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TOP 5 FINISH FOR OMAN RACING AT ASIAN LE MANS



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PACT SIGNED TO PROMOTE OMAN AS LEADING INVESTMENT DESTINATION



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TAMARIND; A SHADOWY AND EVERGREEN TREE WITH MEDICAL BENEFITS



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO GERMANY, SERBIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany on being re-elected as his country's president for a second term. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Steinmeier. His Majesty also wished the people of Germany further progress and prosperity, and the relations between the two countries further development and growth.

His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Aleksandar Vucic of the Republic of Serbia on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness. He also wished the people of Serbia further progress and prosperity.

— ONA

HM THANKED BY ITALIAN PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Sergio Mattarella of the Italian Republic in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on the occasion of being re-elected as his country's president. In his cable, President Mattarella expressed his sincere appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's heartfelt sentiments and affirmed his keenness to strengthen the existing relations between the two countries. He also wished His Majesty the Sultan good health and happiness and the Sultanate of Oman further progress and prosperity.

— ONA

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CZECH JAN HIRT WINS 5TH STAGE IN TOUR OF OMAN



Czech cyclist Jan Hirt of the IWG Team bagged the first position in the fifth stage in the Tour of Oman 2022. The tour will conclude on Tuesday with the participation of 17 international teams. Hirt also took the race leader's red jersey. The fifth stage (150.5 km) started from the Wilayat of Samayil and ended up at Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. The sixth and the last stage of the Tour of Oman (135.5 km) will kick off on Tuesday from Al Mouj in the Governorate of Muscat to the Sea Road of Muttrah. **DETAILS ON P10**

SQU to resume in person classes from February 20

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 14

The Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has announced that in person classes for all classes will begin from February 20.

"The decision comes after conducting an epidemiological study of the situation and the positive indicators arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic", the university said in a statement.

However, the university administration advised the students, teaching and administrative staff to take the vaccine against Covid-19 and to stick to the precautionary measures and procedures set by the Covid-19 Supreme Committee.

An instructional guide to this effect was earlier issued by the university to ensure a safe return to study at the university.

The administration of Sultan Qaboos University switched to the distance education system at the end of January 2022 following a rise in the number of coronaviruses and its variant Omicron for all students in all colleges. The Ministry of Education has already made it mandatory for the 12th grade to operate in full attendance in both public and private schools for the second semester in the academic year 2022/2021.

According to the announcement made by the ministry last week, as for grades 5 to 11, the traditional or direct education system will be followed while adhering to the precautionary health measures.

However, schools with over 30 students to a class will follow the blended education system.

Plan to build major cities in Muscat, Suhar, Nizwa

OVER HALF A MILLION REQUESTS FOR LAND PLOTS

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

[@zainabalnasseri](#)

The number of land plots distributed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning reached 1.319 million, of which 632,000 were built or developed, at a rate of 48 per cent, and 686,000 were non-developed (52 per cent).

Also, the number of current applications for land plots stand at 509,000. Among the applicants, 40 per cent are men and 60 per cent women, said the ministry during a media briefing held on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The media meeting, entitled 'Paradigm Shift', was attended by a high-level team of officials and media representatives. It witnessed the launch of an executive plan for 2022 as a translation of the national priorities emanating from the Oman Vision 2040, and the national strategy for urban development. The meeting also included a review of the most prominent achievements of the ministry.

During the presentation, Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, highlighted the ministry's achievements and challenges.

CHALLENGES
The most prominent challenges faced by the ministry in the 2021 plan, according to him, were financial appropriations, budget



Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili

Number of land plots distributed

1.319m

Built or developed

632,000

Current applications for land plots at

509,000

Value of real estate trading in 2021 stood at

RO 2.552 bn

(an increase of 4%)

16,000

Sites approved for food security projects

7,645

Land plots of various uses on an area of 597m square metres

"Despite all the challenges faced by the real estate sector, the value of real estate trading in 2021 stood at RO 2.552 billion, while it was RO 2.456 billion in 2020, an increase of 4 per cent", the minister said, adding that revenue from these transactions stood at RO 72.5 million last year, which is low compared to the previous year as a result of reduction in fee for some services provided by the ministry.

Statistics indicate 163,000 requests to prove and register ownership have been decided, including 88,000 (54 per cent) requests approved of the total requests, and 75,000 (46 per cent) are rejected.

FOOD PROJECTS
Besides, the minister indicated that 16,000 sites had been approved for food security projects and 7,645 land plots of various uses planned on an area of 597 million square metres.

The number of usufruct contracts until 2021 stood at 93,000, with a fee collection of RO 8.4 million.

Dr Al Shueili spoke about the Soroush initiative, which is a national initiative for integrated residential projects in support of the existing housing policies in the Sultanate of Oman to provide suitable alternatives for eligible citizens to grant land in partnership between the public and private sectors. He added that there were five new sites allocated within the integrated project.

TURN TO P2



Over half a million land requests; 123,025 in Muscat

FROM P1

SOROUH INITIATIVE

In his speech, he pointed out that the ministry called last year to submit requests to express a desire to design and implement real estate development projects “Sorouh” in the governorates of Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah and South Al Batinah, with the aim of embracing various alternatives and solutions to provide adequate housing, achieving the objectives of the comprehensive urban strategy, providing basic services and an innovative model as an alternative to the granting policy and enhancing the role of the private sector and its involvement in building societies.

Until October 2021, land applications in Muscat stood at 123,025, in Al Dakhiliyah 55,127, and South Al Batinah 32,107.

Regarding housing assistance to social security families and people with limited income, the minister said that 2,000 families benefitted from the programme at a value of RO 47 million, 700 housing units were delivered, and 713 cases were exempted from housing loans

worth RO 13.5 million, according to the Royal directives.

“To help those affected by Shaheeh cyclone, payment of housing loans in 544 cases had been postponed for six months, besides 328 cases were approved for housing assistance. The ministry officials carried out more than 40 field visits and verified 199 plots within the wilayat’s boundaries,” the minister added.

He spoke of the ‘Ifsah’ initiative, where 142 reports were received, of which 68 were within the ministry’s powers and 74 were related to customer service. “There are several cases of direct violations that have been transferred to the State Audit Institution and Public Prosecution. Also, services of three employees in the ministry were terminated after being convicted of various cases during 2021,” the minister added.

GOVERNMENT PLOTS

After the issuance of Royal Decree No 42/2021 regarding granting government plots, the ministry has made great strides in governance and legislation in this aspect. According to the



presentation, the ministry has completed 50 per cent of the draft law on housing, 75 per cent of the draft law of property type for public benefit, 70 per cent of the real estate development law, 25 per cent of the urban planning law, and 75 per cent of the addressing law.

With regard to the families affected by the activities of the industrial Port of Sohar, the minister spoke of the model city of Liwa as an example, indicating that the completion rate of the project stands at 85 per cent, the monetary compensation amounted to 85 per cent, the land compensation rate

was 95 per cent, and there are 476 housing units under construction with total completion of the infrastructure of public services, which has reached 100 per cent.

As for the Al Batinah Coastal Road Compensation Project, the route of the first phase (Barka-Musannah-Liwa-Shinas) has been handed over to the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, according to the minister.

He also said that the second phase (Al Suwaiq-Al Khabourah-Saham-Suhar) has gone a long way as the percentage of in-kind

compensation for the houses was 96 per cent, the in-kind compensation for the farmers was 58 per cent, the disbursed cash was 84 per cent, and the completion rate of the waste removal project stood at 55 per cent.

NEW CITIES

The minister also spoke of the ministry’s plan to build major cities in Muscat, Suhar, Salalah and Nizwa, declaring that there will be a visit to Nizwa on Wednesday, to inspect potential sites for the development of this city.

Based on the ministry’s approach of ‘sustainable spatial development for prosperous communities,’ the ministry is implementing several plans and initiatives to achieve this, including 23 initiatives in the field of housing, 4 initiatives in financial sustainability and 39 in urban planning, in addition to several initiatives to enhance institutional culture, including communication identity, governance, legislation, digital transformation, competencies and capacity building.

The minister highlighted the

Plan to build major cities in Muscat, Suhar, Nizwa, and Salalah

Integrated complexes as land plot alternatives

To help those affected by the Shaheeh cyclone, payment of housing loans of 544 cases had been postponed for six months, and 328 cases were approved for housing assistance

‘Amlak’ initiative, a digital platform for the ministry’s services, whose trial will be run on Tuesday. It provides 50 services to Omani citizens and citizens of the Gulf countries, real estate brokerage offices, investors and those interested in the real estate market and others. He also announced the launch of the ministry’s new customer service line to receive all comments and inquiries.



More than 16,000 title deeds cleared

MUSCAT: Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, has said that 16,300 applications for authenticating and registering title deeds have been cleared, among them 8,800 requests were sanctioned and 7,500 others rejected.

The minister made the statement during the second media dialogue on comprehensive transformation of the ministry.

He added that the total number of usufruct contracts in 2021 stood at 9,300, while the value of collected fees amounted to RO 8.4 million. Sixteen new sites were approved for food security projects on a total area of 597 million square metres, as well as 7,645 land plots for multiple services and five sites for integrated residential projects.

As many as 2,000 families benefited from the Housing Assistance Programme in 2021, said the minister, noting that the programme cost RO 47 million and that 700 housing units were constructed as part of the programme. As many as 713 applicants were exempt (from housing loan dues) under Royal directives to the tune of RO 13.5 million, while 544 applicants had their housing loan instalment postponed for a grace period of six months, said the minister.

The minister also said that trial operation of the integrated digital service platform, Amlak, will be launched on Tuesday. Amlak comprises 50 electronic services related to the real estate register and investor services in the field of housing, to name a few.

— ONA

National spatial strategy covers wider areas

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The National Urban Development Strategy adopted by the Sultanate of Oman to support the Vision 2040 covers wider areas in its journey towards providing a general framework for guiding urban growth, according to the Minister of Housing and Urban Planning.

Speaking at the annual press briefing held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center (OCEC), Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, said the ambitious strategy is essential for the implementation of the Oman Vision 2040.

“The Oman National Spatial Strategy of the Sultanate of Oman aided by the GIS (Geographic Information System) is an ambitious initiative that aims to identify growth engines and areas that need programmes for further advancement geographically as the Strategy

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is evaluating the geographical indicators and statistics on land use and ownership data and viewing the lands allocated for usufruct, and verifying the requests for land plans to accommodate more citizens in the packages as part of the National Urban Development Strategy

DR KHALFAN BIN SAID AL SHUEILI
Minister of Housing and Urban Planning

covers lands, buildings, services network of all kinds, and satellite images to devise development strategies,” he said.

Oman National Spatial Data Infrastructure (ONSDI) is a governmental initiative that aims to provide a framework for geospatial standards, policies, institutional arrangements, and technology infrastructure necessary to coordinate, facilitate, and support the sharing and utilisation of geospatial information.

The ONSS envisages the designation of key urban centres as greater cities, national gateway cities, regional hubs in addition to maritime hubs as National Gateway Cities, and emerging towns as regional hubs towards establishing new engines of growth across the country towards Vision 2040.

The National Urban Planning Strategy will also cover valleys, areas prone to floods, and other geographical data. GIS is a unified central geographic services system linked to a

database and it will also provide internal and external geographic services needed for the national plan, according to him.

“The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is evaluating the geographical indicators and statistics on land use and ownership data and viewing the lands allocated for usufruct, and verifying the requests for land plans to accommodate more citizens in the packages as part of the National Urban Development Strategy.”

Accordingly, the significant economic and population growth in the major cities include Greater Muscat, Greater Salalah, Greater Nizwa and Greater Suhar.

The ONSS will enable these greater cities to offer high-quality services, besides enabling them to be the centres of better lifestyle, creativity, innovation and advanced education, involving various sectors that provide services to a wider range of urban and rural areas, according to the strategy.



Travel to Jabal Akhdhar without 4WD?

The Minister of Housing and Urban Planning has said that there are plans to develop a city project in Al Jabal al Akhdhar, which can be accessed from South Al Batinah by all types of vehicles including the ones that are not four-wheel drives.

He said there is flexibility when comes to the ownership of property for citizens who do not

reside in Al Jabal al Akhdhar.

A study is under way for the planned economic development of Al Jabal al Akhdhar in coordination with all competent agencies, the minister said at the press conference.

Currently, a 4x4 vehicle is needed to pass by the checkpoint for Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, along with the driving licence and car registration papers.



MUTTRAH, AL GHUBRA FACED WATERLOGGING AFTER HEAVY RAINS

Rains to continue till Tuesday



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Formation and flow of clouds continued on the coasts of the Sea of Oman and parts of the Al Hajar Mountains on Monday predicting more rain.

Continued activity and intense clouds brought scattered rain on the coasts of the Sea of Oman — the governorates of South Al Sharqiyah, Muscat, South and North Al Batinah and parts of the governorates of Musandam, Al Buraimi, Al Dakhiliyah and Al Dhahirah.

Mostly there will be clear sky over the rest of the governorates. There are chances of late night to early morning low level clouds or fog patches over parts of South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates.

Heavy rains were experienced across many parts of the Muscat Governorate on Sunday night with Muscat International Airport recording 9.6 mm, Muscat 1.4 mm and Wadi



Al Maawil, South Al Batinah recorded 3.2 mm taking many by surprise.

Muttrah and Al Ghubra faced waterlogging in certain areas, especially impacting parking areas.

According to weather forecaster at Oman Meteorology at Civil Aviation Authority, Ibrahim al Brashdi, more rains were expected on Monday in Musandam, coastal area of the

Arabian Sea, North and South Al Batinah, Al Dakhiliyah and Muscat at night as well as on Tuesday morning. Isolated rains are expected in South Al Sharqiyah. Active northwest winds in parts of the desert areas of Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta and Dhofar may raise dust and affect the level of horizontal visibility.

Musandam Coast is expected to have wave height of 2 metres with relative humidity ranging

between 20 to 75 per cent, Sea of Oman is expected to be moderate with a wave height of 2.5 metres and humidity ranging between 35 to 80 per cent and the Arabian Sea is moderate with 2.0 metres with humidity ranging between 15 to 80 per cent.

The lowest temperature was recorded in Saiq at 5.4 degrees Celsius and the maximum temperature was recorded in Al Amerat topping at 30 degrees Celsius. Over most of the Sultanate of Oman winds will be northwesterly to northerly moderate to fresh. The weather forecast for Tuesday stated that partly cloudy skies with chances of isolated rain are expected over Musandam Governorate and parts of the Sea of Oman and south Al Sharqiyah coast whereas mainly clear skies are expected over the rest of the governorates with chance of late night to early morning low level clouds or fog patches over parts of South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates.

RNO continues participation in IMX22

MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) continues its participation in the International Maritime Exercise (IMX22). The Maritime Security Centre (MSC) assumes command and control of the exercise on the Omani maritime zone.

RNO ships and navy ships from the USA, the UK, Pakistan and South Korea are taking part in the exercise conducted with the support of the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo).

Commodore Tarik bin Issa al Raisi, Acting Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) accompanied by the MSC deputy chief, visited the exercise zone on the sea, on Monday. They were briefed about the exercise's activities, tasks and duties undertaken by the participating naval ships as part of the exercise's plan. They reviewed the methods and tactics utilised

for implementing the objectives of the exercise.

The exercise aims to enhance existing security cooperation among the participating nations, international organisations and regional and international maritime centres. The exercise targets to boost communications and procedures for exchanging information and acquiring more experiences among the participating navies to enhance the security of ports and navigation lines and secure the movement of international ships.

— ONA



Wadi bani Habib is an architectural wonder

TEXT & PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Architectural patterns express the cultural details of a country and society. Omani lanes (Harat) that were built centuries ago hold importance for their distinguished way of making. These lanes are built of mud, stones and plaster

and the designs of their doors and windows vary in bright colours that make them exceptionally aesthetic.

This architectural distinction has contributed to making the lanes a destination for tourists and those interested in discovering the secrets of the Omani architectural heritage.

The village of Wadi Bani Habib,

located on the slopes of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, is an example of the Omani architectural style. A visitor to this mountain village can discover the skills of the Omanis in architectural design. The main entrances, rooms, halls and kitchens have a natural ventilation system. Overall it proves the originality of the Omani

designs and observance of climatic conditions and the prevailing social and cultural settings of the time.

Although these lanes are now quiet, one can benefit from such creative designs by merging the old style with the modern style.

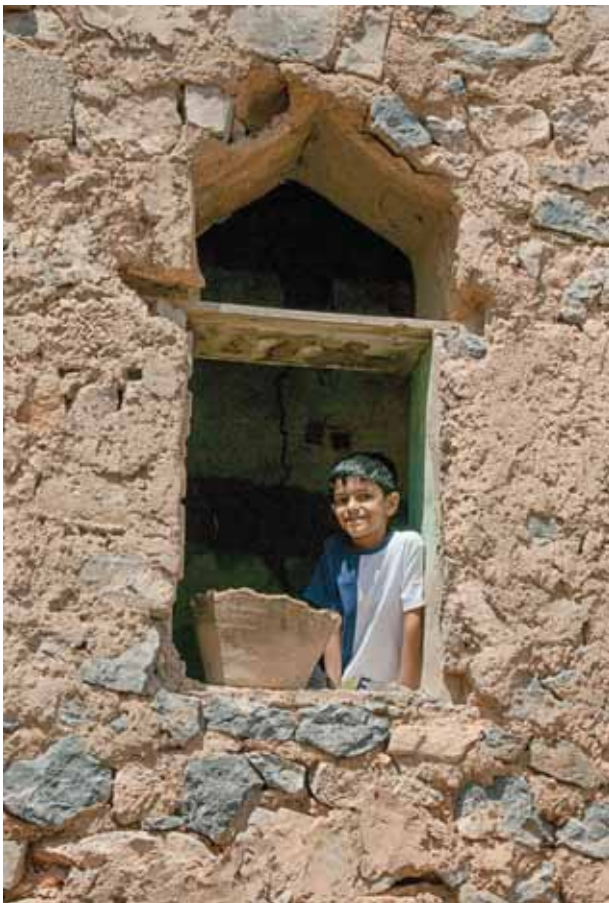
"Among the things that must be observed while visiting these archaeological sites is to look at

the designs of wooden doors and windows. They still retain the carvings and decorations, as the doors have a special place in the Omani culture.

The doors of some educated families were adorned with Quranic verses, literary and poetic expressions. According to official statistics, these structures are more

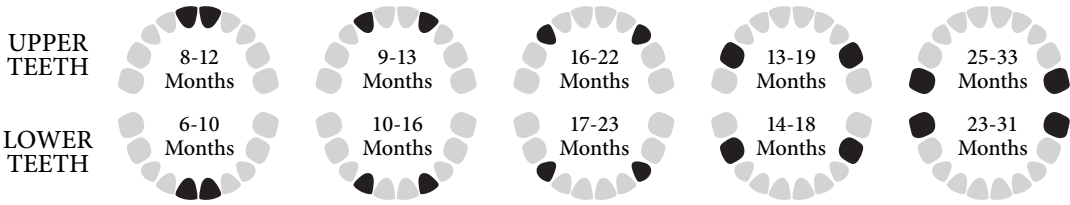
than one thousand years old and found mainly in the wilayats of Nizwa and Al Hamra.

"This is an indicator that the competent authorities must support in order to enrich eco-tourism in the Sultanate of Oman and revitalise the tourism economy at the same time," an Omani investor told the *Observer*.





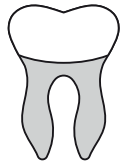
PRIMARY TEETH ERUPTION



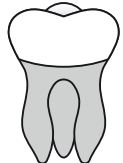
ORAL HYGIENE FOR CHILDREN



TYPES OF TEETH



Premolar



Molar

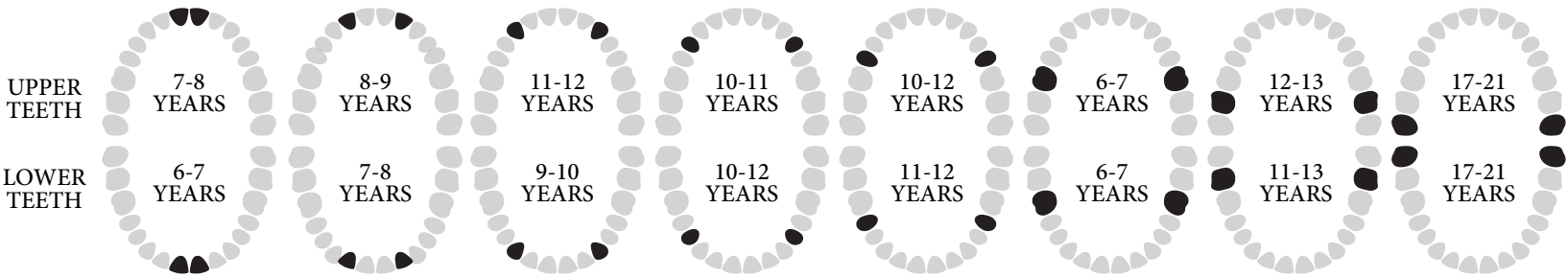


Canine



Incisor

PERMANENT TEETH ERUPTION



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Dental caries (tooth decay) is one of the most common and persistent diseases found in humans and causing rising concerns. According to experts, dental caries or cavities found in the teeth are caused by a combination of factors including bacteria in the mouth, frequent eating of soft foods, sipping on sugary drinks and not brushing teeth well.

According to Dr Bargavi Balamurugan, Dental Surgeon at Al Amal Medical Centre in Muscat, dental caries result from a progressive demineralisation on the tooth surface.

“Bacteria naturally builds up in a children’s mouth, forming a

sticky substance called plaque that can cost the teeth. Whenever a child eats food, bacteria within the plaque layer produce acids which are a major cause of erosion of hard tooth enamel of caries”, she said.

“Teething symptoms are many. Some of them will be irritable, cry a lot and will have trouble sleeping, on the other hand the child will see usual saliva droops from his mouth compared with the normal situation. Also the

temperature rises very slightly but if the temperature rises to 38 degrees or more consult a doctor immediately. Also, if the child has high temperature, vomiting or diarrhoea during teething, consult your doctor to see if he or she has a medical condition that requires treatment”, Dr Balamurugan said.

In general babies start teething between the age of six months to twelve months however there are range of differences from one baby

to another, some babies don’t have any teeth in the age of one year and the first tooth appears at the age of six months where the front teeth begin to appear first than the others follow and most children often complete their teeth when they are three years.

Primitive teeth begin to appear first then replaced one by one starting at the age of six years with permanent teeth by age of three after that a child

gets 20 deciduous teeth. Milk teeth have thinner enamel and appear whiter than permanent teeth, also they are susceptible to decay and damage when the permanent teeth begin to appear initially they have wavy edges and then their shape gradually adjusts overtime. The order of appearance of milk teeth is the lower teeth usually appear before the upper teeth in the following pattern where the central incisors

appear first then the lateral incisors then the first molars then canines and finally the second molars.

“Keep the child’s mouth clean by wiping the gums with clean cloth. Once you see the first teeth they should be brushed with a soft toothbrush. Also don’t leave a bottle or a sippy cup in the mouth of an infant to drink from for a long time. Teach the child to drink from a regular cup as soon as possible, preferably from 12 to 15 months. Reduce sticky food which contains sugars. Juice is not recommended for children under 6 months’ age. If juice is given to children between 6 to 12 months it should be diluted with water (half water, half juice). It’s recommended to visit the dentist to check the teeth of infants before the age of one year”, she said.



Indian expats welcome waiver of PCR test requirement

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@vinot_nair

Indian expatriates have welcomed the waiver of mandatory RT-PCR tests for all fully vaccinated flying into the country from the Sultanate of Oman.

Starting on Monday, the Indian government had scrapped the mandatory pre-travel RT-PCR test, valid for 72-hours before departure, for passengers arriving from over 80 countries, including the Sultanate of Oman.

With PCR tests costing around RO 8 to RO 12 per person (excluding RO 5 for the Ministry of Health stamp), the new decision is a big reprieve

to passengers travelling with families. India had demanded PCR tests also for children prior to this rule.

“It was not just about spending around RO 50-60 per family, but also the nervousness of being tested positive and or delaying the travel date,” said Ramprakash Menon, who had to change the ticket after one of his family members tested positive last year.

Travel agents also confirmed that getting refunds from airlines or rebooking to a new date can be a costly affair these days if the PCR results turn out to be positive.

“It was surprising that India had PCR tests even for children

It was not just about spending around RO 50-60 per family, but also the nervousness of being tested positive and or delaying the travel date

RAMPRAKASH MENON
Passenger

above five, who were generally exempted by many countries, including the Sultanate of Oman,”

Grace John, a healthcare worker, said.

While the need for a mandatory seven-day home quarantine has been waived as per the new guidelines, all travellers must submit complete information in a self-declaration form on the Air Suvidha portal before the scheduled travel, including the last 14 days travel details. They should also upload the vaccine certificate.

Airlines will allow boarding by only those passengers who have filled the form on the Air Suvidha portal. PCR tests are still mandatory even for fully vaccinated travellers coming into the Sultanate of Oman.

No fee for passports lost or damaged during Shaheen

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A section of residents who were affected by the cyclone Shaheen will get passports free of cost, as many who faced the cyclone either got their valid documents damaged or lost them while braving many other hardships.

An announcement to this effect was made during an ‘open house’ held under the chairmanship of Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the ‘open house’, the community members appreciated the support they received from different agencies of the Sultanate of Oman during the cyclone which caused extensive damage in the geographical area where it made landfall. The most affected areas were Musannah, Al Suwaiq, Saham, Al Khabourah and Suhar in Al Batinah Governorate. The affected areas faced 60-knot winds and 12-metre waves.

house called the re-issuance of passports for the cyclone-hit people “a huge relief” as many of them were clueless after they lost vital documents, including passports.

“Leaving everything, I kept my passport with me soon after the rain started in my area. But the impact was so huge that I could not keep it safe and got lost somewhere while being transported to a safe location by the civil defence officials of the Sultanate of Oman. I am really thankful to them for taking care

As per government estimates, more than 5,000 people had to be shifted to temporary accommodations after the severe storm destroyed homes, and damaged infrastructure

As per government estimates, more than 5,000 people had to be shifted to temporary accommodations after the severe storm destroyed homes, and damaged infrastructure.

According to sources involved in the community welfare work, requests for issuance of some 400 passports have been received so far and the modalities are being finalised to issue fresh documents as soon as possible.

Since a notice regarding this has been posted on the Indian Embassy website, the officials are expecting more requests from those who have lost their passports during the cyclone.

Those who attended the open

of us so nicely until normalcy returned. Thankfully, we had easy access to food and shelter,” said S Prasad from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. He could not attend the ‘open house’ but was happy over the decision of issuance of fresh passports without any fee.

Many other issues were raised during the session that gave a walk-in opportunity to Indian nationals to discuss their consular and other problems for early redressal. “All cases brought forth will be taken for timely resolution,” said the officials while responding to the queries of the open house participants.

Wusta Gov discusses CSR programmes with OQ8

HAIMA: Shaikh Mu'dhid bin Mohammed al Yaquobi, Governor of Al Wusta, received in his office on Monday senior officials of the Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company (OQ8).

The meeting touched on the important programmes set for the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Governorate and means of promoting them.

These regular meetings between Al Wusta Governor's Office and various partners aim to achieve more sustainable partnership.

— ONA

Pact inked for internal roads pavement

DIMA W'ATTAYEEN: An agreement was signed for paving 18 km of internal roads in the Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate at a cost of RO 2.275 million, on Monday.

The agreement was signed by Shaikh Ali bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Governor of North Al Sharqiyah, Chairman of the Tender Board in North Al Sharqiyah with the company undertaking the project.

The agreement involves paving a number of internal roads within residential quarters and old neighbourhoods. Upon completion the new roads will stimulate economic and tourist activities and contribute to the urban development in the Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen.

— ONA



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Defence
ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tenders.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
001/2022	Construction work-SALALAH	Excellent	3 rd March 2022	4 th April 2022	530/- R.O
002/2022	Construction work-MAM	Excellent	3 rd March 2022	4 th April 2022	500/- R.O
003/2022	Construction work-MAZYONAH CAMP	Second & Above	3 rd March 2022	4 th April 2022	135/- R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer.
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Manpower (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope and drawings.
 - Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as soft copy (USB) in two separate files:
 - Financial (bill 1&2 separated from bill3)
 - Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.



Iran ‘hurry’ to reach agreement in N-talks: FM

DUBAI: Iran is keen to reach a swift agreement with world powers in nuclear talks in Vienna, provided its national interests are protected, the Iranian foreign minister said on Monday. “Tehran is in a hurry to reach agreement in Vienna, but this should be within the framework of our national interest,” Hossein Amirabdollahian told a news conference, in which he also urged Western powers to stop “playing with time”.

Meanwhile, talks to salvage Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal are not at a dead end but key outstanding issues require political decisions by the West, Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman said on Monday.

Iran has already taken its political decision by staying in the deal after Washington abandoned it in 2018, spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh also told reporters in Tehran.

Indirect talks in Vienna between Iran and the US resumed last week after a 10-day break. Delegates have said the talks have made limited progress since they resumed in November after a five-month hiatus.

“There is no dead end in Vienna. Negotiations are underway as before and exchanges are taking place between the delegations,” Khatibzadeh said.

The talks have made limited progress since they resumed in November after a five-month hiatus

“What is going on today in the talks is a continuation of important and critical points. Our distance from an agreement depends on the will of the West’s side,” he added.

“If the United States and Europe respond to Iran today — within the framework of JCPOA — we can announce in Vienna tomorrow that we have reached an agreement,” he said, using the acronym for the official name of the nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Khatibzadeh’s assessment came hours after Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, said progress in the talks was becoming “more difficult every moment... while Western parties ‘pretend’ to come up with initiatives to avoid their commitments”.

On another issue, Khatibzadeh said a prisoner swap deal with the United States was on the agenda in parallel with the nuclear talks in Vienna.



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian holds talks with his Irish counterpart Simon Coveney in Tehran. – AFP

“But it seems the US has not made a decision on it. Perhaps it is waiting for the results of the talks,” he said.

Iran has in recent years arrested dozens of dual nationals, including several Americans, mostly on espionage charges. It accuses Washington of holding Iranian prisoners allegedly for violations of US sanctions against Iran. Rights activists accuse Iran of trying to use the detentions to win concessions from other countries. Iran dismisses the charge. — Reuters



Yemeni security guards inspect the damage in the vicinity of the telecommunication ministry following overnight airstrikes in Sanaa. – AFP

Coalition strikes target satellites station in Sanaa

ADEN: The coalition fighting in Yemen destroyed an Ansar Allah telecommunication system used to control drones, Saudi State TV reported on Monday after the coalition asked civilians in Yemeni ministries in the capital Sanaa to immediately evacuate.

The bombing targeted a ground station for satellites in the vicinity of the telecommunication ministry in northern Sanaa, residents said.

Later on Monday, Ansar Allah-

run TV Al Masirah reported a coalition attack targeting the telecommunication ministry, destroying the TeleYemen telecoms company building and damaging a neighbouring building.

The coalition said the Ansar Allah use ministry headquarters to “launch hostile operations,” and as a response a site linked to the latest attack on Saudi Arabia’s Abha international airport would be destroyed. — Reuters/AFP

Sudanese protester killed in crackdown

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces shot dead a protester Monday as they cracked down on thousands marching against last year’s military coup and the arrest of several pro-democracy activists, medics said.

Regular mass protests have rocked the troubled northeast African nation since an October 25 military takeover led by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the death on Monday takes the number killed to at least 80.

The power grab derailed a fragile power-sharing agreement between the army and civilians negotiated after the 2019 ouster of longtime ruler Omar al Bashir. On Monday, thousands rallied in the capital Khartoum and its twin city of Omdurman, reporters said, while protests also took place in the eastern city of Port Sudan and in the western Darfur region, according to witnesses.

In Khartoum, protests had begun with crowds waving national flags and carrying red balloons — as the rallies coincided with Valentine’s Day.

“Today is the nation’s love day,” one banner read. Some shouted slogans demanding the authorities



Sudanese protesters during a demonstration calling for civilian rule and denouncing the military administration in Khartoum’s twin city of Omdurman. – AFP

release activists who have been arrested, while others carried pictures of protesters killed.

“We are demanding the release of resistance committee members and politicians who were unjustly arrested, and some of whom are facing fabricated charges,” protester Khaled Mohamed said.

But as crowds tried to approach the presidential palace, security forces fired volleys of tear gas canisters.

One protester was killed after he was shot in “the neck and chest by live rounds by coup forces,” the independent Central Committee of Sudan Doctors said. Tear gas was also fired at protesters in Omdurman and North Khartoum, witnesses said.

While Sudan has repeatedly denied opening fire on protesters, Human Rights Watch has quoted witnesses detailing how the security forces have used both “live ammunition” and fired tear gas canisters “directly” at crowds, a tactic that can be deadly at close-quarters.

The authorities have also arrested scores of activists accused of belonging to the “resistance committees” who have been instrumental in organising protests. — AFP

SEOUL

S Korea to start giving fourth doses of vaccine

South Korea will begin giving out fourth doses of Covid-19 vaccines this month and supply millions of additional home test kits to ease shortages amid a surge in Omicron infections.

The surge has pushed daily cases to records, but widespread vaccination, with first booster shots received by more than 57 per cent of the population of 52 million, has helped limit deaths and serious infections.

High-risk groups will be the first to get the fourth dose, in



effect a second booster shot, Health Minister Kwon Deok-cheol said. “We’re planning to provide fourth shots to those who live in nursing homes and care facilities and others with declined immunisation,” he said. — Reuters

COLOMBO

Gunmen attack high-profile Lanka TV journalist

Armed men stormed the home of a high-profile Sri Lankan television journalist critical of the government, police said, sparking condemnation by local media rights groups.

Chamuditha Samarawickrama, who had criticised the powerful ruling Rajapaksa family and their allies in recent broadcasts, including on YouTube, was shaken but unhurt after the pre-dawn raid, police said.

“They carried weapons to intimidate the guard and gained



access to the housing compound,” a police official said adding that forensic experts had been called in to launch an investigation.

“There were at least three armed men and they travelled in a white van,” Samarawickrama said. “I heard shots fired. — AFP

MANILA

Boxing icon refuses to drop fight for presidency

World boxing icon Manny Pacquiao said he was not yet throwing in the towel despite a new survey showing he was still behind in the race to replace Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

Pacquiao, a senator in the Philippines, is one of 10 candidates running for president in elections on May 9.

“I will not be discouraged, and so will my supporters who continue to knock on every door, in every community, in every



town and in every province to share our plan to lift our country out of poverty,” he said. “We will continue campaigning for the future of our nation,” he added. “This fight is difficult, but it will be more difficult if no one stands up to fight for the poor.” — dpa



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In brief

■ LONDON



CAMILLA TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID DAYS AFTER CHARLES

In Britain, the Duchess of Cornwall has tested positive for Covid, Clarence House has announced. Camilla, 74, caught the virus for the first time just days after the Prince of Wales contracted the illness for a second time. A Clarence House spokesman said: "Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall has tested positive for Covid-19 and is self-isolating. "We continue to follow government guidelines."

Camilla is triple vaccinated, sources said. Clarence House declined to confirm how Camilla was feeling or whether the prince and the duchess were isolating together on Valentine's Day. — dpa

■ PARIS



PARIS POLICE KILL ATTACKER AT TRAIN STATION

French police shot dead a man who lunged at officers with a long-bladed knife marked with an anti-police slogan at Paris's Gare du Nord train station, the interior minister said. The man attacked two police officers on patrol at the station, one of Europe's busiest, with a 30-centimetre knife with the English slogan written on the blade, according to prosecutors. "The police were threatened by an assailant who had a knife and who clearly wanted to hurt them and kill them", Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told reporters on a visit to the southern city of Montpellier. "They used their service weapons to neutralise him and he died", Darmanin added. — AFP

■ MOSCOW



TURKMEN LEADER'S SON SET TO RUN FOR PRESIDENCY

Serdar Berdymukhamedov, the son of Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, has confirmed he will join the race to replace his father in a presidential election set for March 12, Turkmen news website Salamnews reported. President Berdymukhamedov, 64, announced at the weekend he was calling an early election. He said he would not seek another term after 15 years at the helm and wanted to allow a younger generation to take over. His 40-year-old son, who is currently a deputy prime minister, is widely expected to succeed his father as president of the gas-rich Central Asian nation. — Reuters

UKRAINE CRISIS

RUSSIA KEEPS DOOR OPEN FOR DIPLOMACY



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and German Chancellor Scholz hold a joint press conference in Kyiv. — AFP

MOSCOW/KYIV: Russia suggested on Monday that it was ready to keep talking to the West to try to defuse a security crisis in which it has massed a huge force within striking distance of Ukraine, while a Ukrainian official said Kyiv was prepared to make concessions to Moscow.

In a televised exchange, President Vladimir Putin was shown asking his Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, whether there was a chance of an agreement to address Russia's security concerns, or whether it was just being dragged into tortuous negotiations.

Lavrov replied: "We have already warned more than once that we will not allow endless negotiations on questions that demand a solution today."

But he added: "It seems to me that our possibilities are far from exhausted... At this stage, I would suggest continuing and building them up." Washington has Russia could invade Ukraine "any day now", and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday

Envoy says concessions available, but not on Nato bid as Scholz says no plans to admit Ukraine to Nato

called the situation "very, very dangerous".

Russia has positioned more than 100,000 troops near to Ukraine's borders but denies planning to invade, accusing the West of hysteria.

Earlier in the day, the Group of Seven large Western economies (G7) had warned Russia of "massive" economic consequences if it did invade, and promised Kyiv swift support.

Ukraine's ambassador to Britain backtracked on remarks suggesting that Kyiv would reconsider its attempt to join Nato — one of Russia's primary concerns — but did say that other concessions could be on offer.

"We are not a member of Nato

right now and to avoid war we are ready for many concessions and that is what we are doing in conversations with the Russians", he told the BBC in a clarification. "It has nothing to do with Nato, which (membership application) is enshrined in the constitution."

The Kremlin said that if Ukraine renounced its aspiration to join the Western military alliance, it would significantly help address Russia's concerns.

Moscow has made clear it sees the former Soviet republic's quest for closer ties with the West, notably through Nato, as a threat.

Eight years ago, mass protests on Kyiv's Maidan square in favour of closer integration with the West forced out the pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich.

Faced with the ascendancy of pro-Western politicians promising to advance democracy and fight corruption just across its border, Russia captured and then annexed Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, home to the Russian Black Sea fleet. — dpa

Trudeau to invoke emergency powers to end protests

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will inform provincial premiers of his intention to invoke special measures to give the federal government extraordinary powers to deal with protests that have shut some border crossings with the United States and paralysed parts of Canada's capital, CBC News said on Monday.

Citing unnamed sources, CBC said Trudeau planned to invoke the Emergencies Act, a rarely used provision that allows the federal government to override the provinces and authorise special temporary measures to ensure security during national emergencies anywhere in the country.

It has only been used once in peacetime — by Trudeau's father, former prime minister Pierre Trudeau — during the so-called "October Crisis" in 1970. It was invoked twice during the two world wars, when it was known as the War Measures Act.

The CBC said Ottawa had no plans to send in the

military. A six-day blockade of North America's busiest trade corridor in Windsor, Ontario, ended on Sunday while protests in Ottawa entered a third week.

The "Freedom Convoy" protests, started by Canadian truckers opposing a vaccinate-or-quarantine mandate for cross-border drivers, have turned into a rallying point for people opposing the policies of Trudeau's government, covering everything from pandemic restrictions to a carbon tax.

The premier of Ontario announced on Monday that he will lift vaccine passport requirements in the Canadian province, the epicentre of protests against Covid-19 health measures for more than two weeks now.

"We're going to get rid of the passports", said Premier Doug Ford at a press conference, explaining that the vast majority of people were vaccinated and that the peak of cases sparked by the Omicron variant had passed.

— AFP



Trucks drive down the road towards the Ambassador Bridge border crossing in Windsor, Ontario. — AFP

Greenfield Airports set to boost India's aviation sector

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

@patkaushal

The Government of India's plan to set up Greenfield Airports is set to become a game-changer in the country's aviation sector. Under the plan, 21 Greenfield Airports will be developed across the country. The estimated cost of development, expansion, and upgradation of the airports is Rs 91,000 crores in the next four to five years.

In his address to the joint session of the Indian Parliament, President Ram Nath Kovind mentioned the Greenfield Airports with special mention of the country's biggest airport that is coming up at Gautam Buddha Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh.

He also mentioned the development of airports in the North East and said, "This development of the North East will prove to be a golden chapter in India's growth story."

In a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha, Union Minister of Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia said, "Upgradation, modernisation of airports is a continuous process and is undertaken by Airports



The estimated cost of development, expansion, and upgradation of the airports is Rs 91,000 crores in the next 4-5 years

Authority of India (AAI) and other airport developers from time to time depending on the availability of land, commercial viability, socio-economic considerations, traffic demand and willingness of airlines to operate to and from such airports."

With the in-principle approval to set up a new greenfield international airport at Jewar, Noida, in 2018, the Government of India set the ball rolling for the country's one of

the most ambitious projects in the aviation sector.

For this, the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh appointed Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) implementing agency for the project under public-private-partnership (PPP) mode. The Government of Uttar Pradesh (GoUP) has awarded the project to M/s Zurich Airport International AG for development of the airport.

As for work progress, the GoUP has informed that the task of acquisition of 1,334 hectare of land for Phase-I of the project has been completed and the possession of the land has been obtained.

The forecast for initial year traffic is four million passengers per annum (MPPA) as per the master plan. The initial capacity of the airport for phase 1, however, is projected at 12 MPPA. The estimated project cost for Phase

I is Rs 8,914 crore, including the land acquisition cost. As per the Concession Agreement, the scheduled completion date of the airport is September 29, 2024.

Other airport projects, which have got the Union Government's in-principle approval, are Mopa in Goa, Navi Mumbai, Shirdi and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, Kalaburagi, Bijapur, Hassan and Shimoga in Karnataka, Datia (Gwalior) in Madhya Pradesh, Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh, Dholera and Hirasar in Gujarat, Karaikal in Puducherry, Dagadharthi, Bhogapuram and Oravakal in Andhra Pradesh, Durgapur in West Bengal, Pakyong in Sikkim, Kannur in Kerala and Hollongi (Itanagar) in Arunachal Pradesh.

The airports accorded approval at Mopa, Navi Mumbai, Shirdi, Noida (Jewar), Dholera, Hirasar, Bhogapuram, Kannur and Kushinagar are international airports and remaining are domestic airports. Out of these, eight airports namely Durgapur, Shirdi, Sindhudurg, Pakyong, Kannur, Kalaburagi, Oravakal and Kushinagar have been operationalised.

Learning to be a parent, by the book



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Associate Professor, Dept of English Language and Literature Sultan Qaboos University

The shift away from childcare to self-care is the biggest move in parenting in the 21st century. If you are a new parent, chances are that you have prepared for this moment enthusiastically and meticulously. Everything from clothing, car seats and feeding paraphernalia is thought out to the last detail. Unlike earlier, parenthood today is a multimillion dollar industry, propped up by a dizzying array of advertisements, digital applications and of course, books. Through much of the 20th century, focus was on the babies — from the traditional parenting style of John Watson (‘kiss your kid just once a day — to say good night’), to Benjamin Spock’s very popular ‘trust your instinct’ strategies. By the 1980s, parenting books (actually books on being a mother) became industrialised in North

America and Europe, the result of a large number of women taking up full-time work, with very basic childcare options, and, of course, still gendered parenting roles where fathers came into the picture just to cuddle a well-fed baby for the family photo. This is the time that books like ‘What to expect when you are expecting’ by Heidi Murkoff took off from the book stands. With its focus on the day to day journey of the mother to be, the book had a gritty, hands on approach which was popular with the working woman. By the 2000s, books on parenting changed to reflect a transformed society: a more technological, multicultural, globalised world where would-be parents are experimenting with alternative medicine, natural birthing techniques and holistic

THE SHIFT AWAY FROM CHILDCARE TO SELF-CARE IS THE BIGGEST MOVE IN PARENTING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

care. The books are also competing with digital content and the battle is a tough one. Parenting apps like Fatherly and cloud baby monitor are widely popular in North America while Baby sparks and Baby connect are upcoming parenting applications from South Asia. Sprii and kidszapp are two bilingual (Arabic and English) community apps which bring together parents who share their challenges, give each other parenting tips and even suggest places to visit with kids, like neighbouring parks, kid-

friendly restaurants and afterschool activities. But the lasting value of a good book will always remain. The book continues to be cherished, especially when it comes with a scrapbook for a baby’s first hand and footprint, lock of hair, first tooth and other memories. ‘Future books baby records’ and ‘First years’ are common titles for baby scrapbooks, although there are now ways of self-publishing such books digitally. The shift away from childcare to self-care is the biggest move in parenting in the 21st century. The Gen-Z, soon to be parents, are likely to approach being mothers and fathers in a widely different way from those before them. Holistic care, shared parenthood and emphasis on mental and emotional health are important considerations which are

now being addressed by parenting books in all parts of the world. Titles like ‘Peaceful parent, happy child’ and ‘The happiest baby on the block’ show what is important for parents today — a stress free path to happy parenting. It’s not only *what* is being said that is different but also, *how*. Memoirs, humorous books on parenting disasters, letters between parents and children, all these are ways in which parenting books stand apart from the traditional, prescriptive books on childcare. ‘Diaper dude’, ‘Weird parenting wins’ and ‘How not to hate your husband after kids’ are titles which show the direction in which parenting books are going. They are edgy, funny, nostalgic, emotional and even downright silly, but they are popular because parenting itself is all that, and more.

The Brazil resort town disappearing into the sea

EUGENIA LOGIURATTO

Vultures roam the sand in the Brazilian resort town of Atafona amid the ruins of the latest houses destroyed by the sea, whose relentless rise has turned the local coastline into an apocalyptic landscape. The Atlantic Ocean advances an average of six metres a year in this small town north of Rio de Janeiro, which has long been prone to extreme erosion — now exacerbated by climate change. The sea has already submerged more than 500 houses, turning the once idyllic coastline into an underwater graveyard of wrecked structures. One of the next to lose his home will be Joao Waked Peixoto. Walking through the jumbled rubble of what was once his neighbours’ house, he looks at what is left: a fragment of a blue-painted room strewn with tattered magazines, a bicycle and other remnants of life. “When will we have to leave? That’s an unknown,” he says. “The sea advanced three or four metres in 15 days. Our wall might not last until next week.” Waked Peixoto’s grandfather built the house as a vacation home, a beachfront getaway with large rooms and a garden. During the coronavirus pandemic, Waked Peixoto and his family moved in full-time. But it now looks inevitable the house will be swallowed by the sea. “It will be a shame to lose this house, because it holds so many memories of my whole family,” he says. Atafona, a town of some 6,000 people, has long suffered from extreme erosion. It is part of the four per cent of coastlines worldwide that lose five metres or more every year. The problem is being exacerbated by global warming, which is causing sea levels to rise and making currents and weather patterns more extreme, says geologist Eduardo Bulhoes of Fluminense Federal University. But Atafona has had a “chronic problem” for decades, he says. The Paraiba do Sul river, whose mouth is in Atafona, has shrunk because of mining, agriculture and other activities that drain it upstream. “In the last 40 years, that has drastically reduced the river’s volume, meaning it transports less sand to Atafona,” says Bulhoes. With less sand, the town’s beaches have stopped regenerating naturally, ceding ground to the sea. Construction on the coast has only made the problem worse, by stripping away sand dunes and vegetation, the beaches’ natural defenses. “Large boats can’t come through the river delta anymore... and the money disappeared along with them,” says Elialdo Bastos Meirelles, head of a local fishermen’s community of some 600 people.

— AFP

That organic cotton T-shirt may not be as organic as you think

ALDEN WICKER, EMILY SCHMALL, SUHASINI RAJ & ELIZABETH PATON

Michael Kors retails its organic cotton and recycled polyester women’s zip-up hoodies for \$25 more than its conventional cotton hoodies. Urban Outfitters sells organic sweatpants that are priced \$46 more than an equivalent pair of conventional cotton sweatpants. And Tommy Hilfiger’s men’s organic cotton slim-fit T-shirt is \$3 more than its conventional counterpart. “This product contains independently certified organic cotton grown without chemical pesticides, chemical fertilisers and genetically modified seeds,” the product description reads. With the fashion industry trumpeting its sustainability commitments, those labels are both a means of value signalling and a lure to consumers willing to pay more to act better. There’s only one problem: Much of the “organic cotton” that makes it to store shelves may not actually be organic at all. The largest single producer of the world’s organic cotton supply is India, which accounts for half of the organic cotton sold globally, and where the organic cotton movement appears to be booming. According to Textile Exchange, a leading organic proponent, organic cotton production in India alone grew 48 per cent in the last year, despite the pandemic. However, much of this growth is fake, say Indians who source, process and grow organic cotton. At the heart of the problem is an opaque certification system rife with opportunities for fraud. Consumers are assured of “organic” material by brands, which rely on official stamps of approval from external organisations. Those in turn rely on reports from opaque local inspection agencies that base their conclusions on a single planned yearly inspection (in the case of the facilities) or a few random visits (for farms). In recent months, the credibility of these inspection agencies has been destroyed. In November, the EU voted

INDIA ACCOUNTS FOR HALF OF THE ORGANIC COTTON SOLD GLOBALLY WHERE THE ORGANIC COTTON MOVEMENT APPEARS TO BE BOOMING

to no longer accept Indian organic exports certified by the main companies responsible for organic cotton: Control Union, EcoCert and OneCert. And in January, the international agency that provides accreditation to organic inspection agencies, IOAS, withdrew OneCert’s ability to inspect and certify cotton processors for these labels. Crispin Argento, founder and managing director of the Sourcery, a small consulting firm that helps brands source organic cotton, has spent the past year hunting down organic cotton with his team only to see suppliers disappear when they start asking for proof of authenticity. He estimates between one half and four-fifths of what is being sold as organic cotton from India is not genuine. And almost the entire supply chain is implicated

in what he calls a game of “smoke and mirrors.” For at least a decade, in reports and at conferences convened by agitated large brands and the network of NGOs that serve them, the organic cotton industry in India has been described as in “crisis,” but the problems have been kept largely out of the public eye. NGO workers worry exposure would lead to the total collapse of the industry and harm the small subset of farmers who are, in fact, growing organically. When confronted with the allegations of fraud, many fashion brands and their sourcing partners that use Indian organic cotton admitted that the system wasn’t perfect but affirmed their commitment to organic cotton and said any problems that existed were located outside their own supply chains. A spokesperson for PVH, the owner of Tommy Hilfiger, wrote in an emailed statement that organic cotton was one of a variety of sustainable materials they had committed to sourcing and noted, “We know that rigorous standards and reliable verification processes are critical for sourcing sustainable materials.” Michael Kors and Urban Outfitters did not respond to emails requesting comment on their organic cotton sourcing.

—The New York Times



Cotton at a ginning mill run by bioRe, which was formed by two Swiss companies, in Kasrawad, India.

Face it and overcome fear



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

Once again I saw someone walking and texting and this time around, the person was walking down the stairs. On this day, however I was not going to be shy or hesitant and I called onto her from the bottom of the stairs and said, ‘Please do not text and come down the steps.’ She smiled and heeded with approval

and stopped where she was to complete her text message before she resumed walking down the steps. It must have been an urgent message. Once bitten twice shy — and that is what has happened to me — a fall on the steps, skipping a few, and the recovery has not been that of comfort. Everything you take for granted are now done with care. It has made me confident enough to stop strangers on their path if they are texting and walking to request them not do so. Bad enough that we are often taking actions while our mind is preoccupied. Now it is not just our mind but one of the most important senses that is not in our control. How else would we be aware of our surroundings? Lately we have been exploring mindfulness and

walking and texting makes one realise how disconnected we are in reality. Sure enough we have our own judgements but imagine being on the other extreme and being unaware who walked past us, where is the step, where is the landing? So has the accident made me alert, conscious or has it caused a fear in me where I have the urge to tell others not to walk and text lest... Fear is not a bad thing as I found out but if not checked on it can leave its impression on our mind forever- such as having a driving license and not wanting to drive due to a car accident. Life styles often change because of fear all because of the want to

avoid the situation again. Learnt more about it while interviewing Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Senior Psychiatrist, for *Oman Observer* Podcast, GreenMent, on the topic — Chronic fear — how dangerous is it and how common is it? We all have some kind of fear, do we not? From flying to swimming to spiders and water the fears are too many and sometimes we do not reveal it to others worried they might know our weaknesses. Do you remember after the first drastic storm in the Sultanate of Oman in 2007 how many times we ran to shop for food and water to stock them whenever rain was forecast? It was a collective reaction and along the years we have healed and overcome the fear of being stuck without food and water. So what we are going through the pandemic period might linger around in us for a while to come - the need for ventilation, personal space awareness and even feeling guilty to shake hands. This is what Dr Hamed had to say about fear. “It has some kind of purpose in preserving life, but sometimes too much fear can be crippling. At times people can go through experiences and then they become fearful of going through it again. Post traumatic stress disorder is a reaction to catastrophic situation — something might have happened that is life threatening such as volcano, earthquake or frequent rains. This is where a person feels his life is in danger. So he carries his memory with him and it causes life changes. Some people have unreasonable fears and they know it does not make sense, yet they cannot face it. So one of the ways to overcome fear is to face it!”



SIGNS OF SPRING

Crocus flowers bloom as the sun shines in Berlin's Kreuzberg district on Monday as the first signs of spring appear in the German capital.— AFP

Republicans try to out-Trump each other with tough border rhetoric ahead of poll

TED HESSON & ALEXANDRA ULMER

In the past year, Texas Governor Greg Abbott has deployed thousands of National Guard troops to the southern US border, begun building a new border barrier, and arrested migrants for allegedly trespassing on private property. The two-term Republican governor has taken the lead in opposing Democratic President Joe Biden's immigration reforms, earning him an endorsement by former president Donald Trump. But as Abbott runs for a third term, conservative candidates challenging him in a March 1 Republican nominating contest contend he is still not tough enough on illegal immigration. Allen West, a former Republican US congressman, says Texas should arrest and deport immigrants who enter the United States illegally - something states do not have the power to do - if the federal government refuses to act. The “porous border” shows how Abbott's approach has failed, West argues. Don Huffines, a businessman and former state senator, wants to close Texas' bridges with Mexico to most inbound traffic and deploy the entirety of the state's National Guard to the border. Abbott spokesperson Renae Eze rejected criticism of the governor's immigration record, saying that Texas had been forced to step up after Biden “abdicated” his responsibilities to safeguard the border. While opinion polls show Abbott has a sizable lead over both West and Huffines, he will likely face the most competitive gubernatorial primary of his career. The attacks from his right flank show how even the staunchest Republican border hawks face pressure to be ever more stringent on the issue in the run-up to the election. Trump rewrote the party's immigration playbook after he successfully campaigned in 2016 on building a border wall and blocking the entry of refugees, often employing nativist language to describe his goals. The current election cycle shows Trump's influence persists even after losing the presidency in 2020 - and that some candidates are going further. “No issue grabs the attention of Republicans like immigration and border security do,” said James Henson, director of the Texas Politics Project at the University of Texas. Republican primary voters have a seemingly “unlimited appetite” for tough immigration measures, Henson added. Some 68 per cent of Republicans in

Texas say border security or immigration are the top issues facing the state, according to an October 2021 University of Texas poll. And while Republicans broadly approve of Abbott's immigration policies, according to surveys, the polling suggests they want even more action. The tougher border proposals pushed by Abbott's challengers demonstrate how Republican candidates are trying to out-Trump each other on an issue that remains a powerful galvanising force for the party's primary voters, despite economic issues and tensions around Covid policies dominating headlines. And for Republicans in competitive primaries, a tough stance on immigration is a way to differentiate themselves without risking backlash from voters, said Alex Conant, a Republican strategist. Republicans across the country have made immigration a major focus heading into the November 8 congressional election, where Democrats risk losing control of Congress, stymieing Biden's legislative agenda. Candidates can tap into voter outrage over record-high attempted border crossings and the cost of providing public services to migrants, a message amplified by the country's popular conservative media like Fox News. Liberal advocacy groups say Republicans are demonising migrants who come to the United States seeking refuge, distorting the economic effects of immigration, and trying to capitalise on xenophobic fears over the fate of the country's white majority. As Republican candidates work to burnish their hardline immigration credentials, some are turning to Stephen Miller, the architect of Trump's restrictive immigration agenda. Miller is formally advising Republican hedge fund CEO David McCormick in his campaign

for a US Senate seat in Pennsylvania and informally speaking with other candidates, he said. McCormick last week visited the Arizona town of Yuma near the Mexican border — some 3,900 km from Pennsylvania's capital Harrisburg. “Every state is a border state when Joe Biden and his administration incentivise illegal immigration,” he said in a written statement. In Arizona, Kari Lake, the Trump-endorsed Republican frontrunner for governor, agrees with Texas' border crackdown but has vowed to go further. Lake, a former Fox News anchor, wants to forge an alliance among like-minded states to deport immigrants in the United States illegally, which is a federal responsibility. Some Republican primary candidates are even taking aim at legal immigration, once a major plank of the party's pro-business stance. “We need to have a full immigration moratorium,” said Trump-endorsed Joe Kent, an Army veteran running in a Washington state primary against US Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler. Kent says too many tech jobs are being taken by H-1B visa holders, a skilled-worker programme whose recipients are majority Indian. Analysts say Washington's voting system, where candidates of all parties appear on the primary ballot together and the top two vote-winners advance to the general, will favour moderates like Herrera Beutler. “A couple years ago it used to be, ‘Legal immigration good, illegal immigration bad.’ That used to be the Republican mantra,” said Deputy Director Chris Chmielenski. “You're starting to see less of that.” — Reuters



A man crosses over the Gateway international Bridge in Brownsville, Texas. Governor Greg Abbott has been getting pushback for his deployment of thousands of National Guard personnel to the US-Mexico border by Democratic lawmakers and even some of the guard members participating in the mission, who call the move overtly political and a waste of resources.—AFP

sport

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Jan Hirt of Inter-marché-Wanty-Gobert rides during the fifth stage of Tour of Oman between Samayil and Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain), in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. – AFP

HIRT EXCELS AT JABAL AL AKHDHAR

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 14

Czech rider Jan Hirt produced a masterful performance in the tough climbing stage at Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain) to grab the red jersey of the Tour of Oman in the Stage 5 on Monday. In a repeat of stage 4 finish, the Inter-marché-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux rider went solo inside the last 2 km.

Well supported by team-mate Rein Taaramae, Hirt displayed impressive climbing legs to tame the 5.7 km ascent of Jabal Al Akhdhar in the 150.5 km stage that began at Al Feyhaa Resthouse in Samayil.

Hirt claimed the stage win ahead of Kevin Vauquelin and Elie Gesbert (Arkea-Samsic).

On the way, he also cracked overnight leader Fausto Masnada (Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team) on slopes of 10.5% gradient to power to the top of the standings.

Masnada finished just outside the top 10 (+1'48") and remained second in the general standings ahead of the sixth and final stage of 132.5 km from Al Mouj to Muttrah Sea Road.

The closing ceremony will be presided over by HH Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Assistant Secretary General for the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, at the Muttrah Sea Road.

White jersey Anthon Charmig (Uno-X Pro Cycling Team) suffered a crash earlier in the race.

Rui Costa (UAE Team Emirates) climbed two spots into third at 1:16 with both Elie Gesbert (Arkea-Samsic) and Charmig sitting just two seconds behind him.

The 92-man peloton had to battle the windy conditions

throughout and splits did eventually begin to form. Marco Canola (Gazprom-RusVelo) was the non-starter.

Danish rider Charmig was one of several to come down in a crash along with Mark Cavendish, but both got back to action.

At 4 km, Luca Rastelli (Bardiani-CSF-Faizané), Laurenz Rex (Bingoal Pauwels Sauces WB), Antonio Angulo (Euskaltel-Euskadi), Andrea Peron (Team Novo Nordisk) and Nicolas Vinokurov (Astana Qazaqstan Development Team) opened up a gap. Oman national team's Abdulrahman al Yaqoobi made an effort to join the top six but he was caught by the peloton after 20 km.

Two major splits came back together with just over 40 kilometres remaining.

Quick-Step led the bunch towards the foot of the final climb.

INTERMARCHÉ SET PACE
Then a push from the Inter-marché-Wanty-Gobert squad saw it further reduced to about 15 riders at the bottom of Green Mountain.

Inter-marché-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux quickly got to the front of the bunch to bring the gap down to 2 minutes.

Inter-marché-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux set the pace at the bottom of the climb and Rein Taaramae quickly reduced the front group to a handful of riders. Hirt broke away with 2 km to go past Arkea-Samsic's power duo of Elie Gesbert and Kevin Vauquelin.

Hirt also topped the points classification (34 points) ahead of Masnada (24) and Charmig (24).

In team category, Team Arkea-Samsic (55:23: 00) were on top, followed by Inter-marché (+07") and Team DSM (+2.07").

TOUR OF OMAN STAGE 5 RESULTS			
POSITION	RIDER	TEAM	TIMING
1	Jan Hirt (Cze)	Inter-marché-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux	3:35:39
2	Kevin Vaquelin (Fra)	Arkea-Samsic	3:36:18
3	Elie Gesbert (Fra)	Arkea-Samsic	3:36:27
4	Kevin Colleoni (Ita)	Bikeexchange-Jayco	3:36:36
5	Rui Costa (Por)	UAE Team Emirates	3:36:36
6	Rein Taaramae (Est)	Inter-marché-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux	3:36:50
7	Anthon Charmig (Den)	UNO-X Pro Cycling Team	3:36:50
8	Henri Vandenabeele (Bel)	Team DSM	3:36:58
9	Kevin Vermaerke (USA)	Team DSM	3:37:22
10	Mauro Schmid (Swi)	Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team	3:37:22

GENERAL CLASSIFICATION AFTER STAGE 5			
POSITION	RIDER	TEAM	TIMING
1	Jan Hirt (Cze)	Inter-marché-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux	18:25:27
2	Fausto Masnada (Ita)	Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team	18:26:27
3	Rui Costa (Por)	UAE Team Emirates	18:26:43
4	Elie Gesbert (Fra)	Team Arkea-Samsic	18:26:45
5	Anthon Charmig (Den)	UNO-X Pro Cycling Team	18:26:45
6	Kevin Vauquelin (Fra)	Team Arkea-Samsic	18:27:05
7	Kevin Colleoni (Ita)	Team BikeExchange-Jayco	18:27:17
8	Rein Taaramae (Est)	Inter-marché-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux	18:27:18
9	Henri Vandenabeele (Bel)	Team DSM	18:27:21
10	Mauro Schmid (Swi)	Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team	18:27:28



Oman beat toppers UAE, Ireland win



Oman's Aamir Kaleem receives the man of the match award.

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH MUSCAT, FEB 14

Oman posted a seven-wicket win against table toppers UAE as the quadrangular T20 series concluded at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat on Monday.

Despite the defeat, UAE emerged winners of the series with four points from three matches and a better net run-rate of 0.547 compared to second-placed Ireland (0.457) who also have four points.

Oman's lone win in the series helped them land in third position above Nepal. Both teams have two points each, but Oman managed a better net run-rate (-0.438) than Nepal (-0.592).

In the morning match, captain Zeeshan Maqsood won the toss and elected to bowl first.

UAE posted a challenging total of 165 for eight wickets in 20 overs after a scintillating knock of 84 by opener Muhammad Waseem.

Waseem mainly dealt with sixers, sending eight over the ropes. He also hit three boundaries to belt 84 runs from 44 balls.

Veteran left-arm slow bowler

Aamir Kaleem wrecked the UAE batting at the other end taking 5-29 which included the price wicket of Waseem.

Rohan Mustafa and Vriitya Aravind scored 19 runs each.

Bilal Khan bowled a tidy spell of four overs giving away only 15 runs.

In reply, Oman reached the target with three balls remaining.

Kashyap Prajapati hit 69 from 53 balls with the help of eight fours.

Shoaib Khan scored 34 and opener Jatinder Singh made 22 runs.

IRELAND WIN

In the last match of the series, Ireland beat Nepal by 16 runs.

In a low-scoring encounter, Nepal won the toss and elected to bowl first.

Ireland found it difficult to score against a good bowling effort by Nepal. George Dockrell top-scored with 28.

Man of the match Dipendra Singh Airee took four wickets for Nepal with his right-arm off-break bowling.

It was Airee's day except on the winning points with the Nepal all-rounder taking 4-21 and two

catches during Ireland batting and returned later to score 28 runs.

Ireland were all out for 127 runs in 20 overs.

In reply, Nepal could only manage 111-9 in 20 overs.

All the Ireland bowlers were among wickets with Mark Adair, Simi Singh, Barry McCarthy and Andy McBrine all taking two wickets each.

Curtis Campher also chipped in with a wicket to ensure success for all Irish bowlers.

McBrine had the best figures of 13-2 for 4 overs.

Brief scores: UAE 165-8 in 20 overs (Muhammad Waseem 84; Aamir Kaleem 5-29) lost to Oman 165-3 in 19.3 overs (Kashyap Prajapati 69, Shoaib Khan 34)

Ireland 127 all out in 20 overs (George Dockrell 28; Dipendra Singh Airee 4-21, Abinash Bohara 2-29) beat Nepal 111-9 in 20 overs (Dipendra Singh Airee 28; Andy McBrine 2-13, Barry McCarthy 2-16)

POINTS TABLE						
Read as rank, team, played, won, lost, tie, points, net run-rate)						
1.	UAE	3	2	1	0	4 0.547
2.	Ireland	3	2	1	0	4 0.457
3.	Oman	3	1	2	0	2 -0.438
4.	Nepal	3	1	2	0	2 -0.592

OFA appoints Spanish coaches for U-16, U-19 teams

ADIL AL BALUSHI MUSCAT, FEB 14

The Oman Football Association (OFA) announced on Monday appointed new Spanish head coaches for the national under-19 and under-16 teams.

David Gordo Mansilla will be in charge of the under-19 team and Pablo Herrero Fernandez will head the under-16 coaching team.

A press release from the OFA said that the agreement with both Spanish coaches is inline to the OFA's strategy to set up strong national teams with top international standards. Moreover, the goal is to have a developed junior national teams that can add positively to the senior national team.

WORLD CUP EXPERIENCE

The Spanish coaches will be assisted by national coaches including Ahmed al Alawi as second assistant coach for coach Mansilla in the U-19 team besides first assistant coach Khalid Ghanim from Egypt. Other coaching staff in U-19 team will feature Julio Diaz as goalkeeper coach and Jose Diaz as performance analyst.

The coaching posts became vacant as former coaches Yaqboo al Sabahi (U-19) and Hilal al Oufi (U-16 team) quit the team after reaching the Asian Cup.

Mansilla, 52 years old, will replace Al Sabahi and aims to position the junior national team in better position at the GCC, Arab, continental and international levels.

The former head coach of Spain U-18, U-17 and U-16 teams assumed charge and began visiting clubs and matches few days ago. Mansilla had won many titles with the Spain team. Under his supervision, the Spanish U17 team finished runners-up of the Fifa World Cup for U-17 twice. He served many clubs including Real Madrid U-18 team besides leading technical staff of CD Legan, AD Alcoric, RSD Alcal, CUC Villalba among others.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

The coaching staff of the U-16



David Gordo Mansilla, head coach of U-19 team.

team will comprise Spaniard Pablo Herrero Fernandez as head coach, national coach Anwar al Habsi, who hails from Al Mudhaibi, will be the assistant coach. Jassim al Dohani will be goalkeeping coach and Nasser al Abri will be the fitness coach.

Fernandez took charge of the post since his arrival to the Sultanate of Oman last week as he attended some league matches. The Spanish coach had last served as the assistant coach of Real Murcia FC during June 2020 to October 2021. The previous post was as assistant coach of Burgos CF for one year.

The 45 years old coach managed Real Club Recreativo de Huelva for one season before moving to Burgos CF. Fernandez begun his journey in June in 2009 as head coach of CF Rayo Majadahonda. He is an experienced coach and posses 14 years in coaching top professional players. He is holder of Master degree in sports coaching.

On the other hand, OFA signed an agreement with the Saudi former referee Ali Ahmed al Turaifi as umpiring expert. The former international umpire was the main referee in five fixtures at the Fifa World Cup in 2002.



Pablo Herrero Fernandez, head coach of U-16 team.

Maniz Azad, OHI book exciting B Division wins

MUSCAT: Star Omani all-rounder Shuaib Ismail al Balushi was the hero of Maniz Azad International's 4-wicket win over OCT Al Hail A in a 30-over B Division League game at Muscat Municipality ground 2 on Friday.

OCT Al Hail A posted 183 for 6 on the board thanks to top knocks from Ismail Ghulam (80) and Abdul Ghani (56). Shuaib and Kamran Ijaz were the pick of Maniz Azad bowlers, taking two wickets each.

Maniz raced to the target in only 18.4 overs, scoring 184 for 6. Krishna Pradhan led the way with a solid 59 not out off 33 whereas Shuaib struck a strokeful 55 off 32. Nadhir Ghulam and Suhaib Abdul claimed two wickets each.

Brief Scores (B Division 30 overs): Oct Al Hail 'A' 183 for 6 in 30 over (Ismail Ghulam 80 – 6x4, 2x6, Abdul Ghani 56 – 6x4, Shuaib Ismail 2-32, Kamran Ijaz 2-26) lost to Maniz Azad International 184 for 6 in 18.4 overs

(Krishna Pradhan 59 – 10x4, Shuaib Ismail 55 – 9x4, Kamran Ijaz 33 – 3x4, 2x6, Nadhir Ghulam 2-33, Suhaib Abdul 2-23) by 4 wickets.

MURTAZA BOWLS OHI TO VICTORY

In another B Division clash at Muscat Municipality ground 1, Douglas OHI beat Bank Muscat by 3 wickets thanks to a wonderful 5 for 20 by Murtaza Shah.

Murtaza's spell was instrumental in restricting Bank Muscat to a modest 132 for 9 in 30 overs. Shamsudheen Shareef lent him excellent support, taking 3 for 17. Sarmad Mehmood topscored with an unbeaten 64.

OHI had a few hiccups before chasing down the target in 23.4 overs, scoring 135 for 7 as Santosh Vishwakarma topscored with 30 off 32. Amir Mehmood was brilliant with the ball, claiming 4 for 20.

Brief Scores (B Division): Bank Muscat 132 for 9 in 30 overs (Sarmad Mehmood 64 – 6x4, Murtaza Shah



Vanderlande's Rahul Chadha

5-20, Shamsudheen Shareef 3-17) lost to Douglas OHI 135 for 7 in 23.4 overs (Santosh Vishwakarma 30 – 4x4, Chintan Kamlesh 22 – 3x4. Amir Mehmood 4-20) by 3 wickets.

RAHUL STARS IN ANOTHER VANDERLANDE WIN

Vanderlande magic man Rahul Chadha powered his side to an emphatic 79-run victory



Shoaib Ismail al Balushi of Maniz Azad

against Al Waad Trading and Contracting Enterprises in a C Division T20 League game at Muscat Municipality ground 2 in Al Amerat on Friday.

Vanderlande's imposing total of 217 for 8 included major contributions from Rahul (51), Barathwaj Vinayagam (46) and

Aasim Mohammed (46). Ratheesh Poliyakottu picked up 3 for 29.

Al Waad struggled to keep up with the mounting run rate and could manage to score only 138 for 8 in 20 overs as Haja Hussain (3 for 19), Aasim Mohammed (2 for 21) and Rahul Chadha (2 for 28) made things difficult for them with their superb bowling. Suseendran Siraichezhian topscored with 40. **Brief Scores (C Division):** Vanderlande 217 for 8 in 20 overs (Rahul Chadha 51 – 6x4, 1x6, Barathwaj Vinayagam 46 – 4x4, Aasim Mohammed 46 – 7x4, Ratheesh Puliyakottu 3-26, Sujith Kumar 2-29) beat Al Waad Trad & Contracting Enterprises 138 for 8 in 20 overs (Suseendran Siraichezhian 40 – 5x4, Parthipan Krishnan 32 – 3x4, Haja Hussain 3-19, Aasim Mohammed 2-21, Rahul Chadha 2-28,) by 79 runs.

SAJID STARS IN KHALSA WIN

In another C Division match, Sajid Ali's superb 61 not out

helped Khalsa United to a 21-run win over Al Jadidi Engineering and Contracting at Muscat Municipality ground 1.

Khalsa could not compile a big total due to Al Jadidi's brilliant bowling and had to be content with 125 for 8. Rohit Thanikattu and Charles Jacob claimed two wickets each.

Khalsa bowled even better, dismissing Al Jadidi for a lowly 104 in 18.1 overs thanks to outstanding spells by Sushil Kadam (3 for 9), Majid Rafique (3 for 12) and Harminder Singh (3 for 24). Only Vaseem Pyarejan batted well, scoring 47 not out off 30.

Brief Scores (C Division): Khalsa United 125 for 6 in 20 overs (Sajid Ali 61 – 3x4, Rohit Thanikattu 2-24, Charles Jacob 2-18) beat Al Jadidi Engineering And Contracting Llc 104 all out in 18.1 overs (Vaseem Pyarejan 47 – 8x4, Sushil Kadam 3-9, Majid Rafique 3-12, Harminder Singh 3-24) by 21 runs.



AL HARTHY, DE HAAN AND EASTWOOD SECURE BEST RESULT POSSIBLE WITH P5

Top 5 finish for Oman Racing at Asian Le Mans

DUBAI: Fifth place in round two of the Asian Le Mans Series at Dubai Autodrome on Sunday capped a strong and competitive opening weekend of the season for Ahmad al Harthy and Oman Racing — the Sultanate’s of Oman number one racing driver hailing a ‘perfect race’ in the No 69 Aston Martin. Taking the second stint of Sunday evening’s four-hour encounter in Dubai, Al Harthy produced an absolutely sensational drive and ran as high as second in the GT class — Oman Racing having qualified 10th fastest — as a maiden ALMS podium result looked a possible reality.

In the end, with overall pace from the Aston Martin Vantage GT3 not quite a match on this occasion for the rival Ferraris and McLarens, Al Harthy and team-mates Sam De Haan and Charlie Eastwood had to settle for a nonetheless satisfying top five result.

“It was a perfect race from our perspective, everything was spot on and we didn’t do anything wrong all race”, reflected Al Harthy, who is supported by Omantel, OQ and MHD-ITICS, “The team really did an amazing job, I drove

a perfect race in my stint but we just didn’t have the overall pace compared to our rivals — that was the difference no matter how well we performed.

“Sam did an incredible job in the first stint, a fantastic start to the race, and Charlie — as he always does — delivered a faultless drive. I’m really delighted with the performance we gave, running in P2 for so long felt amazing and it gives us the motivation to take to Abu Dhabi where we can hopefully fight for stronger results next weekend.”

Following on from a strong top six result in round one on Saturday evening in Dubai, Oman Racing’s trio had their sights set on more in Sunday’s four-hour contest but with plenty of work to do from the fifth row of the GT class grid.

De Haan started the race in the No.69 Aston Martin Vantage GT3 and put together an awesome opening lap, slicing his way through the pack and avoiding drama to climb into third place. Initially soaking up pressure from Brendan Iribe in his McLaren 720S, De Haan was shuffled back to fifth place on lap three and remained there up to the first



round of driver-change pit-stops. Pitting from an improved fourth under Full Course Yellow conditions just past the one hour mark, De Haan handed over the Oman Racing car to Al Harthy who ran in fourth position when the action resumed around 10 minutes later. Edged back to fifth prior to a second Full Course Yellow around 80 minutes into the race, Al Harthy took the opportunity to pit again during the cautionary period.

Proving to be an inspired move, when the action resumed shortly after the Omani was second in GT and just outside the overall top 10 — driving superbly. Able to keep a gap of several seconds over the

Ferrari 488 of David Perel, as the race approached the halfway point Perel had closed onto the tail of the Aston Martin.

Driving faultlessly, Al Harthy kept the Ferrari at bay and when yet another Full Course Yellow period was called around the two-hour mark the Omani concluded an absolutely fantastic stint by handing over the car to Eastwood.

Perel had also pitted to hand over the Ferrari to Davide Rigon, and so Eastwood was in the same position Al Harthy had been with Rigon close behind. Soaking up the pressure brilliantly, Eastwood fended off the Ferrari throughout most of hour three until Rigon was able to get ahead later on.

Just before the end of hour three Eastwood pitted, emerging back into the race in fifth spot and as bullet-proof as his performance was behind the wheel of the Aston Martin, that’s where he had to stay to the chequered flag at the end of hour four.

Now the Asian Le Mans Series moves on to neighbouring Abu Dhabi for rounds three and four of the 2022 season, taking place next weekend on February 19 and 20 at Yas Marina Circuit.

Zakariya impresses at Qatar Rally with second spot

MUSCAT: Oman rally driver Zakariya al Amri on Subaru Impreza N14 ended Qatar International Rally in a high when he clinched the second place in Group N with his co-driver Mohammed al Amri.

Zakariya also finished fifth overall after strong performance and pace during 10 stages of the rally.

Zakariya expressed happiness after a tough outing in Losail, Qatar.

“I did my best in the two-day rally. It was very hard terrain and difficult to navigate. My team has worked hard to realise this second place in Group N,” Al Amri said.

During the rally, Zakariya pointed out that he pushed

as much as he can on the first day.

“We pushed hard on day one with caution as the stage was hard in some area and slippery in other places. We had some mechanical problems but we overcame these issues in time. Then we got clear by better timing in our group in front of Abu Shurfa and Abu Jamoos from Jordan and behind Mishari al Thufiari who won the group title.”

“I am really thankful to my team and the mechanics for their support and hard work. Special thanks goes to Oman United Insurance and Al Faiha Real Estate for their support to my attendance in the Merc competition this year,” Al Amri concluded.



Wolverhampton bounce back to blank Tottenham

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, FEB 13

Having lost to Arsenal the previous week, Wolverhampton Wanderers lifted their performance most impressively to beat Tottenham Hotspur 2-0, with both goals scored within 18 minutes of the start. The win took them within 4 points of the top four in the Premier League while Spurs’ poor run has brought three consecutive defeats, the last two coming within four days, despite playing at home.

Spurs manager, Antonio Conte, said: “The problem is you cannot buy a winning mentality. You can only transfer it day by day. Some players understand more quickly the process, others need more time. A winning mentality, in my opinion, means ‘I am ready to kill you to live’, to show better desire than your opponent. When you understand the defeat has to hurt you a lot, not a little.”

He added: “There are a lot of jobs to do but it is not simple because the environment here is used to playing for the Champions

League, Europa League. If you want to try to be competitive and fight for something important, you have to be good on the pitch and many aspects around us. They are working well but commitment itself is not good enough if we want to try to fight for something important.”

While Spurs struggled for long periods, misplacing passes, Wolves quickly took control. Spurs failed in chances to score when openings did come. Heung-Min Son should have done better in the 16th minute when he tried to be too precise in front of goal and Harry Kane was tackled by Romain Saiss in the 39th minute when he was late in taking a shot.

Two errors from goalkeeper Hugo Lloris gifted Wolves both goals. The first, in the 6th minute resulted from a wild punch — instead of attempting to catch — which sent the ball into the path of Raul Jimenez for a powerful volley into the net.

The second goal came 12 minutes later when Lloris miscued a back pass to Ben Davies who



Wolverhampton Wanderers’ Raul Jimenez in action with Tottenham Hotspur’s Hugo Lloris. – Reuters

failed to clear the ball which went into the 18-yard box. There was poor defending by Rodrigo Bentancur and Davison Sanchez and as the ball went loose, Leander Dendoncker was quick to pounce and score. Thereafter, little chance was given by Wolves for the opposition to score except in the 88th minute when a firm header from Christian Romero was superbly saved.

Wolves manager, Bruno Lage, was asked if he dreams of a top-six finish — which would get his team into Europe — he said: “I will not dream. I will only dream of Leicester (the next game), they are a very strong team, very hard. Every game is a hard game, that is why in the last week I have been talking about character.”

He added: “We controlled the game against Tottenham. When we got three points against a top team and a manager who is one of the best and gets results wherever he goes. The goal is every time to improve and the way we are working, the most important thing is that.”

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Dairy firm receives investment licence in record 30 minutes



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 14

Samayil Industrial City announced on Monday that it issued a licence to Al Habib Food Industries, a local Omani firm, to set up a dairy processing plant at a cost of RO 500,000.

The application, processed through the integrated one-stop portal as well as the Masar Quick Service app, was handled in a record 30 minutes, Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn)

is currently executing the design and implementation of infrastructure to support the further development of Samayil Industrial City.

This includes a dual-lane road spanning 1.4 km from the roundabout at the main entrance of Samayil Industrial City to the roundabout near Al Sharqiyah expressway. The project also includes designing and executing sewage pipe linking phase 3 with phase 1 of the Industrial City, which is expected to be completed in April.

Pact signed to promote Oman as leading investment destination

Omani investment services firm Ubhar Capital to support Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in positioning the Sultanate of Oman as attractive investment destination

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 14

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has signed an agreement with leading investment advisory services firm Ubhar Capital to promote investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman.

The cooperation agreement was signed by the Investment Promotion Under-Secretary Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah with Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al Saadi, CEO of Ubhar Capital.

As part of the pact, Ubhar will assist the ministry in highlighting the Sultanate of Oman's value proposition as an investment



destination, identify target areas and economic activities for investment, undertake preliminary feasibility studies focusing on attractive investment opportunities, and identify potential investors as well.

Also as part of the partnership, Ubhar will assist in the organisation of familiarisation visits by prospective investors, supported by strategies to facilitate the financing and eventual implementation of specific projects.

Additionally, the investment

services firm will undertake research and prepare reports on specific investment opportunities for the benefit of interested local and international investors.

One objective of this effort is to identify challenges and impediments faced by investors with the overall goal of improving the business environment in the Sultanate of Oman.

As part of its remit, Ubhar will work with the ministry in building a database of potential investors to enable Oman's authorities to work with them.

In a statement, Al Samsamiyah said the agreement will enhance the investment appeal of the country, supplementing other regulatory and legislative initiative taken by the government to drive FDI inflows. It comes on the heels of the recent launch of a one-stop portal for the processing of investment applications, the roll-out of the investor residency visa programme, fast-tracking of processes, and other initiatives.

Ubhar's CEO Shaikh Abdulaziz said the company will support the ministry in its endeavour to position the Sultanate of Oman strongly as a world-class setting for business and investment, which can compete internationally with other global destinations.

Ubhar Capital, one of the largest investment companies in the region, has more than \$1 billion in assets. It has also facilitated a number of major joint stock financing transactions and helped raise over \$7.5 billion through initial public offerings, private placements, and mergers and acquisitions.

(With inputs from ONA)

Sohar Aluminium commits feedstock for RO 42 million Omani alloy wheel project

VALUE CREATION: Central to the value proposition and cost-competitiveness of Synergies Casting Oman is a commitment by Sohar Aluminium to meet its requirement of aluminium as feedstock in the form of hot metal

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Seeking to enhance value creation from its operations, Sohar Aluminium has pledged to supply hot metal from its smelter in Suhar Industrial City as feedstock to a first-of-its-kind alloy wheel manufacturing plant currently under commissioning nearby.

Synergies Casting Oman (SCO), set up with an investment of RO 42 million, has commenced trial operation of its high-tech plant that specialises in the manufacture of high-end aluminium alloy wheels for the global automotive industry.

The facility, billed as the only



one of its kind in the Middle East, is slated for commercial launch before the end of the current quarter. At full capacity, the plant will manufacture 1.2 million alloy wheels for export primarily to markets in the United States and India.

Central to the project's value proposition and cost-competitiveness is a commitment by Sohar Aluminium (SA), which is owned 40 per cent by OQ (part of Oman Investment Authority), to meet its requirement of aluminium as feedstock in the form of hot metal.

In exclusive remarks to the Observer, SA CEO Said al Masoudi (pictured) said Synergies Casting Oman is the latest addition to a set of downstream companies that rely



on the aluminium smelter for their hot metal needs.

"SA is committed to supply the full current requirement of hot metal to Synergies Casting per the volume specified in the contract," Al Masoudi said.

"The hot metal offtake has started with small trial lots and will increase gradually to reach full capacity as per the contract."

Benefitting from SA's hot metal supplies are three other downstream processing firms: Oman Aluminium Processing Industries (OAPIL), the country's leading manufacturer of aluminium rods and overhead line conductors; Oman

Aluminium Rolling Company LLC (OARC), which produces flat-rolled aluminium products; and Oman Aluminium Cast LLC (OAC), a specialised aluminium horizontal cast house that produces high current bus bars required by aluminium smelters and other electrolysis plants as well as specialised castings.

All three plants, along with Synergies Casting Oman, are located in the close vicinity of SA's smelter, enabling the transfer of hot metal in specially designed mobile transport vehicles to each facility.

Delivery of the feedstock in its pure molten state ensures

significant energy savings for the recipient companies, among other operational benefits.

Significantly, with Synergies' contract now in effect, SA's cumulative supply commitment to local customers has now ramped up to 60 per cent of the total metal produced, said Al Masoudi.

"SA's long-term strategy has been to supply 60 per cent of its metal to downstream customers. With Synergies in operation, there are four downstream industries producing value added products which are used in domestic and international markets," the CEO stated, noting that all of SA's aluminium production volume is now committed against long-term agreements.

Sohar Aluminium is jointly owned by OQ (40 per cent), Abu Dhabi National Energy Company TAQA (40 per cent) and Rio Tinto (20 per cent).

The balance of 40 per cent of the smelter's aluminium output, which is a total of around 395,000 tonnes per annum, is sold as ingots and sows on the international market.

Oman oil price rises \$2.46/barrel

MUSCAT: Oman oil price (April Delivery 2022) yesterday reached \$92.93 per barrel, comprising an increase of \$2.46 from the price of last Friday, which was \$90.47. The average price of Oman oil (February delivery 2022) has stabilised at \$73.14, thus \$7.12 per barrel lower than January delivery 2022. — ONA

Asyad Group seeks to buy refrigeration arm of Oman Fisheries

MUSCAT: Oman Fisheries Company, minority owned by the Omani government represented by Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) — part of Oman Investment Authority — announced that it has received an offer from Asyad Group to acquire 100 per cent of refrigeration and storage subsidiary Al Ameen Stores and Refrigeration for a consideration of RO 3.1 million.

Al Ameen Stores and Refrigeration is 100 per cent owned by Oman Fisheries, the latter said in a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

Nama Group announces winners of Wiyakum initiative

MUSCAT: Nama Group has announced the conclusion of the sixth edition of its internal volunteering initiative (Wiyakum) for the electricity and water sectors in the Sultanate of Oman. Wiyakum is a key project aiming at reflecting and enhancing the volunteering activities within the group and driven by the group's efforts to realise its sustainability policy, which aims at promoting a culture of volunteering among the group's employees by focusing on the pillars of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

The initiative also aims to activate the volunteering leave entitled for employees by the implementation of their volunteering projects in as per the policy. The closing ceremony was held at Kempinski Hotel —



Muscat, during which the Nama group has reviewed the voluntary

initiatives conducted by the group's employees.

Four winning projects out of eight which were financially

empowered by the group to reach the implementation phase within predefined framework of this initiative, were honoured during the ceremony.

Engineer Saleh al Rumhi, CEO, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), said: "It gives us great pleasure to witness the conclusion of the sixth edition of Wiyakum our volunteer work initiative. Since its launch each version of the initiative has left a special imprint in the world of volunteering in the Sultanate of Oman. It aims to achieve the pillars of development for economic, social and environmental sustainability. We will continue to strive for volunteer work efforts to continue, and we will move forward to achieve sustainability as a common goal."

In this edition, 32 voluntary projects have been submitted by different teams and individuals.

Wiyakum Application was honoured with the first place, the project which was proposed by different subsidiaries within the group and was merged under one umbrella is aiming at empowering the voluntary work of the group employees and to organise it within the Sultanate of Oman in general.

The environmental Playground was honoured with the second, the project aims at designing and building an environmental playground for kids by recycling unused cars tyres. A project to support children's mental health won the third place followed by a hiking and mountain biking route project.

Hyundai Elantra reigns supreme in 2021



MUSCAT: The Hyundai Elantra achieved the top overall sales position in the Saudi Arabian market in 2021, according to official figures. In addition to being Hyundai's best-selling model in the Kingdom, Elantra is also the best-in-class car in the sedan C segment.

Second only to its sibling, the Tucson, as the global best-seller in the Hyundai lineup, the Elantra has steadily evolved in terms of design and quality refinement. With more than 30 years and seven model generations, the Elantra has become a formidable contender for the title of best-in-class vehicle around the world.

With enthusiasm and affection from loyal customers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Elantra has steadily maintained sales across the Kingdom. Powered by a design statement that is sharp and bold, the Elantra has a spacious interior with modern comfort and connectivity features, advanced safety and driver assistance systems, and a versatile driving experience that combines

satisfying performance and unmatched fuel economy.

"The Elantra is a core part of Hyundai's lineup in The Kingdom and across the Middle East and has served customers from all walks of life for nearly three decades.

The stellar sales results are a testament to the popularity of the Elantra and bolsters our dedication to continuously offer customers advanced features and smart mobility solutions across all our model lineup," commented Hyoungjung Im, the Vice-President of Hyundai Motor Company.

He added: "This achievement motivates us to keep moving forward with enhancing the lives of our customers by investing in the technology, design, and quality of our products to help reinvigorate their trust in us."

The Elantra's modern look reflects the 'Sensuous Sportiness' design identity of Hyundai and is equipped with an elaborately designed chassis, which allows the driver to enjoy the distinctive sporty character of the design."

NBO donates eight ambulances to MoH



MUSCAT: As part of a long-running drive to support Oman's efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has donated eight fully equipped ambulances to the Ministry of Health (MoH) for hospitals in Muscat and Salalah.

The ambulances were handed over during a ceremony attended by Dr Thamra al Ghafri, Acting Director-General of Health Services of Muscat Governorate, and Abdullah bin Zahran al Hinai, CEO of NBO, as part of a RO 500,000 donation the bank pledged towards the cause in 2021.

Abdullah al Hinai commented, "The health and well-being of the community remains at the top of our agenda and we continue to work closely with our stakeholders and authorities to ensure that our help is directed where it is

needed most. Although we are starting to get over the worst throes of the pandemic, the healthcare authorities are still under pressure to treat those affected. We continue to see the incredible strength of our healthcare heroes and are both proud and honoured to continue our support of their efforts in bringing the community back to health."

Since the beginning of the

pandemic, the bank has been active in contributing to the nation as it overcomes both the health impacts and the wider economic impacts. Through a series of measures including donations, vaccinations, loan deferments, and targeted SMS advice, it has reiterated its care for the community, all while encouraging its customers to bank from the safety and comfort of home.

Ooredoo wins at World Economic Magazine Awards

MUSCAT: In recognition of its leading technological services, products and offerings, Ooredoo has been named "Best Telecom Provider" and "Best Digital Transformation" at the US-based World Economic Magazine Awards.

This prestigious global



accolade is recognition of Ooredoo's amazing network and continuous value-added to customers digital experience to enjoy the Internet even more. Ooredoo has also recently won the Global Business Magazine Award for Best Telecommunications Company Oman 2022.

This is a testament to its continued efforts to transform Oman's communications landscape, while providing its customers with the latest technologies to enrich their digital lives. To find out the latest on Ooredoo's offerings, visit www.ooredoo.om,

Own the powerful Lexus GX with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: The powerful and luxurious GX SUV is available with exclusive benefits. They include free service 3 years / 30,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and 1 year free registration. The campaign is valid up to March 23, 2022. (Conditions apply. Visit any Lexus showroom for details).

The Lexus GX with its 292-horsepower 4.6-litre V8 producing 44.7 Kg.M of peak torque engine is great companion for both city drives and weekend getaways. Its 2500 kg towing capacity, makes it a perfect boat hauler. Towing is aided with

Trailer Sway Control, a function of the Vehicle Stability Control that enhances straight-line tracking.

Utilising the technology of the Kinetic Dynamic Suspension System (KDSS), the GX 460 enhances handling and ride comfort by helping to keep the vehicle level in both on and off-road conditions. When the GX encounters an uneven surface, one compressed cylinder causes fluid to flow to the other cylinder, helping the vehicle to keep all four wheels on the ground.

The system works without any action needed by the driver.



Thanks to an Off-Road Package featuring Multi-Terrain Select, tackling tough terrain is equally as easy. Adding extra peace of mind

is GX's Lexus Safety System+, completing Lexus' milestone of equipping models with active safety equipment.

A TORSEN torque-sensing limited slip centre differential distributes power under most driving conditions and changes the ratio as needed based on wheel slip. The four-wheel drive system offers a low range for slow speed off-road driving. With Downhill Assist Control (DAC), Hill-start Assist Control (HAC), Active Traction Control (A-TRAC), Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) and available Crawl Control, the

GX can roam unpaved roads, trails, and steep inclines with confidence. In the Sultanate of Oman, every Lexus vehicle comes with special benefits and privileges such as manufacturer's warranty of 4 years/100,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and 24 hours on-road assistance from AAA. For more information, please visit www.lexusoman.com or www.youtube.com/lexusoman or www.facebook.com/LexusOmanSBA or [instagram.com/oman.lexus/](http://www.instagram.com/oman.lexus/). For further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Lexus Showroom.



Stocks slump, oil hits 2014 highs on Ukraine tensions

LONDON: Global equities dived on Monday after the United States warned that Russia could attack Ukraine within days, while oil briefly hit eight-year peaks on fears of a conflict that would hit supplies. Frankfurt and Paris stock markets each sank by as much as 3.5 per cent in late morning deals, while London lost more than 2.2 per cent at one stage.

Asia also nursed heavy losses, mirroring Wall Street's sharp sell-off on Friday. World oil prices paused after earlier striking their highest levels since 2014 on deepening worries of a conflict sparked by key crude producer Russia.

"Stock markets are getting pummeled as everyone prepares for a possible Russian invasion of

Ukraine", OANDA analyst Craig Erlam said.

"The threat has been apparent for weeks but the warnings of recent days make clear that diplomatic efforts are not working and there's now a very real risk of an imminent move from the Kremlin."

In the face of uncertainty, investors are dumping riskier assets like equities, while key Russian exports including also gas have been well supported, he added. Russia's main stock market was down more than four per cent while the rouble fell against the dollar.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has dismissed calls by US counterpart Joe Biden and others to pull back.



A man fills a motorcycle with gas at a station in Taipei. — AFP

Governments have told their citizens to leave Ukraine and US national security adviser Jake Sullivan warned last week that an invasion could begin "any day now" and would likely start with "a significant barrage of missiles

and bomb attacks".

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz was preparing to visit Kyiv and Moscow to try to head off the crisis. "The prospect of war is rarely good for stock markets, and so the new trading week has begun on a

bad note across Europe and Asia as investors fear a physical battle between Russia and Ukraine", said AJ Bell analyst Danni Hewson.

The crisis comes amid a pick-up in crude demand as economies reopen after the coronavirus pandemic and people return to a more normal life.

In earlier Asian deals, Brent had climbed as high as \$96.16 and WTI crude to \$94.94 per barrel, stoking renewed concern over elevated inflation. "Russia is the world's second-largest exporter of crude oil and the largest exporter of natural gas", noted Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch.

"If Russia invades Ukraine, crude oil and natural gas prices can be expected to surge significantly.

In this case, Brent would probably exceed \$100 per barrel." Europe has for months already suffered from soaring natural gas prices, which have fuelled rocketing domestic energy prices and sparked decades-high inflation.

"In the event of a Russia-Ukraine escalation we could be seeing a significant increase in domestic energy prices since much of Europe is heavily reliant on Russian oil and gas supplies", said XTB analyst Walid Koudmani.

"As energy prices have been a key contributor to the recent record levels of inflation, a further increase could spill over into the majority of the economy and potentially hinder an already fragile post-pandemic economic recovery." — AFP

Sur Public Park to be self-sustaining enterprise

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 14

A grand public park planned in Sur in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate with funding support from Oman LNG will be a self-sustaining enterprise, providing business and investment opportunities for local Omani entrepreneurs while also enhancing Sur's tourism appeal.

Oman LNG announced on Sunday funding support to the tune of RO 3 million for the second phase of the park's development in collaboration with the South Al Sharqiyah governor's office.

The second phase of the park builds on previous support in which Oman LNG had funded detailed consultancy services for the design phase of the park, taking into consideration a number of important factors to accommodate all community needs, while reflecting company's environmental efforts. It



is set to be a public facility, attracting residents and visitors.

Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of South Al Sharqiyah, said: "It gives us a great pleasure to continue the exceptional relationship and collaboration with Oman LNG, through supporting various social responsibility programmes and projects. Sur Public Park is an additional vital project and comes as a testimony to His Majesty Sultan

Haitham bin Tarik's call to enhance and develop services across the governorates of Oman. Additionally, such project will accommodate many benefits from social, economic and touristic spectrums that will offer to people and tourists."

The project aims to offer tourism and investment opportunities that will be for recreational purposes for people in Sur and the wider South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. It will also help raise awareness of environmental protection.

Hamed bin Mohammed al Numani, CEO of Oman LNG, said, "We feel privileged to pursue this project that will provide many opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to invest and grow new businesses for recreation. It is, by all means, an environment-friendly project that comes to raise awareness of nature-based carbon offset and enhance the touristic infrastructure in South Al Sharqiyah."

Goldman Sachs cuts S&P 500 forecast

NEW YORK: Goldman Sachs has tempered its outlook for the S&P 500 index, expecting it to stay below the 5,000 mark this year as rising inflation threatens to derail a nascent recovery in the US economy.

The revised forecast of 4,900 point is a near 4 per cent cut from the brokerage's previous estimate, but is still 11 per cent above the S&P 500's Friday close of 4,418.64.

The benchmark index has come under pressure since the beginning of the year,

shedding nearly 7.3 per cent, as a host of worries ranging from interest rate hikes to tensions in Ukraine has turned investors skittish and markets volatile.

"Uncertainty abounds regarding the path of inflation and Fed policy", Goldman Sachs economists said in a note.

US Consumer prices rose solidly in January, leading to the biggest annual increase in inflation in 40 years.

— Reuters



Ali al Habsi opens first Belkin showroom

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Ace Omani footballer Ali al Habsi has opened the first Belkin exclusive showroom followed by another one at the Mall of Oman and in City Centre Qurum respectively.

These showrooms, opened in association of their local partnership with AAMAAL LLC, will serve the customers with the latest range of Belkin products while creating brand awareness across the region.

"I am truly honoured to be representing a globally renowned brand like Belkin in the Middle East, and I look forward to contributing to the brand's continued success in the Sultanate of Oman and the Gulf region", said Ali al Habsi.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Fawad Mir, Regional Managing Director of Belkin EMEA, said the company would continue to expand and grow its business

while keeping customer centricity at the heart of its operations.

"The retail environment in the region is increasingly sophisticated, with customers looking to experience products before making their buying decisions.

Our two new stores in Oman is based on our customers in the centre", he said.

The stores will offer a one-of-a-kind retail experience for customers across Oman to explore products in an interactive setting. A custom-built video wall at the storefront and audiovisual projections on the inner LED screens will guide consumers through the product journey.

Customers will also have access to a customer experience desk with an experiential display showcasing top-selling products in categories such as audio, power banks, Magsafe charging products and more.

Iraq's \$27 billion TotalEnergies deal stuck over contract wrangling

LONDON: A \$27 billion deal between France's TotalEnergies and Iraq, that Baghdad hoped would reverse the exit of oil majors from the country, has stalled amid disputes over terms and risks being scrapped by the country's new government.

Iraq has struggled to attract major fresh investments into its energy industry since signing a flurry of post US-invasion deals over a decade ago. The Iraqi government has cut oil output targets repeatedly as international oil companies that signed those initial deals leave due to poor returns from revenue sharing agreements.

TotalEnergies agreed last year to invest in four oil, gas and renewables projects in the southern Basra region over 25 years. The deal, signed by Iraq's oil ministry in September 2021 followed a visit from French President Emmanuel Macron.

The ministry, however, did not have agreement on the deal's financial details with all the government departments that needed to approve it, three Iraqi oil ministry and industry sources involved or familiar with the negotiations said, and it has been mired in disputes ever since.

Following a parliamentary election, the deal now needs approval from a new Iraqi cabinet, including new oil and finance



A man works at West Qurna 1 oil field in southern Iraq. — Reuters

ministers, who won't be in place until at least the end of March.

Iraq's oil ministry said it expects the TotalEnergies deal to complete from then. TotalEnergies said it was progressing towards closing the deal but added, "The agreements remain subject to conditions to be met and lifted by both sides."

The terms, which have not been made public or previously reported, have raised concerns from Iraqi politicians, and according to sources close to the deal are unprecedented for Iraq.

A group of lawmakers wrote to the oil ministry in January demanding details of the deal and

asking why it was signed without competition and transparency. Parliament could force the oil ministry to review or scrap the deal.

Under the draft terms, TotalEnergies is relying on getting \$10 billion of initial investment to fund the wider project via oil sales from the Ratawi oilfield, one of four projects in the broader agreement, sources said.

The Ratawi field is already pumping 85,000 barrels of oil per day and rather than TotalEnergies receiving its share, the revenue is going into government coffers. TotalEnergies is due to get 40 per cent of the revenues from

Ratawi's oil sales, Iraqi oil sources involved in negotiations said. That dwarfs the more usual 10-15 per cent that investors would have received from past projects through Iraq's technical service contracts, which reimbursed foreign companies for capital and production costs and paid a fixed remuneration fee in crude.

The higher the revenue-sharing proportion, the quicker and less risky the payback for investor. Iraq's oil ministry officials argue the country needs to be competitive with other energy producing countries to lure big investors like TotalEnergies.

— Reuters

Border blockades keep auto production and trade off kilter

Blockades of the US-Canada border stymied flows of critical supplies for the fourth day on Friday, leaving companies scrambling for materials and shutting down major auto factories from Ontario to Alabama.

The partial closure of the Ambassador Bridge, the busiest land crossing between the countries and a vital conduit for the auto industry, sent ripples through North American supply chains. Business groups called on officials to forcefully remove protesters who were causing the blockades.

Some companies tried to redistribute key parts among their factories and looked for other ways to move products.

But others appeared resigned to shutdowns, saying that bypassing the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, was just too expensive or difficult.

Toyota said the disruptions had led to “periodic downtime” at its engine plants in West Virginia and Alabama, as well as factories in Canada and Kentucky, and that interruptions were likely to continue through the weekend. Ford Motor curtailed capacity at two plants in Windsor and Oakville, which is also in Ontario, and shut down its Ohio assembly plant.

Other automakers said their assembly lines were running but not at optimal levels.

General Motors’ production was “running at relatively normal levels,” the company said. Stellantis, which owns Jeep, Ram and other brands, said all its North America plants had started on Friday morning but that the situation remained “incredibly fluid.”

The disruptions threatened to linger as truck drivers and members of far-right groups protested vaccine mandates and other pandemic restrictions in Canada and called for the resignation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Both the Canadian and US governments were trying to help companies get auto parts, fresh fruit and vegetables, and other products across the border. Manufacturers and logistics companies were sometimes routing trucks hundreds of miles out of their way to bridges and border checkpoints that were open.

Alternatives to the Ambassador Bridge are limited, said Kelly Stefanich, a Toyota spokesperson. Sending shipments through



Protesters in downtown Ottawa, where they have blocked streets around Canada's Parliament building for weeks. Canadian police moved in to clear protesters at an economically vital bridge in Windsor, Ontario, that connects Canada and the United States.

Buffalo, New York, and Mackinaw, Michigan, for example, required more drivers and trucks, which were already in short supply.

“We are seeing trucks starting to flow slowly now, which is a good sign,” Stefanich said.

The protests followed two years of pandemic-related closures of ports and factories and a surge in demand for cars and other goods among consumers who cut spending on restaurant meals, travel and other services.

A persistent shortage of semiconductors has also depressed auto production, leaving manufacturers particularly vulnerable to the blockades.

“Every hour this persists, the costs rack up,” said Brian Kingston, president of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers’ Association, whose members include Ford, GM and Stellantis. “They need to enforce the law and remove the protesters from the road leading to the bridge.”

Production shutdowns will worsen a shortage of new vehicles, which has already driven up prices, IHS Markit, a research firm, warned.

Some businesses that need to ship goods across the border were paying extra to reroute the freight through Buffalo, where the crossing remained open — at least for now, said Jennifer Frigger-Latham, vice president of sales and marketing at EMO Trans, a logistics company.

“In the current market, people are so used to delays and frustrations because of Covid, they’re much quicker to react these days and throw money at the problem,” she said.

Canadian officials were allowing some companies to send goods through other ports of entry without having to refile documents. US customs officials were assisting that effort by adding personnel and screening lines at those alternate crossings.

But finding alternate routes was not

always easy, said Linda Dynes, executive vice president of Canadian operations for Farrow, a 100-year-old customs broker.

She said one crossing in Coutts, Alberta, had not been consistently open over the last week. Protesters may try to block another between Saskatchewan and North Dakota. And the Peace Bridge connecting Fort Erie, Ontario, and Buffalo could be shut down this weekend. On Thursday, protesters clogged the Ottawa airport.

“It seems like every time you find an alternative path, it gets blocked, either by a farm vehicle or a truck,” Dynes said. Domestic spot prices for shipping had tripled in some cases, causing many companies to suspend shipments, she added.

Those difficulties have been compounded by a shortage of truck drivers. Some business groups had spoken out against the vaccine requirements for truckers in Canada and the United States, saying they would worsen logistical problems.

The partial closure of the Ambassador Bridge, the busiest land crossing between the countries and a vital conduit for the auto industry, sent ripples through North American supply chains. Business groups called on officials to forcefully remove protesters who were causing the blockades.

US trade deficit soared to a record level in 2021

The US trade deficit in goods soared to record levels in 2021, topping \$1 trillion as Americans continued to spend heavily on computers, toys, bicycles, clothing, pharmaceuticals and other goods made in foreign factories during the pandemic.

The overall trade deficit in both goods and services also hit an annual record, rising 27 per cent as the country’s imports far outpaced its exports, according to data released by the Commerce Department.

The widening deficit — which climbed to \$859.1 billion from \$678.7 billion the previous year — was a reflection of a highly unusual pandemic economy.

Americans, sheltering at home from the coronavirus and many with savings swelled by government relief packages, slashed their spending on travel, restaurants and movies and splurged on furniture, electronics, food and other goods instead.

The trade deficit numbers are also the latest sign of how dependent the United States remains on other countries, particularly China, for the things that consumers want to buy.

While both President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump have talked about reviving US manufacturing, the United States continues to be deeply reliant on factories in China and other low-cost countries to produce a vast array of consumer goods.

Imports surged by \$576.5 billion, or 20.5 per cent, rising sharply from a slump at the onset of the pandemic, as both the quantity and the price of the foreign products that

Americans purchased increased.

Businesses spent heavily on equipment and machinery, and the rising price of energy also pushed up the cost of total imports.

Exports grew 18.5 per cent, or by \$394.1 billion. Demand for foreign goods was so strong that it snarled global supply chains and clogged US ports, in some cases making it difficult for exporters to get their products out of the country.

The slowdown in demand during the pandemic for services, usually a strength for the US economy, also pushed up the trade deficit, as foreigners drastically reduced their spending on tourism and education in the United States.

The United States typically records a large trade surplus in services, which is subtracted from the overall deficit. Last year, the services surplus fell 5.6 per cent to \$231.5 billion.

The data also revealed the shortcomings of a trade deal that Trump signed with China in 2020. The agreement was designed to lower the US trade deficit with China, which Trump viewed as a sign of America’s failing trade policy, and to boost purchases of American farm goods before the 2020 election.

China committed to buying an additional \$200 billion worth of American goods and services above a 2017 baseline by the end of 2021. But those purchases did not materialise.

In fact, data released on Tuesday showed that China bought only 57 per cent of the American exports it had

committed to purchase under the agreement, according to tracking by Chad Bown, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

That was not even enough to reach the import levels from before the trade war, Bown said. In other words, China actually bought none of the additional \$200 billion of exports that the trade deal had promised, he said.

The ballooning trade deficit subtracted more than a percentage point from economic growth figures last year, more than it has in decades. Economists argue that the imbalances reflected in a large trade deficit can be related to a variety of economic issues, including fewer manufacturing jobs, unsustainable debt loads and financial bubbles.

“It’s devastating,” said Robert E. Scott, the director of trade and manufacturing policy research at the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute, which has called for more dramatic action to reduce the trade deficit, like realigning the value of the dollar. He added that the trade deficit was “draining jobs away from the recovery.”

“All that spending that’s falling on imports is creating jobs elsewhere and not in the US,” he said.

However, there is debate about just how alarming the trade deficit figures should be.

Many mainstream economists say that trade deficits can rise for reasons that are either positive or negative. Those reasons are usually more related to economic growth rates, government spending and the value of the US currency, they argue, than they are to trade policy.

“It’s devastating. The trade deficit was draining jobs away from the recovery. All that spending that’s falling on imports is creating jobs elsewhere and not in the US.”

ROBERT E SCOTT
DIRECTOR OF TRADE AND
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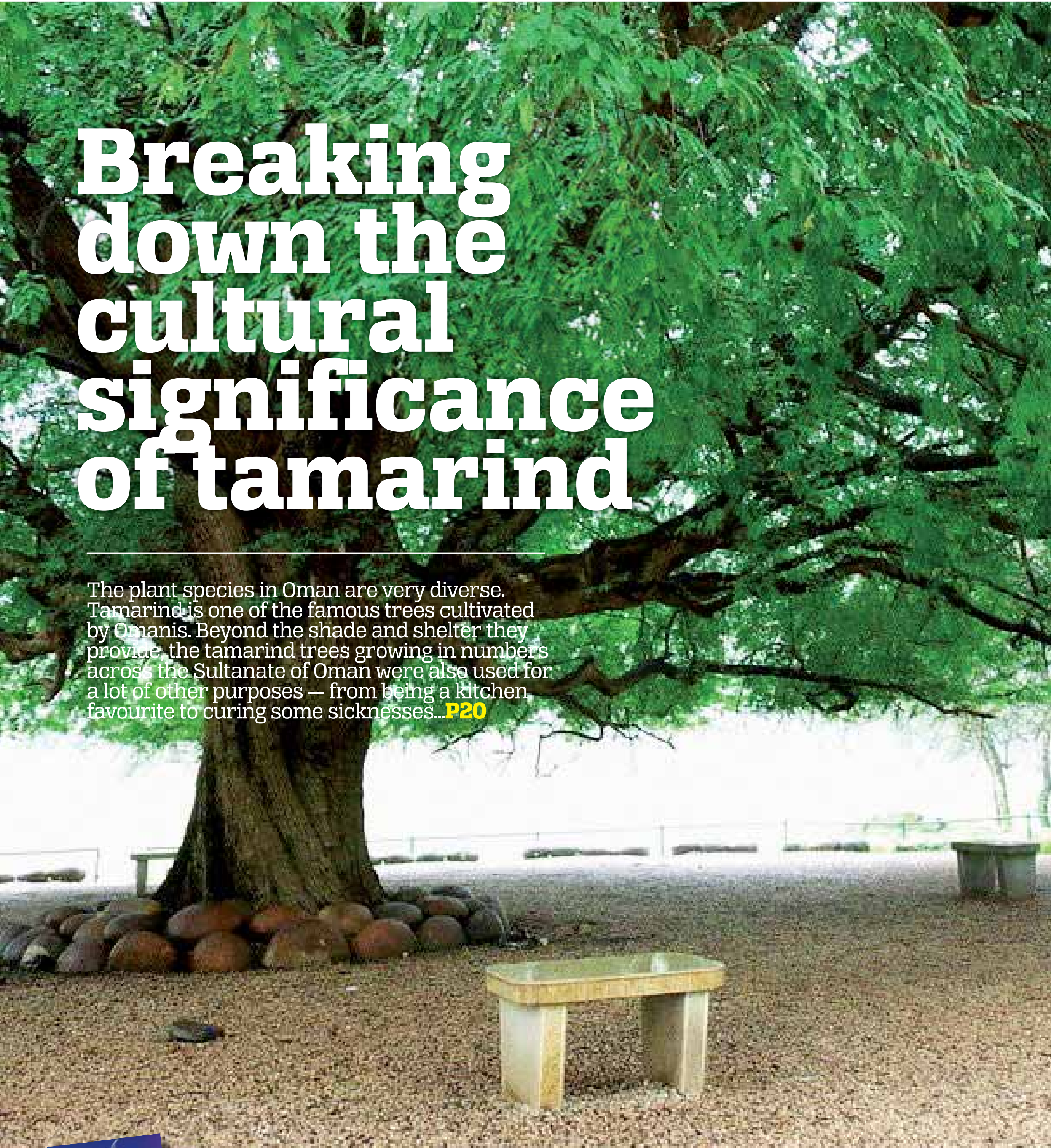
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features



Breaking down the cultural significance of tamarind

The plant species in Oman are very diverse. Tamarind is one of the famous trees cultivated by Omanis. Beyond the shade and shelter they provide, the tamarind trees growing in numbers across the Sultanate of Oman were also used for a lot of other purposes — from being a kitchen favourite to curing some sicknesses...**P20**

READ

SEA OF TRANQUILITY
BY EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL

When Gaspary-Jacques Roberts, a detective in the black-skied Night City, is hired to investigate an anomaly in the North American wilderness, he uncovers a series of lives upended: The exiled son of an earl driven to madness, a writer trapped far from home as a pandemic ravages Earth, and others.

TRAVEL TALES

Venice's 'Carnival of hope' kicks off as Covid worries ease

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE revelled in the start of the annual Carnival celebrations in Venice on Saturday, marking a slow return to normality after the Covid-19 pandemic hit the two previous editions.

The 2020 Venice Carnival, which usually draws tourists from around the world, was curtailed when the pandemic broke out in Italy in February that year and then cancelled the following year as the gov-

ernment sought to contain infections.

"This is the Carnival of hope," said Venice resident Cristian Scalise. "Covid is ending and we hope to return to our life as always."

Italy's rate of new Covid infections and hospitalisations has been gradually declining in recent weeks and the government this week ended a requirement for people to wear face masks outdoors under

most circumstances.

However some Carnival attractions, such as parades, will remain suspended to avoid contagion, authorities have ruled.

"I came here because I missed the Carnival so much and because we haven't been able to celebrate it for two years," said Barbara del Prato, from the city of Parma.

She had travelled to Venice with her entire family, all dressed in elaborate costumes.

Some 50,000 people had come to the lagoon city to take part in the celebration, ANSA news agency reported, citing local police.

The Venice Carnival began centuries ago as a period of excess before the rigors of Lent, the 40 days of fasting that traditionally precede Easter. A traditional Carnival costume often included a mask — not as a guard against disease as in current times, but so festival-goers could hide their identities and do as they pleased.

On Saturday, only a few people



were seen wearing costumes and the mood was more subdued than usual, but this is expected to change in the coming days as this year's edition, entitled "Remember the Future", gets going.

"I'm sorry not to see the (Venetian Carnival) masks that I would have expected, but it's a restart," said Ketty Milano, a Venice resident.

The Carnival is due to run until March 1. — Reuters



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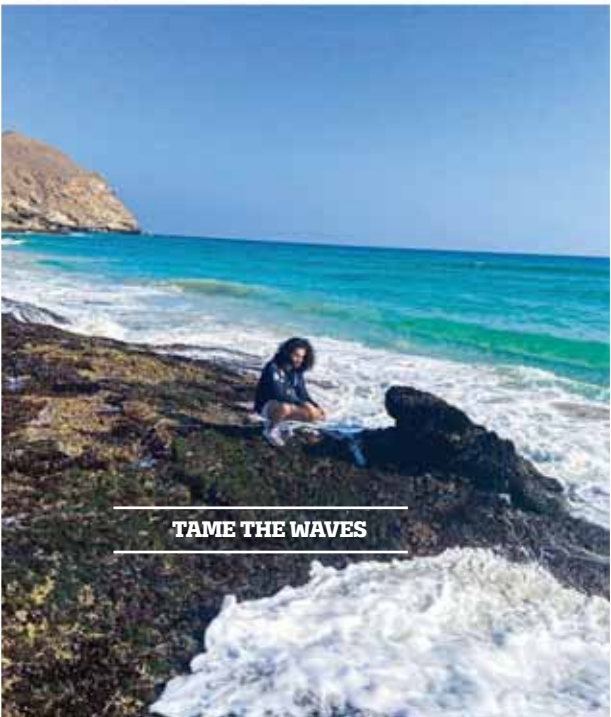


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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

Prehistoric drum is top ancient find: British Museum



A CARVED STONE drum unearthed in England is one of the most significant pieces of prehistoric art ever found in the country, the British Museum said on Thursday.

The 5,000-year-old drum carved from chalk is set to go on display for the first time in a major exhibition about the Neolithic site of Stonehenge and its historical context.

Extensive research into the drum, uncovered near a village in Yorkshire in northern England in 2015, has confirmed it is one of the most significant ancient objects ever found in the British Isles, the museum said.

"This is a truly remarkable discovery, and is the most important piece of prehistoric art to be found in Britain in the last 100 years", said Neil Wilkin, curator of the exhibition "The World of Stonehenge", which opens February 17.

The drum is "one of the most elaborately decorated objects of this period found anywhere in Britain and Ireland", and its style echoes that of objects from Stonehenge and related sites, the museum said.

Seemingly created as a sculpture or talisman rather than a functional musical instrument, the drum is one of only four known examples.

It was found alongside the grave of three children who were buried close together, touching or holding hands. The drum was placed just above the head of the eldest child, accompanied by a chalk ball and a polished bone pin.

The drum was found around 240 miles (380 kilometres) from Stonehenge near the village of Burton Agnes.

A similar ball and pins have been found in and near Stonehenge.

This suggests that communities across Britain and Ireland shared "artistic styles, and probably beliefs, over remarkable distances", the British Museum said.

"Analysis of its carvings will help to decipher the symbolism and beliefs of the era in which Stonehenge was constructed", said Wilkin.

The British Museum's collection includes a group of three similar drums found in 1889 at the burial site of a single child around 15 miles (24 kilometres) away from the latest find.

The museum describes these three, known as the Folkton Drums, as "some of the most famous and enigmatic ancient objects ever unearthed in Britain".

Radiocarbon dating has revealed they were created at the same time as the first phase of construction of Stonehenge, between 3005 and 2890 BC. — **AFP**

CHANGING WORLD

Iran 'jail restaurant' aims to free bad debt inmates



TWO IRANIAN ex-prisoners have opened a successful "jail restaurant" to help raise funds to free convicts languishing behind bars for unpaid debts.

A storefront picture of their "Cell 16" diner in eastern Tehran shows a frustrated prisoner holding a chicken leg in one hand and trying with the other to bend the bars of his cell to escape.

The idea of the restaurant was hatched in prison.

"I met my partner while we were in police custody", Benyamin Nakhat, 31, said. "I was working at the iron market in Tehran but I went bankrupt. I found myself penniless."

His business partner, Arman Alizadeh, a 30-year-old exporter, was also drowning in debt.

Iranian law is harsh on writing cheques that bounce, and on failure to pay agreed dowries or bank loans: It's jail time until the money is repaid.

More than 11,000 Iranians are behind bars for failing to pay their debts, according to prison officials. That is almost five per cent of Iran's total prison population.

Two years after their

release, the jail time friends opened Cell 16, with its separate dining tables behind bars.

"Decorating the place was easy, we just reproduced the place where we'd been held", Nakhat said, smiling. "We wanted to show that prison isn't necessarily a place filled with bad guys."

"Inmates are sometimes people who haven't committed crimes but have had misfortune. It can happen to anyone."

HELP THE PRISONERS

With the help of social media, the business has been a success, having first opened in 2016 with just seven "cell" tables. It has expanded to two more eateries, in Tehran and the central city of Isfahan.

But the owners have not forgotten their comrades in trouble.

"We want to help inmates by raising funds", Alizadeh said. "We help indebted prisoners by sometimes launching campaigns for help from donors or clients."

"We post the requests on our Instagram page and everyone contributes in their own way. Parts of the restaurant's proceeds will

also be used to help free prisoners."

He added that "it's often the wives of prisoners who seek help. We choose those who seem to us to have priority. For example, a married person with children, or sick persons unable to work to repay a loan."

Several associations and celebrities are involved in such charities.

According to state news agency IRNA, last year \$130 million were donated to repay the debts of thousands of prisoners.

Cell 16 also employs newly-released ex-cons.

Accompanied by her two friends, diner Hasti Berjissian, 24, a purchasing manager in a factory, likes the concept.

"We've been coming here since it opened", she said, taking a bite of pizza. "The food is good but above all, we want to help the prisoners."

In another cell, Shiva Shemshaki, 33, celebrated her husband's birthday.

"I come because a friend of ours has been in prison for nine months for unpaid debts", she said. "He had bought some goods but, because of inflation, he was ruined." — **AFP**

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

Bedouin Damsels

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

1 - PHILOSOPHY

Were it not for loneliness
No poem would be written
No stranger would cry
Were it not for loneliness
No virgin would be deflowered
No teenager would moan,
Were it not for loneliness
We'd never discover
This dreadful pain.

2 - IRAM*

Iram
Is a baby girl whose deity
Dispensed with
Because of its great beauty
And wealth.
Both travelers and lovers
Adored it
But only
Bedouins of the Empty
Quarter
Step on it with bare feet.

Iram
So mysterious, so far-off
The exile for the poets
And their afterlife.

Iram
A poem never sung by
Motanabbi
Or Maghot**
Never lends itself to rhyme
or rhythm.
An open text
For all dreams
The wonder of the first cup
And pleasure of the last
one!

Iram
Wilderness of the last
agony!

Iram
Salvation
Salvation
Salvation.

3 - LORD CURZON

This colonial historian
I test so much
He hates the East
And sings so stupidly
From the buttocks of his
Decayed empire!

4 - WHO'S LIKE ME?

Who's like me
A despised, proud poet?

Who like me
Drinks with such grand
visions in his head:
Plump Bedouin damsels
A city teeming with immortal souls
But buried beneath sands
An expanse where all things meld
Even nothingness
The Supreme Ego Freud
didn't fathom?

5 - THE CONCEITED

Don't wear make-up now!
In my moment of sobriety
I was
Fighting the air
That tightened your
breasts
And exposed them to passers-by.

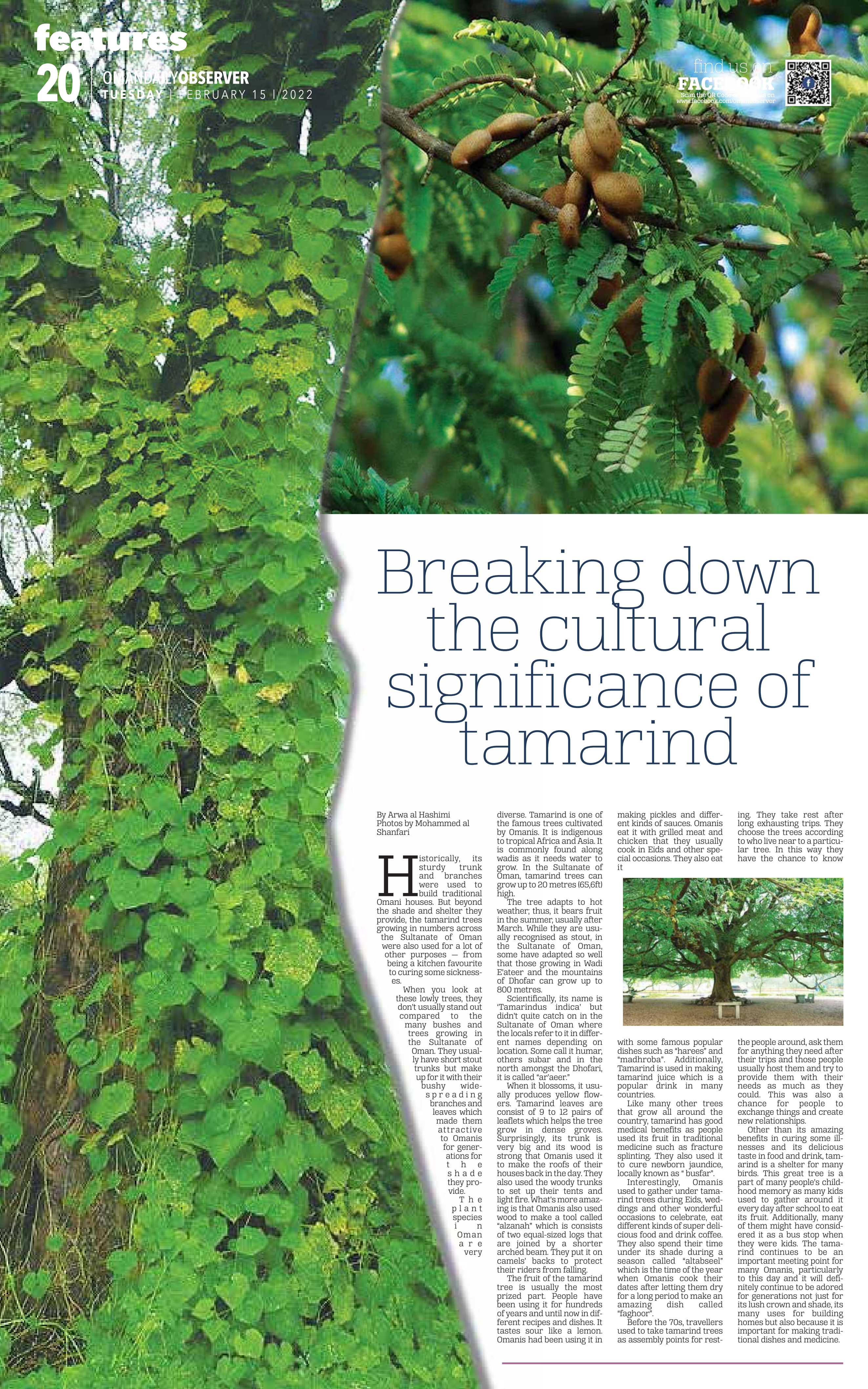
6 - DIRECTION

She
And the pianist
Take you to every direction.
He, with his mad frivolity
And rash creativity,
Doesn't leave you
A sense to sway you.
She contains the place
With a beauty
She shares with no
shareek!***

*Name of an ancient city mentioned in the Quran. Some archaeologists believe it is in Zofar, the southern part of Oman (the translator).

**Mohammed Maghot (1934-2006) is a contemporary Arab poet from Syria (the translator).

***Shareek is the Arabic word for partner. It is rich with religious associations, as Muslims believe that God has no shareek. And because the English word, partner, falls far short of conveying the religious dimension, I preferred to use shareek (the translator).



Breaking down the cultural significance of tamarind

By Arwa al Hashimi
Photos by Mohammed al Shanfari

Historically, its sturdy trunk and branches were used to build traditional Omani houses. But beyond the shade and shelter they provide, the tamarind trees growing in numbers across the Sultanate of Oman were also used for a lot of other purposes — from being a kitchen favourite to curing some sicknesses.

When you look at these lowly trees, they don't usually stand out compared to the many bushes and trees growing in the Sultanate of Oman. They usually have short stout trunks but make up for it with their bushy wide-spreading branches and leaves which made them attractive to Omanis for generations for the shade they provide.

The plant species in Oman are very

diverse. Tamarind is one of the famous trees cultivated by Omanis. It is indigenous to tropical Africa and Asia. It is commonly found along wadis as it needs water to grow. In the Sultanate of Oman, tamarind trees can grow up to 20 metres (65.6ft) high.

The tree adapts to hot weather; thus, it bears fruit in the summer, usually after March. While they are usually recognised as stout, in the Sultanate of Oman, some have adapted so well that those growing in Wadi E'ateer and the mountains of Dhofar can grow up to 800 metres.

Scientifically, its name is 'Tamarindus indica' but didn't quite catch on in the Sultanate of Oman where the locals refer to it in different names depending on location. Some call it humar, others subar and in the north amongst the Dhofari, it is called "ar'aeer."

When it blossoms, it usually produces yellow flowers. Tamarind leaves are consist of 9 to 12 pairs of leaflets which helps the tree grow in dense groves. Surprisingly, its trunk is very big and its wood is strong that Omanis used it to make the roofs of their houses back in the day. They also used the woody trunks to set up their tents and light fire. What's more amazing is that Omanis also used wood to make a tool called "alzanah" which consists of two equal-sized logs that are joined by a shorter arched beam. They put it on camels' backs to protect their riders from falling.

The fruit of the tamarind tree is usually the most prized part. People have been using it for hundreds of years and until now in different recipes and dishes. It tastes sour like a lemon. Omanis had been using it in

making pickles and different kinds of sauces. Omanis eat it with grilled meat and chicken that they usually cook in Eids and other special occasions. They also eat it

ing. They take rest after long exhausting trips. They choose the trees according to who live near to a particular tree. In this way they have the chance to know



with some famous popular dishes such as "harees" and "madhroba". Additionally, Tamarind is used in making tamarind juice which is a popular drink in many countries.

Like many other trees that grow all around the country, tamarind has good medical benefits as people used its fruit in traditional medicine such as fracture splinting. They also used it to cure newborn jaundice, locally known as "busfar".

Interestingly, Omanis used to gather under tamarind trees during Eids, weddings and other wonderful occasions to celebrate, eat different kinds of super delicious food and drink coffee. They also spend their time under its shade during a season called "altabseel" which is the time of the year when Omanis cook their dates after letting them dry for a long period to make an amazing dish called "faghoor".

Before the 70s, travellers used to take tamarind trees as assembly points for rest-

the people around, ask them for anything they need after their trips and those people usually host them and try to provide them with their needs as much as they could. This was also a chance for people to exchange things and create new relationships.

Other than its amazing benefits in curing some illnesses and its delicious taste in food and drink, tamarind is a shelter for many birds. This great tree is a part of many people's childhood memory as many kids used to gather around it every day after school to eat its fruit. Additionally, many of them might have considered it as a bus stop when they were kids. The tamarind continues to be an important meeting point for many Omanis, particularly to this day and it will definitely continue to be adored for generations not just for its lush crown and shade, its many uses for building homes but also because it is important for making traditional dishes and medicine.