected by the Authority and handed over to the courts for prosecution and the recovery of stolen. Cracking down on financial abuse is a welcome in cleansing society from the clutches of corruption, nepotism, fraud, appropriation of public funds and laundering of stolen monies. According to the Authority’s latest report, several cases of corruption were unearthed by the SAAI leading to the

recovery of about RO 580 million (approx. \$1.5 billion) over the past five years. As many as 207 cases were filed as well in coordinated with the relevant authorities. It is imperative that instances related to the theft of public funds are brought to light in the interest of transparency and accountability. During the period from 2011 to 2020, the Authority followed up on many complaints and reports that were represented in many administrative and financial abuses, as well as delays in completing official transactions, abuse of power and playing in government tenders, in addition to the grievances of employees. The latest report is based on the State Financial and Administrative Audit Institute’s audit a total of 519 main and subsidiary bodies during the period 2011 to 2020.

Its thorough review of the finances of these bodies will help deter financial abuse in the future, as well as help to strengthen the role of government units tasked with monitoring and supervision the use of public funds. Every effort must be made to preserve the property and assets of government institutions from theft. The process of disclosure and transparency in these cases means enhancing the methods of integrity and propriety among workers in government institutions, the private sector and civil society during the next stage. Greater vigilance and supervision of public funds will ensure that government finances are utilised for their intended purposes, notably in implementation of development projects, which in turn will support job creation and socioeconomic benefits to the Omani population.

China’s real estate balancing act



YU YONGDING

The author, a former president of the China Society of World Economics and director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, served on the Monetary Policy Committee of the People’s Bank of China from 2004 to 2006

Despite strong global economic headwinds, not least from the Covid-19 pandemic, China managed to achieve 8.1 per cent GDP growth last year, its highest rate in a decade. With that, China met the International Monetary Fund’s expectations and far surpassed its own government’s 6 per cent target. But China’s economic performance is not quite as strong as it may seem, and not only because year-on-year growth figures were flattered by the pandemic-induced trough in 2020, when the growth rate slowed sharply, to just 2.3 per cent. China’s growth momentum was much weaker in the second half of the year (4 per cent growth, year on year) than in the first half (12.7 per cent), owing largely to the government’s efforts to rein in the real estate sector. China has good reason to be vigilant. Housing prices have roughly tripled over the past 20 years, with the ratio of home prices to annual income now averaging

43.15 in Shenzhen, 42.47 in Beijing and 33.36 in Shanghai, compared to 13.37 in London and 8.76 in New York City. This partly reflects the misallocation of resources: China has built too many skyscrapers, luxury hotels, and high-end apartments, and not nearly enough affordable housing. Speculation is also a concern. In order to stabilise housing prices, force real estate developers to deleverage, and reduce commercial banks’ exposure to the sector, the government introduced three major policy measures, which began to take effect in 2021. The first was the imposition of “three red lines” for developers. In August 2020, China’s government declared that a few large developers could not have a liability-to-asset ratio of more than 70 per cent, a net gearing ratio of more than 100 per cent, or a cash-to-short-term-debt ratio of more than 100 per cent. Last year, these red lines were applied to the entire real-estate sector. If crossed, regulators will impose tighter debt limits on developers. China also introduced new

caps on banks’ lending exposure to the real estate sector. For the big state-owned commercial banks, property lending cannot exceed 40 per cent of the total, and mortgage lending is capped at 32.5 per cent. Limits for smaller banks are determined by regulators based on size. Lastly, China overhauled how local governments sell rights to land. It is hoped that a limited number of centralised auctions will help to force down prices. These measures go a long way towards explaining why the cumulative growth rate of real-estate finance plunged from 54.2 per cent in January 2021 to 4.2 per cent in December. Over the same period, the cumulative growth rate of total house sales dropped from 133.4 per cent to 4.8 per cent in terms of square metres, and from 104.9 per cent to 1.9 per cent in terms of value. As a result, the cumulative growth rate of investment in real estate development in China fell from 38.3 per cent to 4.4 per cent, a sharp decline, even taking the base effect into account.

Not surprisingly, because of the large share of real estate investment, total investment growth also plummeted in 2021, from 35 per cent in January to 4.9 per cent in December. This does not bode well for China’s economic growth. Although investment’s contribution to GDP growth has decreased significantly since 2010, it remains important. Investment demand played a key role in fueling the economic recovery early last year. In fact, according to a 2020 World Bank report, the share of housing-related activities in both fixed-asset investment and GDP in China today far exceeds the levels in the United States at the peak of its housing boom in 2006. That is why, when GDP growth declined in the third quarter of 2021, China’s government tweaked its policies to curb excessive borrowing by property developers. China’s government has emphasised that policies to address financial vulnerabilities and structural problems should not impede economic growth. But, when it comes to the real estate

sector, that will not be an easy balance to strike, and, given the economy’s reliance on real estate, getting it wrong could have serious repercussions. China’s government should have adopted more expansionary fiscal and monetary policy last year to boost overall growth. It should have made more efforts to boost growth in infrastructure investment as well, to offset the negative impact of the slowdown of real estate investment on economic growth. In fact, infrastructure investment grew by a measly 0.4 per cent last year, compared to 0.9 per cent in 2020. The good news is that China’s government recently announced that stabilising growth is its top priority. China has ample room for implementing expansionary fiscal and monetary policy. Markets are confident that China will be able to achieve a growth rate of 5.5 per cent in 2022. With that, one hopes that the country’s lackluster GDP growth, which has continued for more than a decade, will finally end.

© Project Syndicate, 2022

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

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

أوربيت
ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

Tally
POWER OF SIMPLICITY

TALLY FOR VAT

For Tally Sales, Services or Customization

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

<https://www.asiasolutions.net>

TallyPrime

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2022 RAJAB 22, 1443 AH

Observer Classified Section

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

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

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

Tally is now available on the **Cloud**

Ask for FREE Demo

Think TALLY
Call 977 TALLY
(977 82559)

TallyPrime

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

VAT REGISTRATION, RETURN FILING, TAX CONSULTANCY

Contact: 9246 9602 / 9723 0025

SIT. WANTED

23-YEAR-OLD Indian, BCom, MBA graduate
2+years of experience, looking for Accountant job in Oman. Expert in Tally & MS Excel.
Mobile: 78654381. E-mail: ibruhim@gmail.com

EXPERIENCED Indian with BBA and Commerce graduate, looking for suitable openings in corporation jobs, admin and operation management jobs. Well verse in English, Arabic, Hindi and Urdu. Possess valid Oman driving license. Contact GSM 95236249, Email: shairazshkh80@gmail.com

المجرة للشحن اللوجستية
GCL GALAXY CARGO LOGISTICS

WORLD WIDE AIR & SEA CARGO SERVICES

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

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

M M T CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE

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

ROAD, SEA & AIR TRANSPORT WORLD WIDE

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

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

Quality Comes First

Tower Cranes & Passenger Lifts:

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

Steel Fabrication Works

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

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072

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

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY

Al Salama Polyclinic

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

Emergency number 94502100

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCE CARDS

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

ALL OVER INDIA EXPRESS DELIVERY

Online Tracking

TOLL FREE NUMBER 80066766

Service Available
www.alnamanicargo.com

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

95587410, 99785420, 99638698, 98523831

Branches
HO: RUWI - HAMRIYA, GHALA, AL AMRAT, SEEB, SOHAR, SUWAIQ

FOR RENT

INDIAN male (MBA) with 16 years of experience in finance and accounts in Oman. Seeks senior position, holds D/L and NOC. Currently in Oman and ready to join immediately.
Contact: 98820824.
E-mail: shamsu.arkd@gmail.com

INDIAN male graduate Executive Secretary/ Stenography/ Oman DL and Muscat experience available.
Contact 79256679.

PREVIOUS Oman experience in Outdoor Sales & Operations looking for suitable job opportunity. Oman Driving Licence. Expected Salary 850/.
00918281058000
igin.tom@gmail.com

21 YEARS of experience in Oman as an Accountant in different industries with 14 years of continuous service in a real estate company. Oman D/L and NOC available. Contact 92583726. Email: georgetvm@live.com

FOR RENT/INVESTMENT

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

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

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

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

GLOBAL Authorized Distributor & Reseller of AUTOKONTROL

Dual & Multi-Speed Limiters

Authorized distributor for AutoKontrol speed limiters in Oman.

Approved and installed at PDO/ OQ / Oxy sites.

Over 20,000 vehicle installations across Oman.

Drive by Wire (DbW) advanced technology.

International Certifications used in over 50 countries.

Wide range - fuel pump control, Drive by Wire, Multi Speed etc.

For inquiries, please contact us at:
P.O. BOX 2006, P.C. 130, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
+968 2422 2490 / 91 / 92 +968 99 396 0095 (Mama)
smo@fms-tech.com www.fms-tech.com

OPAL approved HMS Vendor since 2018

Authorized Distributor & Business Partner of **FMS TECH**

"Reseller Inquiries Welcome"

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

Food Service
Catering Supply
Ship Chandling
Re-export
Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
Fresh & Chilled Meat and Chicken
Dairy Product & Grocery Items

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

VIGAS CARGO
WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR

Transportation, Packing & Cargo Services

CARGO SERVICES BY AIR & SEA WORLD WIDE

DOOR TO DOOR DELIVERY IN INDIA, INDONESIA & UK

PROFESSIONAL PACKERS & MOVERS

MUSCAT - DUBAI - MUSCAT REGULAR TRANSPORT

H.O. Ruwi 99851366 92495068

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

vigas.cargo@yahoo.com

USED SHEET METAL FABRICATION MACHINES

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

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

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

BLOCKS 2 Industrial & 1 Commercial at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. Contact: 91111261, 99055407.

SERVICES

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

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

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

RENT A CAR

Buttercup Rent A Car

AMAZING OFFERS

○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.

○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts.
972494490.

LUXURIOUS

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

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

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

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

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

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

Our Services

KST Spare Parts
Car Accessories
KST Rent a Car

9478 2288

Al Eman Dental Clinic

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

+968 24834113
+968 97454854
+968 96438854

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

apave Apave Gulf LLC

We are hiring! Only Omani Nationals

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

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

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

ZEN POLYNE

"TARPAULIN WAREHOUSE IN OMAN"

INDIAN BRAND BEST QUALITY LLDPE TARPAULINE CROSS LAMINATED MULTI-LAYER TARPAULIN

FEATURES OF ZEN-POLYNE

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

RAVIRA

Please Contact: OMAN : +968 9329 1473 / 7937 1865
UAE : +971 5030 58676
Mail Id: raviraninternational@gmail.com Web: www.raviran.com

مخازن مغلقة ومبردة للإيجار في الدقم

COLD & CLOSE STORES FOR RENT AT DUQM

79111172
99333223
97777456
94111118

مميزات المخازن

- مواقع استراتيجي وقريبة من ميناء الدقم
- مساحة كل مخزن
- توفر كافة وسائل السلامة والوقاية من الحرائق
- تصل إلى ١٠٠٠ متر مربع

hitech

trust only in the best

OUR SERVICES

- CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE
- OIL & GAS EQUIPMENT TRADING
- MANPOWER SUPPLY
- TRANSPORTATION & HEAVY EQUIPMENT RENTAL
- ANTI-CORROSION COATING

TECHNICAL FOR GENERAL TRADING & CONTRACTING SPC

Office no: 31, 3rd floor, Building no: 537, Street no: 5016, Area- 24 P.O.Box: 125, P.C: 115, Ghala, Muscat

22386444 / 96790700
info@hitech-oman.com
HI-TECH GROUP Kuwait

www.hitech-oman.com www.hitechkw.com

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

Official distributor of **Schneider Electric**

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

Tel: +968 24832474, +968 79474556
E-mail: alkhooory@omantel.net.om • www.alkhoooryoman.com

*As proven in many virology lab tests

SHYCOCAN
Virus Attenuation Device

FOR ENQUIRY, OFFER OR PURCHASE CONTACT: 78676045

DISABLES COVID FAMILY VIRUSES

ATTENUATES COVID WITH 99.9% EFFICACY INDOORS

100% SAFE
EFFECTIVE
EASY TO USE
ROBUST

features

OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | editor@omanobserver.om



Hooked by Ikebana and the allure of floral arrangement

The art of floral arrangement uses plant materials and flowers to create eye-catching displays. Devyani Sampat, an Omani woman of Indian origin, has perfected this art and is now teaching local womenfolk a few tricks of the trade from her vast experience...**P20**

READ



TIME IS A MOTHER
BY OCEAN VUONG

In this deeply intimate second poetry collection, Ocean Vuong searches for life among the aftershocks of his mother's death, embodying the paradox of sitting within grief while being determined to survive beyond it.

DISCOVERY

Builders find 2,000-year-old Roman cemetery in Gaza

A 2,000-YEAR-OLD ROMAN CEMETERY containing at least 20 ornately decorated graves has been uncovered near the shoreline in the northern Gaza Strip, with the antiquities ministry calling it the most important local discovery of the past decade.

Gaza is rich with antiquities having been an important trading spot for many civilisations, from as far back as the ancient Egyptians and

the Philistines depicted in the Bible, through the Roman empire and the crusades.

Ruins discovered there include the remains of a siege by Alexander the Great as well as a Mongol invasion.

Twenty Roman graves have been located so far and the team expect to unearth 80 in total within the 50-square-metre cemetery. Only two graves have been opened, one



contained skeletal remains and some clay jars.

Because of the shape of the graves and the relatively ornate decorations, they likely belonged to

"senior ranking people" in the Roman empire during the first century, said Jamal Abu Rida, Director-General of Gaza's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

Unlike Muslim graves from later periods that face north to south, the Roman graves lie east to west, he said.

"We have made several discoveries in the past, this is the most important archaeological discovery in the past 10 years", said Abu Rida.

The area is closed off to journalists and the public while the site is organised and made safe for visitors, the ministry said.

The site, which is being supervised by a French team of experts, was found by a construction crew working on an Egyptian-funded housing project. When they came upon some of the cemetery's large, ancient bricks, they stopped work and called in the archaeologists.

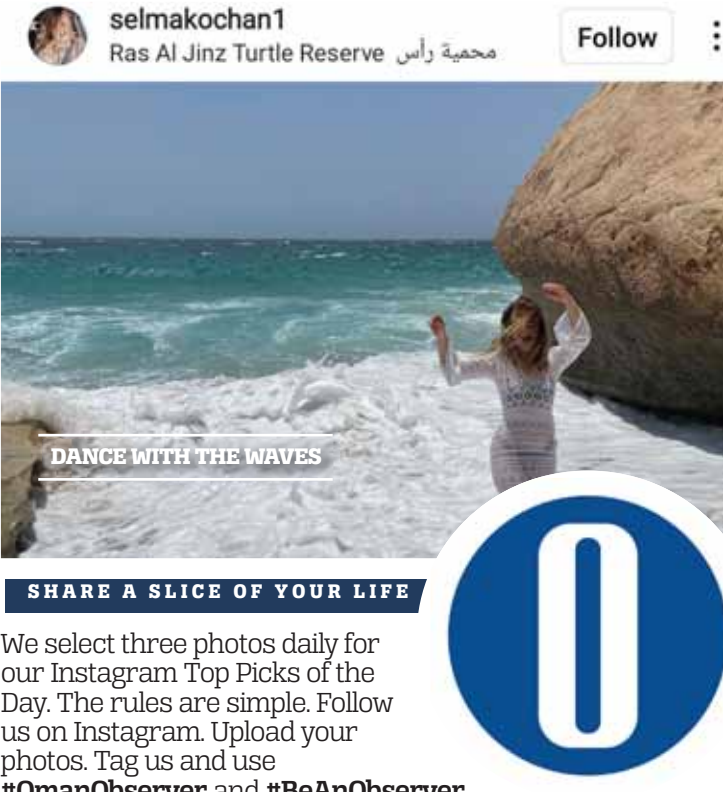
Gaza is run by the Palestinian group Hamas, which has fought four wars with Israel since 2008.

The conflict has crippled the local economy and authorities usually engage international groups to help excavate and preserve archaeological findings, said Abu Rida. — **Reuters**



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

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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



AROUND THE WORLD

CULTURE

A Chilean indigenous language vanishes as last native speaker dies



AN INDIGENOUS language from South America's extreme south has all but vanished after the death of its last living speaker and guardian of its ancestral culture.

Cristina Calderon died on Wednesday, aged 93. She had mastered the Yamana language of the Yagan community and after the death of her sister in 2003 was the last person in the world who could speak it. She worked to save her knowledge by creating a dictionary of the language with translations to Spanish.

"With her an important part of the cultural memory of our people is gone," said Lidia Gonzalez, Calderon's daughter, on Twitter. Gonzalez is one of the representatives currently drafting a new constitution in Chile.

The dictionary, however, meant there was hope of preserving the language in some form, she said.

"Although with her departure a wealth of especially valuable empirical knowledge is lost in linguistic terms, the possibility of rescuing and systematising the language remain open," she said.

Although there are still a few dozen Yagans left, over the generations people from the community stopped learning the language, which was considered "isolated" since it was difficult to determine the origin of its words.

Calderon lived in a simple house and made a living selling knitted socks in the Chilean town of Villa Ukika, a town created by the Yagan people on the outskirts of Puerto Williams.

The ancestral ethnic group used to populate the archipelagos of South America's extreme south, now Chile and Argentina, an area which nudges towards the frozen Antarctic.

— Reuters

ART

Long a Foundational Material, Concrete Is Now a Finishing Touch



TOWARDS THE END of 2019, Natalie Feltham started to look for a simple, minimal vessel for burning incense in her home.

She wanted something more austere than the clay or ceramic options she had seen, with "clean, symmetrical and sharp lines." But it "didn't really exist," she said. So, Feltham, 27, who lives in Hitchin, England, decided to make her own using concrete.

Acquiring the necessary materials wasn't that difficult, she said. Making concrete calls for just three ingredients: cement, water and aggregates, which are small particles of sand, gravel or stone. Cement is mixed with water to form a paste, which is combined with the aggregates and poured into a mold. As it hardens, the mixture becomes concrete.

"It's quite an easy medium to mix and make," said Feltham, who had noticed concrete being used to create counter-

tops and tiles, but "not really in small home pieces."

After finishing the incense burner, Feltham began using the material to make other décor and, in early 2020, started selling pieces via her line, Concrete Goods. Her boyfriend, James Goodwin Davies, 30, left his job as a graphic designer later that year to become the co-owner of Concrete Goods, which now sells candle holders, bowls, plates, soap dishes and, of course, incense burners that the two make using the material.

Their products are among a number of home furnishings made with concrete, which is creeping into categories more commonly associated with ceramics. On Etsy, there was a 49-per cent increase in searches for concrete or cement trays on the site in the past 12 months compared to the same period the previous year, as well as a

CULTURE

Easter Island 'Moai' stone statue begins long journey home



A HUGE "MOAI" statue, one of the iconic stone monuments from Easter Island, began its journey back home on Monday following a years-long campaign to get it returned to its original setting since it was housed in a museum in Santiago in the 19th century.

The 715 kilogramme (0.72 tonne) sculpture will be transported by truck to the Chilean port city of Valparaiso, from where it will set sail on a naval ship on a journey of about five days to reach remote Easter Island, known locally as Rapa Nui.

The initiative is part of a repatriation program seeking to return to the Pacific Ocean island ancestral remains, sacred and funerary objects. Similar negotiations have taken place to try to recover a specimen in the hands of the British Museum.

"For the first time, a Moai will return to the island from the mainland," Minister of Culture Consuelo Valdes told reporters.

"Without a doubt, this is part of a work that as a ministry we began years ago with the return of various collections and ancestors to their homeland."

Easter Island, over 2,000 miles (3,219 km) from the coast of Chile, has over a thousand stone statues, giant heads that were carved centuries ago by the island's inhabitants, which have brought it fame and UNESCO World Heritage Site status.

The Rapa Nui community held an act in honour of the icon at the National Museum of Natural History in the Chilean capital, which still retains two smaller sculptures. The statue will be housed in the Padre Sebastián Englert Anthropological Museum on the tourist island. — Reuters



Hooked by Ikebana and the allure of floral arrangement

By Liju Cherian
Insta: journocherie

Flowers are like my children; they have a beauty of their own. Cultivating flowers as a hobby helps me to de-stress", shared Devyani Sampat, an Omani national residing in the Sultanate of Oman for over 50 years.

An enthusiastic lady, Devyani today is popular among the floral community in Muscat. She has been demonstrating Ikebana and European style flower arrangements for over two decades.

Frangipani (Plumeria) flowers hold a special charm for her as this is especially available all over the Sultanate of Oman. The scent of the flower fills the air and is used in per-

While making any floral arrangement, she spends quality time and handpicks every flower according to the theme and mood needed to create them.

"I believe in quality in whatever I do and attaining perfection is my goal", says Devyani who attends various conventions in Japan and is connected to the famed Sogetsu School of Japan. As a student of Ikebana Sogetsu School of Japan she has attended various conventions in Japan gaining deep knowledge on floral arrangements.

What started as a likelihood for bonsai plants during a visit to India, was destined to change her concept towards plants and flowers.

From using farm pink roses, marigold, to making garlands for temples, she has a way with life.



fumes, warm oils and even medicines.

Inspired by the flowers, she formed the Frangipani Flower Arrangement Group in Muscat in October 2009.

Post Covid-19, she has plans to host a 'flower fashion show' using fresh flowers and unconditional natural materials like dry, fresh leaves, pods, twigs, seeds.

Hibiscus, Frangipani, Tuberose, Chrysanthemum, Gladiolus, Anthurium, roses, have a special love for her as these flowers are grown in the Sultanate of Oman.

Devyani is of the view that hobbies bring us joy and enrich our lives.

According to her, flowers promote positive stress. "This is needed for our daily lives and provides a healthy amount of challenge. They also help us to be more patient, increase confidence and self-esteem. Hobbies challenge and help us stretch our boundaries", she explains excitedly.

She makes it a point to remind me that life is more than just running around on constant routines. "Each of us needs a hobby to keep us mentally active and joyous. We owe it to ourselves."

She now has taken the task of teaching Omani ladies about the various aspects of making floral designs, which is now online due to the pandemic.

"I am sharing with my students what I have learnt all these years through careful attention and dedication and perseverance", she adds.

She plans to open retail shops in the interior areas, and also promote this as a home industry which will be of help during festivals like Eid, Diwali and Valentine's Day.

Devyani says flowers stay in vase fresh if conditioned properly for two weeks during winter, tending to its foliage and cropping leaves carefully.

She has visited many world flower shows and given demos in India and the Sultanate of Oman.

Devyani is also connected with National Alliance for Floral Associations (NAFA), World Association for Floral Artists (WAFA) and World Flower Council (WFC).

"I want to create awareness about this hobby and want to educate those interested about Ikebana, floral art and mould more floral artists", concludes Devyani.

