

PURKHOTTAH KANU EXCHANGE

مكتب التحويل المالي

SEND MONEY TO USA

SAME DAY CREDIT

SWIFTLY - SECURELY - SMARTLY

99101314, 99849289

customersupport@pkexchange.net

www.pkexchange.com

pkexch

@pkexchange1

DOWNLOAD OUR APP TODAY!

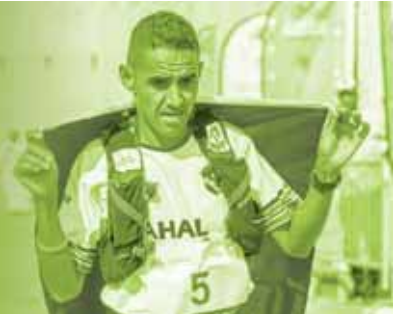
Google Play

App Store



P10

IMAD CLINCHES 20KM GOLD AT HIMAM TRAIL RUN RACE



P13

OMAN INVESTMENT AUTHORITY'S SPACEX STAKE TO SPUR GROWTH OF OMAN'S NASCENT SPACE INDUSTRY



P20

REVERED OMANI VIOLIN PERFORMER SHARES LOVE FOR MUSIC



MUSCAT

NEW PACKAGES FOR LOCAL, FOREIGN INVESTORS

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) will present this month a new package of investment opportunities in the industrial sector, which will include a pre-purchase agreement. According to Eng Sami bin Salem al Sahib, Director General of Industry, around 20 to 25 investment opportunities will be presented to Omanis as well as investors outside the Sultanate of Oman.

DETAILS ON P2

OVER 1,800 LIVING WITH HIV IN OMAN

The epidemiological situation of Aids in the Sultanate of Oman showed that the number of people living with HIV in the country reached 1,826 until the end of 2020 and 1,454 of them are under treatment (79 per cent of whom are males). Statistics, released by the Ministry of Health, indicated that the number of registered cases of Omanis increased to 147 (Aids patients and virus carriers) in 2020 compared to 135 cases in 2016.

DETAILS ON P5



INSIDE



PALESTINIANS SOCCER TEAM FOR AMPUTEES

P6



SCHOLZ CLOSER TO GERMAN CHANCELLERY

P8

OMAN-SAUDI TIES TOUCH NEW PEAK

S A U D I C R O W N P R I N C E V I S I T S S U L T A N A T E T O M O R R O W

MUSCAT: His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), will visit the Sultanate of Oman, on Monday.

A statement from the Diwan of Royal Court said that the visit is based on the deeply-rooted historical relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and is aimed at consolidating the bonds of love and affection between the two peoples.

The statement said that the visit comes to complement the outcome of the meeting of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his brother King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during His Majesty's visit to the KSA in July this year.

A number of fields and aspects of common concern will be discussed during the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown



Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to serve the aspirations of both peoples and their hopes of a more prosperous future.

Abdullah bin Saud al Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, said that the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown

Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, to the Sultanate of Oman, comes in confirmation of the deeply-rooted historical and distinctive relations binding the two countries. He added that it will be a historical visit as it will take the Omani-Saudi relations to broader horizons.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), the ambassador said that the visit of His Majesty

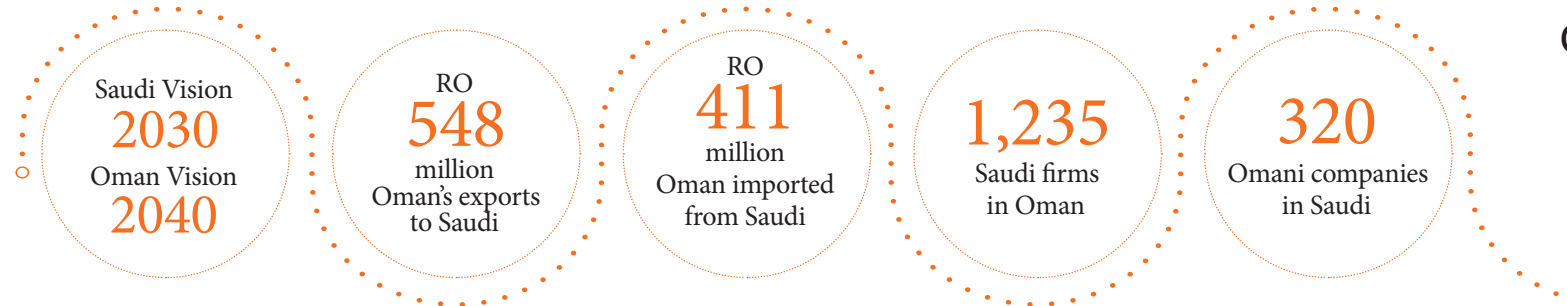


Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and his meeting with his brother King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, represented a quantum leap for the Omani-Saudi relationship established by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may Allah the Almighty have mercy on him,

after his first visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Today, he said, we are witnessing that clear path being continued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The ambassador added that this visit will bring about a qualitative leap and a new, prosperous and progressive stage that will be reflected in both countries and realisation of the aspirations of the two brotherly peoples.

SEE ALSO P3



Oman- Saudi partnership projects

- Khazaen Economic City
- Salalah-2 Independent Power Project
- Salalah Independent Water Project
- United Power Company (Manah IPP)
- Ibri-II solar-powered IPP

Misfat al Abriyeen named one of the best tourism villages

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, DEC 4

Misfat al Abriyeen added another feather on its cap when it was named as one of this year's Best Tourism Villages by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The list includes 44 villages from 32 countries across the world. The announcement came during the United Nations World Tourism Organization General Assembly held last week in Madrid, Spain.

Misfat Al Abriyeen in the Wilayat of Al Hamra, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah receives thousands of tourists every year. Nature lovers, people interested in heritage, and cross-country adventure flock to Misfat from within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

The village boasts amazing



terrace farms, beautiful alleys, and old houses built on top of solid rocks. The combination of these elements gives a visitor to Misfat Al Abriyeen a dramatic image from the viewing platform, which is a short walk from the entrance to the village. Over the past few years, inhabitants of Misfat Al Abriyeen are engaged in restoration and maintenance of

houses of the old town to serve as tourist destinations. It now has six hotels and heritage houses offering more than 70 rooms. Misfat Al Abriyeen village has been featured by Discovery channel and other international media. The Wilayat of Al Hamra is expected to see rapid growth towards the end of 2021 after the launch of the zipline project at Misfat Al Abriyeen.

PDO to inaugurate its second-largest project

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) will inaugurate the Yibal Khuff Project (YKP), the second-largest project in its history, under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, on Monday.

YKP Project, located 50 km away from Fahud, is among the strategic projects that contribute to meeting the Sultanate of Oman's growing medium and long-term oil and gas demands, as well as reducing PDO's net non-associated gas import.

The \$2.6-billion project involves the drilling of 33 oil and gas production wells linked to the main station with a 198-kilometre pipeline network, in addition

to a station to generate 45 megawatts of electricity with a unit to reuse the heat emanating from the generators' exhaust to produce the steam required for the liquid sulfur production process, he said adding that this mega project will be delivering, when fully operational, five million cubic metres of gas per day and around 20,000 bpd of crude.

The project generates over \$300 million of In-Country Value (ICV) with focus being placed on the investment in Omanis through the training and qualification.

Around 1,200 Omanis have been employed on site in the construction of the facilities, with a further 200 nationals deployed as fully qualified welders. — ONA

■ MINISTRY OF LABOUR CONDUCTS TEST FOR JOB-SEEKERS



NIZWA: The Ministry of Labour conducted tests for job-seekers who have applied for 48 vacancies in a number of public establishments, at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, on Saturday. A total of 503 applicants underwent tests amid precautionary measures required by the Supreme Committee on Covid-19. — ONA



Philippines amends quarantine rule for jabbed

VINOD NAIR

[@vinot_nair](#)

The Philippines has amended the testing and quarantine protocols for countries not classified under the Red List category, the country's embassy in the Sultanate of Oman said on Saturday.

Even fully vaccinated travellers from Oman, which was recently included in the green list, will have to undergo an institutional quarantine on arrival in the Philippines.

The country's Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) updated the testing and quarantine protocols for all international passengers entering the Philippines.

Fully vaccinated travellers will be required to present a negative RT-PCR test result taken within 72 hours before departure. On arrival in the Philippines, they will undergo facility-based quarantine and will re-take a swab test upon the fifth day. Regardless of a negative result, they are required to undergo home quarantine up to their 14th day upon arrival.

For individuals who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, and whose vaccination status cannot be independently validated, are required to present a negative RT-PCR test done within 72 hours before their departure from their country of origin.

They are also to go under facility-based quarantine upon arrival in the Philippines and re-take a swab test on the seventh day from their arrival.

Even if they get a negative result, they are also required to undergo home quarantine up to the 14th day from their arrival.

Minors will follow the testing and quarantine protocol of the parent or guardian travelling with them, regardless of the minor's vaccination status and country of origin.

Airlines have been directed to ensure that they allow only passengers who comply with the negative RT-PCR test protocol.

New packages for local, foreign investors to be announced

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, DEC 4

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) will present this month a new package of investment opportunities in the industrial sector, which will include a pre-purchase agreement.

According to Eng Sami bin Salem al Sahib, Director General of Industry, around 20 to 25 investment opportunities will be presented to Omanis as well as investors outside the Sultanate of Oman.

In the last four months, the ministry succeeded in attracting two key investments — the establishment of an international bakery for the manufacture of pastries and baked products, with an investment volume of more than RO15 million through an agreement with Khazaen City and Atyab Bakery.

The other investment in the range of RO7 million to 10 million will be plastics, which will also come up in Khazaen City.

Reception for *Shabab Oman II* today

MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) will hold an official reception on Sunday on the return of its sail ship *Shabab Oman II*, under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, at the Said Bin Sultan Naval Base.

On November 7, *Shabab Oman II* set sail on her fifth international tour to a number of ports of the GCC countries. The ship also participated in Dubai 2020 Expo in the UAE in coordination with the general commission of the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion and the GCC Secretariat-General. — ONA



دار الأوبرا السلطانية مسقط
ROYAL OPERA HOUSE MUSCAT

SEASON 2022

January - May



Book online now at rohmuscat.org.om
or through our app

10
YEARS
ANNIVERSARY
2011-2021



THE VISIT OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN BIN ABDULAZIZ AL SAUD IS REINFORCED BY THE STATE VISIT MADE BY HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK TO KSA IN JULY

BIG BOOST TO RELATIONS

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continue to foster their firm relations in various fields to realise the interests of their brotherly peoples under the wise leaderships of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The visit of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister

and Minister of Defence of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to his second country, the Sultanate of Oman on Monday, comes within the same context and is reinforced by the state visit made by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to KSA in July. That visit culminated in the signing of a number of agreements, most notably the establishment of the Omani-Saudi Joint Coordination Council between the governments of the

two brotherly countries.

Through this council, the two countries will work on continuous coordination and consultation on matters and topics of common interest in all fields and the fostering of cooperation between them. Besides, the two countries will sign many agreements and memoranda of understanding with a view to achieving common interests.

Over the past five decades, the two neighbouring countries built

strong fraternal relations that have been reflected in a number of fields including the signing of the border demarcation agreement in March of 1990 as well as the mutual understandings that are marked by cooperation and respect in various regional and international issues either in the level of the foreign ministries of both countries or within the GCC framework which seeks through its basic system, to achieve cooperation between

its six member states as well as reinforcing their regional and international roles to achieve peace and security.

This cooperation and interdependence was stressed at the "Sultan Qaboos, Shaikh Sabah Summit" which was held in the city of Al Ula in Saudi Arabia last January. The summit stressed the need to strengthen the regional and international role of the GCC bloc through developing strategic partnerships between

the GCC and countries groups, and regional and international organisations to serve common interests as well as promoting military integration among the GCC states under the supervision of the Joint Defence Council, the Supreme Military Committee and the unified military command. The aim is to face emerging challenges based on the joint defence agreement and the principle of collective security for the GCC states. — ONA

Crown Prince's visit to bolster historic ties: Saudi ambassador

MUSCAT: Abdullah bin Saud al Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, said that the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, to the Sultanate of Oman comes in confirmation of the deep-rooted historical and distinctive relations binding the two countries. He added that it will be a historical visit as it will take the Omani-Saudi relations to broader horizons.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), the ambassador said that the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and his meeting with his brother King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and His Royal Highness Prince

Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, represented a quantum leap for the Omani-Saudi relationship established by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, may Allah the Almighty have mercy on him, after his first visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Today, he said, we are witnessing that clear path being continued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

The ambassador added that this visit will bring about a qualitative leap and a new, prosperous and progressive stage that will be reflected in both countries and realisation of the aspirations of the two brotherly peoples. The visit will contribute to the strengthening of cooperation and achieving integration and harmony in all fields, as there are common denominators between Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030.



The ambassador said that the achievements made by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of KSA and the initiatives and projects he had announced are due to His Highness's outstanding leadership personality and his insightful and serious vision that contributed to the realisation of these achievements that became a

source of pride for the Saudi, Arab and international peoples.

His Royal Highness the Crown Prince has become the focus of the world's attention and a role model in terms of accuracy, achievement, and commitment to his inspiring and ambitious thought, energy. With these achievements he reduced years and moved the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to advanced stages compared to many countries of the world. His Highness's directives had made a great impact on strengthening some international concepts such as transparency, governance and accountability which contributed to raising the efficiency of performance and government procedures and reducing financial expenditures, the ambassador said.

The ambassador indicated that the visit reflects the ideal relationship between the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), especially that the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are among the largest countries and founders of the GCC.

He added that the economic and investment relations are the title of the current stage between the two brotherly countries.

As for the political relations, both countries are consistent in many fields and they act within the scope of the GCC. There is a congruence between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in terms of visions and the continuous joint consultation between them especially that both countries seek to promote the values of peace, mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

The ambassador described the economic and investment relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as excellent, however the two leaderships are looking forward to taking these relations to the next level especially after the opening of the Empty Quarter outlet which is expected to make a qualitative leap in many fields between the two countries. — ONA

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkutttyp

BUILDING A KNOWLEDGE-SOCIETY is one of the priorities of a government as it forms the foundation of a country's development. Hence sustained efforts are made to acquire a great deal of cumulative and fruitful know-how. In the Sultanate of Oman, the authorities believe in the use of research results to sustain national development plans and find solutions to the issues facing its society through innovations.

Research and innovation in the country is inspired by the speech of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on February 23 last year when he said, "On top of our national priorities is the education sector. It will receive full attention, and it will be provided with a supporting environment, which motivates research and innovation."

Oman Vision 2040, the gateway to become a developed nation under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, aims at promoting the country's position in different sectors over the next two decades.

For this purpose, the Vision document sketches "a national system that empowers human capabilities in the educational sector and nurtures scientific research, innovation, and creativity to build a knowledge-based economy and society".

The National Innovation Strategy (NIS) guides the country's institutions to place the NIS's initiatives as the top priorities to achieve Oman Vision 2040. This has led to the increase in the number of indicators of the country on the Global Innovation Index (GII).

ENRICHING RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

The Vision 2040 stresses on improving educational outcomes that have become necessary to build the Omanis' confidence in their identity and commitment to their social values.

In line with the other sectors, the research and innovation sector at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) continues its efforts in building research and innovation capabilities.

It has developed the Oman Research Portal, which aims to establish an integrated system to provide many electronic platforms and complementary tools to facilitate and enrich the research environment in the country.

During 2020, MoHERI funded as many as 248 research projects through the Block Funding Programme, covering research support grants for holders of PhD, master's and bachelor degrees, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students who are studying abroad at their own expense.

A total of 28 governmental and private institutions in the country benefited from the support for this year, including various communications and IT sectors, the environment and natural resources sector, the health and community service sector, the energy and industry sector, and the education and human resources sector.

The financial

aid provided to support and finance the approved research projects has amounted to RO 1.2 million.

Through the portal, a researcher can submit their research proposal from anywhere with Internet access. The results of the evaluation of the submitted proposal and evaluation reports can also be followed up through the portal. The researcher can access the portal if their institution is affiliated with the ministry or if they are registered as independent researchers.

CHALLENGES

Acknowledging the key role of innovation as a driver of economic development, it will be necessary for policymakers to be able to measure and assess outcomes. For this, they will require innovation indicators beyond the traditional metrics of inputs, such as the level of funding of research and development. The Sultanate of Oman's economy is dominated by large firms that operate mostly in the petrochemical and natural resources, construction and trade sectors. Even though the innovative activity in those companies is not negligible, it is insufficient to spur innovation throughout the economy and buttress the functioning of a meaningful national innovation system.

Recent studies stress on the need for a system that will enhance marketing of research output through raising awareness in the business sector about the added value of research. It should be made mandatory that the private sector allocates a portion of their annual net profit to finance research and development.

This should be in exchange for benefiting from the know-how and activities of universities and higher education institutions in developing their production programmes. Also there should be a joint database between researchers and institutions to achieve better results, and increasing exchange visits by researchers.

One of the major challenges facing research is how to convince the private sector to support and engage in research projects. Also, there is a lack of diversity in funding sources for researchers, like research agreements with more international research centres and universities.

Much like in other areas, most research is concentrated in Muscat, with just under half of the identified universities and colleges located in the capital areas. Recently, Al Batinah North has emerged as a centre for research and innovation.

The government has been leading on several Smart City hackathons aimed at fostering the youth, entrepreneurs and businesses to generate applications and proof of concepts leveraging data in key areas of growth in line with the Vision 2040.

No doubt, establishment of an efficient national innovation system can lead to a more diversified, more productive and more sustainable economy, with higher quality and more attractive jobs.

2040

Oman Vision 2040 sketches a national system that empowers human capabilities in the educational sector and nurtures scientific research, innovation and creativity to build a knowledge-based economy and society

FOR A
KNOWLEDGE
SOCIETY

Ensuring bright future for kids with disability

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

The Sultanate of Oman assures better living standards and inclusive society for people with disabilities and the Vision 2040 guarantees advanced amenities for future, according to experts in caring for children with disabilities.

The future route map of the nation has clearly stated a clear path to establish a very bright future for these needy children while elevating their positive mindedness towards life.

"However, we will need to give more prioritisation, funding, policies and plans for early diagnosis, early screening and rehabilitation at a national level," said Dr Watfa al Mamari (pictured), Senior Consultant, Developmental Paediatrician at the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

A lot of work has been done towards this cause and the need for more research and data is vital to help us define our own special demands and prevention, according to her.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 1 billion people, about 15 per cent of the global population, currently experience disability,



As many as 0.2 per cent of children in the Sultanate of Oman aged 0 to 14 years are on the autism spectrum

DR WATFA AL MAMARI

Senior Consultant

and it is expected that the number will increase due to many factors including the fact that people are living longer and as a result, more people are living with chronic diseases and the other important etiologies of disabilities such as child developmental conditions like cerebral palsy and autism continue to exist.

One billion people experience some form of disability, and one-fifth of the estimated global total experience significant disabilities. A report from the National Centre for Statistics and

Information (NCSI) based on the 2020 census says that the number of Omani people with disabilities reached 42,304 (1.55 per cent of Omanis) with different types of disabilities.

"As many as 0.2 per cent of children in the Sultanate of Oman aged 0 to 14 years are on the autism spectrum. This estimate is about 15 times higher than a 2011 finding as per a study by the Developmental Paediatric Unit at SQUH, Royal Hospital and Al Masarra Hospital in 2019," Dr Watfa said.

It was found that only 1.4 cases per 10,000 children in the Sultanate of Oman have autism. That was the only study of autism prevalence in the country.

"These figures are still below the international prevalence figures hence more efforts are required to be able to estimate the magnitude of the problems," adds Dr Watfa.

The number of rehabilitation services in the country has increased dramatically since 2010 until today, especially for children with autism.

Vision 2040 envisages that providing intervention at a very early childhood age is fundamental for successful inclusion and was proven scientifically over the years.

Over 1,800 living with HIV in Oman

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabalnasseri

The epidemiological situation of Aids in the Sultanate of Oman showed that the number of people living with HIV in the country reached 1,826 until the end of 2020 and 1,454 of them are under treatment (79 per cent of whom are males).

Statistics, released by the Ministry of Health, indicated that the number of registered cases of Omanis increased to 147 (Aids patients and virus carriers) in 2020 compared to 135 cases in 2016. The ministry said that the increase in the number of reported cases during the past years is due to the beginning of a gradual decline in the concept of stigma associated with the disease, the application of protocols related to the confidentiality of medical examinations, the availability of necessary medicines for treatment and the delay in deterioration of cases, which encouraged patients to visit health institutions for examination and treatment, in addition to cases discovered during pregnancy tests.

As for the mortality due to the disease, 24 deaths were recorded during 2020, including 17 deaths from the infected during the previous years, and 7 deaths from infections only reported in 2020.

This comes in light of the participation of the Sultanate of Oman with countries around the world in the celebration of World



Aids Day, which falls on the 1st of December every year under the slogan "Eliminating inequalities as a means to eradicate Aids." This year's theme is to address the inequalities that are increasing cases of Aids, to reach people who do not currently receive basic HIV services, and to contribute towards efforts to end Aids and make the world a healthier place.

The Ministry of Health has intensified its efforts to reduce the spread of HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases in society in general and the most vulnerable groups in particular. It works to improve health, physical, psychological and social conditions of people living with HIV, reduce complications of the disease, reduce death rate due to opportunistic diseases associated with Aids, treat those infected with sexually transmitted diseases and work to encourage and support the efforts of civil organisations working in the field of combating behaviours that lead to HIV infection.

The ministry said in an awareness bulletin that the virus can be transmitted through the body fluids of an infected person, such as: blood, breast milk, semen and vaginal secretions. The virus can be passed from a mother to her baby during pregnancy and childbirth. The infection is not transmitted by normal daily contact, such as kissing, hugging, shaking hands, or sharing personal items, food or water.

It should be noted that HIV-infected people who receive antiretroviral therapy and whose virus is suppressed, do not transmit the infection to their partners. Therefore, early access to antiretrovirals and continuous treatment is crucial not only to improve the health of people living with HIV, but also to prevent transmission of the virus to others.

According to the World Health Organization, HIV continues to be a major global public health issue, having claimed 36.3 million lives so far.

38th anniversary of Sultan Qaboos' inauguration as great scout marked

AMAL AL RIYAMI

NIZWA, DEC 4

The General Directorate of Education in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, represented by the Scouts and Guides Department, celebrated the 38th anniversary of the inauguration of late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos as the Greatest Scout of the Sultanate of Oman.

The ceremony proclaimed the ideals of love, giving and loyalty, inculcated in the members of the Scouts and Guides movement. It was also an occasion for celebrating the progress of the movement and the concerted efforts of its members to achieve goals under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran by scout Al Molhem bin Said al Tobi from the Mohammed bin Masoud Scout band.

Speaking on the occasion, Saif al Julandani, Director-General, said: "I am pleased to extend to you my best wishes and congratulations as we celebrate together the 38th anniversary of the inauguration of



late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos — may his soul rest in peace — as a great scout of the Sultanate of Oman. That is the most valued occasion in the history of the Omani scouting and guiding movement, and the most prominent historical scouting event on the international scene.

"Since the Omani Renaissance, the youth have received generous patronage from His Majesty. The Scouts and Guides movement in the country received a great deal of support, which helped it achieve a prominent position among its counterparts in the Arab and international

scout associations. We were all inspired by him in work and giving. It also made its presence felt in various fields at the Arab and international levels. This movement consolidates educational values and demonstrates the pioneering role in serving and developing society and instilling good citizenship among our student scouts and guides," Al Julandani added.

"As we celebrate this anniversary along with the celebrations of the 51st glorious National Day, in the name of all the members of the Scouts and Guides movement, we renew the promise and loyalty to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. We are determined to contribute and participate in advancing comprehensive development and consolidating the principles of loyalty and obedience — an affirmation of the role of human resources in achieving the vision of the Omani Renaissance."

A visual on "Oman's Renewed Renaissance" was presented, in which Dr Azzan bin Khalfan al Hasani and Dhawi bin Salim Awlad Thani, and Dr Taiba bint Mohammad al Mahrouqi and Dr Huda bint Saud al Abri participated.



JOB OPPORTUNITY وظيفة شاغرة

Great opportunity to join reputed company looking for a dynamic and energetic coffee machine or electronic appliances technician.

Interested candidates may submit their CV to the following Email:

فرصة عظيمة للانضمام إلى شركة مرموقة تبحث عن فني مكان صنع القهوة أو فني أجهزة إلكترونية يتمتع بالحياة والنشاط في العمل. يمكن للمرشحين الراغبين إرسال سيرتهم الذاتية إلى البريد الإلكتروني الآتي:

hradmncf12@gmail.com

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the Observer classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (56/2021)

Specialized Companies in the field of tender shown below and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents from the website through the following link:

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

against non-refundable fees until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/21/059 (Re-Call-01)	2021/MM/ QS-29 (Re-Call-01)	Annual Maintenance of Arches Fountain at AL Qurm (Re-Tender) (E- Tender)	Rial 25	12/12/2021	19/12/2021	Excellent

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1 %) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200/24402330).

Macron talks regional stability on Saudi visit

JEDDAH: French President Emmanuel Macron met Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince in Jeddah on Saturday to discuss regional stability, in particular crisis-hit Lebanon.

Macron landed in Red Sea city after visits to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar as part of a short Gulf tour.

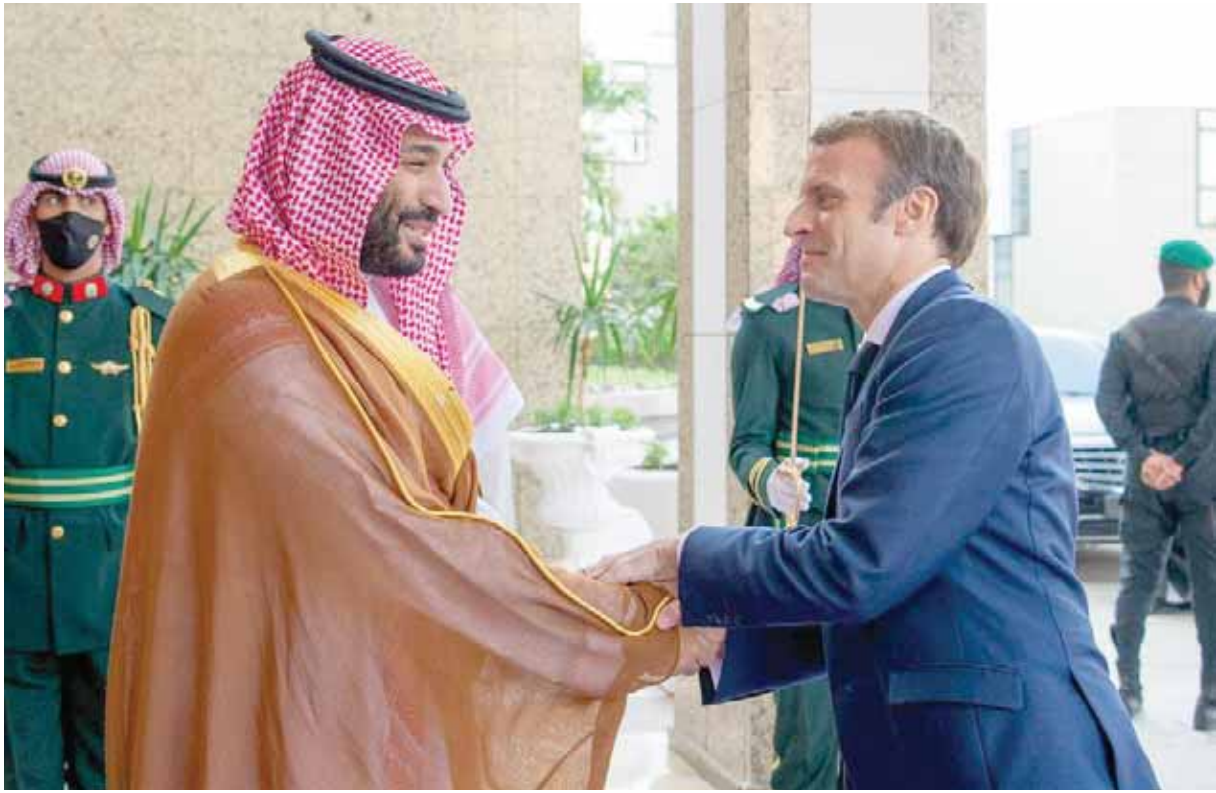
Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman shook hands with Macron, who wore a face mask, welcoming him at the royal palace before talks and a lunch together.

He becomes one of the first Western leaders to meet with Prince Mohammed in the kingdom. Dialogue with Saudi Arabia was necessary to "work for stability in the region", Macron said on Friday.

"I note that Saudi Arabia had organised the G20 summit... not many powers boycotted the G20," said Macron.

During his discussions with Prince Mohammed, Macron is expected to plead the case of Lebanon, where an economic crisis has been exasperated by a diplomatic row sparked in October between Beirut and some Gulf states — in particular Saudi Arabia which had blocked imports. His efforts are likely to receive a boost by the resignation of Lebanese information minister Georges Kordahi.

Macron on Friday welcomed Kordahi's departure, saying he hopes to "re-engage all Gulf coun-



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman receives French President Emmanuel Macron in Jeddah on Saturday. — SPA

tries in relations with Lebanon".

The French president has spearheaded international efforts to help Lebanon out of its worst-ever economic downturn.

The country's fragile government has been struggling to secure international aid, particularly from Arab powers.

Kordahi said on Friday his resignation, which he had initially ruled out, became inevitable earlier this week when he met Lebanon's prime minister.

"I understood from Prime Minister Najib Mikati... that the

Macron becomes one of the first Western leaders to meet with Prince Mohammed in the kingdom

French want my resignation before Macron's visit to Riyadh because it could maybe help them start a dialogue with Saudi officials over Lebanon and the future of bilateral ties," Kordahi told reporters.

Macron said France had a role

to play in the region.

"But how can we work for regional stability and on Lebanon and many other issues while ignoring the first Gulf state in terms of geography and size?" he said, referring to the kingdom which is the Arab world's largest economy, and the world's biggest crude exporter.

On Friday, the UAE signed a record \$15.8 billion contract for 80 French Rafale warplanes and committed billions of euros in other deals during Macron's stop-over. — AFP

Palestinians launch national football team for amputees

GAZA CITY: Players in the Gaza Strip used crutches and prosthetic legs on Thursday to stretch, run and dribble as part of the first-ever Palestinian national team that hopes to qualify for the Amputee Football World Cup.

The team trained at the Palestine Stadium in Gaza City under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The 20 players on the team were selected from among five Gaza clubs for players who lost limbs.

Player Hassan Abu Kareem, 38, said his leg was amputated after he was injured in an Israeli raid on Al Maghazi refugee camp in 2006. "From the moment of injury, my life has not changed," he said.

"I continued with my ambition and great goal in life, and my goal is to represent Palestine and to make an

achievement for myself in the field of sports." Red Cross spokeswoman Suhair Zakkout said the players were setting a new Palestinian standard after the first local team began in 2019 with several players.

"Today, these players make history by forming the first national football team for amputees," she said.

Zakkout said the players were training for qualifying matches to be held in March 2022 in Iran. If the team succeeds, they will go on to the Amputee Football World Cup, slated to be held in Turkey in late 2022.

Fuad Abu Ghaliun, chairman of the Palestine Amputee Football Association, said his group applied to join the World Amputee Football Federation in 2019. Their candidacy was accepted earlier this year. — AFP



Palestinian players with disabilities take part in a training session in Gaza City. — AFP

Jordanian flies the world from homemade basement cockpit

AMMAN: Jordanian Muhammad Malhas has long harboured dreams of being a pilot. Now at 76 years old, he's soaring above the clouds in a cockpit he built in his basement. "Since the beginning of time, man has been watching the birds in the sky, and dreaming of flying freely," Malhas said.

As a boy, he enjoyed flying his kite and wondering how something so flimsy made of paper could soar so high.

"It was then the desire and love of flying began to obsess me," he added, sitting in the flight simulator, a replica of the cockpit of a Boeing 737-800, which he has spent three years building from scrap and secondhand items.

"My heart was always hanging in the sky, and my dream was to become a pilot, but circumstances did not allow it," he said.

He graduated in hospital management from a London university in 1969, and went to work with his father at the Amman hospital the family had founded.

But Malhas kept his dreams alive, devouring books on aviation, aircraft engineering and guides to learning how to fly.

He even joined the Royal Jordanian Air Academy in 1976, rising before dawn to take flying lessons in a small Piper aircraft, before heading to work. He obtained his licence two years later.

For almost a decade he was a member of the Jordanian Gliding Club, taking to the skies every weekend.

And by 2006, he was flying virtually thanks to flight software he downloaded on his computer.

He joined a global network of



Muhammad Malhas sits at his flight simulator cockpit at his home in Jordan's capital Amman. — AFP

flight simulator fans, where they could fly in almost real conditions directed by an air traffic controller.

"We were a group of about 30 to 40 friends, aviation enthusiasts

from different countries chatting about flying virtually in our spare time.

"We used to fly to Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad... even

My heart was always hanging in the sky, and my dream was to become a pilot, but circumstances did not allow it

MUHAMMAD MALHAS
Jordanian flier

Britain and the US. Sometimes we sat for six hours on computers as if we were flying real flights," he said.

Now retired, his life-long passion has taken a new spin. Sat in front of three large screens, equipped with switches and indicators, in his homemade

cockpit, Malhas has the world at his fingertips.

All the parts were bought at local markets. The chairs were originally part of a bus.

The screens show pictures of clouds and sky above, rivers, forests and deserts below. He can even choose what the weather outside is like.

The work took three years, with the help of friends who are electronic engineers. And it cost around 6,000 dinars (\$8,400).

His friend Ahmed Fares, 25, helped installing switches and indicators which "respond to the conditions of the plane, so that it looks like a real plane flying".

Sometimes his wife joins Malhas in the cockpit. "I think it is amazing to fly while sitting at home and to feel the joy of flying around the world," he said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

TUNIS

Tunisia records first case of Omicron variant

Tunisia recorded its first confirmed case of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus in a Congolese man who arrived from Istanbul, the health minister said.

Ali Mrabet said the 23-year-old man tested positive and all fellow travellers on his flight from Turkey were contacted by Tunisian authorities to be tested as well.

The Omicron variant was first announced by South Africa but has since been discovered to have been present earlier



in Europe. It has prompted governments around the globe to reimpose travel restrictions, despite warnings from the WHO this could do more harm than good. — AFP

UNITED NATIONS

Sudan urged to respect freedom of the press

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres urged authorities in Sudan to respect freedom of expression and the press, calling the coup-stricken country hostile to journalists in a report submitted on Friday to the Security Council.

Hundreds of political activists, journalists, protesters and bystanders watching anti-coup rallies were arrested following the country's latest upheaval on October 25.

On that date military chief



General Abdel Fattah al Burhan seized power and detained Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok, but after international condemnation and the mass protests he reinstated the premier in a November 21 deal. — AFP

DUBAI

UAE signs deal for French Rafale fighter jets

The UAE has signed a deal for 80 French-made Rafale fighter jets, the biggest international order ever made for the warplanes, officials said during a visit by French President Emmanuel Macron. The UAE, one of the French defence industry's biggest customers, also agreed to buy 12 Caracal military transport helicopters, the French presidency said.

"This is an outcome of the strategic partnership between the two countries, consolidating



their capacity to act together for their autonomy and security," the statement said. The Rafale order is the biggest made internationally for the aircraft since it entered into service in 2004. — AFP

In brief

■ JAKARTA



ONE KILLED AS INDONESIA'S SEMERU VOLCANO ERUPTS

At least one person was killed and 41 suffered severe burns after the Semeru volcano in Indonesia's East Java province erupted on Saturday, officials said. The eruption sent residents fleeing as a huge column of smoke blanketed nearby villages in darkness, turning day into night.

In addition to one known death and injuries, two people were missing and eight stone miners were trapped following the eruption, Indah Masdar, deputy district chief of Lumajang, said in a televised news conference. "We hope that those trapped can be rescued soon. Their families are crying and anxious about their fate," she said. — dpa

■ KATHMANDU



STOLEN NEPALI STATUE RETURNS TO ITS TEMPLE FROM US

A centuries-old sculpture of two Hindu gods was re-installed at its temple in the Nepali capital Kathmandu, nearly 40 years after it was stolen and later emerged in the US. The stone statue of the gods Laxmi and Narayan was repatriated to Nepal in March by the Dallas Museum of Art and the FBI after a months-long investigation by Nepali and American activists and officials.

It was taken from the temple in 1984 and appeared on display at the Dallas museum six years later, on loan from a collector.

The work, dating back to between the 12th and 15th centuries, is one of a handful of cultural artefacts returned to Nepal from foreign museums and collectors this year. — AFP

■ MANILA



COURT ALLOWS MARIA TO TRAVEL TO ACCEPT NOBEL PRIZE

A Philippine court allowed Filipino journalist Maria Ressa, who faces travel restrictions due to legal cases, to travel to Norway to personally accept the Nobel Peace Prize. In granting her travel permission, the Court of Appeals ruled that Ressa has proven that she is 'not a flight risk' and that the travel to Oslo was "necessary and urgent."

"Any allegation that Ressa would be absconding is merely speculative at this moment," the court said, rejecting the solicitor general's objection to her request to travel. Ressa is the first Filipino to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. — dpa

Solomon Islands girds for further protests

HONIARA: The Solomon Islands is bracing for further political unrest, with fresh protests and a vote of confidence in the country's prime minister slated for Monday.

The US State Department has warned citizens of possible "demonstrations leading up to, during, and after the vote" and announced the consular agency in Honiara would be shut for normal business.

"Remember that even peaceful demonstrations can turn violent without warning," officials warned on Friday.

Last month, a protest against Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare sparked three days of rioting in the capital that saw at least three people killed, 56 buildings burned or pillaged and left the city's Chinatown district in ruins.

Order was restored by Australian, Fijian, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand peacekeepers, who have divided up the capital for joint patrols with the overstretched Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.

The governor of the country's central bank — which estimated that the riots cost the equivalent of 15 percent of annual economic output — called for Monday's pro-



New Zealand Defence Force soldiers arrive in Honiara to join an international peacekeeping mission in Solomon Islands following deadly anti-government riots. — AFP

tests not to damage critical infrastructure.

"We must ensure that we do not allow any further damage to any properties or to any of the re-

maintaining critical infrastructures, whether government or privately owned," governor Luke Forau said.

"We cannot afford to experi-

ence any more destruction."

Honiara has been on edge since the unrest and remains under an indefinite nighttime curfew.

The no-confidence vote,

Honiara has been on edge since the unrest and remains under an indefinite nighttime curfew

brought by opposition leader Matthew Wale, is a potential flash-point for more trouble and security is likely to be tight at parliament on Monday.

The crisis has been fuelled by poverty, unemployment and inter-island rivalries in the nation of 800,000 and exacerbated by Sogavare's decision to switch the Solomons' diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to China in 2019.

Sogavare, 66, is serving his fourth stint as Solomons' prime minister and has twice previously been toppled by no-confidence votes. The leader of the Solomon Islands' most populous island Malaita — whose residents were involved in the initial protests — said new protests would respect the rule of law.

"We are going to do things legally, we are trying to get our people informed of a legal process," provincial premier Daniel Suidani said. — AFP

Teenage climber confronts history on K2 summit

LAHORE: Pakistani mountaineer Shehroze Kashif faced many dangers climbing the planet's tallest peaks, but his toughest moment came when he passed the corpse of his hero on the savage slopes of K2.

Kashif was 19 years and 138 days old when in July he became the youngest person to summit both Mount Everest, the world's highest peak, and K2, the second-highest.

It was on K2, just below the infamous stretch known as the Bottleneck, that he passed the bodies of Iceland's John Snorri, Chile's Juan Pablo Mohr and Pakistani climbing legend Ali Sadpara.

"The most emotional moment for me was going on past those climbers, the dead body of Pakistan's national hero," Kashif said in an interview.

Many Pakistanis have crucial roles as high-altitude porters, but Sadpara was one of the few to break into the elite ranks of mostly Western climbers who have long dominated headlines in mountaineering.

He was declared missing along with Snorri and Mohr on February 5. It was more than five months before their bodies were found, on July 26, and Kashif made his summit push as dawn broke the next morning. "I got emotional, thinking that they had come with the same passion I had," Kashif said.

"But then I thought, why not fulfil their unfulfilled dream? And I took their dream with me."

This month, the *Guinness Book of World Records* officially declared him the youngest person to climb K2 and the youngest to climb both the world's two highest mountains. Kashif summited Everest, which at 29,032 feet is Earth's tallest peak, in May.

But the 8,611-metre K2 — known as the "Savage Mountain" and located near Pakistan's border



Pakistani mountaineer Shehroze Kashif holding a painting of himself during an interview in Lahore. — AFP

The most emotional moment for me was going on past those climbers, the dead body of Pakistan's national hero

SHEHROZE KASHIF

Pakistani mountaineer

with China — is the more brutal summit. They are "poles apart", Kashif said, calling K2 a "beast".

In winter, winds can blow at more than 200 kilometres per hour and temperatures can drop to minus 60 degrees Celsius. Kashif suffered snow blindness and frostbite — and said he was lucky his big toe was not amputated. "My energy was too low, it was a difficult time... One wrong step and you are history," he said from his home in Lahore, the sub-tropical, low-altitude Punjabi city where he was born.

Kashif was first entranced by the mountains at 11 years old when he spotted the scenic 3,885-metre Himalayan peak Makra while on holiday with his father in northern Pakistan.

"It all started there," he said. While standing on top of the world he felt "chosen" — a feeling that he described leaving on the peak, "so others coming behind you can also feel it". Now, he said, Everest and K2 are not enough.

He plans to become the youngest person to climb the world's 14 highest mountains, the only peaks on the planet that are above 8,000 metres. All lie in Asia, in the Himalayas or the Karakoram range, and five are in Pakistan.

Only around 40 people in history are believed to have climbed all 14. But it can be difficult to verify summit claims and some experts said there could be even fewer.

The youngest is Mingma Gyabu "David" Sherpa, of Nepal, who the *Guinness Book of World Records* said summited them all by age 30. Kashif still has 10 to go. He has also climbed Manaslu in Nepal and Broad Peak in Pakistan, the eighth and 12th highest mountains respectively — and has given himself until 2024 to summit the rest.

He is well aware of the dangers. Pakistan mourned the loss of Sadpara but Kashif also lost a friend, Pakistani-Swiss climber Abdul Waraich, on Everest in May. — AFP



People wait in line ahead of the opening of a voting station in a market in the Kanifing neighbourhood in Banjul. — AFP

Gambians vote in first presidential poll

BANJUL, Gambia: Gambians voted on Saturday in the first presidential election in the tiny West African nation since former dictator Yahya Jammeh fled into exile. The voting will be closely watched as a test of the democratic transition in The Gambia, where Jammeh ruled for 22 years after seizing power in a bloodless coup in 1994.

The ex-autocrat was forced into exile in Equatorial Guinea in January 2017 after Adama Barrow, then a relative unknown, defeated him at the ballot box. President Barrow, 56, is now running for re-election, and faces five other candidates.

Voting near the presidential palace, he predicted “the biggest landslide victory in

the history of this country,” saying “in the next 24 hours my people will be celebrating in the streets.”

Polls opened at 0800 GMT, with long lines forming well before dawn in the capital Banjul. Nearly 500 people lined up around the block at a market in the Banjul neighbourhood of Manjai Kunda, ready for hours of waiting. “I expect that people vote peacefully,” said voter Alice Jarjue, 27.

“Gambia is a peaceful country and we should maintain it that way. If another one (than your candidate) wins, you should respect that.” Babacar Diallo, 48, lined up early to vote. “It is a very important to vote because we want change,” he said. — AFP

French right chooses Paris region chief to challenge Macron

PARIS: France’s conservative party on Saturday chose the moderate chief of the Paris region Valerie Pécresse to challenge President Emmanuel Macron next year, a pick that will likely have major influence on the shape of the campaign.

Members of The Republicans (LR) in the primary run-off vote chose Pécresse, who will be its first-ever female presidential candidate and presents herself as a voice of moderation, over hardliner Eric Ciotti, party leader Christian Jacob announced.

Both had made the run-off after the first round of voting earlier this week upended expectations.

The favourites ex-minister Xavier Bertrand and former EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier were both knocked out and went on to back Pécresse.

“The party of (France’s post-war leader) General (Charles) de Gaulle... our political family, will have a female candidate in the presidential election. I am thinking of all the women of France today. I will give everything to triumph,” she said after the result was announced.

Pécresse won almost 61 per cent of the vote among party members while Ciotti won just over 39 per cent, Jacob said. Ciotti accepted defeat and immediately pledged to support Pécresse. The result is being keenly watched by the Elysee.



Les Republicains right-wing party’s head of the Ile-de-France region and candidate for the 2022 presidential election Valerie Pécresse celebrates after she won LR’s primary in Paris. — AFP

While all opinion polls have predicted centrist Macron should win the election, the emergence of a strong candidate on the traditional right who gains momentum during the campaign would be a major factor.

The campaign has so far been waged on the right, with Macron’s government tacking rightwards over the last months with tough rhetoric on immigration and preserving France’s secular system.

The Republicans failed to make the run-off in 2017, after its candi-

“**The Republican right-wing is back. It will fight with implacable will. France cannot wait any more**

VALERIE PECRESSE
French politician

date Francois Fillon was felled by a graft scandal.

But the party, out of power since 2012, makes much of its status as the inheritor of the presidencies of Nicolas Sarkozy and Jacques Chirac as well as Charles de Gaulle.

“The Republican right-wing is back. It will fight with implacable will. France cannot wait any more,” Pécresse said, promising to make France “respected in the world”. — AFP

Scholz closer to German chancellery

BERLIN: The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) on Saturday gave the green light for its first coalition government with the Greens and pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) at federal level, under incoming chancellor Olaf Scholz.

At a party conference, more than 98 per cent of delegates voted in favour of the coalition agreement with the Greens and the FDP, in a result met with long applause.

“We now have the chance: a new dawn can take place for Germany,” Scholz stressed, announcing a government “that tackles progress at a moment when it would be dangerous not to do so”.

The decisions of the FDP and the Greens on the planned coalition are still pending.

In the vote, there were 598 votes in favour, seven against and three abstentions. The SPD



gave the result as 98.84 per cent, without taking into account the abstentions.

The three-way constellation is referred to as the traffic-light coalition in Germany, named after the red, yellow and green colours that traditionally represent the parties.

The coalition deal promises ac-

tion on climate change, a restructuring of the economy, and also improvements for low-income earners, tenant and families, for example.

The minimum wage is to rise to 12 euros (\$13.57), and 400,000 new flats are to be built annually. “I am very proud of what we have negotiated together,” emphasised

SPD General Secretary Lars Klingbeil.

Party leader Norbert Walter-Borjans promised that the SPD would not merely act as a “government loudspeaker” and would also pursue the goals that had not made it into the coalition agreement.

His co-chair Saskia Esken stressed: “With the traffic light, we are making history.”

The vote of the SPD party conference alone is not enough to form the coalition: On Sunday, an FDP party conference will vote, and the Greens are currently polling their members. The result of that ballot is to be announced on Monday.

The coalition agreement could then be signed on Tuesday, and on Wednesday Olaf Scholz is expected to be elected chancellor in the Bundestag and his Cabinet sworn in. — dpa

Francis hits out at EU migration divisions

ATHENS: Pope Francis on Saturday blamed the EU’s nationalist divisions for a lack of coordination on migration as he began a landmark trip to Greece, aiming to improve complicated relations with the country’s Orthodox Church. Francis said that Europe was “torn by nationalist egoism” on migration during a meeting with EU vice-president Margaritis Schinas, Greek President Katerina Sakellariopoulou and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, among other officials.

The European community “continues to temporise” and “appears at times blocked and uncoordinated” instead of being an “engine of solidarity” on migration, the pope said.

“Today, and not only in Europe, we are witnessing a retreat from democracy,” he said, warning against populism’s “easy answers”. Francis has long cham-



Pope Francis and Greek President Katerina Sakellariopoulou at the Presidential Palace in Athens. — AFP

pioned refugees, calling them “protagonists of a terrible modern Odyssey.” On Sunday, he will return to the island of Lesbos which he visited in 2016 during the early years of the migration crisis.

The 84-year-old’s visit to the Greek capital is the first by a pope since John Paul II in 2001, which in turn was the first papal visit to Athens since the 1054 Schism between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

KARLSRUHE

Libyan militant arrested in Dresden

A suspected militant from Libya has been arrested in the eastern German city of Dresden, prosecutors said. The man was remanded in custody last week. The suspect is accused of joining a fighter association called the ‘Libya Revolutionaries Operations Room’ (LROR) in 2016. According to the prosecutors, the grouping fought Libyan National Army troops under the influential military commander Khalifa Haftar.

The man, who is reportedly



29 years old, had allegedly held a leadership position.

He had raised money in Libya by, among other things, “putting pressure on bank employees,” federal prosecutors said in a statement.

WARSAW

Iraq flies more migrants out of Belarus

Iraq has flown hundreds more migrants stranded in Belarus back home. On Saturday, another Iraqi Airways plane took off from the capital Minsk for Erbil, the Belarusian airport announced on its website. Onboard the Boeing 747-400 were 419 people, including four children. In the past few weeks, more than 2,000 people have already been flown out, according to Belarusian sources.

However, many people are still staying in an emergency shelter



in a logistics centre in Brusgi on the Polish border.

The state news agency Belta published pictures from there on Saturday showing children with posters in the snow asking Pope Francis for help.

NAIROBI

20 killed as Kenya bus plunges off bridge into river

At least 20 people drowned on Saturday when a bus travelling to a wedding in central Kenya was swept off a bridge into a flooded river, police said. “The search and rescue is ongoing but so far 20 bodies have been taken out,” said Joseph Yakan, police commander in the Mwingi East area.

He said about 10 people had been rescued but it was unclear how many were aboard the bus when it tipped into the swollen Enziu River about 200 kilometres east of the capital Nairobi.



The bus was carrying members of a church choir and villagers to a wedding. Witnesses said the driver was trying to cross fast-flowing waters passing over the bridge but the force was too strong, sweeping the bus beneath the churning currents. — AFP

The French Merkel? Pecresse eyes election surprise

JOSEPH SCHMID

Valerie Pecresse, who on Saturday became the first woman to win the nomination of the main right-wing party for the French presidency, is betting voters are ready for her brand of can-do conservatism that focuses on economic rigour as well as security concerns.

The candidate for The Republicans (LR), has promised to “restore French pride” with a programme of budget cuts, immigration curbs, a defence of “family values” and a crackdown on crime.

Polls have not yet shown her reaching a second round run-off against President Emmanuel Macron but analysts have seen her candidacy as an intriguing prospect, should she win momentum on the campaign trail, and potentially the rival he fears most.

A self-described “Iron Lady” and “workhorse,” she insists on a need for bureaucratic reforms that would axe 200,000 civil servant jobs, but also pledges a 10 per cent pay hike for everyone earning less than 3,000 euros (\$3,400) a month.

After her victory she said she was thinking of all the women in France and has in the past cited outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel and former British premier Margaret Thatcher as trailblazing inspirations.

“A woman who stands her ground, has courage and gets things done like me is someone, like Angela Merkel in Germany, like Margaret Thatcher in Britain, who can defend tooth and nail our people’s interests,” she told BFM television after her surprise advance on Thursday to the second round of the primary.

Born in the posh Paris suburb of Neuilly, the 54-year-old Pecresse is president of the Ile-de France region that encompasses millions of people outside the capital, where she handily won re-election earlier this year.

Like Macron, who is widely expected to seek re-election on his centrist platform next year, Pecresse graduated from the elite ENA school that produces the country’s top civil servants.

— AFP

A woman who stands her ground, has courage and gets things done like me is someone, like Angela Merkel in Germany, like Margaret Thatcher in Britain

VALERIE PECRESSE
Presidential candidate



NO JAB, NO ENTRY

A security staff member checks the digital vaccination certificate on a customer's smartphone at the entrance of a shopping mall in Stuttgart, southern Germany, on Saturday, amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Golden Bullet against Covid-19?



Ray Petersen
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

WHETHER AN INDIVIDUAL DISPLAYS THE EARLY ONSET SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19, OR HAS BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH SOMEONE WHO SUBSEQUENTLY TESTS POSITIVE, THE INDIVIDUAL CAN TAKE ORAL DOSAGE OF PAX-LOVID, AND BE SIGNIFICANTLY SAFER

The onset of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 has many of us running for cover, and pessimistic about the immediate future of life after the traumas of 2020 and 2021, but let us not wave the proverbial ‘white flag’ just yet.

For a start, US President Joe Biden this week said that although Omicron is “a cause for concern, it is not a reason to panic.” Also, the World Health Organization has determined that in an unusual quirk of nature, it’s very aggressive, transmissible behaviour also dramatically shortens its lifespan, meaning it has extraordinary host mortality, and generally speaking, according to Boston University infectious disease expert Davidson Hamer, “If a virus becomes more able to kill its host quickly, it is not able to spread very far, and a high mortality is not good for a virus that wants to spread.”

In other absolutely positive news, we find that during August 2021, buoyed by the success of their vaccines in the fight against Covid-19, the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer initiated an evaluation of protease inhibition, an orally administered anti-viral therapy to be prescribed at the onset of Covid-19 infection, or following exposure to Covid-positive others, with the objective of preventing critical levels of illness.

The Chief Medical Officer and President, Dr Mikael Dolsten said, “All of us at Pfizer are incredibly proud of our scientists who designed and developed this molecule, bringing forth a breakthrough oral therapy to combat Covid-19. As is often the case, it is looking back that gave science the key to unlocking Covid-19 in the first place, with current vaccines created in several laboratories around the world being developed in part due to insights gained from science’s previous interactions with recent zoonotic episodes of SARS of Chinese bat/civet origin, and MERS, which had a Saudi Arabian origin, in camels.

The result of the research and development, announced by Pfizer to the New York Stock Exchange on November 5, is Paxlovid, given the designation of PF-07321332; ritonavir, an oral treatment which simply put, prevents the metabolism, or reproduction of the protease, an enzyme that Covid-19 needs, in order to replicate and become more malicious. It emasculates the protease the virus needs to create its genetic structure within human cells. Without that enzyme the virus cannot replicate, it cannot grow and get stronger, and ultimately, itself, must perish.

The real-life, real-time scenario that

Pfizer have put forward with Paxlovid is that within a two-to-five-day window, whether an individual displays the early onset symptoms of Covid-19, or has been in close contact with someone who subsequently tests positive, or has a family or workplace member who tests positive, the individual can take oral dosage of Paxlovid, and be significantly safer. In reality, not only significantly safer, but virtually immune as statistics on primary vaccination offer 90 per cent immunity from infection, while based on its trial to date with Pfizer, Paxlovid reduces the risk of even hospitalisation, let alone mortality, by a further 89 per cent, therefore reducing the genuine risk-ability to just under 99 per cent, which truly is a ‘golden bullet’ scenario.

Although evidence is beginning to emerge in Japan of cross-mutation of Covid-19 into oblivion, and of a much less than feared impact upon the African continent, despite Omicron setting many hearts aflutter, the recent chaotic scenes in Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands have ensured that complacency in respect of the pandemic cannot be sustained, and the ‘golden bullet’ cannot come soon enough. We can, and must, trust the science. After all... that’s what got us into this.

Brazil’s pioneering solution to vaccine shortages



JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

BRAZIL POINTS THE WAY TO A PROMISING BOTTOM-UP SOLUTION

There is near-unanimous agreement that vaccinating the entire world is the only way to end the pandemic. The higher the vaccination rate, the fewer chances the virus will have to acquire dangerous mutations.

There is a simple reason why poorer countries don’t have enough vaccines: there aren’t enough doses to go around. Philanthropy, too, has fallen short. The Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility, an international consortium that promised to send two billion vaccine doses to poor countries by the end of 2021, has shipped only 25 per cent of that amount.

The world is not making as many vaccines as it could. Every

firm in every country that has the capacity to make vaccines should be doing so. Yet after paying Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and Pfizer/BioNTech to develop their vaccines, the US and German governments are unwilling to require these companies to share their technology with manufacturers in other countries.

Unless these governments change their position, the companies will continue to exploit the lucrative monopoly power granted to them by the WTO’s Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). According to WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the proposal for a TRIPS waiver is “stuck.” Though

the number of rich countries opposing it has dwindled, there is still enough opposition to thwart a solution.

But while the WTO dithers, Brazil has taken matters into its own hands, giving us the closest thing we have to a way out of this crisis. In April, Brazilian Senator Paulo Paim proposed a bill that would allow the country to bypass the barriers erected by TRIPS. The legislation seizes on the fact that, as the trade law scholar Frederick Abbott explained to us, “Article 73 of the TRIPS agreement, covering the protection of security interests, already provides each government with the authority to take whatever action it considers necessary to address the Covid-19

pandemic, including suspending intellectual-property rights.”

If this option is already available, why are so many countries still waiting around for the WTO to grant them formal permission? The answer is that ever since the WTO’s creation, rich countries have punished developing countries for doing what they are entitled to do under the organisation’s own rules. When South Africa, Brazil, India, and Thailand sought to override monopolies on unaffordable anti-retroviral drugs during the HIV/Aids crisis, the United States and the European Union put them on trial — sometimes literally. This history has created a chilling effect.

In September, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro signed the bill into law, but not before using his veto powers to remove or revise crucial clauses, including those specifying when and how the law would come into effect, and those requiring pharmaceutical companies to share their know-how, data, and biological material. One month later, the Brazilian Senate recommended charging Bolsonaro with “crimes against humanity” for causing unnecessary loss of life in the pandemic. But the charges did not include his mangling of the IP bill — an act that could lead to even more unnecessary loss of life.

Copyright:
Project Syndicate 2021



Imad clinches 20km gold at Himam Trail Run Race

MUSCAT: At the first glimpse of sunlight this morning, around 421 trail runners representing 35 countries lined up at Birkat Al Mouz Bayt Ar Rudayda castle to take on the Himam Train Run Race.

At the moment the clock ticked around to 6:15 am, the starting pistol sounded and they were off, climbing into the mountains by as much as 2,210m.

This year’s Himam Trail Race featured three distances, 20km, 35km and 70km. The first runners began to cross the finishing line after just over one hour 23 minutes after completing the 20km race and more athletes crossed the line for the next two hours and 50 minutes until all 145 athletes returned safely.

Each course heads towards the village of Al Muaydin and nearby date plantations before ascending the mountainside in the ultimate

test of endurance. The routes then reverse course to head for the finish line with a gentle descent back down the mountain.

GOLD MEDAL

The battle for the lead went almost to the finishing line before Imad al Farsi (OMA) managed to outlast Nasr al Naabi (OMA) to take the gold medal. Omar al Hadrami (OMA) finished third.

The top ten male finishers were all Omani. The first female home was Ciara Blackstock (IRL) who finished eleventh overall in a dead heat with tenth place, completing the 20km course in 1:39:28.

Next to cross the line were the leaders in the 35km race, once more dominated by local runners. Yusuf al Subaihi (OMA) took first place in a time of 3:01:43, followed six minutes later by Jamal al Khatri (OMA) in a time of 3:07:35. Just 12 seconds later, Ghaith al Saidi

WINNERS' LIST	
70KM Overall 1. Rachid El Murabity, MAR, 6:57:07 2. Sami al Saidi, OMA, 7:06:37 3. Hamdan al Khatri, OMA, 7:28:48	35K Female leaders: 1. Joanna Buchholz, GBR, 4:25:28 2. Liis Pagil, Estonia, 4:47:53 3. Lynsey Mackay, GBR, 4:50:30
70K Female leaders: 1. Suad al Nasibi, OMA, 10:07:22 2. Natalie Forester, GBR, 12:06:23 3. Dana Matar, LEB, 14:42:02	20KM - Overall 1. Imad al Farsi, OMA, 1:23:51 2. Nasr al Naabi, OMA, 1:24:14 3. Omar al Hadrami, OMA, 1:28:12
35KM - Overall 1. Yusuf al Subaihi, OMA, 3:01:43 2. Jamal al Khatri, OMA, 3:07:35 3. Ghaith al Saidi, OMA, 3:07:47	20K Female leaders: 1. Ciara Blackstock, IRL, 1:39:28 2. Brenda Bac, Netherlands, 2:08:37 3. Klazina Stapel, Netherlands, 2:09:12

(OMA) finished third in a time of 3:07:47. The first female runner to complete the course was Joanna Buchholz (GBR) in a time of 4:25:28, finishing 22nd overall. Winners of each race will

receive a prize of RO 500 for the first, RO 300 for second and RO 150 for third.

The first female finisher will receive RO 150 and all runners completing the course within 18



hours will receive a medal. The 70km race this year is registered at the International Trail Running Association (ITRA) and carries three points for each finisher which helps towards ranking

positions and entry into the world’s toughest trail running marathon races, while the 35K carries 3 ITRA points.

The Himam Trail Race was organised by Himam Adventure, under the umbrella of Al Sahwa Team, Nizwa Club, and supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Oman Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and the Authority for SME Development (Riyada) in Al Dakhiliyah.

The event was sponsored by Petroleum Development Oman, gold sponsors Oman LNG, Ooredoo and bp Oman, and silver sponsors the Golden Tulip Nizwa and Mazoon Dairy, Zados and Daleel Petroleum.

For further updates, shared videos and images from the race, please follow @himam_adventure on Instagram and @Hikinghimam on Twitter.



Wind causes more surprises at ILCA 6 World Championship

MUSCAT: Day three of the 2021 ILCA 6 World Championships was once again influenced by the wind. Just two races in the men’s category and one in the women’s were completed at Barceló Resort Mussanah as the sailors struggled to get to grips with the changing wind patterns.

The men’s leaderboard remains unchanged from yesterday with Al Moutasim al Farsi out in front, holding a six-point lead over Nik Pletikos of Slovenia after winning one race and finishing second in the other.

Abdul Malik al Hinai moved into third position when Umut

Eyriparmak had to retire from the second race after making an excellent start by winning the first. He ends the day in fourth place. Ali al Saadi retained fifth position and stays within touching distance of the leaders.

BLACK FLAG

The only women’s race of the day was dramatically impacted by the weather as seven of the fleet were given the black flag and disqualified for prematurely starting the race, including yesterday’s leader Julia Busselberg of Germany and Anne-Marie Rindom of Denmark. That allowed Emma Plasschaert of

Belgium to take the victory and move to the top of the leaderboard.

Busselberg slips to second and Agata Barwinska of Poland moves into third. Viktorija Andrulyte of Lithuania moved into fourth place after a strong display and yesterday’s second placed sailor Vasileia Karachaliou dropped to fifth. The fleet is still very close with just seven points between first and sixth.

Nik Pletikos of Slovenia, said, “Today we had quite shifty wind, not much wind which was tough for me as one of the heaviest in the fleet. So, I struggled a bit in the up-wind. We’ll see what happens

tomorrow, hopefully there will be more wind.”

Viktorija Andrulyte of Lithuania, said, “There were light to medium winds today for us, which I enjoy a lot. There are still a lot of races to go, my expectation is that I just want to keep pushing myself and enjoy. The race is very hard, the fleet is really good, but it’s great to compete and be against the best sailors in this class.”

Following racing, the sailors were treated to an Arabian Night where they were able to experience Omani food, Henna art and traditional dancing with an Omani band.

INDIA ON TOP AFTER HISTORIC AJAZ 10-FOR

MUMBAI: New Zealand's Mumbai-born spinner Ajaz Patel took a record 10 wickets in an innings but their batsmen collapsed to leave India in control of the second Test on Saturday's day two.

Ajaz emulated England's Jim Laker (1956 v Australia) and Indian spin legend Anil Kumble (1999 v Pakistan) to complete his

perfect 10 in the second session and bowl out India for 325.

But New Zealand's batsmen collapsed to 62 all out and India were 332 ahead by stumps at the Wankhede Stadium after not enforcing the follow-on and reaching 69 for 0 in their second innings.

First-innings centurion Mayank Agarwal, on 38, and

Cheteshwar Pujara, on 29, made to open the innings after Shubman Gill suffered a blow to his elbow while fielding and could not take field, were batting.

Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin claimed four wickets and fast bowler Mohammed Siraj took three in the New Zealand innings on a day when Ajaz ruled with his left-arm

spin. Ajaz, who took four wickets on day one including Pujara and skipper Virat Kohli for ducks, rattled India in the first session with wickets in successive balls to be on a hat-trick.

Ajaz sent back Agarwal, who started the day on 120 with India on 221-4, to break a 67-run stand with Axar.

The wily spinner soon got Axar

lbw and wrapped up the Indian innings with Siraj his final scalp as the Kiwi players surrounded their hero with hugs and applause.

He sent down 47.5 overs in four spells out of a Kiwi total of 109.5 and bowled almost unchanged on day two.

Ajaz returned figures of 10-119 but Agarwal's 150 and a 52 by Axar Patel helped India to a challenging

total on a turning track.

In the New Zealand innings Siraj, who replaced injured Ishant Sharma in the team, struck early to send back Will Young for four.

He then got two wickets including stand-in-skipper Tom Latham for 10, and Ross Taylor, for one, on either side of overs to be on a hat-trick that was avoided by Henry Nicholls.

— AFP

SCOREBOARD

INDIA FIRST INNINGS (O/N: 221/4):	
M Agarwal c Blundell b Ajaz	150
S Gill c Taylor b Ajaz	44
C Pujara b Ajaz	0
V Kohli lbw Ajaz	0
S Iyer c Blundell b Ajaz	18
W Saha lbw Ajaz	27
R Ashwin b Ajaz	0
A Patel lbw Ajaz	52
J Yadav c Ravindra b Ajaz	12
U Yadav (not out)	0
M Siraj c Ravindra b Ajaz	4
Extras (B-13, LB-5)	18
Total (all out, 109.5 overs)	325
Fall of wickets: 1-80, 2-80, 3-80, 4-160, 5-224, 6-224, 7-291, 8-316, 9-321	
Bowling: Southee 22-6-43-0, Jamieson 12-3-36-0, Patel 47.5-12-119-10, Somerville 19-0-80-0, Ravindra 4-0-20-0, Mitchell 5-3-9-0	
NEW ZEALAND FIRST INNINGS:	
T Latham c Iyer b Siraj	10
W Young c Kohli b Siraj	4
D Mitchell lbw Patel	8
R Taylor b Siraj	1
H Nicholls b Ashwin	7
T Blundell c Pujara b Ashwin	8
R Ravindra c Kohli b J Yadav	4
K Jamieson c Iyer b Patel	17
T Southee c sub b Ashwin	0
W Somerville c Siraj b Ashwin	0
A Patel (not out)	0
Extras (LB-1, NB-2)	3
Total (all out, 28.1 overs)	62
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-15, 3-17, 4-27, 5-31, 6-38, 7-53, 8-53, 9-62	
Bowling: Umesh 5-2-7-0, Siraj 4-0-19-3, Axar 9.1-3-14-2, Ashwin 8-2-8-4, Jayant 2-0-13-1	
INDIA SECOND INNINGS	
M Agarwal (not out)	38
C Pujara (not out)	29
Extras (LB-2)	2
Total (no loss, 21 overs)	69
Bowling: Southee 5-0-14-0, Ajaz 9-1-35-0, Jamieson 4-2-5-0, Somerville 2-0-9-0, Ravindra 1-0-4-0	

Djokovic season over as Serbia beaten by Croatia in Davis Cup

Defeat for Serbia meant Djokovic closed his 2021 season having agonisingly missed out on the first calendar Grand Slam by a male player in more than half a century when he lost the final of the US Open



Croatia's Mate Pavic (L) and Croatia's Nikola Mektic celebrate winning a point against Serbia's Novak Djokovic and Serbia's Filip Krajinovic during the Davis Cup in Madrid. — AFP

MADRID: Novak Djokovic's dream of adding a second Davis Cup to his 20 Grand Slam titles was shattered on Friday when Serbia were defeated by Croatia in the semifinals.

Djokovic and partner Filip Krajinovic lost 7-5, 6-1 to top-ranked Mate Pavic and Nikola Mektic, the Olympic and Wimbledon champions, in the decisive doubles rubber.

Croatia, the 2005 and 2018 Davis Cup winners, will face either Russia or Germany in Sunday's final.

Djokovic had earlier defeated Marin Cilic for the 18th time to keep Serbia alive.

The world number one, unbeaten in singles in the tournament since 2011, triumphed 6-4, 6-2 to pull Serbia level at 1-1 in the tie.

It was his 19th successive Davis Cup singles win.

In the opening rubber, Borna Gojo, ranked a lowly 279, pulled off a surprise win over world

number 33 Dusan Lajovic, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2. Cilic, a former world number three now down at 30, carved out eight break points on the Djokovic serve but was unable to convert a single one.

Defeat for Serbia meant Djokovic closed his 2021 season having agonisingly missed out on the first calendar Grand Slam by a male player in more than half a century when he lost the final of the US Open.

His hopes of a first Olympic singles gold medal were also dashed in Tokyo.

However, he still ended the year tied with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal on 20 Slams, claimed the year-ending world number one ranking for the seventh time and will on Monday mark a total of 350 weeks in the top ranking.

Djokovic has also extended his record Masters collection to 37 titles. Gojo has played well above his world ranking in the tournament so far and showed real mettle against Lajovic to

come back from a set down, especially after letting slip a 4-2 and 40-0 lead in the first set, losing 17 of the next 18 points.

He also saw off Italy's Lorenzo Sonego (ranked 27) in the quarterfinal and Australia's Alexei Popyrin (67) in the group stages.

"In the first set I was up 4-2 40-0, I was in control, I slipped in that game there. I got down on myself a little bit, but then the captain and the teams and the fans picked me back up," said Gojo.

"Obviously Davis Cup is a special competition where the pressure is bigger on everyone and I managed to play some of my best tennis here at this tournament.

"I'm very happy that I managed to get those big wins, ranking wise, but for me it's more important that I managed to get the point for the team."

Croatia had lost both their previous meetings with their Balkan neighbours.

— AFP

Shoaib, Samay shine to keep Muscat unbeaten; Orient win

MUSCAT: Shoaib Khan's superb 81 not out and leggie Samay Shrivastava's 4 for 49 were the highlights of Muscat CT's comfortable 9-wicket win over Renaissance in a 50-over Premier Division League game at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Al Amerat on Friday.

Unbeaten Muscat lead the points table with 12 from 6 matches, followed by Oman Stallions which has 8 from 5 games.

Invited to bat first, Renaissance ambled to a modest 189 for 9, Abdul Attaullah (47) and Sufyan Mahmood (44) being its main scorers. Apart from Samay's superb spell, Shoaib Khan bowled well too, taking 2 for 26.

Muscat has no trouble chasing down the total, racing to 190 for 1 in 36 overs thanks to brilliant batting by Shoaib and Pranav Athawale (73).

Brief Scores (Premier Division): Renaissance 189 for 9 in 50 overs (Abdul Attaullah 47 - 4x4, 1x6, Sufyan Mahmood 44 - 4x4, 2x6, Samay Shrivastava 4-49, Shoaib Khan 2-26) lost to Muscat CT 190 for 1 in 36 overs (Shoaib Khan 81 - 12x4, 1x6, Pranav Athawale 73 - 8x4) by 9 wickets.

IBRAR POWERS ORIENT TO BIG WIN

Ibrar Hussain's magnificent 138 not out powered Orient Travels to a huge 164-run victory against LC Tech in a 50-over A Division clash at OC turf 2 on Friday.

Batting first, unbeaten Orient Travels, which has now three wins from three matches, posted 282 for 8 on the board, Ibrar leading the way with an excellent century. Imran Ali and Shahil Mohammed claimed three and two wickets respectively.



LC Tech was jolted by early blows from Tanveer Rana, who picked up 4 for 44, and was dismissed for a disappointing 118 in the 26th over. Lakshmi Narayana was the only notable scorer with 31.

Brief Scores (A Division): Orient Travels 282 for 8 in 50 overs (Ibrar Hussain 138 - 17x4, 2x6, Imran Ali 3-46, Shahil Mohammed 2-59) beat LC Tech 118 all out in 25.5 overs (Lakshmi Narayana 31 - 5x4, Tanveer Rana 4-44) by 164 runs.

AWAIS HELPS PDO TO VICTORY

Awais Mohammed's 4 for 39 helped PDO RC to a thrilling 7-run win over Maniz Azad International in a 30-over C Division match at Muscat Municipality ground 1 on Friday.

PDO's 203 for 9 included 44 from Mohammed Idrees and Azhar Habib's 36. Star Omani all-rounder Shuaib al Balushi bagged two wickets.

Maniz Azad made a valiant attempt at chasing down the total by fell short by 7 runs. Shuaib topscored with the bat, contributing 57 off 53 while Usman Asgher chipped in with a solid 37. Apart from Awais's outstanding spell, Zakir Khan

and Umer Khalil bowled well too, taking two wickets each.

Brief Scores (B Division): PDO RC 203 for 9 in 30 overs (Muhammed Idrees 44 - 2x4, Azhar Habib 36 - 4x4, 1x6, Shuaib al Balushi 2-29) beat Maniz Azad International 196 for 9 in 30 overs (Shuaib al Balushi 57 - 8x4, Usman Asgher 37 - 5x4, Awais Mohamed 4-39, Zakir Khan 2-34, Umer Khalil 2-39) by 7 runs.

RANJITH STARS IN DG WIN

In a 20-over C Division game at the same venue, Design Group Engineering Consultants defeated Khalsa United by 4 wickets thanks to a match-winning 64 off 50 by opener Ranjith Kumar.

Khalsa was restricted to 146 for 7 due to brilliant bowling by Mohammed Firoz who picked up 3 for 21. Harminder Singh topscored with 31.

Design Group surpassed the total rather comfortably, scoring 147 for 6 in the 18th over thanks to solid knocks from Ranjith and Muhammed Althaf (33). Majid Rafique took 2 for 33.

Brief Scores (C Division): Khalsa United CT 146 for 7 in 20 overs (Harminder Singh 31 - 6x4, Deepesh Mehta 29 - 3x4, Mohammed Firoz 3-21) lost to Design Group Engineering Consultants 147 for 6 in 17.5 overs (Ranjith Kumar 64 - 6x4, Muhammed Althaf 33 - 4x4, Majid Rafique 2-33) by 4 wickets.

Al Rawahi becomes first local to win Oman Rally

MUSCAT: Abdullah al Rawahi became the first Omani in motor sport history to claim victory at the Oman Rally Sohar International 2021 on Saturday.

Partnered by Jordanian co-driver Ata al Hmoud, Al Rawahi guided his SRT Skoda Fabia Evo to a stunning start-to-finish victory with a winning margin of 21min 22.5sec.

In so doing, the talented youngster joined veteran Nizar al Shanfari (Qatar Rally – 1999) as one of only two Omanis in history to have won a round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC) since its inception in 1984.

Al Rawahi won all of the event’s 12 demanding gravel special stages and gained valuable time behind the wheel of his new car before embarking upon a full MERC campaign in 2022.

The feat means that the Omani becomes the 41st winner of a MERC event on the 221st ever round of the regional series. Al Hmoud duly became the second Jordanian co-driver in the history of the championship to win a round of the series: fellow countryman Khaled Zakaria claimed six victories during a short spell sitting alongside Mohammed Ben Sulayem and a solitary win in Jordan with Amjad Farrah.

“This is a fantastic result for me and the whole team on my first event in the car,” said a delighted Al Rawahi. “It was a perfect opportunity to gain more experience before next season and to secure a first MERC win. I thank my sponsors, everyone at the Oman Automobile Association for their efforts and the team at SRT for their support.”

Qatar’s Nasser bin Khalifa al Attiyah and Italian co-pilot Giovanni Bernacchini overcame a time-consuming first day puncture to snatch second place in a Ford Fiesta R5. The former MERC runner-up set a string of second fastest times on the final day to overhaul Zakariya and Mohammed al Amri. Al Amri’s consolation was guiding his Subaru Impreza to success in the MERC2 section and finishing on the last step of the podium in third overall, despite delays with mechanical issues in SS12.

Al Rawahi won all of the event’s 12 demanding gravel special stages and gained valuable time behind the wheel of his new car before embarking upon a full MERC campaign in 2022. Oman’s Faisal al Rashdi rounded off the finishers in the international field in sixth place with Yaqdhan al Rashdi and his Subaru Impreza. Jarah al Touqi was forced to retire his Subaru Impreza after mechanical problems in stage nine

Jordanian driver Ihab al Shorafa teamed up with Emad Juma to claim fourth place and Asem Aref, partnered by Ahmad Jankhout, stayed clear of trouble in his little two-wheel drive Renault Clio RS to confirm the 2021 MERC3 title in the absence of rival and defending champion Henry Kahy. Aref finished a fine fifth.

Oman’s Faisal al Rashdi rounded off the finishers in the international field in sixth place with Yaqdhan al Rashdi and his Subaru Impreza. Jarah al Touqi was forced to retire his Subaru Impreza after mechanical problems in stage nine.

Haitham al Soomar was not able to start the third round of the Oman Rally Championship after the issues that had plagued his Mitsubishi Lancer on Friday.

Hamed al Qasmi had been fastest over the six stages on day one, but an eighth stage accident side-lined his Mitsubishi and that opened the door for Waheeb al Kharusi and Musaab al Soomar to fight for National Rally honours, with the former securing a comfortable win in his Toyota Yaris.

The official calendar for the 2022 FIA Middle East Rally Championship will be released after the FIA World Council meeting later this month.



Abdullah al Rawahi

OMAN RALLY SOHAR INTERNATIONAL 2021 - POSITIONS AFTER SS12:		
1. Abdullah al Rawahi (OMN)/Ata al Hmoud (JOR) Skoda Fabia Evo	2hr 29min 02sec	
2. Nasser bin Khalifa al Attiyah (QAT)/Giovanni Bernacchini (ITA) Ford Fiesta R5	2hr 50min 24sec	
3. Zakariya al Amri (OMN)/Mohammed al Amri (OMN) Subaru Impreza STi	3hr 07min 50sec	
4. Ihab al Shorafa (JOR)/Emad Juma (JOR) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX	3hr 09min 30sec	
5. Asem Aref (JOR)/Ahmad Jankhout (JOR) Renault Clio RS	3hr 48min 20sec	
6. Faisal al Rashdi (OMN)/Waleed al Rashdi (OMN) Subaru Impreza WRX	3hr 48min 38sec	

OMAN NATIONAL RALLY - RESULT AFTER SS11:		
1. Waheeb al Kharusi (OMN)/Wadeea al Kharusi (OMN) Toyota Yaris	3hr 30min 38sec	
2. Musab Al-Soomar (OMN)/Bassam Al-Qassimi (OMN) Kia Rio	4hr 56min 23sec	



Nasser bin Khalifa al Attiyah

International Tent Pegging championship concludes

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 4

Iraq’s riders dominated at the International Tent Pegging Traditional championship by winning the overall title.

On the concluding day on Saturday in Duqm, riders Hamed al Riyami and Safwan al Mamari led the third day competition while rider Safwan al Mamari claimed the first place award of individual category and rider Hamed al Riyami was positioned as the runner-up.

The Russian rider Fidor was positioned in the third place.

Shaikh Sabaa bin Hamdan bin Sabaa al Saadi, the Secretary-General of the Higher Committee for National Day Celebrations, was the chief guest on the concluding ceremony in presence of Mohammed bin Issa al Fairuz,

Chairman of the International Tent Pegging Federation (ITPF), and top officials.

The chief guest distributed the awards to the top-place winners and awarded the individual category prizes to the participants beside honouring the best riders awards.

TOP PERFORMANCE

Oman’s riders showed top performance during the three days championship. Hamed al Riyami was named as the best rider in the championship after leading the table and presenting solid performance.

The Iraq team clinched the first place award in the overall category while the Oman team was positioned in the second place. The Sudan team are positioned in third place.

As many as 33 riders took part



in the International Tent Pegging Traditional championship which began on Thursday and lasted for three days in Duqm.

The riders who took part in the championship were representing different countries including:



Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Malaysia, Iraq, UK, Germany, Norway, Iran, Russia, Pakistan, Canada, USA, Jordan, Sudan, Palestine, Syria and the hosts the Sultanate of Oman.

The championship, which

was under organisation of the International Tent Pegging Federation (ITPF) which is based in Muscat, started with Tent Pegging events through individual lance, pairs lance and team lance (show).

In all the three days, the championship registered tough competition among the participated riders as all the participants were looking to secure more points and snatch the top places awards.



OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om
follow us: @oman_biz



Own your dream home
with our **Home Finance**

- Finance available for purchase of property or land
- Flexible payment tenure up to 25 years
- Fast approval and easy documentation

For more information visit: <http://bit.ly/HomeFinanceENG>

 3471 5777  /MatarahOman  @MatarahIslamic  @MatarahIslamic



Oman Investment Authority’s SpaceX stake to spur growth of Oman’s nascent space industry

Maximising returns: US-based SpaceX is among 20 local and international firms that OIA recently added to its private equity portfolio following investments in these businesses

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Revelations by Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman, that it has taken an equity stake in SpaceX — the US-based space exploration company founded by billionaire businessman Elon Musk — underscores the Omani government’s ambitions to develop a new economic sector around space and satellite communications.

Last week, OIA listed California-USA headquartered SpaceX among 20 local and international firms that it had recently added to its private equity portfolio following investments in these businesses.



(Image for illustration only)

SpaceX represents the boldest of OIA’s investments, estimated by experts to total around \$17 billion and currently distributed across 36 countries around the world.

Well-known for its design, manufacture and launch of advanced rockets and spacecraft,

SpaceX was recently valued at around \$100 billion, making it the world’s second most valuable private company (after Chinese tech start-up ByteDance).

Although OIA did not disclose the size of its equity investment in SpaceX, it stressed that its broader objective transcends

monetary returns alone.

“The investment will advance in benefiting from the technologies owned by the company and create potential opportunities to transfer the company’s expertise and experience locally, which leads to opening prospects for foreign





The investment will advance in benefiting from the technologies owned by the company and create potential opportunities to transfer the company’s expertise and experience locally, which leads to opening prospects for foreign investments

investments,” the wealth fund noted in a post last week.

Indeed, OIA’s announcement comes against a ramped-up effort by the government to ignite the growth of wider space and satellite communications activities in the Sultanate of Oman.

Late last year, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology revealed that the government is targeting the launch of the country’s first space satellite around 2024.

In conjunction with this goal, the Ministry also announced plans to appoint an international consultant to advise the government on the development of a national space strategy for the Sultanate of Oman.

A National Space Policy, the Ministry points out, will enable the government to, among other things, shape the strategic focus and contours of a future industry around space. In addition to attracting investment into the sector, it will also help in the development of national technical and industrial capabilities in various areas across the industry.

Additionally, it will support international cooperation in the field of space, it stated. A thriving space industry, according to the Ministry, is also imperative to the Sultanate of Oman’s future socioeconomic development. **TURN TO P15**

CMA programme to qualify Omani insurance staff for higher positions

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 4

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) is preparing to launch this week a fortnight-long General Insurance Underwriting Certificate training programme in collaboration with the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) and the Insurance Institute of India.

The programme will be conducted as part of the Tamkeen training initiative for Omani cadres working in the insurance sector to help upgrade the skills and aptitude of the employees working in general insurance underwriting, marketing and those who are qualified for promotion to senior administrative levels in underwriting departments.

The programme will focus on risk management, insurance concept and general insurance underwriting as well as all types of general insurance prevailing in the Omani market and methods of underwriting and reinsurance to acquaint the participant with the ways for dealing with different insurance products from underwriting perspective to achieve efficient insurance underwriting.



شركة المرافق المركزية
Centralized Utilities Company

Tender Announcement

Introduction
Centralized Utilities Company LLC (herein the “Employer” or “Marafiq”) inviting proposals from qualified and experienced Bidders to undertake the following Services /Project in Duqm. The Company invites Bidders to submit their proposals as described below.

No	Tender Number	Tender Title	Tender Description	Tender Fees	RFP Issuance Date	Bid Submission Date
1	CUC-000-00-000-LE-TND-0011	Supply and Installation of CCTV for various PAW sites in Duqm.	The scope of works will be Design, Supply, Installation and commissioning of CCTV in Duqm as follows; • CCTV at four (4) locations (sites) • Provision Wireless (or appropriate) connectivity • Supply, install, configure and test monitors (2x40”) in the SCADA Control Room • Supply, install, configure and test local PC/Servers for hosting CCTV camera	N/A	8-Dec-2021	26-Dec-2021
2	DPC-DPW-00-000-LE-TND-0013	Supply of Tools and Spare Parts for Operation Phase for DIPWP-Retender	Provision of Tools and spare parts required for Operation as following: • Mechanical tools & gauges • Mechanical calibration Devices • Electrical Meters and indicators • Hydraulic testing devices • Generators & Portable batteries • Workshops equipment • Air guns, pumps, drills, and grinders	30 OMR	8-Dec-2021	5-Jan-2022

Request for proposal
The RFP for both tenders will be made available in electronic form only from 9:00 AM, 8-Dec 2021 Oman time.

Contractor Minimum Qualifications
Contractor must hold valid registration with Government Tender Board for works of this nature, and have necessary experience in Oman for similar services/ projects.

Interested Contractors shall contact Marafiq via email to tender@marafiq.om with the subject heading “Tender No” and “Tender Title” to receive further instructions related to payment of tender fee and collection of RFP Package.

P.O. Box 80 P.C. 102
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
www.marafiq.om



Future Makers programme set to conclude at SEZAD

FUTURE SKILLS:
Initiative aims to enable school students to keep pace with modern technological developments

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 4

The activities of the Future Makers programme — an initiative to create a new generation of young Omani entrepreneurs in Duqm — are set to wrap up at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) this week.

The programme focused on developing the personal skills and capabilities of school students in grades 8 to 11.



The programme is implemented by Tawasul Foundation with the support of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and

Free Zones (OPAZ) and Asyad Dry-dock in partnership with the Ministry of Education. The programme, which

kicked off on November 7, seeks to develop students' skills and abilities in dealing with future technologies and their

applications, and to enhance the aspects of innovation and creativity among male and female students to contribute to achieving the national goals and priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

Likewise, it aims to introduce the new generation to the importance of future technologies and skills and their role in achieving Oman Vision 2040.

In addition, the programme seeks to support students' comprehension of the basics of mathematics and English language and strengthen their understanding in a way that contributes to the development of their skills and reflects positively on their academic journey and daily life.

Mona bint Said al Shukaili, CEO of Tawasul Foundation, said: "Our Future Makers Programme

aims to enhance the skills of 150 male and female students from Duqm in the areas of the 4th Industrial Revolution and other innovative and creative skills to establish a generation capable of keeping pace with economic and scientific developments in Duqm and to supply higher education institutions and the labour sector with qualified and ambitious youth."

Eng Yahya bin Khamis al Zadjali, In-Charge of Managing Operations at SEZAD, said: "The programme focused on preparing future makers to keep pace with the changes brought about by the information revolution and its impact on improving the lifestyle, especially in economic areas that depend on the business environment through multiple means of communication."

Bank Muscat extends support to NGOs working for the welfare of persons with disabilities

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat continues to extend strong support to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working for the welfare of disabled persons. On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, the bank highlighted a number of key initiatives in the recent past, where it partnered a number of NGOs to extend support to different segments of society.

In 2021, the bank contributed a number of wheelchairs, including powered and non-powered versions, and electric beds to persons with severe disabilities in partnership with the Oman Association for the Disabled.

The bank also recently contributed laptops and BrailleSense devices to visually-impaired students at Sohar University and hearing aids to the Omani Association for the Hearing-impaired.

Bank Muscat had earlier supported the construction of a playground at the Al Aman Rehabilitation Centre for children with severe disabilities, and is also at present helping provide a sports field at the Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities.



The efforts are a part of the bank's various CSR initiatives aimed at enhancing facilities for the disabled and helping them integrate into mainstream society so as to contribute positively to the nation.

As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat has been undertaking many measures for the inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream society.

The bank's efforts in this regard include the operation of a special ATM with a special transaction flow for blind and visually-impaired people on the premises of the head office of the Al Noor Association of the Blind. Also, special access ramps

and other arrangements for easy access have been made available at different branches and ATMs in the Sultanate of Oman.

The bank has also trained a number of its branch employees in sign language to facilitate easy communication with the hearing impaired.

Every year, Bank Muscat continues its CSR and sustainability programmes and activities that are serving various segments of society including the youth and children, people with disabilities, social welfare families, entrepreneurs, students and communities across the country. Apart from numerous one-off projects, the bank continues to run over 10 long-term CSR programmes.

Mazoon Dairy launches new product

MUSCAT: Mazoon Dairy Company launched its new 'Long-life' orange juice product, which is the company's first product in the long-life category of juices, as it contains the nutritional values necessary for consumers' health.

Long-life juices are a suitable choice for all consumers in terms of convenient storage for periods of up to six months, in addition to being easy to present as a healthy option for all family members.

Moreover, the orange juice product is prepared from the finest natural fruits and is rich in vitamin C. The juice is also free of sugar, colours, and



preservatives.

The new orange juice is in a one-litre capacity, and soon it will be launched in (200 ml) capacity with other long-life juice products.

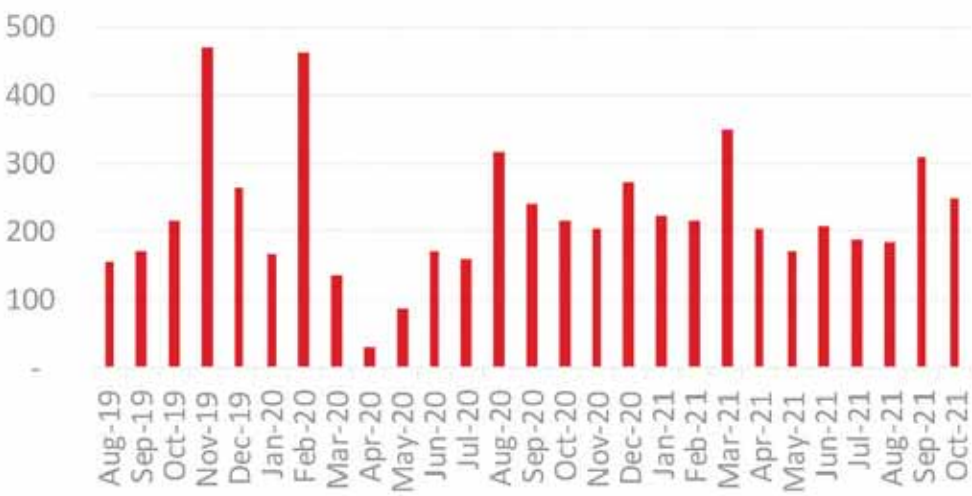
Mazoon Dairy continues its unveiling of new products

range under the highest standards of quality and food safety in accordance with the Gulf standards followed in the Sultanate of Oman, and under the direct supervision of the regulatory authorities, led by the Food Safety and Quality Centre.

All production processes are carried out in the company's plant under the direct supervision of the quality assurance and control team, and each production process is subject to a number of laboratory tests (before, during and after), conducted in modern and advanced laboratories within the factory facilities in Wilayat Al Sunina.

MSX closes lower, led by financial sector scrips

Traded Value of Property in Oman (OMR mn)



Source: NCSI

The MSX30 Index ended the week lower by 2.99 per cent. All sub-indices ended lower as well. Services & Financial Index closed lower by 1.77 per cent and 2.58 per cent, respectively while Industrial index closed down by 1.52 per cent. MSX Shariah Index closed lower by 1.77 per cent.

Ominvest, in its EGM held on November 17, obtained its shareholders' approval to issue Unsecured Subordinated Perpetual Sukuk Al Mudaraba Certificates (Sukuk) worth RO 52 million.

The Sukuk will be issued by Ominvest and exchanged for shares (Treasury Shares) held by Jabreen International Development Company (Jabreen), a fully owned subsidiary of Ominvest.

After the exchange transaction is completed, the Treasury Shares will be cancelled by Ominvest.

The Sukuk will be in exchange for 139.4 million treasury shares, which represent 17.26 per cent of Ominvest's equity capital. Ominvest plans to acquire the Treasury Shares at 373 baisas per share from Jabreen.

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has announced the opening of 13 national projects valued approximately at RO 3.5 billion.

The projects cover a number of key sectors, including energy, food security, manufacturing, mining, health and tourism services.

The 13 national projects are: Liwa Plastic Industries; Salalah Liquefied Petroleum Gas project; Petroleum Coke Installation at Sohar Free Zone; Ibri Solar Plant; Al Murooj Dairy Products; Al Bashayer Meat project; Shrimp farm in Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan; Khazaen Land Port (dry port) in South Al Batinah; One-Stop-Station in Salalah; Ahjar Quarry Company, based in the Wilayat of Liwa; Karwa Motors project in Duqm; Oman International Hospital project; and Dusit2 Naseem Resort in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

Latest NCSI Oman figures indicate that the Sultanate of Oman's population rose by 0.8 per cent in November 2021, as compared to October 2021.

Omani's population grew by 0.2 per cent in November compared to October 2021 while expatriate population rose by 1.8 per cent in November 2021 compared

to October 2021. Of the total population, 62.37 per cent were Omanis while 37.63 per cent were expatriates as of November 2021.

The value of traded property in the Sultanate of Oman went up by 16.2 per cent in 10M/2021 to RO 2,302 million compared to RO 1,981 million in 10M/2020.

Traded value of mortgage contracts during the same period fell by 0.9 per cent to RO 1,197 million compared to RO 1,208 million in same period last year. Traded value of sale contracts rose by 52.9 per cent to RO 1,089 million compared to RO 712.6 million in 10M/2020.

Number of properties issued during 10M/2021 also rose by 37.7 per cent to 210,858 compared to 153,098 in 10M/2020.

The Sultanate of Oman recorded net outflows of \$3.6 million in the month of November 2021. With outflows in November, the overall inflows during the year 2021 stand at \$43.5 million.

Oman's highest positive inflow during 2021 came in the month of June 2021 when net inflows during the month were recorded at \$75 million.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

Vietnam exceeds US Treasury currency thresholds, but no manipulator label

WASHINGTON: Vietnam again exceeded the US Treasury's thresholds for possible currency manipulation and enhanced analysis under a 2015 trade law, but the department on Friday refrained from formally branding it as manipulator.

Switzerland and Taiwan also narrowly escaped triggering all three manipulation criteria in the Treasury's latest semi-annual currency report, thanks to revised, broader measurements for trade and current account surpluses and foreign exchange market interventions.

All three had tripped the Treasury's thresholds in April prompting more intensive US engagement to revise their practices.

Former president Donald Trump's administration had branded Vietnam and Switzerland as manipulators in December, invoking a 1988 currency law.

In the latest report, the Treasury found that no major trading partners during the year through June 2021 sought to manipulate their currencies for a trade advantage or for preventing effective balance of payments adjustments.

The department said it would continue to work with Vietnam and Taiwan to address US concerns. For Switzerland, which tripped only the trade and foreign exchange intervention



Motorists ride a motorcycle past the State Bank of Vietnam building in Hanoi. – Reuters

thresholds, the Treasury said it would continue to conduct an in-depth analysis of the alpine country's practices for another year.

Switzerland was moved to the Treasury's "Monitoring List" of major trading partners that merit close attention to their currency practices, along with 11 other countries that remained on the list: China, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Ireland, Italy, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Mexico.

Treasury said it was "satisfied with progress made by Vietnam to date" and would continue engagement started in May with

Taiwan.

"This engagement includes urging the development of a plan with specific actions to address the underlying causes of currency undervaluation and external imbalances," Treasury said of the Taiwan engagement.

The United States in July dropped a threat to impose tariffs on Vietnamese goods after the country's central bank agreed with the US Treasury to refrain from manipulation and make its exchange rate practices more transparent.

The deal followed a Reuters report that Vietnam had sought to shift its spot dollar purchases

to forward purchase contracts with banks to evade the Treasury criteria.

The Treasury's latest report did not spark any significant immediate moves in the Taiwan dollar, the Vietnamese dong or the Swiss franc.

A Taiwanese central bank official said discussions with Washington would continue but blamed Taiwan's large trade deficit with the United States on strong demand for technology products fueled by the Covid-19 pandemic and production shifts prompted by US tariffs on Chinese goods.

Switzerland's finance ministry repeated its longstanding denial

that the country's central bank engages in manipulation of the franc for an economic advantage.

"Foreign exchange interventions are necessary for Swiss monetary policy in order to maintain appropriate monetary conditions and thus price stability," the ministry said in a statement.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told the Reuters Next virtual conference on Thursday that she would continue to engage her Chinese counterpart, Vice-Premier Liu He, on foreign exchange policy issues. In the second currency report issued by the Biden administration, the Treasury also adjusted the three manipulation thresholds under the 2015 law to include somewhat broader measures of trade surpluses, foreign exchange interventions and current account surpluses.

A Treasury official said Switzerland would have exceeded the old current account surplus threshold, and narrowly missed exceeding the new one. "Treasury is working relentlessly to promote a stronger and more balanced global recovery that benefits American workers, including through close engagement with major economies on currency-related issues," Yellen said in a statement accompanying the report.

— Reuters

Tesla's Musk sells another \$1.01 billion in stock



WASHINGTON: The richest man on the planet, Elon Musk (pictured), is not yet done with his selling spree as the Tesla CEO sold another 934,000 shares on Thursday worth \$1.01 billion.

This made the total amount of shares sold by the EV mogul in the past month or so to \$10.9 billion.

In November, Musk sent out a Tweet teasing his followers to vote whether he should sell 10 per cent of his stock in Tesla. Since then, Musk has sold more than 10.1 million shares in the company.

However, he has also bought back 10.7 million shares in the same time frame. Following the news, the stock of Tesla has again gone down. In the past 30 days, the stock has declined a mammoth 18 per cent which has also brought the net worth of Musk down to \$284 billion.

Musk is among a large host of corporate kingpins who has sold millions of shares for billions in the past few months.

Recently, Satya Nadella, the CEO of the software giant, Microsoft, has sold over 50 per cent of his stock in the company last week according to reports. — Reuters

Oman Investment Authority's SpaceX stake to spur growth of Oman's nascent space industry

FROM PAGE 13

Due to the importance of current essential services aided by space/satellite technologies (eg: telecommunications, earth observations, environmental monitoring and protection, border monitoring and national security, meteorological services, etc), the country aims to reap the advantages of the sector in a strategic and well-coordinated approach, it noted.

Wholly government-owned Space Communications Technology LLC (SCT) — a

subsidiary of OIA — has been given the mandate to develop and implement the country's maiden satellite communications project.

Also as part of its remit, SCT is building national satellite communications infrastructure and developing the required capabilities to serve the immediate to long-term telecommunications needs of the public and private sectors.

Already, a local technology firm has snagged a prestigious contract to manufacture satellite components in the

Sultanate of Oman. Muscat-based International Emerging Technology Company (ETCO) announced in October that it was selected by D-Orbit, an Italian aerospace company, to manufacture parts for small and medium satellites, as well as support space logistics.

The pact will also contribute to the development of local competencies in space-related disciplines.

In recent years, SpaceX, founded by business magnate Elon Musk in 2002, has raised

billions of dollars to fund two capital-intensive projects.

One — the Starlink project — centres on a plan to build and install thousands of satellites in low orbit in space to deliver high-speed Internet to consumers anywhere around the world.

More than 1,700 Starlink satellites have been launched to date. Starship, the other project, is the name of a heavy, next-generation rocket that SpaceX is developing to support cargo and passenger missions to the moon and Mars.

Sri Lanka to review illegal money channels as remittance drops

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's top central bank official on Saturday said remittances have declined over the past six months, prompting authorities to examine if the sudden drop in foreign cash inflow was linked to the use of any illegal channels for transactions.

Ajith Nivard Cabraal, the governor of the bank, told reporters that he has seen a \$300 million drop in remittances in just the last month and added



A man shows a thousand rupee note in a money exchange shop in Colombo. — Reuters

that officials will work with local banks to ease and fast-track the cash inflows. — Reuters

Call to back 'vital' UK small firms during festive trading



Customers wear face masks as they shop at a local market in London. — AFP

LONDON: British politicians and business leaders have joined calls for shoppers to support small businesses this weekend to help them tackle the fresh uncertainty they face heading into the crucial festive trading period.

The London government and opposition parties backed Small Business Saturday, which aims to encourage people to spend money in smaller shops, recognising the contribution of independent businesses to communities during the lockdown.

Keir Starmer, leader of the Labour Party, said: "Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the British economy."

"Despite government tax rises and growing costs to firms, small

businesses owners up and down the country have adapted and continued to do the UK proud. I am delighted to be supporting small businesses across the UK this Small Business Saturday, and urge everyone to do the same."

Jonathan Reynolds, shadow business secretary, said: "Small businesses are vital to our economic growth and it's great to be able to celebrate the great work they do today. "I'm delighted to be out in bustling Bury Market today shopping and meeting shop owners. As we look ahead to our Christmas shopping, I want to encourage people to buy local and support our fantastic small businesses."

Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay said: "Small and independent businesses and enterprises are the backbone of our local economy."

"They are vital for providing jobs and keeping money circulating in the local area. They also make our towns and cities diverse, distinctive and unique."

"We know many small businesses are committed to becoming more sustainable and to improving the welfare of their employees, but it is often made difficult and expensive for them to do so."

"That's why, this Small Business Saturday, Greens are calling on the government and local councils to introduce a series of measures to

support small businesses to do the right thing."

Michelle Ovens, director of Small Business Saturday, said: "We all need to show small businesses our love this weekend. Not only do they make a massive contribution to our economy, but an immeasurable difference to all our lives."

Research by Small Business Saturday supporter American Express found that while small business confidence is starting to rebound, challenges included the cost of goods, rising energy costs and product shortages. An estimated £1.1 billion (\$1.45 billion) was spent with small businesses across Britain on the same day last year. — Reuters

UK’s Facebook slap-down raises bar for US watchdog

Britain is learning from past mistakes. Its competition watchdog on Tuesday ordered Facebook owner Meta Platforms to sell Giphy, a database of cartoonish clips for use in online banter and advertising.

The 2020 deal was not immediately transformative for the \$940 billion social media behemoth, and Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg will probably appeal. But the smackdown offers a blueprint for other regulators to say “no”.

In Britain, Giphy and Facebook are leaders in GIFs — the technical shorthand for the clips — and social media respectively.

Giphy plugs itself into big social media sites, making it second only to Google in terms of numbers of searches. The Competition and Markets Authority reckons that, combined, the pair would account for as much as 60 per cent of monthly GIF searches.

But searches for clips of surfing dogs or yawning kittens aren’t the CMA’s primary concern. Instead, it’s worried about the impact the union could have on future competition in the display advertising market, in which advertisers pay online operators like Facebook to display their ads on their platforms or apps. That’s a big leap, given that GIF-based ads are still in their infancy.

It’s another leap to say there’d be less competition between social media companies due to Facebook’s ability to prevent rivals from accessing Giphy’s GIF databases. For starters, Facebook has offered to keep the libraries open. It’s also unclear how the richness or otherwise of a GIF library will affect advertisers’ choice of a social media platform.

Such issues are likely to feature in Facebook’s expected appeal. Jurisdiction could be another thorny issue. In September it contested the UK regulator’s authority over a US group buying another US company that generates no revenue in Britain.

Significantly, though, the ruling points to regulators in Britain and elsewhere scrutinising even relatively small deals for their potential to have a big impact a long way hence. At a reported \$400 million, Giphy is a tiny addition to Zuckerberg’s stable. — Reuters

Giphy plugs itself into big social media sites, making it second only to Google in terms of numbers of searches



COPPER MASTER

An employee works at an electricity cable factory in Baoying, Jiangsu province, China.

Copper prices edged lower last week as fears over the spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant and slowing growth in China weakened the outlook for demand.

Benchmark copper on the London Metal Exchange (LME) was down 0.3 per cent at \$9,412.50 a tonne on Friday and down around 4 per cent from a week ago.

— Reuters

The upside of entrepreneurship



STEFANO VIRGILLI
stefano@virgilli.com

Continuing from last week. In corporate, it is easy to demonstrate that income does not grow significantly year on year. In fact, the best way for an employee to earn more, is to change job.

For someone who has been employed in a corporation at a salary of RO 2,000, the next salary step might be RO 2,100. The growth is minimal and it might take a year. And as time goes by, the longer an employee stays within the same company, the smaller the growth will be, until the salary will eventually plateau.

However, when an employee starts looking for new opportunities, the entry point in another company could be much higher than the current level.

The same employee could join another company starting at RO 2,500, with a 25 per cent salary increment compared to a mere 5 per cent staying in the same position. My reasoning is not meant to advocate job hopping, which is indeed not a good sign on an employee’s CV.

Moreover, growth should be measured with different metrics other than salary. For

example, staying in the same company for years is a great way to learn about corporate structure, internal dynamics, processes and procedures.

Some researchers said that the sweet spot for balancing salary and other less tangible growth elements could be two-and-a-half years. After that, both the chances of earning more and learning new skills, drop significantly. Two and a half years is also a good amount of time on the CV to show consistence in keeping a job.

If after said period, a new opportunity arises within the same organisation — such as a transfer to a new department or country — then staying within the organisation could be the right move. Two consecutive terms of two and a half year, covering different roles and responsibilities, sum up to a 5 years commitment with the same organisation. An excellent asset in any CV.

But let’s explore the endless upside of entrepreneurship. If we look at the statistics, the majority of entrepreneurs earn as much, or slightly more, than a normal salary in the corporate world. Also statistically, an average entrepreneur might work 25-50 per cent more than an employee.

So why would anyone do that? Well, here is the deal. While entrepreneurs might not earn a great salary from the get go, they are building valuable assets. Simply put, a company can be sold.

A job cannot. Let us take the example of an entrepreneur working for 5 years on a new business idea. Imagine that in the first year the company makes a loss and the entrepreneur cannot pay salary consistently.

Let’s then imagine that during the years 2, 3 and 4, the business starts and continues to grow, thus making room for a salary above average.

Then year 5 comes, and the business has a major breakthrough. A huge client is won and the business generates large profits. Now the entrepreneur still receives a higher than average salary, but also receives a one-time bonus that compensates for the first full year of inconsistent salary.

Then year 6 comes, and the entrepreneur sells the business for an amount of money that can buy a property in cash. Time and hard work reward entrepreneurs.

(The columnist is a member of the International Press Association)

Global coal hypocrisy



SHASHI THAROOR
The author is MP for Indian National Congress

India has somehow emerged as the villain of last month’s United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), blamed for resisting cuts to coal consumption even as toxic air envelops its capital, New Delhi.

The country’s supposed crime in Glasgow was to join China in insisting on a last-minute change to the conference’s final declaration, in which countries pledged to “phase down” rather than “phase out” coal.

For that, India, whose per capita carbon-dioxide emissions are a fraction of those of the world’s leading emitters, was widely criticised for obstructing the global fight against climate change.

The irony is that India has done far less to intensify the planet’s greenhouse effect than either China or the developed West. True, the country is a major coal

consumer, and derives about 70 per cent of its energy from it.

But, as recently as 2015, at least a quarter of India’s population couldn’t take for granted what almost everyone in the developed world can: to flick a switch on a wall and be bathed with light.

Worse, Indians are among the biggest victims of climate change, periodically enduring devastating floods and unseasonal droughts, in addition to choking on polluted air. Delhi is a poster child for poor air quality, which hovers between “severe” and “hazardous” for much of the year.

The causes include PM2.5 particles emitted from coal-fired power plants, fumes from dense traffic, industrial pollution, and the burning of crop stubble by farmers in neighbouring states — all combined with winter fog.

But given India’s traditional role as a leading voice of the developing

world, it became the face of the last-minute change of language at COP26.

The “phase down” wording regarding coal consumption had already appeared in a US-China bilateral climate agreement signed earlier in the conference.

Nevertheless, India became the focus of global opprobrium.

India does not deserve to be the fall guy. For starters, the country has 17 per cent of the world’s population but generates only 7 per cent of global CO2 emissions. (China, with 18.5 per cent of the world’s people, generates 27 per cent of emissions, and the US, with less than 5 per cent of the world’s population, accounts for 15 per cent.)

Whereas wasteful consumption and unsustainable energy-guzzling are rife in the West, most Indians live close to the subsistence level, and many have no access to energy.

To expect India to meet the targets that rich countries currently tout is unfair and impractical.

Economic development — indispensable to pulling millions of Indians out of poverty — requires energy.

Coal may be polluting, but it is not feasible for any developing country to switch rapidly to cleaner alternatives that need scaling up.

Moreover, despite having vast financial resources and access to cleaner fossil fuels such as natural gas (which India must import),

Western countries have done little to help. They have failed to keep climate-finance promises to poor countries (notably the \$100 billion per year they committed to provide at COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009), and refused to transfer advanced green technologies.

And COP26 singled out the coal used by developing countries, not the oil and gas used extensively in

the West.

India’s energy requirements are expected to increase faster than those of any other country in the next two decades.

Since COP21 in Paris in 2015, India has announced ambitious plans to scale up its production and use of renewable energy, which currently accounts for only 18 per cent of its electricity generation. And at COP26, India complemented its explicit commitment to phase down coal with a pledge to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070.

India has also updated its nationally determined contributions, which it must fulfil by 2030. The country is now pledging to increase its installed renewable-energy capacity to 500 gigawatts, and meet 50 per cent of its energy requirements from non-fossil-fuel sources.

© Project Syndicate, 2021

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

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

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

Tally
POWER OF SIMPLICITY

TALLY FOR VAT

For Tally Sales, Services or Customization

Contact: TallyGuru +968 79248644, 98753781
Email: guru.prasad@rtsgroup.com
Roudh Lotas Group LLC

TallyPrime

<http://www.rltsgroup.com/tally-accounting-software/>

SUNDAY

DECEMBER 5, 2021

OMAN DAILY
Observer

Classified Section

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

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

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

Tally is now available on the **Cloud**

Ask for FREE Demo

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

TallyPrime

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

■ SIT. WANTED

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, BLA (Honours), 27, Sri Lankan, experienced in Soft & Hard Landscape Design, Master Planning, 3D Visualizations and Site Inspections, seeks suitable placement in Oman. Contact: 9550 7986 / duminduudara@gmail.com

QUANTITY SURVEYOR (Sri Lankan) HND (UK), BSc QS (Reading) 4 years experience in Building Projects (Civil & MEP) looking for a suitable placement in Oman, Email: tmsafnas@gmail.com Contact: +96878149384

Smile Dental Clinic
Al Ghubrah, Muscat

• Orthodontics
• Root Canal Treatment
• Ceramic Crowns & Bridges
• Treatment for Bad Breath
• Treatment for Bleeding Gums

Tel: 99785613 / 24499698

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

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

■ FOR SALE

WE supply quantities of excellent mountainous soil in Bausher (suitable for compaction and filling) 99242445, 99327939.

■ INVESTOR REQUIRED

INVESTOR required to start a small cold-pressed cooking oil extraction unit in Oman. Cold pressed oil will be extracted by using traditional wooden churners. This method helps to retain the natural minerals and vitamins in the oil and is beneficial for health. For more information please contact: 0091- 9743234719. edelweissbhoomi@gmail.com

■ SERVICES

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

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

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

FOR RENT

Substantial Villa in Hay Al Shatti near Grand Hayatt.
3 Floors with 40 Rooms, 22 Bathrooms
which is suitable for Embassy / Clinic / School / Multipurpose Office / Residential Premises.
TEL : 99643760 / 24704994

■ 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

ZEN POLYNE

"TARPAULIN WAREHOUSE IN OMAN"
INDIAN BRAND BEST QUALITY LDPE TARPAULINE
CROSS LAMINATED MULTI-LAYER TARPAULIN

FEATURES OF ZEN-POLYNE

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

RAVIRA

Please Contact: OMAN : +968 9328 1473 / 7937 1865
UAE : +971 5030 58676
Mail to: ravirainternational@gmail.com Web: www.ravirant.com

Naseer & Suleiman GROUP OF COMPANIES

Naseer & Suleiman Group Companies (NSG) proudly announces Sub-franchising opportunities for international brands in the Sultanate of Oman.

Investors who are interested, kindly contact the business development department on **+968 24541111 or +968 93315939**

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

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

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

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072

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
DUQUIM: 97218831, 94002341

ROAD, SEA & AIR TRANSPORT WORLD WIDE

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

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

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

ALL OVER INDIA EXPRESS DELIVERY

Online Tracking
TOLL FREE NUMBER **80066766**

24/7 FREE PICK UP

www.alnamanicargo.com

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

95587410, 99785420, 99638698, 98523831

HO - RUWI - HAMRIYA - GHALA - AL AMRAT - SEEB - SOHAR

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

Official distributor of **Schneider Electric**

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

Schneider Electric Lovato DAB WEG

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

OMAN DAILY
Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

@omanobserver
www.omanobserver.om

Now get news on the go

To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER

WhatsApp - your number to 96473232

DAWOOD

JOB VACANCY

An Excellent grade, ISO 9001:2015 - QMS accredited Construction company wishes to recruit enthusiastic personnel for the following positions:

Real Estate Sales Agent: Bachelor degree with min 3 yrs experience.

Procurement Engineer: BE. Eng with min 8 yrs experience.

Quantity Surveyor: with min 6 yrs experience.

Required: 1) Oman Driving License holder.
2) Fluency in English and Arabic.

Interested candidates pls forward your CV's to **info@dawood.om**

Labor Accommodation Services

We Offer Standard Accommodation Services to Labor & Junior Staff (Capacity to accommodate 1200 Labors). Accommodations near Rusayl Industrial Area next to National Gas Facility.

- Newly build, clean and municipality approved accommodation
- Easy access and customized accommodation facility
- Spacious and ventilated rooms
- 24hrs Security and Monitoring
- Optional paid food & Laundry Facilities etc.

Shaksy
Engineering Services

Kindly Contact:
Mr Hamza - 93200365
Mr Praveen 93201534

features



Revered Omani violin performer shares love for music

When she was 11 years old, Tahera al Balushi is already considered a violin prodigy although she brush it off as being in the right place at the right time. Nearly three decades later, she is still playing in some of the most remarkable venues and concerts all over the world becoming an icon in her own right in Oman's music scene... **P20**

READ

GO TELL THE BEES THAT I AM GONE

BY DIANA GABALDON

The ninth book in the Outlander series. As the Revolutionary War moves closer to Fraser's Ridge, Claire and Jamie reunite with their daughter and her family.

CONTEMPORARY ART

New arts centre to brush up Russia's image

ACROSS FROM THE KREMLIN, the century-old plant that used to supply the seat of Russian power with electricity has been transformed by a billionaire gas tycoon into a temple of contemporary art. The GES-2 venue on the banks of the Moskva River winding through the Russian capital was designed by leading Italian architect Renzo Piano and promises to house the biggest international names and Russian stars.

Beyond pleasing art lovers, the venue also aims to brush up Russia's image, observers say. The opening comes at the end of a year that saw President Vladimir Putin's government wage an increasingly repressive campaign against the opposition, starting with the jailing of his best-known domestic critic, Alexei Navalny. Authorities have also targeted independent media and rights organisations and cracked down on social media



Contemporary Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson talks to press during the opening of GES-2 contemporary arts centre on the banks of the Moskva River in Moscow

networks, squeezing the space for criticism and bringing a chill on free expression. As Russia hurtles down parallel paths of autocratic rule and modernisation, the GES-2 opening highlights these contradictions. "Putin and his administration have this dream that they can freeze politics while still having business or art develop," said art collector and government critic Marat Gelman. "It looks like schizophrenia." GES-2 is financed by one of Russia's wealthiest people, Leonid Mikhelson, the founder and chief of Novatek, Russia's largest private gas group. With towering electric blue chimneys, the sprawling complex features solar panels on its roof and a birch grove, and will house galleries, cafes and art residencies. "Everything was done fantastically," said Gelman. In addition to the architect,

the project has two other Italians on board: Teresa Mavica, who oversees Mikhelson's VAC foundation which umbrellas GES-2, and artistic director Francesco Manacorda, formerly of Tate Liverpool. The cost of the centre has not been disclosed but is estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars. According to the 2021 Forbes ranking, Mikhelson's fortune is valued at \$24.9 billion. "I told Leonid (Mikhelson) to buy the nearby buildings to demolish them — and he did. To make a good building you need a good client," Piano told reporters. Nathalie Obadia, a gallery owner who also teaches the politics of art at Sciences Po university in Paris, said contemporary art allows "individuals and countries to correct a negative image abroad and at home". — **AFP**

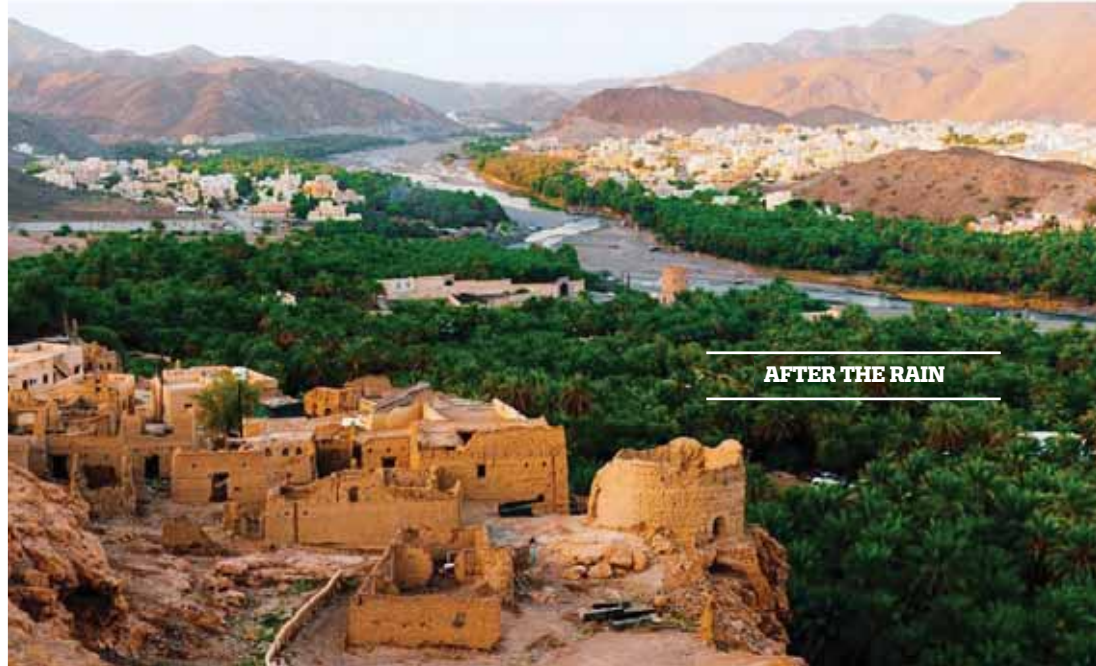


find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

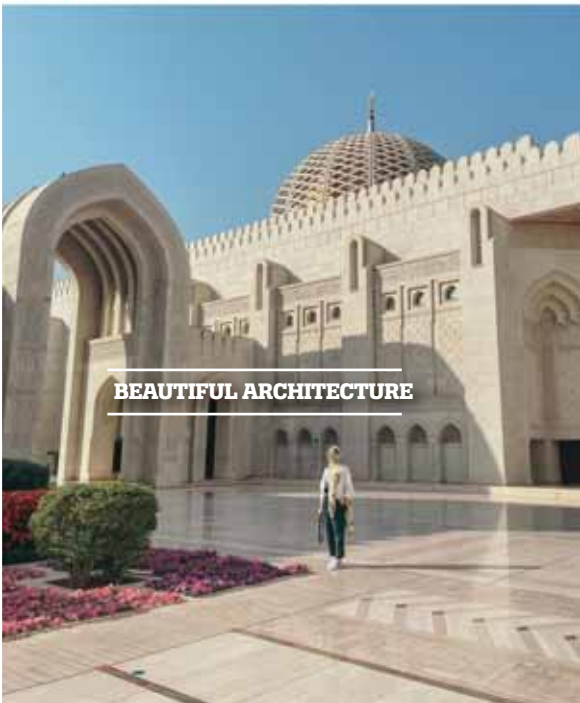
INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



omaralzidjali • Follow
Muscat, Oman



suboohi Khan • Follow
Muscat, Oman



selmakochan1 • Follow
Oman

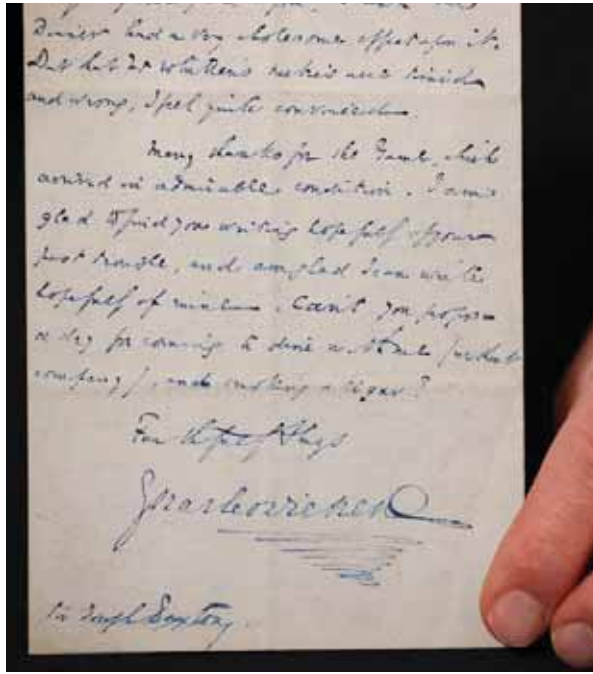


SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE
We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

Dickens letter brings Victorian dinner drama to life

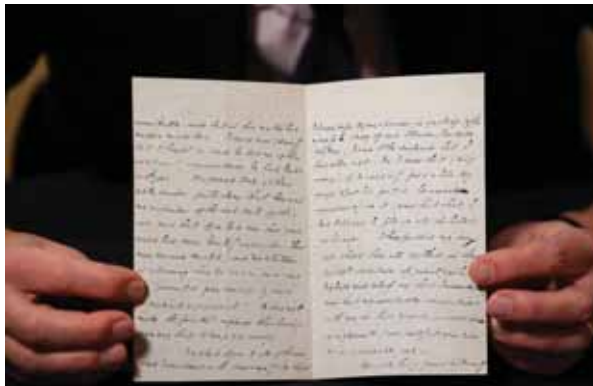


A CONVIVIAL LETTER written by Charles Dickens while he was touring Britain giving readings of his story 'A Christmas Carol' is set to go up for auction at Christie's in London.

In the four-page handwritten note dated on December 6, 1858, to his friend, the architect and member of parliament Joseph Paxton, he describes a dinner held in Dickens' honour that Paxton was persuaded to stay away from over political concerns.

"This is really a splendid letter, because it brings together Charles Dickens and one of the other great Victorian men of the age, Sir Joseph Paxton," said Thomas Venning, head of the books department at Christie's London.

"He's writing in rather kind of colourful terms to express his frustration about why things have gone wrong and paints rather a colourful picture of the



local businessman who seems to have made a mess of the whole thing — a man called Whitten."

Dickens writes that he had considered mentioning Paxton's absence in his talk. "After a careful study of our blunder headed Whitten, I came to the conclusion that I had better not, for I saw that being uneasy, if he could only find a hole big enough to put his foot in, he would unquestionably do it."

The letter is expected to fetch £4,000-6,000 (\$5,300-\$8,000) at Christie's Valuable Books & Manuscripts sale on December 15.

Venning said other Dickens letters were available for less, "but we've estimated this one a bit higher because it's just particularly good".

"It gives a flavour of Christmas, it gives a flavour of Dickens as in his public persona, and it gives that kind of flash of writing ability that you really want from Dickens — the kind of colour and enjoyment of a strange local incident." — Reuters

ART

'The Language of Sunset' takes centre stage at Sarah Gallery



LEBANESE ARTIST Chucralla Fattouh has a wide artistic experience and these experiences can now be enjoyed as "The Language of Sunset" exhibit opens in Gallery Sarah on December 1.

Under the patronage of Her Highness Dr Sayyida Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at Sultan Qaboos University, Fattouh brought with him some of his pieces that best represents where he is at as an artist.

He graduated from the College of Fine Arts of the Lebanese University in Beirut in 1983, since then the Fattouh has dedicated himself to art. From 1985 to date, the artist has conducted more than 150 group and personal exhibitions in art galleries and festivals in Lebanon and abroad including the Americas, Tunisia and Brazil. The artist also exhibited in Bait Muzna Gallery in Muscat in 2015.

He participated in many national and international exhibitions and auctions, such as the Bonhams Art Auction House and recently at Sotheby's, and received many awards and honours, most notably the Queen Elizabeth II award in 2007, in his participation in the live painting of the charitable horse race in the annual Gulf Polo Cup in London.

The artist belongs to the Lebanese coastal village of Monsef. In the early sixties, and since his childhood, he used to observe the waves, the sky, and the clouds that took root in his memory. Inspired by

the beauty of his fair coastal city, he painted those scenes and colours full of life that he saw every day. The artist was able to create for him an artistic imprint that can be distinguished from any other artwork by the symbolism of the characters, and the minimisation of flat geometric shapes in the spaces that surround the subject.

As for the current exhibition at Sarah Gallery, Fattouh presents his recently produced works from the Sunset Language series, which was the main inspiration for this collection in the coastal village of Monsef. This collection takes us on a journey to the artist's world of bright vocabulary and formations, where his works explain the inner self or an essential personal vision of the sunset and its impact on the world.

He says: "Sunset Language Group tells the story of sun whispering her secrets before disappearing at sunset, passing between the bodies of her loved ones and changing their language from an auditory language to a visual language full of warmth and silence." The artist documents this moment and he called it the new language of the sun and painted it to preserve the language of sunset.

In addition, the artist presents his series "Living with a foreign body", where the artist says that the whole world lives with foreign bodies daily. At first, they become afraid, and then gradually they begin to adapt to the foreign bodies around them, so they become part of their world. Here, the

artist captures the image or the first impression of this encounter, which carries many ambiguities, raises the question of the viewer, and the artist does not tell the story but leaves it to the viewer to imagine and explain it.

Fattouh has been an inspiration to his sons and his influence had led them to also pursue careers in art. One of his sons shares with him a short film of his production and artworks in the current exhibition.

Artist Nicholas is a visual artist and film director. Graduated from the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts with a master's degree in Animation, he participated in more than 30 exhibitions and auctions locally and internationally including Bonham (London) where he sold six paintings in 2016.

In 2018, Nicholas debuted the film "How My Grandmother Became a Chair" was awarded the Robert Bosch Stiftung Film Award as a German-Lebanese co-production during the Berlinale. Today, this award-winning short film has been selected in more than 80 prestigious festivals around the world (10 Oscar-qualifying festivals) and has won 21 awards including the Sundance TV and Carthage Awards.

"The Language of Sunset" is open from December 1 to 11, 2021 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm — from Saturday to Thursday at Sarah Gallery in Bait Al Zubair Museum.

For more information about the exhibition, inquiries can be made at 22084747 or visit the gallery's social media account.

COLUMN



Rasha Al Raisi
rashabooks@yahoo.com

Quien Te Cantara touches complex themes including identity and isolation

LILA CASSEN is a famous pop star from the '90s who suffers amnesia after a failed suicide attempt. While recovering, she's informed by her manager Blanca that she hasn't produced any songs since her mother's death ten years back.

Running out of funds to keep her afloat, Lila had signed a comeback tour that she has to prepare for. But with her current condition, the only way left for her to learn her songs and re-gain her old persona is by watching herself online.

While doing that, Lila comes across an interesting video of a fan impersonating her called Violeta, who works as a bartender in a karaoke bar. Violeta is a hardcore fan who specialises in singing Lila's songs and perfecting her looks. Lila sends Blanca to meet Violeta to ask if she could train her to become her famous persona again, an offer which Violeta accepts gladly. From then on, Lila and Violeta's stories intertwine and at times it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two.

This is the storyline of the Spanish movie Quien Te Cantara (Who will sing for you?) written and directed by David Vermut in 2018. Although the concept of the movie is simple outwardly with only four main female characters, yet it touches many complex themes such as identity and isolation. Motherhood is another theme that the characters either share metaphorically (the relationship between Blanca and Lila), biologically (the relationship between Violeta and her daughter Marta) or through memories (Lila's recollection of her mother that she relates to Violeta in a powerful scene at the end).

Vermut's former career in illustration is evident in almost all scenes. The shots are well composed with many symbols that reflect themes from the movie. Lila's high heel shoes are placed at the corner of many scenes as a question: will she be able to fill her own shoes and gain her old persona? There is also a brilliant scene of Violeta wearing a t-shirt with Lila's face on it while still in bed, with Lila's mouth totally covered by the duvet to indicate her current inability to sing. All actresses deliver a powerful performance, whether it's Najwa Nimri playing cold and distant Lila who starts becoming more humane as the movie progresses or Violeta — played by Eva Llorach — who's tormented by her neurotic daughter's impulsive acts and only find release when impersonating her favourite star. Natalia de Molina who plays Violeta's daughter Marta perfects the role and succeeds in keeping viewers at the edge of their seats anticipating her next move.

Even the choice of name for the town where the events take place 'Rota' — that means broken in Spanish — is not a coincidence as all the female characters are somehow broken. The music composition is eerie at times and in others takes you back to the pop culture of the 90s — especially with the weird dance moves that the main characters practise in different scenes. The movie is a homage to fandom and a reflection of the stars' struggle to keep up with the everchanging showbusiness. Quien Te Cantara was inspired by Japanese pop singer Naomi Chiaki who stopped singing after her mother's death in 1992. It was well-received by critics and viewers alike and had seven nominations for Goya awards, including Best New Actress that went to Eva Llorach. If you're not familiar with Vermut's work, then I would suggest you start with his masterpiece Magical Girl (2014) that won him many prizes and international recognition. Quien Te Cantara is a gripping feminine drama both beautiful and devastating. Available on Netflix.

Rasha al Raisi is a certified skills trainer and the author of: The World According to Bahja. rashabooks@yahoo.com



Revered Omani violin performer shares love for music

BY MAI AL ABRI

Prolific Omani violinist Tahera al Balushi keeps referring to her career as something of “being in the right place at the right time” but as time was able to tell, her being selected was not just a coincidence but she actually has the talent, the charisma and longevity to foster a lifelong music career.

Tahera has been performing on international stages for over 30 years. When she was 11, she can already play entire concertos becoming a prodigy who has made an impact not only in the local music and performance industry but including international ones where she was invited to perform.

“It wasn’t a hobby. It was a coincidence that I was in the right place and at the right time. At age 11, the Royal Omani Troupe was looking for young participants in their musical shows. I was picked up. The coaches then gave me the violin. I didn’t know what was that and what to do with it,” she shared.

“Strangely, I felt a connection with that instrument and it was a perfect match with a young lady. Now, I appreciate their choice for me. I have never been connected with violin more than these days,” she added.

A soloist on the Arabic violin in the Sultanate of Oman, thanks to her talent and her innate musical aptitude, Tahera was able to complete her theoretical studies and specialised in playing the violin in the Royal Omani Troupe.

Tahera is proficient in playing various musical and lyrical forms of Arabic music. “I was influenced by some great violinists in the Arab world”, she explained.

Her ambition is to propagate

the talent of Arab women in playing the violin to the world. She wanted representation on the international stage that women like her can have a spot.

“There is something about the sound of the violin that makes my heart soar. The violin generally carries the melody. When well-played, the sound of the bow on the strings is a perfect medium for my emotional expression,” she said.

Tahera has performed in different stages all over the world and is a revered performer in the country. She participates in the Omani Women’s Day celebrations every year. She also participated in a solo performance at the international artist Jihad Akl’s concert at the Royal Opera House of Oman in 2016 and solo playing on the big stage at the Cairo Opera House in the Arab Music Festival in 2006. She had multiple participations with the Omani Oud Hobbyists Association in Switzerland, France, Britain, the Philippines and Japan. She also participated in the opening of the Arab World Cup stadium in Qatar.

Tahera believes in the power of music to heal one’s self. She enthusiastically shared, “The violin has provided me with years of joyful playing in many different circumstances. Perhaps you will find it the right fit for your musical endeavours.”

She added, “I have always believed that music helps people to cure and recover. For any young woman who decides to take that step, it is worth it. It will not only help the woman to form her personality, but also give her peace inside her. This is in addition to the health benefits that one gains. Lower levels of depression, anxiety, and other stress-related health problems. Playing the violin is an excellent stress reliever and a great way to enlarge your social circle.”