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MURRAY
TURNS
CLOCK
BACK



P13

TRA OMAN TO CURB
ANTI-COMPETITIVE
PRACTICES IN
TELECOM SECTOR



P20

FACING
VIOLENCE WITH
BRUSHES AND
BALLOTS



■ ADEN

DOZENS DEAD IN
COALITION STRIKES

An air strike killed about 14 people in a building in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, residents said on Tuesday, during strikes across the city launched by the coalition fighting the Ansar Allah group. The alliance strikes on Sanaa followed an attack claimed by the Ansar Allah on Monday on Abu Dhabi, in which three people were killed. **SEE P6**

■ GENEVA

ENDEMIC WOULD NOT
MEAN END OF DANGER

The World Health Organization on Tuesday warned against the notion that the Covid-19 pandemic becoming endemic would mean the disease was no longer dangerous. “People talk about pandemic versus endemic”, the WHO’s Emergencies Director Michael Ryan said. **SEE P7**

■ NEW YORK

A LIBRARY THE NET
CAN’T GET ENOUGH OF

On the first Tuesday of the year, Don Winslow tweeted a photograph of an avid reader’s dream library. Bathed in the buttery glow of three table lamps, almost every surface of the room is covered with books. There are books on the tables, books stacked on mahogany ladders and books atop still more books lining the shelves of the room. **SEE P9**

INSIDE



SUDANESE BARRICADE
STREETS AFTER 7 KILLED

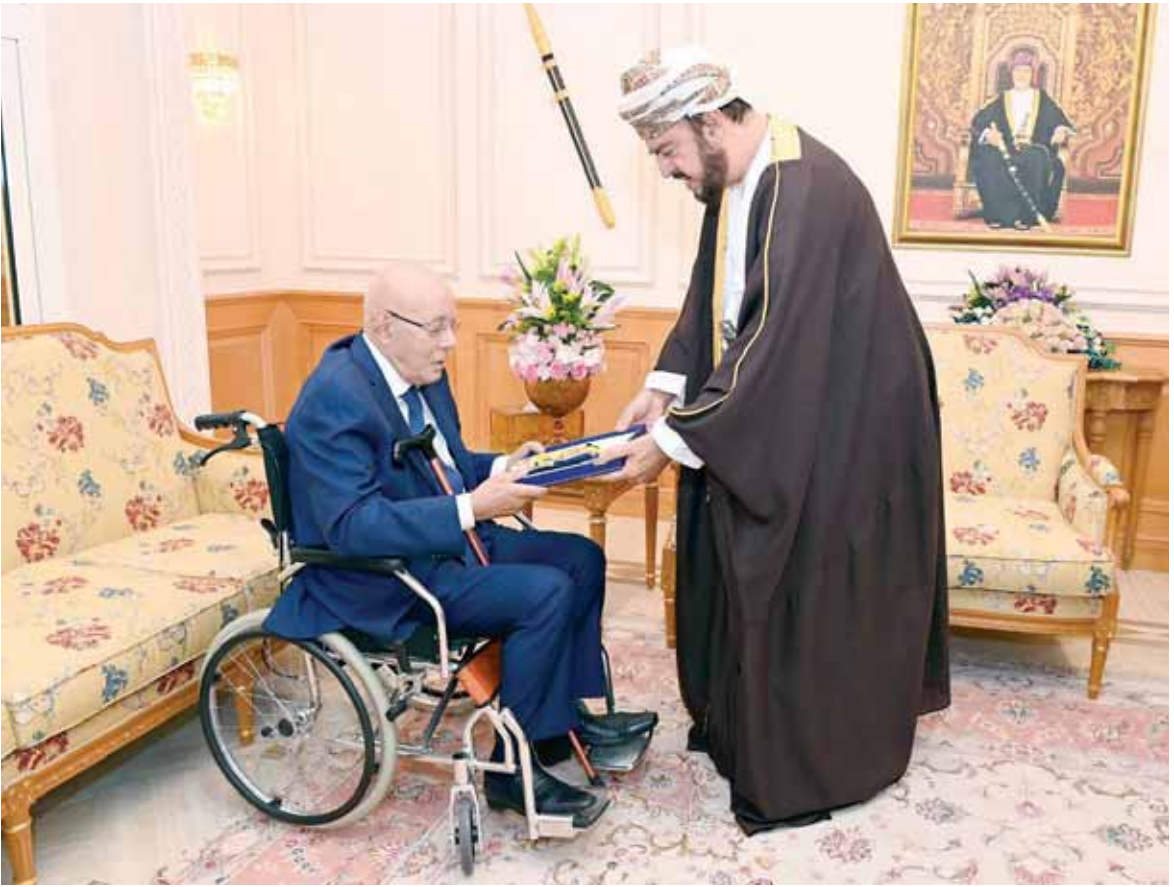
P6



MALTESE LAWMAKER ELECTED
EU PARLIAMENT CHIEF

P7

■ HM CONFERS FIRST CLASS ORDER ON SWISS CITIZEN



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has conferred the Order of Al Numan (First Class) on Yousef Furtas, former Honorary Consul General of the Swiss Confederation. The order reflects His Majesty the Sultan’s recognition for the efforts of the former Honorary Consul General and his contribution to developing the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Swiss Confederation. The order was handed over by HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan when he received Furtas in his office here today. The conferment ceremony was attended by the Secretary-General and the two advisers at the Office of HH Sayyid Asaad. – **ONA**

Oil hits 7-year highs on global
economic recovery hopes, unrest

LONDON: Oil prices traded at the highest levels in more than seven years Tuesday, in part on hopes of a global economic recovery ramping up demand.

Stock markets headed south with US Treasury yields surging on expectations the Federal Reserve will have to unveil several interest rate hikes to tackle a worrying spike in inflation.

Expectations of Fed tightening continued to support the dollar.

European crude benchmark Brent North Sea reached \$88.13 per barrel, while US contract WTI hit \$85.74 — the highest levels since October 2014 — before easing slightly in later trading. Also supporting prices was the claim of an attack by Yemen’s Ansar Allah in Abu Dhabi that triggered a fuel tank blast killing three people on



Monday, with the group warning civilians and foreign firms in the United Arab Emirates to avoid “vital installations.”

“The suspected drone attack in Abu Dhabi underscores the ongoing threat against civilian and energy infrastructure in the region amid heightened regional

tensions”, said Torbjorn Soltvedt of Verisk Maplecroft.

“Reports of damage to fuel trucks and storage will concern oil market watchers, who are also keeping a close eye on the trajectory of ongoing nuclear talks between the US and Iran”, he added. **SEE ALSO P13**

ROHM to premier its new production on Jan 20-22

MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) will present their new production of Verdi’s unforgettable opera Rigoletto during January 20-22.

The opera has been produced in collaboration with Fondazione Arena di Verona and the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre and will be performed by Fondazione Arena di Verona. With direction by the

late Franco Zeffirelli, the greatest opera director of his era, ROHM’s exceptional new production of Rigoletto is a landmark celebration of the 10th anniversary of the opera house.

The ROHM will be staging Verdi’s glorious opera Rigoletto this season particularly because this will be the world premiere of Franco Zeffirelli’s last great work. The intrinsic



synchronicity of celebrating ROHM’s 10th Anniversary Season with a wonderful work by the same great director with whom the opera house opens its first season, gives this moment a special significance.

With Puccini’s Turandot in 2011, ROHM began a wonderful relationship and a journey full of hope for the opera house. Now, in 2021, with Rigoletto, it marks

the achievement of a decade of brilliant musical performances, with the anticipation of many more to come.

The ironic story of a cruel court jester who becomes a victim of his own crimes, this is a masterpiece which demonstrates Verdi’s astonishing brilliance in characterisation, plot dynamics and unspoken emotions in musical tapestries. — **ONA**



Oman hosts meeting between GCC countries and Jordan



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, on Tuesday hosted the third meeting of the joint action GCC-Jordan team operating in the field of social development for the period 2021-2025.

The meeting discussed mechanisms for activating the proposed plan of action

between Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and the Kingdom of Jordan in social affairs. The plan covers the exchange of expertise in the field of rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

The proposed solutions for this segment include finding alternatives, like guardianship homes, and supporting them

with a package of services. The plan also deals with the protection of victims of violence and human trafficking, as well as juveniles facing adverse conditions.

The meeting touched on the significance of participating in experiments related to aftercare services for those who pass out of social institutions. It envisaged

ways to develop a joint strategy for GCC-Jordan cooperation in all areas of social, psychological and economic support for individuals and families in need.

The meeting also underlined the need to support civil society institutions, explore successful experiences in the field and provide institutionalised social support for women. — ONA



Omani envoy to Morocco presents credentials

RABAT: Dr Said bin Mohammed al Bar'ami on Tuesday presented his credentials as the extraordinary and plenipotentiary ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Morocco. The event took place when King Mohammed VI of Morocco

received the ambassador. The ambassador conveyed to King Mohammed VI the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. On his turn, King Mohammed VI expressed his appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan, wishing him good health, happiness and a long life. — ONA

Oman, Saudi Arabia review environmental cooperation

RIYADH: Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority and his delegation, held a meeting with the minister of environment, water and agriculture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the presence of specialists and experts to discuss joint cooperation between the two countries in a number of important environmental issues.

The two sides discussed future visions and possible aspects of cooperation between the two countries, which include cooperation and exchange of expertise in natural reserves and marine reserves management, environmental tourism management and the exchange of experiences between the two countries for appropriate management of chemicals and waste, inspection and control, training and capacity building.

The chairman of the Environment Authority stressed the importance of successful cooperation between the two countries in the field of environmental protection, expressing his satisfaction that the Oman Vision 2040 considers

the issue of environmental protection and the preservation of natural resources as one of the government's priorities towards achieving the sustainable development goals, protecting humans from harmful environmental effects, and generating economic opportunities by taking advantage of environmental components.

The chairman of the Environment Authority and his accompanying delegation visited Saudi Aramco in Riyadh, where he met with Khalid bin Khalifa al Mulhim, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs at Aramco and other officials. The meeting discussed a number of environmental issues of common concern. It also discussed Aramco's environmental excellence strategy, environmental initiatives programmes in air quality, emissions, management of water associated with production, waste management, training programmes in the environmental sector and integrated management of environmental data.

Ways to increase investment flows discussed

MUSCAT: Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, reviewed means of enhancing trade and investment cooperation with businesspeople and investors from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The meeting aimed to increase trade exchange between the two countries. The meeting also touched on the incentives



offered by the ministry and the investment opportunities in the industrial field. Presentations were given on the advantages

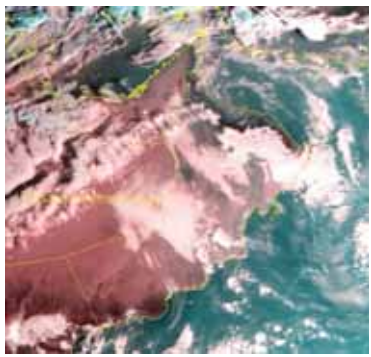
provided for investors by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), Khazaen Economic City and

the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). The initiatives and achievements of the past period in supporting investors, easing procedures and attracting foreign capital to the Sultanate of Oman were also covered in the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Amjad al Quhaiwi, Ambassador of Jordan to the Sultanate of Oman and officials from both sides.

— ONA

Temperature expected to drop in coming days



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Northwesterly fresh wind between 15-30 knots is expected

to blow over the Sultanate of Oman causing moderate to rough sea over the coastal areas of the Sea of Oman and Musandam western coastal areas overlooking the Arabian Gulf. Wave height may reach up to 4 meters.

There is a possibility of low and poor horizontal visibility due to dust and rising wind especially

in open areas and deserts.

Air temperatures could drop between (5 to 8°C) compared to the current rate. The Civil Aviation Authority advises all to take precautions especially fishermen and drivers due to expected rough sea state and poor visibility.

— ONA

To avoid extinction Al'alan trees need people's awareness

**TEXT & PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI**

Al'alan tree (*Juniperus Excelsa*) comes under endangered species, which is spread all over in the foothills and plateaus of the Al Hajar Mountains at an altitude of 3,000 metres above sea level.

It belongs to the conifer family and its fruits are used to tackle vermin, reptiles and mosquitoes. Locally it is called 'Ar'ar', which has a branch height of 12 metres.

Its sweet aromatic smell distinguishes it and Al'alan wood is used in construction due to its weather sturdiness. Local people use its gum as a memory stimulator and fruit to treat stomach problems.

There should be an awareness

campaign among the visitors to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, where the Al'alan trees are found in abundance. Unfortunately, without knowing the consequences, some visitors sit under the trees, set fire and break the branches causing damage to the trees.

According to the Oman Centre for Genetic Resources, the Al'alan tree (*Juniperus Excelsa*) comes under endangered species, its other areas of vegetation being Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Levant, Turkey and some countries bordering the Mediterranean basin.

The historical importance of *Juniperus Excelsa* has been documented in many sources. Mention is there in Pharaonic the Hearst and



Ebers Papyrus as a source of "pain reliever" helpful in heart diseases, epilepsy, urinary tract infections diuresis, renal colic, joint pain, rheumatism, burn,

cough and asthma. Studies show that the Sultanate of Oman went through cold ages and rare environmental conditions.



Some researchers discovered fossils of the tree in the Al Haqf region (Wusta Governorate).

Therefore, the importance of this tree for the people of

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is not limited to its environmental, health and aesthetic value. It is an integral part of their heritage. The relationship of the people of the Western Hajar Mountains with the Al'alan tree has been rooted since ancient times. To preserve this tree and other trees that are subjected to human and natural violations, and to preserve them from the danger of extinction, a Royal Decree was issued to establish the "Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Landscape Reserve" that includes six natural areas located on a total area of 116 square metres. The reserve has successfully retained the trees that are closely associated with the Sultanate of Oman's heritage and culture.



87% of target groups fully vaccinated

KABEER YOUSUF
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Ninety-four per cent of the total population of the Sultanate of Oman, falling under the target groups, received the first dose of the vaccine, while 87 per cent of them are fully vaccinated, according to a report from the Ministry of Health (MoH).

“The statistics that the MoH released on Tuesday include those who received their vaccines from both government and private health centres,” said a spokesperson from the ministry, adding that it also includes those target groups covered by the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre as well as the old airport premises till last week.

The report on the number of deaths and morbidity resulting from Covid-19 suggests that there has been a decrease in the number of deaths and morbidity of inpatients due to vaccination coverage. While 313,538 confirmed cases of Covid-19 were reported in the country from the day the first case was registered on February 24, 2020, the total deaths reported till Monday stands at 4,122, with the recovery rate of 96.5 per cent.

The study has found that the wider vaccination resulted in lower number of deaths and inpatients in hospitals.

“Around 90 per cent of the total deaths reported are among the unvaccinated group and the death rate among the vaccinated group has been very low as they are better immunised and



protected against casualties.”

Out of the total deaths, 7.5 per cent are those vaccinated with one dose and 2.5 per cent for those vaccinated with two doses.

In terms of cases of morbidity, the unvaccinated stood at about 89 per cent of the total inpatients, while these percentages do not exceed 7 per cent for those vaccinated with one dose of vaccinations and

2.5 per cent for those vaccinated with two doses.

“However, the booster dose is crucial to enable the vaccinated groups to be better protected against the pandemic and all are urged to get their booster dose although there has been a noticeable decrease in the rates of deaths and inpatients due to the Covid-19 virus,” he said quoting the report.



Oman, Austria explore means of boosting economic cooperation

MUSCAT: Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, received here on Tuesday Dr Margarete Schrambock, Federal Minister for Digital and Economic Affairs in Austria.

The two sides reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries and explored areas of economic cooperation. They also touched on Oman Vision 2040, which coincides with Austria Vision 2040,

especially in the fields of environmental sustainability and governance.

The two sides also discussed possibilities of cooperation in areas of renewable energy and hydrogen. — ONA

Omani, Iranian businessmen seek to boost agriculture, food security

MUSCAT: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) organised B2B meetings between businessmen from the Sultanate of Oman and Iran in the food security, agriculture, construction and contracting sectors.

The meeting comes within the visit of Iran's trade delegation, which aims to enhance trade and investment cooperation between the two countries in promising sectors.

Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of OCCI stressed the importance of this



visit in achieving economic diversification to meet the aspirations of the two countries.

The meeting was attended

by Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman and several officials from both sides. — ONA

Kids more at risk from Omicron

FROM P1

“It has always been challenging to distinguish between Covid and other viruses, especially during the initial stages of the illness, that is the first three to five days. It can feel just like any other virus. With Omicron, it could be sore throat, running nose, body ache, fatigue, fever, but there are other symptoms such as a decrease in smell and taste, which are more specific to Omicron,”

he noted.

Dr Zaid urged that if people have these symptoms, they should immediately isolate themselves and avoid transmitting the infection to others. PCR test will help the individual distinguish if it is Covid-19 or not.

“Eventually, testing is the only way to know, but the first step should be to isolate to stop the transmission and not become a source for others to fall sick,” said Dr Zaid.



■ WINTER SCOUTS CAMP



The 2022 Winter Scouts Camp has kicked off at the Sultan Qaboos Scouts Camp in the Wilayat of Al Musannah and continues till January 21 with the participation of 66 scouts, 22 excellent students and 11 scout leaders from across the Sultanate of Oman.





P R E V E N T
O B E S I T Y ,
L I F E S T Y L E
D I S E A S E S

WALK THE TALK

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

@patkaushal

Apart from being genetic, the issue of obesity has assumed alarming proportions globally. With a very high rate in the GCC countries, the region is known as a hotspot of obesity.

The rate of obesity in the Sultanate of Oman has been a matter of concern among health practitioners. They find people with obesity prone to many other lifestyle diseases, including diabetes, hypertension and high level of cholesterol, which ultimately leads to heart-related problems. Raising concern over rising cases of obesity in the country, doctors called for corrective measures, including physical activities and a balanced diet in daily routine.

In a recent statement Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, said more than half of the Omani population were overweight now, or 30 per cent of the population has a BMI (body and mass index) of more than 30.

During a media tour of the recently launched Oman International Hospital (OIH), senior consultant surgeons Dr Raad al Mehdi and Dr Roberto Cayon raised concern over the high rate of obesity and said different climatic conditions have different obesity rates.

People know that they need to be alert to avoid being obese, still, they indulge in lousy health practices that lead to consequences beyond redemption, they said

“Obesity has now been recognised as a disease. Like other diseases, it needs prevention and care even after cure. There are genetic elements and lifestyle elements in it”, said Dr Raad al Mehdi.

“Lifestyle is in a mess with food, time spent in air-conditioners, and other elements of convenience that hardly require any physical activity... For example, from an AC house, you come to an AC car and land at an AC office. All through hardly there is any physical activity because any chance of it is being ruled out by using elevators to reach to desired floors in shops and offices”, he said.

When asked why the prevalence of obesity is high in the GCC countries, Dr Roberto Cayon said, “We blame it on lifestyle. But the reason behind this lifestyle is the climate which is very hot generally. In hot weather, people avoid doing physical activity and live mostly in the comforts of AC. Even though they want some outdoor physical activity the climate does not allow. So it is highly recommended to hit a gym or do some exercises at home.”

Of course, food has a big role to play. “It cannot happen that you don’t do any physical work and eat as much as you want, or overeat in the comforts of air-conditioners.”

The doctors advised parents to train children from the very beginning about the choice of food and include physical activities in their daily routine.

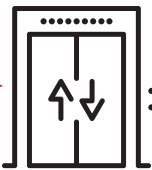
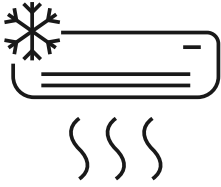
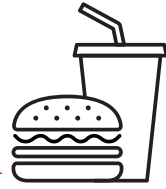
Research done by Dr Sultan al Nohair substantiates the above-mentioned facts leading to obesity.

“Over the last two decades, there is increased consumption of fast foods and sugar-dense beverages (eg, sodas). Simultaneously, technological advances — cars, elevators, escalators and remotes have led to a decrease in the level of activity.

Traditional dependence on locally grown natural products such as dates, vegetables, wheat and has also shifted. Changes in food consumption, socioeconomic and demographic factors, physical activity and urbanisation are being important factors that contribute to the increased prevalence of obesity in the region”, said Dr Al Nohair in his work.

Among many other health issues, the National Nutrition Strategy 2020-2030 of the Sultanate of Oman has well perceived the issue of obesity.

The strategy and its framework identified a multi-sectoral approach across the government and community to address the persistent health problems, including increasing overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases.





Panel reviews ways of reducing extreme weather impacts

MUSCAT: The Health and Environment Committee of Majlis Ash'shura hosted experts from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Environment Authority to identify the environmental damage of adverse weather conditions and ways of reducing their human, environmental and material impacts through early warning systems.

The panel discussed the CAA's ways of dealing with climatic conditions before, during and after their occurrence, and the authority's efforts to raise public awareness of climatic conditions and their impact on public health. Also discussed at the meeting was the fields of cooperation between the Authority and other institutions regarding climatic conditions and ways of reducing the

ensuing environmental and health impacts.

The meeting discussed the Environment Authority's efforts for dealing with climatic conditions and their resultant environmental damage. It also discussed the Authority's plans to reduce the environmental effects resulting from climatic conditions and the aspects of cooperation with the other authorities in this regard.

The meeting emphasized an urgent need to improve the weather forecast and early warning systems of tropical conditions in the Civil Aviation Authority, and the need to activate the cell broadcast service during climatic conditions in cooperation with the telecommunication firms and relevant authorities. The meeting stressed the

THE MEETING EMPHASIZED AN URGENT NEED TO IMPROVE THE WEATHER FORECAST AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS OF TROPICAL CONDITIONS IN THE CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY, AND THE NEED TO ACTIVATE THE CELL BROADCAST SERVICE DURING CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

importance of incentivising human cadres working in the meteorological and analysis sector in order to reduce the migration of experienced cadres.

INSURANCE PROTECTION
The Service and Social

Development Committee of Majlis Ash'shura, on Tuesday hosted a number of citizens to identify their opinions on extending insurance protection and review some procedures of the retirement system.

The meeting reviewed draft reports on the expressed desires referred to the committee by the Office of Majlis Ash'shura and studied by the committee.

Besides, the committee reviewed an expressed desire regarding not rescinding or interrupting social housing programmes or claiming financial dues after the death of the beneficiary.

The committee discusses this topic extensively in order to arrive at results that enrich the matter. The committee will submit its report to the Office upon completion.

Rising oil prices to fuel overall business sentiment



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Omani crude has been trading above \$80 per barrel since January 12, which is important for the people of the Sultanate of Oman as the budget is based on \$50 per barrel for the year 2022.

The Oman crude closed at \$86.70 on Tuesday for March 2022 delivery.

It may be noted that the country's 2022 budget is based on \$50 per barrel and the Ministry of Finance confirmed that a precautionous approach despite the estimates of global agencies that the average price during 2022 is between \$53 and \$84.

Oil and gas revenues are forecasted to be 68 per cent of overall receipts.

The IMF is projecting a medium-term global economic growth of 3.3 per cent and forecasting the country's GDP to grow around 2.5 per cent in 2021 and about 3 per cent average growth over the medium term.

The government has ordered a cap on fuel prices at October 2021 rates until the end of 2022. The government would bear the cost difference that may result from any potential increase in oil prices.

Giving priority to the implementation of projects that serve the economic and social objectives related to the productive sectors, especially the sectors of economic diversification, delaying the implementation of non-urgent projects, and giving great importance

in return for the operation of projects that are completed during the year.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Joice Mathew, head of research at United Securities, said, "The current trend in oil prices is very good for the Omani economy as it will help the government to cut the deficit as the economy is still dependent on revenues from the oil and gas sector.

It will also help accelerate government spending on various infrastructure and social projects that will help to create job opportunities and subsequently boost consumer confidence and spending."

On the cautious note, he said, "Worldwide economies are experiencing inflationary trends and runaway oil prices, like around \$100 per barrel, will slow down the economic growth or recovery in oil-importing economies."

Mathew felt that since Omicron has proved to be less fatal than previous variants, there is a possibility of a travel sector growth sooner than expected, which will aid demand for aviation fuel. Already, there was a jump of over 40 per cent in hotel occupancies in 2021, compared to the previous year.

One of the most important pillars of the Sultanate of Oman's budget 2022 has been maintaining safe and sustainable levels of public spending while raising non-oil revenue contributions and prioritising the implementation of projects related to the productive sectors and others.

Omani-Uzbek joint committee explores areas of cooperation

MUSCAT: The online meeting of the Omani-Uzbek Joint Committee held on Tuesday explored the cooperation relations in the fields of economy, trade, investment, education and culture between the two countries.

The Omani side in the meeting was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, the Foreign Ministry's Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs, while



the Uzbek side was headed by Shukhrat Vafaev, Deputy Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade, Executive Director of the Fund for Reconstruction and Development.

The meeting was attended by the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to Uzbekistan, the Charge D'affaires of the Uzbek embassy in Muscat and several officials from both sides. — ONA

Field visits to Govt properties to assess rent

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance on Tuesday issued Circular No 1/2022 setting out a schedule for field visits to government properties and assessment of their rent. Members of the Properties Inspection Committee and Properties Rent Assessment Committee will study the basic value of properties floated for sale in the governorates in 2022.

The circular points out that the programme of field visits to government properties will begin this month.

The ministry calls upon all ministries and government units to provide the coordinator of the two committees with a list of topics due to be submitted to the committees during the proposed visits. This, the ministry said, will facilitate the assessment of annual rent of government properties. — ONA



Tender Number

T-35-2021

Tender Announcement

"Mwasalat" invites professional firms for the following tender:

Tender Name

Call of Agreement for Supply & Installation Windshield Protection Film for MWASALAT Buses in Muscat

Project Summary

Supply & Installation Windshield Protection Film for MWASALAT Buses in Muscat to different buses as per the specification mentioned in RFG based on call-off order as and when required.

Tender Fee

Free

Grade & Speciality

Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field

Start date for tender document distribution

WED, 19 January 2022

Last date for tender document distribution

THU, 27 January 2022

Last date for submission

WED, 09 February 2022

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00A.M - 2:00 P.M.

Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email.

Tender Document shall be shared by email.

The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.

Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head-quarter Oman National Transport Company S.A.O.C (MWASALAT) at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor). Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.

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

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

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY
Advertisement No. (3/2022)

Specialized Companies in the field of tender shown below and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/22/003	2022/MM/HQ-3	Cleaning Work at Muscat Municipality Buildings (E- Tender)	Rial 40	07/02/2022	27/02/2022	Specialized
PRE/19/002	2022/MM/QS-1	Maintenance Works of MEP Services for Muttrah Fish Market (E- Tender)	Rial 25	07/02/2022	27/02/2022	Specialized

Tender Conditions :-

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.

2. Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.

3. For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

4. For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

5. For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200/24402330).



Sudanese barricade streets after 7 killed

KHARTOUM: Sudanese shuttered shops and barricaded streets with burning tyres and rocks on Tuesday, staging angry rallies to protest against one of the bloodiest days since a coup derailed the country's democratic transition.

Security forces on Monday opened fire killing at least seven people as thousands marched against the army's October 25 takeover, taking the total number killed in a crackdown since the coup to 71, according to medics.

"No, no to military rule," protesters chanted in southern Blue Nile state, where some carried banners daubed with the slogan "No to killing peaceful protesters", said witness Omar Eissa.

The protests come as Washington ramps up pressure in a bid to broker an end to the months-long crisis in the northeast African nation, with top US diplomats expected to arrive in the capital Khartoum for talks.

Sudan's main civilian bloc, the Forces for Freedom and Change, called for two days of civil disobedience to begin on Tuesday.

"Shop closed for mourning," said a series of small signs posted



Sudanese demonstrators barricade Al Sahafa street with rocks and burning tyres during ongoing protests against a military coup in Khartoum. — AFP

on the closed outlets at the sprawling Sajane construction supplies market in Khartoum. One of the merchants, Othman el Sherif, was among those shot dead on Monday.

Protesters — sometimes numbering in the tens of thousands — have regularly taken to the streets since the coup led by General Abdel Fattah al Burhan nearly three months ago.

SUDAN'S POLICE USED 'THE LEAST FORCE' TO COUNTER THE PROTESTS, IN WHICH ABOUT 50 POLICE PERSONNEL WERE ALSO WOUNDED

The military power grab derailed a fragile transition to civilian rule following the April 2019 ouster of Omar al Bashir, with prime minister Abdalla Hamdok resigning earlier this month warning Sudan was at a "dangerous crossroads threatening its very survival".

After Monday's deaths, the UN special representative Volker Perthes condemned the use

of live ammunition, while the US Embassy criticised "violent tactics of Sudanese security forces," the latest such appeals by world powers, which have not curbed a rising death toll.

On Tuesday, police fired tear gas at dozens of protesters setting up roadblocks in east Khartoum, an AFP correspondent said.

In several other parts of Khartoum, many pharmacies and other shops were shuttered, according to an AFP correspondent.

Sudan's University for Science and Technology suspended all activities as part of the civil disobedience, according to an official statement.

Outside the capital, hundreds of protesters also staged demonstrations in other cities, witnesses said.

"We took to the streets to protest the massacre that the security forces committed in Khartoum yesterday," said protester Hassan Idris, in the eastern state of Kassala.

Burhan on Tuesday formed a fact-finding committee to probe Monday's violence, with its findings to be submitted within 72 hours, Sudan's ruling Sovereign Council said in a statement. — AFP

Erdogan to discuss Bosnian crisis with Serbia

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said he will discuss the crisis in Bosnia with Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vucic on Tuesday and that Ankara would step up its diplomacy on the matter, according to broadcaster NTV.

Mostly Muslim Turkey has long had deep-rooted ties with the Balkans. It backed Bosnia's late Bosniak Muslim leader Alija Izebegovic during its 1990s war but has forged good relations with its post-war, inter-ethnic Bosniak-Serb-Croat presidency.

Bosnia was split into two widely autonomous regions — a Serb Republic (RS) and a Federation dominated by Bosniaks and Croats overlaid by a loose central government after the war.

The crisis flared after Serb Republic lawmakers passed a non-binding motion last year to start pulling the RS out of Bosnia's armed forces, tax system and judiciary, a move long backed by nationalist Serb leader Milorad Dodik.

Turkey has criticised the move as "wrong, dangerous" and has offered to mediate in the crisis, which has raised concerns of a relapse into ethnic conflict.

Vucic held talks with Erdogan in Ankara on Tuesday.

— Reuters

Dozens dead in coalition strikes on Sanaa

ADEN: An air strike killed about 14 people in a building in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, residents said on Tuesday, during strikes across the city launched by the coalition fighting the Ansar Allah group.

The alliance strikes on Ansar Allah-held Sanaa followed an attack claimed by the Ansar Allah on Monday on coalition partner the United Arab Emirates, in Abu Dhabi, in which three people were killed.

The coalition also said it intercepted eight drones launched towards Saudi Arabia on Monday.

Early on Tuesday, the coalition said it had begun air strikes against strongholds and camps in Sanaa belonging to the Ansar Allah group, Saudi state media said.

The strikes appeared to be the deadliest since 2019 on Sanaa.

The strike that killed about 14 people, according to initial estimates, was on the home of a Ansar Allah military official.

It killed him, his wife, his

25-year-old son, other family members and some unidentified people, a medical source and residents said.

Coalition strikes around the city had killed a total of about 20 people, the deputy foreign minister for the Ansar Allah administration, which holds much of northern Yemen, said on Twitter.

Ansar Allah-run Al Masirah TV said strikes had damaged houses, killed at least a dozen people and wounded about a dozen.

The UAE has armed and trained Yemeni forces that recently joined fighting against the Ansar Allah in Yemen's energy-producing regions of Shabwa and Marib.

Monday's Ansar Allah-claimed attack on two sites in the UAE set off explosions in fuel trucks, killed three people and ignited a blaze near Abu Dhabi airport. In response, the UAE said it reserved the right to respond to "terrorist attacks and criminal escalation". — Reuters

22 killed as rescuers search for survivors after deadly Afghan quake

HERAT, Afghanistan: Rescuers searched on Tuesday for survivors of a powerful earthquake in a remote western region of Afghanistan that killed at least 22 people and caused "massive" damage to buildings, officials said.

Monday afternoon's shallow 5.3-magnitude quake jolted Qadis district in Badghis province, a rural area not easily accessible by road.

"The earthquake caused massive damage to houses, about 700 to 1,000 have been damaged," Badghis provincial spokesman Baz Mohammad Sarwary said in a video message.

Afghanistan is already in the grip of a humanitarian disaster, worsened by the Taliban takeover of the country in August when Western countries froze international aid and access to assets held abroad.

Sarwary said 22 people were



A vendor pushes his cart laden with apples on a street in Kabul. — AFP

killed and four were injured, revising the death toll from the previous figure of 26 he gave to AFP late on Monday.

"There is the possibility that the casualties could increase," he said in his latest video message.

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed the toll.

Images circulating on social media showed residents, including children, searching through the rubble of collapsed homes.

Government officials said rescue workers were helping search for survivors and transferring the injured to local hospitals.

A Taliban team was in the area assisting in the relief work.

Mujahid said that all government agencies had been instructed to provide the food, medical aid and shelter to those affected.

"We also call on international aid agencies and humanitarian agencies to assist the victims of the disaster," he said in a statement posted on Twitter.

The epicentre of the quake was near the city of Qala-i-Naw, the capital of Badghis, less than 100 kilometres (60 miles) from the Turkmenistan border, according to the United States Geological Survey.

The United Nations has said it needs \$5 billion in 2022 to avert the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan.

A devastating drought has compounded the crisis, with earthquake-hit Qadis one of the worst affected areas. — AFP

JAKARTA

Indonesia passes law to relocate capital

Parliament approved a bill to relocate Indonesia's capital from Jakarta to a site deep within the jungle of Kalimantan on Borneo island, the most significant advancement of an idea the country's leaders have been toying with for years. The new state capital law, which provides a legal framework for President Joko Widodo's ambitious \$32 billion mega project, stipulates how development of the capital will be funded and governed. "The new capital has a central function and



is a symbol of the identity of the nation, as well as a new centre of economic gravity," Planning Minister Suharso Monoarfa told parliament after the bill was passed into law. — Reuters

MOSCOW

Putin to host Iran president in Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin will host his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi in Moscow on Wednesday, the Kremlin said, amid talks aimed at reviving the Iran nuclear deal. The meeting will be Raisi's most important official visit abroad since he took office, and the first visit by an Iranian president to Russia since 2017.

The leaders will discuss the "whole range of issues of bilateral cooperation", including the 2015 deal that offered Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its



nuclear programme, the Kremlin said. In 2018, Washington announced its unilateral withdrawal from the agreement under former president Donald Trump.

— AFP

ANTANANARIVO

Ten killed by floods in Madagascar capital

At least 10 people have died in flash floods triggered by torrential rain that battered Madagascar's capital Antananarivo overnight, an interior ministry official said. The victims were killed after "the floods caused landslides and houses collapsed," Sonia Ray, spokeswoman for the ministry's disaster management office, said.

Two people have been injured and more than 500 displaced by the storm, according to preliminary figures released by the National Bureau of Disaster Risk



Management (BNGRC). Some 20 districts around the capital of 1.3 million are on red alert for flooding, with built-up urban areas with poor drainage systems seen as especially vulnerable. — AFP



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In brief

■ STUTTGART



GERMAN MAYOR WON'T RUN AS CANDIDATE IN NEXT POLLS

One of the German Greens' most divisive figures, Boris Palmer, has said he will not run for re-election as a candidate for the party in the south-western city of Tübingen. The regional party leadership voted in May to launch an investigation into the politician for repeated comments he has made on subjects including race, migration and human rights that have departed from the usual party line. The investigation could result in his expulsion. "It is logically and factually impossible to be part of a nomination process and an exclusion process at the same time", the 49-year-old wrote to the city association. — **dpa**

■ BARCELONA



SPAIN'S CATALONIA REGION TO LIFT COVID CURFEW

Catalonia will on Friday lift a Covid-19 curfew imposed just before Christmas but other social distancing measures will remain in force in the northern Spanish region. "Restrictions on night-time movements will remain in place until January 21. After that date, it will be possible to move around the streets of Catalonia as normal", regional government spokeswoman Patricia Plaza said. "We haven't hit peak (infections) yet but the trend shows the sixth wave is slowing down", she added. The Covid infection rate in Catalonia, a region of 7.7 million inhabitants which relies heavily on tourism. — **AFP**

■ WASHINGTON



BLINKEN TO VISIT UKRAINE AFTER RUSSIA TALKS

US President Joe Biden's top diplomat will visit Kyiv this week after talks with Russia ended in a stalemate last week amid concerns in the United States and other Western nations that Moscow is preparing to again invade Ukraine. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on Wednesday, the US State Department said on Tuesday. Blinken then heads to Berlin to meet German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, followed by a meeting with the Transatlantic Quad, the department said. — **Reuters**

Maltese lawmaker elected EU parliament president

STRASBOURG: Maltese politician Roberta Metsola was elected head of the European Parliament on Tuesday, the youngest person ever to clinch the job, but fanning controversy for her opposition to abortion.

The appointment of the centre-right 43-year-old from the EU's smallest nation comes a week after the sudden death of outgoing centre-left parliament president David Sassoli, who was already due to step down this month as part of the power-sharing pact.

Metsola — a member of the largest bloc, the European People's Party — won a sweeping majority with 458 votes in a secret ballot after a deal between the leading political groupings. She becomes the third woman to head the chamber.

MEPs applauded and sang "Happy Birthday" as Metsola scooped the top job on the day she turned 43 — becoming the youngest ever head of the legislature.

"In the next years, people across Europe will look to our institution for leadership and direction, while others will continue to test the limits of our democratic values and European principles", Metsola said in her acceptance speech.



Newly-elected President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola during a news conference following her election in Strasbourg. — **Reuters**

"We must fight back against the anti-EU narrative that takes hold so easily and so quickly."

The mother-of-four styles herself as a pro-LGBTQ progressive and champion of women's rights. But her tough stance over abortion has drawn criticism from opponents.

Abortion is illegal in largely Catholic Malta and Metsola in June voted against a report urging all member states to offer safe access to terminations.

That stance saw the Left and

Green groups in parliament field two staunchly pro-choice feminists as their challengers.

French Europe minister Clement Beaune told France Info that he "felt uncomfortable by the symbol" of Metsola's election.

But a backroom deal between the major political forces meant that her ascension from vice president to head the parliament until mid-2024 was in the bag.

"I know that having the first female president of this house

since 1999 matters both inside and outside these rooms", Metsola told lawmakers after the vote.

"But it must go further. Our institution's commitment to having more diversity, gender equality, guaranteeing women's rights, all our rights, must be reaffirmed."

She has previously insisted that she would put personal conviction aside to represent the majority position of lawmakers on the issue. — **AFP**

Standoff over Palestinian eviction ends

JERUSALEM: Israeli police on Tuesday backed down from attempts to evict Palestinians from their home in a Jerusalem flashpoint district, the family said after they threatened self-immolation, triggering a standoff.

The Salhiya family has been facing the threat of eviction from their home in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem since 2017, when the land where their home sits was allocated for school construction.

Anger in Sheikh Jarrah where families battled eviction orders fuelled an 11-day war between Israel and armed Palestinian factions in Gaza last year.

When police arrived to execute the eviction order on Monday, Salhiya family members went up to the building's roof with gas canisters, threatening to use them on themselves if they were forced out of their home.

An hours-long standoff ensued.

By Tuesday, police sent for

the eviction had already been removed but children of the Salhiya family remained on the roof with the gas canisters, their father Mahmud said. According to him, no agreement or understandings had been reached, but lawyers for the family filed a petition to the supreme court on Tuesday to cancel the eviction order.

In a Tuesday statement to AFP, the municipality of Jerusalem stressed the Salhiya family had numerous opportunities to move out of their home, deemed illegal, and

the city had every intention of taking the plot under a district court decision.

Hundreds of Palestinians are facing evictions from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah and other east Jerusalem neighbourhoods. Circumstances surrounding the eviction threats vary.

In some cases Jewish Israelis have mounted legal challenges to claim the plots they say were illegally taken during the war that coincided with Israel's founding in 1948.

— **AFP**

Norwegian killer begins parole hearing

SKIEN, Norway: Mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik gave a Nazi salute on Tuesday as he arrived in court for a parole hearing that will decide if he should be released after spending more than a decade behind bars.

Breivik, a far-right extremist, killed 77 people in Norway's worst peacetime atrocity in July 2011. He killed eight with a car bomb in Oslo and then gunned down 69, most of them teenagers, at a Labour Party youth camp.

With a shaven head and dressed in a dark suit, Breivik made a white supremacist sign with his fingers before raising his right arm in a Nazi salute to signal his far-right ideology as he entered the court.

He also carried signs, printed in English, including one that said "Stop your genocide against our white nations" and "Nazi-

Civil-War".

He was later told to stop displaying them as the prosecution presented its case.

"I don't want to see anything of the kind when the prosecution speaks", Judge Dag Bjoervik said.

Breivik shook his head as the prosecution made its case, which included a passage from the original 2012 verdict which said that even after serving for 21 years in prison the defendant would still be a very dangerous man.

His lawyer Oeystein Storrvik has said Breivik is intent on eventually securing his release.

Addressing the court, Breivik blamed his crimes on online radicalisation by a leaderless network of far-right extremists, which he said had motivated his attacks. "I was brainwashed", Breivik said.



Anders Behring Breivik arrives on the first day of the trial where he is requesting release on parole at a makeshift courtroom in Skien prison, Norway. — **AFP**

"The order was... to re-establish the Third Reich. And how to do that is up to each soldier", he said.

Breivik, who described himself as a parliamentary candidate, also said that he would continue

his fight for white supremacy and Nazi dominance, albeit via peaceful means.

Tuesday's hearing was Breivik's first public appearance since 2017, when he also displayed

Endemic Covid would not mean end of danger: WHO

GENEVA: The World Health Organization on Tuesday warned against the notion that the Covid-19 pandemic becoming endemic would mean the disease was no longer dangerous.

"People talk about pandemic versus endemic", the WHO's emergencies director Michael Ryan told a virtual session of the World Economic Forum.

"Endemic malaria kills hundreds of thousands of people; endemic HIV; endemic violence in our inner cities.

"Endemic in itself does not mean good — endemic just means it's here forever", Ryan told the Davos Agenda roundtable on vaccine equity.

The rapidly-spreading Omicron variant of Covid-19 is much more contagious than previous strains but seems to cause less serious disease for vaccinated people.

That has triggered a debate on the virus passing from being a pandemic to becoming endemic — with the implication that the danger will have passed.

"What we need to do is get to low levels of disease incidence with maximum vaccination of our populations, so nobody has to die", said Ryan. "That's the end of the emergency, in my view. That's the end of the pandemic."

Ryan added that it was possible to end the waves of death and hospitalisations by the end of 2022 through vaccine-led public health measures.

But, he added: "We won't end the virus this year. We may never end the virus. Pandemic viruses end up becoming part of the ecosystem."

With the exception of the one-shot Janssen product, all the Covid-19 vaccines given emergency approval by the WHO require two injections. Ryan raised the prospect of three to four doses at some point being considered the full course of vaccination for enduring protection against severe Covid disease.

"As knowledge develops, and as we see the way the immune system matures and responds to either re-exposure or to an extra dose of vaccine, we may end up in a future where the primary course of vaccination for a vulnerable person might be three or four doses", he said. — **AFP**

Are you facing the Great Talent Reshuffle yet?



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Data generated through LinkedIn's Economic Graph which is based on 600+ new data points created every 2 seconds on the platform suggests more employees than ever are changing careers and employers. This includes the GCC region, which is losing critical talent to the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Philippines whilst fresh talent is moving in from other locations, such as the United States other parts of the Middle East and Africa right now.

This phenomenon, termed 'The Great Reshuffle' by LinkedIn CEO Ryan Roslanksy, has seen employers scramble to respond to the change by understanding the root causes of their own talent drain and are wondering not only how to find and compete for new talent, but also how to get new talent to perform fast to fill the competency gap.

A unanimous conclusion of businesses on talent acquisition and retention strategy has been the necessity to transform working

environments to become more human-centric and support their talent to perform better, faster.

During a recent panel discussion on the Great Talent Reshuffle organised by New Metrics and LinkedIn, Feras Al Majed, Vice-President HR, GBM, commented on the phenomenon: "We needed our people to empower themselves, leveraging all of the tools, and allow managers to manage. We have given back the power to managers to make decisions without being dictated by policy and that helped us through the pandemic. That meant giving away certain control but that did not mean we don't support the business. We empowered managers to take ownership. When managers have accountability and employees are part of the solution, and it is not imposed on them, it helps us gain that attraction. Too often, HR likes to work in black and white, but at times like this you have got to be comfortable to play in the grey."

A great testimony to the success

THIS PHENOMENON, TERMED 'THE GREAT RESHUFFLE' BY LINKEDIN CEO RYAN ROSLANKSY, HAS SEEN EMPLOYERS SCRAMBLE TO RESPOND TO THE CHANGE BY UNDERSTANDING THE ROOT CAUSES OF THEIR OWN TALENT DRAIN AND ARE WONDERING NOT ONLY HOW TO FIND AND COMPETE FOR NEW TALENT, BUT ALSO HOW TO GET NEW TALENT TO PERFORM FAST TO FILL THE COMPETENCY GAP

of adopting human-centric talent strategies is also Alyasra Fashion, a regional major retail and hospitality group. Hani Ismael, the Group's CHRO, spoke about how they approached the challenge so

far: "The fear of the unknown was leading everybody's lives. People's safety first became our strategy and we acted accordingly. Turned the disaster into opportunity, shifting the business online and exposing people to new ways of working."

SHIFT IN STRATEGY

This shift in strategy created by consulting employees on the best plan of action and achievable business targets, alongside increased investment in enabling employees to carry the shift through learning and development, allowed the business not only to survive this critical time, but also to emerge from it stronger with more engaged employees. The company ended up paying out the highest bonuses in company history in January 2021, which they attribute to the human-centric approach the company adopted during the pandemic.

Success stories like the ones of GBM and Alyasra are compelling

cases that can give every company, whether large or small and no matter the industry, the confidence to look at how they can create better employee experiences to drive greater business success and retention.

One way to start is to explore how the organisation can accelerate the velocity of the employee experience journey at the front end by looking at the stages of hiring, onboarding, cultural integration, and the way employees are enabled to reach performance and mastery by consulting their employees via engagement or pulse surveys, 1:1s and focus groups.

This will not only make employees feel valued from the get-go but if these co-created improvements are then implemented and well communicated, will also get people to perform faster in their roles, no matter how long they stay with the organisation. Whether that is one month as a contractor, one year as a career springboard or ten years as on a long-term career path.

Britain faces annual climate damage bill of billions

EMILY BEAMENT

Britain faces annual costs of billions from the likes of flooding and heatwaves by the mid-century, a government risk assessment has found.

The cost of climate change to Britain is set to rise to at least 1 per cent of the GDP by 2045, with economic damage exceeding £1 billion (\$1.36 billion) per year in each of eight key areas by 2050 even if temperature rises are limited to 2 degrees Celsius, it warned. They include the health risks of high temperatures, the impacts of river and flash flooding on communities, buildings and business sites, and damage to carbon locked up in peat lands and woodlands.

New and stronger government action is needed in the next five years to deal with risks in more than half the areas assessed, such as climate

threats to water, energy and transport networks and impacts on crops, the analysis says.

The report, produced as part of the government's legal requirements on tackling climate change, prompted warnings that damage caused by rising temperatures will be greater than the investment needed to avoid harmful levels of warming. The risk assessment, the first of its kind for five years, looks at 61 potential risks, and opportunities, across business, infrastructure, health, nature and international issues at 2 degrees and 4 degrees of warming this century.

As well as the eight areas where economic damage could run to over £1 billion annually, in many more areas the potential damage could run to tens or even hundreds of millions of pounds a year by 2050, with the situation worsening by the 2080s with greater warming.

The report also said early investment to make Britain more resilient to the impacts of climate change, from heatwave plans to restoring upland peat, was highly effective, delivered high value for money, and could generate other benefits. — dpa



CHARLES M BLOW
The writer is an American journalist, commentator and op-ed columnist for *The New York Times* and current anchor for the Black News Channel

Failure on voting rights would be historic

After Democratic Sens Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema made it clear that they were not in favour of altering the filibuster to pass voting rights legislation, essentially dooming the bills to failure and ensuring that Republicans could continue their efforts to unleash an era of modified Jim Crow, the best the White House could say not to sound completely defeated was that they were going to keep fighting.

On Thursday, President Joe Biden said:

"I don't know that we can get it done, but I know one thing: As long as I have a breath in me, as long as I'm in the White House, as long as I'm enraged at all, I'm going to be fighting to change the way these legislatures are moving."

Biden has had breath in him all year, but he just fully joined the fight last week.

On Friday, when reporters asked Vice-President Kamala Harris what comes next on voting rights after Thursday's setbacks, she said:

"Well, we keep fighting. We are committed to seeing this through, however long it takes and whatever it takes."

Again, activists have been fighting this battle for nearly a year without much support from the White House. Democratic state legislators from Texas fled the state and flew to Washington to break quorum and try to prevent the governor from enacting a raft of voter restrictions.

The vice-president, as well as dozens of members of Congress, agreed to meet with them, but weeks after they arrived in Washington, the president still couldn't be bothered to sit down with them.

Biden gave a big voting rights speech in Philadelphia while those Texas Democrats were in Washington, calling the Republican assault on voting rights "the 21st century Jim Crow," but in that speech he never once mentioned the filibuster.

The New York Times wrote at the time that "Mr Biden has bucked increasing pressure from Democrats to support pushing the legislation through the Senate by eliminating



A voting rights demonstration at Black Lives Matter Plaza on the first anniversary of the death of civil rights activist and former Rep John Lewis in Washington.

the filibuster, no matter the political cost. In fact, the president seemed to acknowledge that the legislation had little hope of passing as he shifted his focus to the midterm elections."

For months, voting rights activist groups like the League of Women Voters, People for the American Way and Declaration for American Democracy engaged in direct actions "demanding that President Biden use the full power of his office to support federal voting rights legislation," as the League said. In October, some of these activists were even arrested protesting in front of the White House.

The following month, the Rev William Barber II of the Poor People's Campaign gathered activists outside the White House again, for a day of action.

"Mr President," he said, "we want you to succeed and we will stand with you. But we need you to fight against the filibuster because the filibuster is being used to fight against us, and to bring down democracy."

At the time, Barber requested a meeting with president, saying, "You need to bring religious leaders and women activists, the poor and low-wage people that you say you care about — you need them in the Oval Office." Barber told me that Biden needed to make the moral argument. Biden never met with them.

The White House says that it is going to keep fighting, but the fighting has been raging for months now, as the president focused most of his time and energy on a spending bill that is now stalled, if not dead. We are now in the last stages of the fight for voting rights, and democracy is losing. In particular, the full participation of Black voters and other voters of colour, as an issue, is losing.

This "keep fighting" language is little more than a pep talk designed to prevent voters from falling into despair when the profound reality that their votes — and democratic rule itself — are in danger fully sets in. Well, I'm not interested in happy messages of hope. I'm irate. Failure on voting rights now would be historic. I never thought that my children would grow up to see Black people have less voting power than they did when I was a young adult.

I fully acknowledge that Republicans are the true villains here, but I must also acknowledge that the people who pledged to come to the rescue, the heroes of the story, were too distracted for too long to do all they could.

The reason this failure to protect voting rights is so crucial is that the slate of bills currently being advanced by state legislators is not a final push but an opening salvo in a longer war to curtail voting. If the Republicans see that they can get away with the current suppression, they'll simply pass more bills. — *The New York Times Service*

Call for transparency, credibility



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A popular Arabic saying ‘The costly news of today will be free tomorrow,’ is true to some extent. This only means that if you are not quick to respond, the establishment’s reputation will be under threat.

During the recent years, many people called upon the government to assign an official spokesperson who can respond to the public and deal with them. They expected the spokesperson to have transparency and credibility while responding to various questions and suggestions raised by the media and the community. However, some of the public requested a consistent speaker whose main role was to answer topics while others asked for diversity among the speakers.

The main objective of the public request is to have credible clarification and to stay away from defensive responses. Also it is best not to leave room for doubt because unclarified responses can cause general frustration towards the decision and will be difficult to treat.

Recently, we witnessed great interest on the part of the government although this often has some shortcomings. This development is evident through the news and explanatory statements being issued.

Many cases show that the diversity in speakers has more successes. For example, the Supreme Committee for the Management of Covid-19 was concerned that information reaches the recipient through the representative of the competent establishments. If the topic is related to banks, the committee invites representatives from the Central Bank, and the same applies to commerce, municipalities and ROP.

Another case in point was when the Shaheen Cyclone hit the Sultanate of Oman during which was an important model towards communicating with the people. We listened to specialists from various sectors. These processes helped to deliver important messages, whether technical information, which includes infrastructure or meteorology and other sectors. Recently, during the press conference for the state general budget, we saw officials from various institutions related to the subject respond to queries. The bottom line is that the speaker must be familiar with all the information. He or she should be trained to deal with the audience and respond to questions with the power of influence and persuasion to deliver the details.

On the other hand, the spokesperson is the one who negotiates with decision-makers about some decisions and expresses his point of view, especially if the decisions affect the relationship between the institution and the media or the public.

Previous examples lead us to prefer to have diversity in the spokesperson to get accurate and detailed information and away from constructional expression. The popular saying “Give your dough to the baker even if he will eat half of your bread,” is apt in this case.

The corporate communication departments in different establishments along with their top managements play a pivotal role in communicating with the public and with various media.

Each establishment, through the media department, can communicate the claims to the relevant departments or nominate the concerned person to respond to the media. The corporate media practitioners are requested to be more credible in dealing with the media, respect public’s opinion and their demands and believe in the strength of public opinion, so they can deliver explanatory and transparent information.

The competent authorities should also facilitate access to information by reducing the centralisation of information and working to spread a culture that information is not only available on the desks of the highest official, but is also with relevant departments. For example, why the offices of governors are not activated — I meant to say that the office and not the head of the office — so that these offices are trusted by citizens regarding development and projects in the governorate. When I, as a citizen, visit the office of the governor or the wali, I am certain to obtain correct information relating to the infrastructure projects of my wilayat. However, a common sight seen is that there is no confidence regarding this and that one can find several citizens wearing their khanjar and moving around to meet the minister or the under-secretary. The main idea behind that is you can find the correct information with the top management.



ON ICY BREADLINE

A woman wearing a burqa walks along a road towards her home after receiving free bread distributed as part of the Save Afghans From Hunger campaign in Kabul on Tuesday. – AFP

A library the Internet can’t get enough of



KATE DWYER

On the first Tuesday of the year, author and political activist Don Winslow tweeted a photograph of an avid reader’s dream library. Bathed in the buttery glow of three table lamps, almost every surface of the room is covered with books. There are books on the tables, books stacked on mahogany ladders, and books atop still more books lining the shelves of the room. “I hope you see the beauty in this that I do,” Winslow wrote in the tweet, which has been acknowledged with 32,800 hearts.

If you spend enough time in the literary corners of Twitter, this image may look familiar. It rises again just about annually, and the library has been attributed over the years to authors including Umberto Eco and buildings in Italy and Prague. As with other images featuring beautiful bookshelves, people go absolutely bananas for it. Winslow’s post received 1,700 comments, including one from a professor at Pace University who has been using the photo as his Zoom background.

“It’s clearly the home of a person who loves and collects books,” Winslow said in an e-mail through his agent, Shane Salerno. “For me, I think that photo is as stunning as a sunset. I could spend days and days locked in that library examining each book.” He noted that there’s something comforting about the image, since “it’s a room you could happily get lost in.”

Winslow had no idea the origin of the photo. He had found it on Twitter, but didn’t remember the name or location of the library. (Though he believed it to be the personal library of a prominent author from another country.)

The library, it should be known, is not in Europe. It doesn’t even exist anymore. But when it did, it was the home library

of Johns Hopkins professor Richard Macksey in Baltimore. (I was his student in 2015 and interviewed him for Literary Hub in 2018.) Macksey, who died in 2019, was a book collector, polyglot and scholar of comparative literature. At Hopkins, he founded one of the country’s first interdisciplinary academic departments and organised the 1966 conference “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man,” which included the first stateside lectures by French theorists Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan and Paul de Man.

Macksey’s book collection clocked in at 51,000 titles, according to his son, Alan, excluding magazines and other ephemera. A decade ago, the most valuable pieces — including first editions of “Moby Dick,” T.S. Eliot’s “Prufrock and Other Observations,” and works by Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley — were moved to a “special collections” room on the Hopkins campus. After Macksey’s death, a SWAT team-like group of librarians and conservationists spent three weeks combing through his book-filled, 7,400-square-foot house to select 35,000 volumes to add to the university’s libraries.

Surprise discoveries included an 18th-century Rousseau text with charred covers (found in the kitchen), a “pristine” copy of a rare 1950s exhibition catalog showing Wassily Kandinsky’s paintings, posters from the May 1968 protests when students in Paris occupied the Sorbonne, a hand-drawn Christmas card from filmmaker John Waters, and the original recordings of the theorists at that 1966 structuralism conference.

“For years, everyone had said ‘there’s got to be recordings of those lectures.’ Well, we finally found the recordings of those lectures. They were hidden in a cabinet behind a bookshelf behind a

couch,” said Liz Mengel, associate director of collections and academic services for the Sheridan Libraries at Johns Hopkins. Several first editions by 20th-century poets and novelists sat on a shelf in the laundry room.

After the librarians from Hopkins and nearby Loyola Notre Dame were finished selecting their donations, the remaining books were carted away by a dealer, so Macksey’s son could prepare the house to be sold.

The library image sidesteps all those details to evoke something more universal, said Ingrid Fetell Lee, the author of the Aesthetics of Joy, a blog about the relationship between decor and delight. “We’re attracted to the image, and we come up with all sorts of stories about who it might be and what it might be because we love to tell stories,” she said. “But what’s really driving the attraction is much more visceral.”

Fetell Lee pointed to the photo’s sense of abundance. “There’s something about the sensorial abundance of seeing lots of something that gives us a little thrill,” she said. Also relevant: the “satisfying” sense of organised chaos, and the awe inspired by the high ceilings.

Pictures of books and libraries are popular across social platforms. A representative from Instagram said that some of the top-liked posts on the platform that include the words “library” or “libraries” feature large quantities of books, a “cozy” aesthetic or a warmer colour scheme.

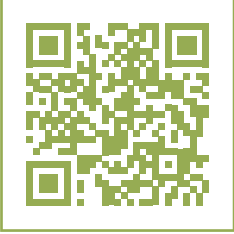
What would Macksey think if he knew his library had taken on a life of its own? “My dad liked nothing better than sharing his love of books and literature with others,” Alan Macksey said. “He’d be delighted that his library lives on through this photo.” — The New York Times.



An undated photo by Will Kirk/Johns Hopkins University of the home library of Prof Richard Macksey, an image of biblio abundance that regularly makes the rounds in book-loving corners of social media and the Internet, drawing comments of awe and delight. – The New York Times

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AL ATTIYAH TO DEFEND TITLE, AL RAWAHI LEADS OMAN CHALLENGE

DAKAR WINNER STARTS FAVOURITE

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 18

Qatari rally champion Nasser al Attiyah, who last week romped to his fourth Dakar crown, will lead the hopefuls for the Oman Rally Sohar International 2022, the opening round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship (Merc), from January 27 to 29.

The Oman Automobile Association (OAA) is all set to host the rally after hosting the final round of the 2021 regional series two months back.

The local challenge will be led by Abdullah al Rawahi, who became the first Omani ever to win a round of the Merc in December.

Partnered by Jordanian co-driver Ata al Hmoud, Al Rawahi guided his SRT Skoda Fabia Evo to a stunning start-to-finish victory and a winning margin of

over 21 minutes.

Al Rawahi-Al Hmoud had also scripted success in the last edition of Jordan Rally as well.

OAA Chairman Brigadier (Retd) Salim bin Ali al Maskiry was excited to note that the rally will see some world class drivers in Muscat.

“We are delighted to host world champions like Nasser al Attiyah and it gives our young drivers a mega rally experience. We also hope Abdullah (Al Rawahi) and other Omani drivers excel on home conditions,” Al Maskiry told *Observer*.

Al Attiyah, who is a six-time winner in the Sultanate of Oman, face stiff competition from Al Rawahi, talented Czech driver Petr Kacirek and Qatar’s Nasser al Attiyah.

The rally will offer most challenging conditions for the drivers with the Sultanate of Oman’s gravel special stages make it

DRIVERS LIST
1. Nasser al Attiyah (Qatar) with Matthieu Baumel (France) – VW Polo GT
2. Oman Rally Team – Abdullah al Rawahi (Oman) with Ata al Hmoud (Jordan) – Skoda Fabia
3. Hamed al Wahaibi (Oman) with Tony Sircombe (New Zealand) – Skoda Fabia
4. Nasser al Attiyah (Qatar) with Giovanni Bernachini (Italy) – Ford Fiesta
5. Duck Racing – Petr Kacirek (Czech Repulic) with Vaclav Kopacek (Czech Republic) – Skoda Fabia
6. Zakariya al Amri (Oman) with Mohammed al Amri (Oman) – Subaru Impreza
7. Faisal al Rashdi (Oman) with Waleed al Rashdi (Oman) – Subaru Impreza
8. Jarah al Touqi (Oman) with Issa al Wardi (Oman) – Subaru Impreza
9. Haitham al Zadjali (Oman) with Wael al Shaibani (Oman) – Mitsubishi Evo 7
10. Ihab al Shurafa (Jordan) with Juma Yousef (Jordan) – Mitsubishi Evo 9
11. Ghaith al Qassimi (Oman) with TBA – Mitsubishi Evo 8
12. Abu Jamous Issa (Jordan) with Juma Emad (Jordan) – Mitsubishi Evo 9
13. Musab al Zadjali with TBA – Kia Rio
14. Alain Nawfal (Lebanon) with Bashar al Qasimi (Oman) – Yamaha YXZ
15. Haitham al Hadidi (Oman) with TBA – Toyota Yaris

a unique event in the FIA calendar. Administration checks will take place at the OAA on Wednesday (January 26th), with scrutineering scheduled for Thursday morning at the nearby Sandan Titanium for Cars dealership. Both the official pre-event press conference and ceremonial start will then take centre stage at the vibrant coastal area of Almouj from 18.15hrs on Thursday evening.

15 TEAMS

The service park and parc ferme will be based at Sandan during the weekend, while competitors tackle 12 special stages over two days. Almouj will then host the post-event press conference and prize giving podium from 18.30hrs on Saturday (January 29th).

Friday’s (January 28) competitive action features two runs through the Al Khoud, Misfah and Saal special stages, split by a midday service stop

and regroup. The leg offers 115.34 competitive kilometres.

Saturday’s action is fought out over two loops of three specials: Abyad, Qalqal and Nakhl. The two loops are again split by a midday regroup and service. The second leg offers 99.04 competitive kilometres, with the event’s timed competition totalling 214.38km in a total route of 629.64km.

A total of 15 teams will be competing, with two drivers on each team.

Rally Director Anwar al Zadjali said the arrangements are completed and the rally track will be challenging as usual.

“Arrangements are finished and we expect the competitive track will bring out the best from the drivers.”

The event will be sponsored by Sohar International, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sandan, Redbull Mobile and Titanium For Cars.

OHA set for 2022 Women’s Asia Cup

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 18

The Oman Hockey Association (OHA) is gearing up to host the 2022 Women’s Asia Cup which will begin on Friday at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

The OHA will unveil the theme of the tournament in a function at Al Marooj Grand Hotel on Wednesday. The Asian event will be hosted in the Sultanate of Oman for first time in history and eight teams will vie for the title including China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

The Women’s Asia Cup is one of the oldest Asian hockey events that started since 1985. The first title of the championship was won by South Korea. They were the title holders in 1993 and 1999. China entered to the champions list in 1989 and also won the prestigious cup in 2009.

India emerged champions in 2004 while Japan earned the title in 2007 and 2013.

India are the defending champions as they won the title in 2017. The assignment will be tough for the Indian women’s team to defend the title in Muscat. The latest participation for the title holders was

in 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo as they ended in fourth place.

OMAN TEAM LAUNCH

The Asian event will feature official launch of the Oman women’s hockey team that will take place on January 25. As many as 26 women players from the Sultanate of Oman are undergoing their first internal training camp. The warm-up camp will feature some basic training and the fundamental coaching skills. The event will include also many training programmes for the domestic women including coaching, umpiring and other

courses. The team players will attend and watch the matches of the Asian tournament during January 21 to 28. For the Asian Cup, all the teams have arrived in Muscat. Japan were the first team to arrive and are involved in a short preparatory camp. The training sessions of the teams are taking places at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex and hockey ground at Seeb club.

A press conference will take place on Wednesday in presence of Asian Hockey Federation officials and the organising committee beside the team manager of the participated teams.





ABOUBAKAR LEADS FROM FRONT

Burkina Faso join Cameroon in Africa Cup of Nations last 16

YAOUNDE: Cameroon captain Vincent Aboubakar scored his fifth goal of the Africa Cup of Nations and his already-qualified side were joined by Burkina Faso on Monday in the second round.

The Saudi Arabia-based forward, who turns 30 on Saturday, put Cameroon ahead and substitute Garry Rodrigues equalised for Cape Verde after half-time in a 1-1 draw in Yaounde.

Cyrille Bayala put Burkina Faso in front and Getaneh Kebede levelled for Ethiopia from a penalty in Bafoussam in another 1-1 draw that was enough to take the west Africans through.

Cameroon topped the final group table with seven points. Burkina Faso edged Cape Verde on head-to-head records for second place after both accumulated four points. Ethiopia were eliminated with just one point.

While Cameroon and Burkina Faso are assured of last-16 places, Cape Verde must wait to see if they go through as one of the best four third-placed teams from the six groups.

Cameroon will remain in Yaounde to play a third-placed team on January 24, a day after Burkina Faso meet the Group C runners-up in Limbe.

Should Cape Verde survive, they will play the winners of Group B or Group C in Bafoussam or Yaounde on January 25.

"We won the group, which was our goal, although we wanted to win all our matches. We will continue to play here in Olembe," said Cameroon coach Toni Conceicao.

"We had many chances. The Cameroonian team was not brilliant but still played a good game. We can do better, but if we take an overall reading, we were superior to our opponents in the group."

Aboubakar is the first Cameroonian to score in all three group matches at a Cup of Nations since Samuel Eto'o achieved the feat with five goals at the 2008 finals in Ghana.



Cameroon's Vincent Aboubakar (R) celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the Group A Africa Cup of Nations 2021 match against Cape Verde in Yaounde. - AFP

NINE-GOAL RECORD

Ndaye Mulamba holds the record for the most goals by an individual in the flagship African tournament with nine for Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) in Egypt 48 years ago.

Aboubakar has a clear lead in the Golden Boot competition with his closest rivals, compatriot Karl Toko-Ekambi, Tunisian Wahbi Khazri, Malian Ibrahima Kone and Malawian Frank Mhango, scoring two each.

In Yaounde, Cameroon broke the deadlock on 39 minutes in a cagey opening half dominated by the two defences.

A free-kick from the Indomitable Lions was partially cleared and

Africa Cup of Nations 2021

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
Burkina Faso Cameroon* Cape Verde Ethiopia	Guinea Malawi Senegal Zimbabwe	Comoros Gabon Ghana Morocco
Standings Pts P W D L F A D 1 Cameroon 7 3 2 1 0 7 3 4 2 Burkina Faso 4 3 1 1 1 3 3 0 3 Cape Verde 4 3 1 1 1 2 2 0 4 Ethiopia 1 3 0 1 2 2 6 -4	Standings Pts P W D L F A D 1 Guinea 4 2 1 1 0 1 0 1 2 Senegal 4 2 1 1 0 1 0 1 3 Malawi 3 2 1 0 1 2 2 0 4 Zimbabwe 0 2 0 0 2 1 3 -2	Standings Pts P W D L F A D 1 Morocco 6 2 2 0 0 3 0 3 2 Gabon 4 2 1 1 0 2 1 1 3 Ghana 1 2 0 1 1 1 2 -1 4 Comoros 0 2 0 0 2 0 3 -3
GROUP D	GROUP E	GROUP F
Egypt Guinea-Bissau Nigeria Sudan	Algeria** Ivory Coast Equatorial Guinea Sierra Leone	Gambia Mali Mauritania Tunisia
Standings Pts P W D L F A D 1 Nigeria 6 2 2 0 0 4 1 3 2 Egypt 3 2 1 0 1 1 1 0 3 Guinea-B. 1 2 0 1 1 0 1 -1 4 Sudan 1 2 0 1 1 1 3 -2	Standings Pts P W D L F A D 1 Ivory Coast 4 2 1 1 0 3 2 1 2 Eq. Guinea 3 2 1 0 1 1 1 0 3 Sierra Leone 2 2 0 2 0 2 2 0 4 Algeria 1 2 0 1 1 0 1 -1	Standings Pts P W D L F A D 1 Gambia 4 2 1 1 0 2 1 1 2 Mali 4 2 1 1 0 2 1 1 3 Tunisia 3 2 1 0 1 4 1 3 4 Mauritania 0 2 0 0 2 0 5 -5

Source: CFA

*Defending champion **Defending champion

Games Played - Won - Draw - Lost

Goals For - Against - Difference

AFP

Aboubakar rifled a low, left-foot shot through a crowd of players and past goalkeeper Josimar 'Vozinha' Dias into the corner of the net. Cape Verde reacted to falling behind by becoming more adventurous and troubled the Cameroon rearguard several times before half-time without managing an equaliser.

The island nation introduced Rodrigues for the second half and he equalised within eight minutes through an exquisite back-heel off a low cross that beat goalkeeper Andre Onana. Aboubakar should have put Cameroon ahead again midway through the second half but blazed over when the ball ran loose inside the box.

In Bafoussam, a city 300 kilometres north west of Yaounde, Burkina Faso went ahead on 25 minutes through Bayala.

After a superb long pass from the centre circle by Adama Guira, Bayala outmuscled two Ethiopian defenders and chipped the ball over advancing goalkeeper Teklemariam Shanko and into the net.

The Burkinabe Stallions conceded on 52 minutes when Ethiopia captain Kebede levelled from a penalty awarded after a VAR review. Burkina Faso welcomed back captain Bertrand Traore, the Aston Villa forward, after his recovery from Covid-19, but a positive test ruled out goalkeeper Herve Koffi. — AFP

Stallions ease past Renaissance

MUSCAT: Vinayak Shukla's fluent 51 not out and Karan Sonavale's all-round contribution helped Oman Stallions to a 6-wicket victory against Renaissance in a Premier Division 50-over League game at Oman Cricket Turf 2 in Al Amerat on Sunday.

Stallions attacked relentlessly reducing Renaissance to 68 for 4 before going on to dismiss them for 159 in the 45th over, Bilal Khan, Mehran Khan, Shakeel Ahmad and Karan Sonavale all taking two wickets each. Asif Khan (35) and Hammad Ifraq (30) were Renaissance's main batters.

Vinayak led the chase with a solid unbeaten fifty as Stallions chased down the target in the 32nd over, scoring 160 for 4. Twinkle Bhandari and Karan contributed 36 not out and 24 respectively.

VIJESH BOWLS IDEAL TO VICTORY

Idear Technology rode on Vijesh Vijayakumaran's outstanding 4-over spell in which he claimed 5 for 9 to trounce Denmark by 4 wickets in a D Division T20 match at Muscat Municipality ground 3 in Al Amerat on Friday.



Vinayak Shukla of Oman Stallions

Vijesh and Arun Kumar (3 for 17) bowled brilliantly to dismiss Denmark for 131 in 18.4 overs, Sankarlal Sasidharan top-scoring with 35. Ideal Technology surpassed the total in 16th over, scoring 132 for 6 thanks to Vijesh's top-score of 37.

Danal Paul and Sankarlal bagged two wickets each.

MAHESWARAN STARS IN CAPITAL WIN

Maheswaran Annadurai and Tejesh Shetty were the heroes of Capital Star's 25 run win over Mazoon Dairy Company in an E Division game at the same venue. Maheswaran struck superb 77

off 54 whereas Chandra Mohan slammed a 25-ball 45 to lead Capital Star to 185 for 6.

Mazoon Dairy fought well but could manage to score only 160 for 8 in 20 overs, Sakil Khan leading the way with a fighting 48 off 39. Tejesh Shetty was the pick of bowlers, taking 4 for 27 whereas Saravanan Manickam and Kamesh Maharaja took two wickets each.

SHAH HELPS AFLAG GROUP TO VICTORY

In another E Division game, brilliant all-round performance by Shah Abbas steered Aflag Group to a comfortable 5-wicket victory against Y Horizon.

Shah Abbas and Arsalan claimed three wickets each, leading to Y Horizon's dismissal for 146 in 20 overs.

Aflag Group raced to the target in 16.2 overs thanks to major contributions by Junaid Iqbal (47), Farrukh Jamal (46) and Shah Abbas (25).

BRIEF SCORES

Premier Division 50 overs
Renaissance 159 all out in 44.2 overs (Asif Khan 35 - 4x4, Hammad Ifraq 30

- 6x4, Bilal Khan 2-33, Mehran Khan 2-32, Shakeel Ahmad 2-23, Karan Sonavale 2-7) lost to Oman Stallions 160 for 4 in 31.3 overs (Vinayak Shukla 51 - 5x4, 1x6, Twinkle Bhandari 36 - 3x4, 1x6, Karan Sonavale 24 - 3x4) by 6 wickets.

D Division T20

Denmark 131 all out in 18.4 overs (Sankarlal Sasidharan 35 - 5x4, 2x6, Vijesh Vijayakumaran 5-9, Arun Kumar Ganesan 3-17) lost to Ideal Technology 132 for 6 in 15.2 overs (Vijesh Vijayakumaran 37 - 5x4, Biji Sundar 27 - 3x4, Danal Paul 2-14, Sankarlal Sasidharan 2-25) by 4 wickets.

E Division T20

Capital Star 185 for 6 in 20 overs (Maheswaran Annadurai 77 - 9x4, Chandra Mohan 45 - 4x4, 2x6, Manumur Rashid 2-37) beat Mazoon Dairy Company 160 for 8 in 20 overs (Sakil Khan 48 - 2x4, 1x6, Tejesh Shetty 4-27, Saravanan Manickam 2-30, Kamesh Maharaja 2-18) by 25 runs.

E Division T20

Y Horizon 146 all out in 20 overs (Nareesh Sudhakar 29 - 3x4, Rudhi Rasheed 28 - 3x4, Shah Abbas 3-28, Arsalan 3-24) lost to Aflag Group 147 for 5 in 16.2 overs (Junaid Iqbal 47 - 6x4, Farrukh Jamal 46 - 7x4, Shah Abbas 25 - 4x4; Sanjay Makwana 2-42, Amar Pal Singh 2-28) by 5 wickets.

Vaishali leads Oman Women to exciting win over Wanstead

SHAHZAD RAZA

MUSCAT, JAN 18

Oman Women captain Vaishali Jesrani top-scored with a fighting 29, leading her side to an exciting 11-run victory against the touring Wanstead Women Cricket Club of UK here at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Al Amerat on Tuesday.

Oman now lead the three-match T20 series 1-0 with the next games following on January 20 and 21 at OC Turf 2.

Wanstead had a good first session, restricting Oman to just 103 for 6 in 20 overs, except that it gave away 17 runs in extras including 13 wides and 3 no balls.

Knowing her side's ability to defend a total, Vaishali stayed on till the 16th over, forging partnerships, running hard for singles, and keeping the scoreboard ticking. The ever-reliable Fiza Javed chipped in with a useful 22 and by the end of 20 overs Oman had reached a total that they believed was worth a fight. And fight they did.

Wanstead had a wonderful start, reaching 62 for 1 in 13 overs before Oman started to fight back. Yasmin Daswani (29



off 42) was trapped in front by Priyanka was made to sweat for every run as Oman applied relentless pressure. Though the tourists took the fight to the last over, by that time they had clearly run out of steam, and wickets as well, getting bowled out for 92 with 3 balls to spare. Yasmin Daswani and Saba Naseem were their main scorers with the scores of 29 and 28 respectively. Bhakti Shetty and Priyanka Mandonca were the pick of Oman bowlers, taking two wickets each.

BRIEF SCORES: Oman Women 103 for 6 in 20 overs (Vaishali Jesrani 29 - 1x4, Fiza Javed 22 - 1x4, Sakshi Shetty 14 - 1x4, Priyanka Mendonca 11 - 1x4) beat Wanstead Women CC 92 all out in 19.3 overs (Yasmin Daswani 29 - 1x4, Saba Naseem 28 - 3x4, Aaisha Usman 10 - 1x4. Bhakti Shetty 2-10, Priyanka Mendonca 2-15) by 11 runs.



Fifa President Gianni Infantino speaks with the Best Fifa Men's Player 2021 award winner Robert Lewandowski (on screen) during the Best Fifa Football Awards 2021 in Zurich. – AFP

Lewandowski, Putellas win Fifa ‘Best’ awards

PARIS: Bayern Munich's record-setting striker Robert Lewandowski retained Fifa's top men's player title on Monday at 'The Best' of 2021 ceremony as Barcelona captain Alexia Putellas collected the award for best women's player.

The 33-year-old Lewandowski set a Bundesliga goal record last season, and edged Argentine Lionel Messi of Paris Saint-Germain and Egyptian Mohamed Salah of Liverpool for the award.

"I'm happy and honoured to win this award, and I feel very proud", said Lewandowski, who scored a total of 48 goals for club and country in 2020-2021.

Lewandowski scored three times for Bayern at the weekend taking his 2021-2022 season tally to 39 goals in 33 matches.

The trophy was some consolation for the Polish striker who lost out to Messi for the older and rival award the Ballon d'Or in November. For Putellas, it marked an awards double as the Spaniard triumphed over Barcelona team-mate Jennifer Hermoso and Chelsea's Australian striker Sam Kerr, just as she did for the Ballon d'Or.

The 27-year-old midfielder enjoyed an exceptional 2020-2021 season with Barcelona, leading the Catalans to the Spanish league and cup double as well as the Champions League.

"This trophy is for everyone in the team", Putellas said.

"The trophy will be an inspiration for us all."

The best starting women's 11 however featured no Barcelona player.

Cristiano Ronaldo won the Special Award in recognition

of setting a record of most international goals scored for his country, beating Ali Daei's long-standing mark of 109 for Iran.

The 36-year-old Ronaldo now has 115 goals from 184 games with Portugal after making his debut aged 18 back in 2003.

"I never expected to beat this record, and I thank my teammates from these past 20 years", said Ronaldo, who also holds the record for 140 Champions League goals.

Chelsea's Senegalese stopper Edouard Mendy and Christiane Endler of Lyon won the goalkeeping awards.

Chelsea picked up both coaching awards through Thomas Tuchel and Emma Hayes.

"Ultimately, the coach is only as good as the people they have around them", said Hayes, whose charges were beaten in the Woman's Champions League final but won the Super League and the League Cup.

German coach Tuchel arrived at Chelsea half-way through the season, and transformed an under-achieving side into a ruthless unit to win the prestige Champions League title.

"I'm overwhelmed", said Tuchel. "I enjoy being here, it's a good fit." "I'm grateful to have such supportive people around me, to feel so good in such a competitive club.

Erik Lamela, now of Sevilla, won the best goal award for his trick rabona shot for Spurs in the North London derby.

The medical staff and players of Denmark, who had to deal with Christian Eriksen's collapse on the field at the Euro won the "fair-play" award. — AFP



Gianni Infantino (R) announces the Best Fifa Women's Player 2021 award winner Alexia Putellas (on screen). – AFP

Murray turns clock back

Medvedev fires title shot, easy for Muguruza, Swiatek

MELBOURNE: Former world number one Andy Murray turned back the clock in typically combative style and Daniil Medvedev underlined his status as the man to beat on day two of the Australian Open on Tuesday.

In the women's draw, top-10 seeds Garbine Muguruza, Iga Swiatek and Anett Kontaveit all made comfortable starts to their Melbourne title charges, and former number one Simona Halep won despite struggling with her serve. But there was defeat at the first hurdle for 19-year-old US Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez — the 23rd seed going down 6-4, 6-2 to Australian wildcard Maddison Inglis, to the delight of the home crowd.

After Sunday's deportation of men's defending champion and top seed Novak Djokovic, the first Grand Slam of the year is now in full swing and eager to move on from the visa saga.

That is proving easier said than done and Tennis Australia (TA), organisers of the so-called 'Happy Slam', said in a statement that they "deeply regret the impact" it has had on the other players.

"As the Australian tennis family, we recognise that recent events have been a significant distraction for everyone", TA said, without mentioning world number one Djokovic by name.

‘COULDN’T ASK FOR MORE’

If it has been a distraction for Murray, he did not show it.

The 34-year-old, there as a wildcard, showed all the fighting qualities that made him a three-time Grand Slam champion.

His epic five-set victory over 21st seed Nikoloz Basilashvili was hugely symbolic — the Briton departed Melbourne Park in 2019 not knowing if he would ever be back because of hip trouble.

But here he was, rolling back the years and rolling into round two.

"It's amazing to be back and winning a five-set battle like that, I couldn't ask for any more", said Murray.

There was no such problem for Russia's Medvedev, the second seed and favourite to lift his second major, who made light work of 91st-ranked Henri Laaksonen



Britain's Andy Murray reacts during his first round match against Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili. – Reuters

on Rod Laver Arena, dismantling the Swiss 6-1, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3).

With Djokovic out of the picture and Roger Federer not in Melbourne because of injury, the draw has opened up for the 25-year-old Medvedev and Spanish great Rafael Nadal. Nadal, who is chasing a men's record 21st Slam title, set the tone on Monday with a straight-set romp, but Medvedev was no less emphatic in dismissing Laaksonen.

"I like to play here, I like hard courts and I want to do better than I did last year", said Medvedev, who was runner-up to Djokovic in

2021. Medvedev, who conquered Djokovic in the US Open final in September to win his maiden Grand Slam crown, has cut a confident figure and said in the build-up that he feared nobody. There was disappointment for Casper Ruud of Norway, the eighth seed, who pulled out with an ankle injury before playing a shot.

HALEP STAYS ALIVE

In the women's draw, Spanish world number three Muguruza, a finalist at Melbourne Park two years ago, eased past 77th-ranked Frenchwoman Clara Burel 6-3,

6-4. She admitted she came into their encounter with no knowledge of Burel's game.

"Well, it felt very good. I didn't know really who I was facing. We've never played before", said Muguruza, a previous Slam winner at Wimbledon and Roland Garros. There was also little trouble for Kontaveit, despite some early nerves, and Swiatek, but Romania's Halep was far from comfortable. Halep laboured into round two 6-4, 6-3 after an error-strewn clash with Poland's Magdalena Frech which saw 11 service breaks. — AFP

Six-time European winner Gento dies

MADRID: Paco Gento, the only footballer to win six European Cups, has died aged 88, his former club Real Madrid announced on Tuesday.

Gento's club record of 23 trophies, which stood for over 50 years, was equalled on Sunday by Real captain Marcelo when he came on as a substitute in the Super Cup victory.

Gento scored 182 goals in 600 matches, also accruing among his trophies 12 league titles and two Spanish Cups from 1953-1971.

"Real Madrid CF, the club's president and the Board of Directors are deeply saddened by the death of Francisco Gento, honorary president of Real Madrid and one of the greatest legends of our club and of world



Spain's Francisco Gento arrives on stage to take part in the draw for the 2014/2015 European Champions League group stages. – AFP

“Real Madrid CF, the club’s president and the Board of Directors are deeply saddened by the death of Francisco Gento, honorary president of Real Madrid and one of the greatest legends of our club and of world football”

REAL MADRID

football”, read Real’s statement on their website.

“Paco Gento is the only player in the history of football to have won the European Cup 6 times.

“He will always be remembered by madridistas and all football fans as one of their greatest”, the Spanish club said.

Gento played on the left wing in a formidable attacking line-up with some of the greatest names of the era, including Alfredo di Stefano, Raymond Kopa and Ferenc Puskas.

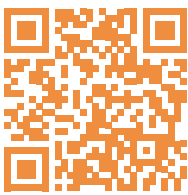
They won five successive European Cups from 1956 to 1960 with Gento surviving a cull of that generation by former teammate-turned-manager Miguel Munoz and going on to lift the trophy for a sixth time in 1966. — AFP

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BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 18

The price of Oman crude gained \$1.76 a barrel to reach \$86.70 in trading on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME), tracking spikes in international benchmarks that soared on Tuesday in response to attacks in the Arabian Gulf region.

Prices have climbed to seven-year highs in recent days largely due to perceptions of a tight market supply situation. Tuesday's attacks on, among other locations, oil storage facilities on the Arabian Peninsula, have added to market jitters of possible supply disruption.

Reuters reported that Brent crude futures rose \$1.02, or 1.2 per cent, to \$88.13 a barrel by 09:24 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures jumped \$1.36, or 1.6 per cent, to \$85.74 a barrel.

Trade on Monday was subdued as it was a US public holiday. Both benchmarks touched their highest levels since October 2014 on Tuesday.

Supply concerns have risen this week after Yemen's Houthi group



attacked sites in the United Arab Emirates. UAE oil firm ADNOC said it had activated business continuity plans to ensure uninterrupted supply of products to its local and international customers after an incident at its Mussafah fuel depot.

Also adding to geopolitical price premiums are rising tensions between Opec+ member Russia and Ukraine.

In addition, some producers within the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) are struggling to pump

at their allowed capacities, due to underinvestment and outages, under an agreement with Russia and allies to add 400,000 barrels per day each month.

"The consensus is that the situation will not improve in the foreseeable future and oil demand

Global oil demand is seen rising 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd) year-on-year in 2022, with fourth-quarter demand reaching 101.6 million bpd

growth together with supply constraints is inevitably leading to a tighter oil balance," PVM analyst Tamas Varga said.

Goldman Sachs analysts said they expected oil inventories in OECD countries to fall to their lowest since 2000 by the summer, with Brent oil prices rising to \$100 later this year.

The hit to demand from Omicron will likely be offset by gas-to-oil substitution, increased supply disruptions, Opec+ shortfalls, and disappointing production in Brazil and Norway, the analysts wrote in a note dated on Monday.

Global oil demand is seen rising 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd) year-on-year in 2022, with fourth-quarter demand reaching

101.6 million bpd.

Goldman expects OECD inventories to fall to their lowest level since 2000 by summer, and Opec+ spare capacity to decline to historically low levels, given the lack of drilling in core-Opec and Russia struggling to ramp up production.

"We expect the increase in Opec+ production to fall even further short of quotas in 2022, with an only 2.5 million bpd increase in production expected from the next nine hikes."

Higher prices will allow Opec to fall behind its monthly ramp up path slightly in order to preserve spare capacity, with the acceleration in shale production growth providing necessary inventory buffer, Goldman added.

The bank also pushed its Iran production ramp-up expectations to second quarter of 2023, citing lack of progress on the Iran nuclear deal negotiations. It sees Brent prices at \$90 per barrel in the first quarter of 2022, \$95 in the second quarter and \$100 per barrel in the last two quarters.

(With inputs from Reuters)

TRA to curb anti-competitive practices in telecom sector

New Retail Tariff Regulation to provide safeguards against price discrimination, predatory pricing, margin squeeze, excessive pricing, lock-in of consumers or bundling of services.



CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) of the Sultanate of Oman plans to upgrade retail telecom tariff regulation with a view to, among other things, curbing predatory pricing and other anti-competitive practices by market players.

The move comes on the heels of the formal entry of a third mobile operator in the country's telecom space. Vodafone Oman's launch promises to intensify competition in a market that already boasts two well-established operators and a host of mobile virtual network operators (MVNOs) among other service providers.

Draft regulations on retail tariffs were published by the Authority earlier this month aimed at garnering public feedback during a period of public consultancy before they are formally approved for implementation. The regulations seek to curb predatory pricing and other anti-competitive practices by market

players.

When eventually enacted via a TRA Decision, it will supersede regulations governing telecom retail tariffs that came into effect in 2016, when the telecom sector was far less crowded than it is today.

Besides safeguarding the interests of the country's roughly 6.3 million-strong telecom subscriber base, the new regulations also seek to "lessen, distort or eliminate competition in the market".

The revised guidelines empower the Authority to intervene if it discerns an "appreciable risk of abuse of domination or other anti-competitive behaviour", which may include, among other things, price discrimination, predatory pricing, margin squeeze, excessive pricing, lock-in of consumers or bundling of services.

Inevitably, the primary focus of the new regulations is

towards what is referred to as the 'Dominant Licensee', which the TRA describes as a licensed telecom service provider that has been formally determined to be dominant by a decision of the Authority in a relevant Retail Market.

Notably, it bars the Dominant Licensee from implementing a new tariff or amending an existing tariff if deemed to be "anti-competitive".

Additionally, the Dominant Licensee is banned from launching any 'Below the Line Offer' - described as any "promotional offer by a non-dominant licensee directly and only to a specific consumer, or a group of consumers, without publishing or advertising the offer".

Likewise, loyalty programmes cannot be used by a Dominant Licensee to attract new consumers. Rewards from such loyalty schemes for existing

customers are limited to only non-telecom services.

The new regulations also place curbs on the kind of language that licensees may use to advertise their tariffs.

"The tariff advertisement shall not use superlative forms, such as,

without limitation, "lowest rates", "widest coverage", or "best network" unless the licensee can objectively prove such claims by indicating the source of claim in its advertisement in a clear manner and such source shall be (a). from an independent and reputed entity; (b) based on

latest available test result/research report; and (c) free from any caveat, condition or limitation," the draft regulations warn. Penalties ranging from RO 8,000 to RO 20,000 are stipulated for any breach of the provisions of the Retail Tariff Regulations.

Investment Opportunity
at Nizwa Industrial City

مدائن
madayn

The Public Authority for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following investment opportunity:

Bidding Number	Bidding Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Fee (R.O)
NIZ/1/2022	Development of Commercial Area at Nizwa Industrial City	27/1/2022	27/2/2022	100

Companies specialized in the aforesaid works and having obtained a valid registration certificate from the Tender Board may subscribe to and obtain the bidding in accordance with the following measures:

- Deposit the Bidding Purchase Fee into the account (0378007322810019) Bank Muscat addressed to The Public Authority for Industrial Estates (Madayn).
- Send the payment receipt and contact details through the email (Nizwa-finance@peie.om) in order to obtain the bidding related documents. Inquiries regarding the project are submitted through (Nizwa.Operation@madayn.om) no later than 6 February 2022.
- Bids are submitted to the Nizwa Industrial City in red-wax sealed envelopes and addressed to the Chairman of Procurement Committee (P.O Box 998, PC 611 Nizwa) where the envelop should not mention or refer to the tenderer. The bids should be deposited before 12 pm on the designated date and enclosed with a banking bond equivalent to 1 per cent of the bid's value and valid for a period of 90 days from the date of submission.

Madayn should not accept the lowest or any other bid.

Madayn may cancel the tender and the tenderer are not eligible for compensations.

madayn.om

مَدَائِن

@madaynoman

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Oman Shell completes ‘Solar into Schools’ project in 22 schools

MUSCAT: Oman Shell recently announced the completion of its ‘Solar into Schools’ project, which is Shell’s fifth ‘Gift to The Nation’ initiative in 2016.

In this project, Oman Shell collaborated with the Ministry of Education and a number of local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to install solar photovoltaic (PV) generation systems in 22 public schools across the Sultanate over a period of five years.

Three more schools were added with solar PV systems set to be installed within the period from 2021-2023.

The Solar into Schools initiative helped to install about 27 megawatts (MW) of PV solar plants. These projects help to reduce CO2 emissions (estimated 2,000 tonnes p.a). The project piloted the first PV solar system in the Sultanate of Oman raising the awareness of new generations of low-carbon energy solutions.

The project also saw the implementation of Shell’s NXplorers educational programme in all 22 schools. Through this programme, Shell aimed to promote the students’ scientific knowledge and skills and demonstrate that knowledge practically through direct interaction with solar PV systems in their schools.

During the programme,



more than 1,400 students were trained with the participation of more than 130 teachers from various schools in the Omani governorates and wilayats (provinces).

Commenting on the completion of the Solar into Schools project, Walid Hadi, Oman Shell’s VP and Board Chairman said, “Initiatives like these are a part of our commitment towards supporting the Sultanate’s energy transition while also contributing to the national economic diversification goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

While the ‘Solar into Schools’ project harnessed the Sultanate of Oman’s potential for solar energy

development and deployment, it also played an important role in raising awareness of the benefits of using low-carbon energy sources amongst the community, boosting interest amongst the Omani youth in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) educational streams and inspiring them to take up entrepreneurial renewable energy roles in the future.”

By partnering with local SMEs to execute the Solar into Schools project, Oman Shell was able to foster the growth and development of renewable energy sector while empowering individual entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills to

capitalise on potential business opportunities.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education said: “I would like to extend our thanks and recognition to Oman Shell for its continuous and fruitful cooperation with the Ministry of Education in consolidating students’ awareness of clean energy and its importance in our future lives by adopting two major projects in this area.

The first project is the Solar into Schools project, where solar PV systems have been installed in 22 public schools across the Sultanate over the past five years and the first solar PV systems have been piloted in the Sultanate of Oman. The project focused on educating generations about the importance of clean energy solutions.

The second one is NXplorers educational programme, which was also implemented in the 22 schools, through which Shell aims to enhance students’ scientific knowledge and skills and practically demonstrate that knowledge through direct interaction with solar PV systems in their schools. We in the Ministry of Education commend this cooperation and hope to continue to cooperate with Shell to take scientific projects to a better and broader horizon”.



Rule the roads with the powerful Toyota Supra

MUSCAT: Toyota’s legendary Supra is work of art both in terms of design and performance. Backed by its strong lineage and the Toyota badge, it makes it one the best vehicles to own, especially for those who love to extract more out of every journey.

The Supra’s 3.0-litre turbocharged engine produces up to 335hp and 51 kg.m of torque. The torque comes on strong even from very low engine speeds, thanks to a combination of a twin-scroll turbocharger, direct fuel injection, and continuously variable timing on both the intake and exhaust camshafts.

The 8-speed automatic transmission delivers speedy up and downshifts and features paddle shifters for manual control when desired. The Supra’s Sport Mode sharpens throttle response, changes steering wheel characteristics and improves transmission shift crispness.

Meanwhile, Traction Mode can be activated as part of the Vehicle Stability Control System to provide track-driving capability by reducing the intervention of the traction and stability control functions.

Launch Control is available only when the vehicle is in Sport modes.

The frontal design was inspired by the fourth-generation Supra, but has a more expressive look. The vehicle’s low stance is emphasised by a prominent central grille flanked by large air intakes, which are essential for engine cooling.

The distinctive headlight units feature a six-lens LED arrangement incorporating the indicators and Daytime Running Lights (DRL). The rear combination lamps feature a purposeful structure with the turn, tail, and stop functions integrated into the distinctive main ring shape.

The Supra’s gauge cluster features an 8.8-inch colour Thin Film Transistor (TFT) LCD with an analog tachometer in the centre and a digital speedometer on the left side, creating a sporty image that reflects the vehicle’s racing heritage. A 1.8-inch full-colour Head-Up Display (HUD) provides various driver-focused information, while a further 8.8-inch widescreen touch display located on the dashboard contains the navigation system, which can also be operated via a remote control on the centre console, enabling easy fingertip access without disturbing driving posture.

Additional features include a back monitor with guide lines, dual-zone automatic air conditioning system and a JBL 12-speaker HiFi Surround Sound system with a seven-channel amplifier. As with all Toyota vehicles, safety is paramount.

The GR Supra is equipped with a comprehensive array of safety and convenience features, such as all-round airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Traction Control (TRC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Brake Assist (BA), Electronic Parking Brake (EPB), Tyre Pressure Monitor System (TPMS), and Hill-start Assist Control (HAC), among many others. High-tensile and ultra-high-tensile strength steel have been used for the main body-part materials, realising a lightweight yet highly rigid body that effectively absorbs impact energy.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories.

Nissan Altima now available at low EMI

MUSCAT: Nissan Altima, known for its excellent drive, superior handling, fuel efficiency and thoughtful technology solutions, is now available on low EMI. Customers can now avail an exceptionally low EMI rate of RO 170 on Nissan Altima (terms and conditions apply). EMIs are calculated on the basis of 20 per cent down payment and 3.25 per cent rate of interest for 6 years loan tenure. Subject to credit approvals.

A senior official of Nissan Oman said, “We are delighted to have Nissan Altima which is a premium mid-size sedan like no other, available on low EMI. Nissan Altima offers effortless power



while furthering remarkable fuel economy. Its good looks, striking exterior, colour range, spaciousness and fashionable interior have brought the car a

lifetime of fans. Its powerful high-performance engine and a range of other options adds to its appeal. Nissan Altima is cherished by owners in Oman for its classy

design, fuel economy, driving performance, safety technology, and comfortability.”

Nissan Altima is also cherished by owners in the Sultanate of Oman for its good looks, striking exterior, colour range, spaciousness and fashionable interior have brought the car a lifetime of fans. The vehicle offers those who drive it an effortless power while furthering remarkable fuel economy.

Nissan Altima has advanced safety features for those seeking a more focused driving experience. Owners vouch that with its advanced technology and in-built design, Nissan Altima is a pleasure to drive.

Bank Muscat Green Finance: Facilitating a sustainable future

MUSCAT: The recent celebration of the Omani Environment Day on January 8 once again highlighted the keen focus with which the Sultanate has been implementing different initiatives to protect our environment.

The strong participation of society and the private sector under the leadership of the Ministry of Environmental Affairs have been a great encouragement in this regard. Today, the widespread adoption of renewable energy is a key part of creating a green economy in the Sultanate, and Bank Muscat has been playing its part in making large-scale adoption of alternative energy possible by the general public with

the introduction of Green Finance for installation of residential solar panels.

Green Finance, which is the Sultanate of Oman’s first environmentally-friendly finance product, was earlier launched in 2019 in association with the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

It encourages customers to install solar panels on their rooftops and use solar energy for a large part of their household energy requirements. Under the scheme, loans up to RO 25,000 are being given to eligible individuals at highly competitive interest rates.

This unique initiative reflects



the bank’s commitment to responsible banking and its continuous contributions to the country’s overall progress and

development.

Abdullah Tamman al Mashani, General Manager – Products, Bank Muscat, said: “We are delighted with the response to the pioneering Green Finance scheme. A transformation is taking place at present as renewable energy gets more and more popular. As a pioneer in offering products that meet the different needs of customers and a strong supporter of Public-Private Partnership in promoting national goals, the bank has been participating in many environmental-friendly initiatives.

Bank Muscat is particularly keen to play its role in helping achieve the goals of Oman Vision

2040. Customers will be able to install residential solar panels and use solar energy for a large part of their household requirements. It is important to note that this initiative will help the Sultanate of Oman in reducing harmful emissions and also energy costs for customers.”

The bank’s customers can obtain Green Finance from any of the bank’s branches located across the Sultanate. They can visit the nearest branch with the required documents and obtain financing starting at 3.5 per cent for a period of up to 5 years. More details are also available at <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/loans/Pages/details.aspx#green>.



Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week: Accelerating global sustainability



HAMMAM AL BADI
@HammamBadi

Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW), hosted by Masdar as a global platform for accelerating sustainability, opened on Monday at the Dubai Exhibition Centre at Expo 2020 Dubai.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. The ceremony was also attended by Lt Gen Shaikh Saif bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Shaikh Mansour bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs, Shaikh Hamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Member of the Abu Dhabi

Executive Council, Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, and a number of senior officials.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum welcomed the leaders and experts meeting in the UAE to discuss issues related to sustainability and intensify collaborative efforts to find solutions for moving the world towards a more sustainable future.

Highlighting the importance of ADSW, the first global gathering of its kind after COP26, Shaikh Mohammed said, "Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week lays a pathway for COP28 when the UAE will welcome the world in 2023. The continued success of ADSW, which every year sets the sustainability agenda for the year to come, fully reflects our nation's leadership in the field of climate action. This year's convening of ADSW as part of Expo 2020 Dubai provides an

opportunity for the convergence of global expertise to stimulate constructive dialogue and push efforts towards implementing innovative solutions."

Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, said: "As the first event of its kind since COP26, Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week is a kick start to carbon neutrality this year, offering strength through unity.

This event holds great significance with the UAE hosting COP28 in 2023 — a milestone for the country's journey over the next 50 years. The UAE is a powerhouse of sustainable development for the Middle East and beyond, with pathways showing the way for the rest of the world."

Dr Sultan al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, UAE Special Envoy for Climate Change and Chairman of Masdar, addressed the challenge of maintaining economic progress, while turning

back the clock on emissions.

He said, "Finding the answers to these questions has been the mission of the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week and the Zayed Sustainability Prize — a mission that builds on the UAE's position as a pioneer in clean energy. When we began investing in the renewables space more than 15 years ago, our leadership had a theory of the future that has been proven right over time.

"Today, the UAE is home to the largest and lowest cost solar plants in the world. And globally the future of renewable energy is just as bright."

As one of the largest gatherings concerned with discussing sustainability issues, ADSW provides a global platform for cooperation, knowledge exchange, investment and innovation, as it attracts more than 45,000 participants annually representing more than 170 countries and hosts nearly 1,000 international companies.



World Future Energy Summit 2022: Driving the energy transition

HAMMAM AL BADI
@HammamBadi

The World Future Energy Summit 2022 opened in Abu Dhabi on Monday on the sidelines of the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week.

The Summit puts the focus on five critical industries — the Solar and Clean, Water, EcoWASTE, Smart Cities and Climate and Environment — that are shaving sustainability and driving investment globally. The five forums have featured more than 275 industry leaders.

Grant Tuchten, Group Event Director at World Future Energy Summit, said, "These five forum programmes brought together leaders and stakeholders driving the sustainability agenda, through leadership and global investment strategy.

"Attendees could network, do business and share knowledge about issues critical to sustainable development." The Solar and Clean Energy Forum and Expo is the centrepiece of the World Future Energy Summit.

Building on the momentum generated by COP26, the Forum will provide a timely opportunity to discuss energy transition, hydrogen (including the UAE national strategy for hydrogen) net zero energy, sustainable finance and energy storage.

It takes place as the GCC region accelerates the development of major infrastructure projects that significantly reduce reliance on fossil fuels, with green hydrogen generation projects emerging as the crown jewel of these efforts.

Frost and Sullivan estimates that additional investment in solar in MENA could reach \$182.3 billion by 2025.

Arab countries are home to 6 per cent of the world's population but have less than 2 per cent of renewable water supply, according to the World Bank.

The Water Forum has covered decarbonising desalination, water efficiency strategies, water re-use priorities, food security —water nexus, and digitalisation and innovation highways.

EcoWaste 2022 Exhibition and Forum have been launched under the strapline "Exploring future opportunities for waste management to achieve a circular economy."

Hosted by Tadweer, EcoWaste showcased best practices and experiences, as well as unveiling new projects and technologies in the waste management sector, as the UAE moves steadily towards adopting the circular economy model.

This year's eighth edition brought together more than 35 local, regional and international companies.

Dr Salem al Kaabi, Director-General of Tadweer, said, "EcoWaste Exhibition and Forum is a unique opportunity for showcasing the latest innovations and technologies in waste management, which serve as a tool for creating a better world."

On Monday, BP and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals in the Sultanate of Oman signed a Strategic Framework Agreement and a Renewables Data Collection Agreement which will support the potential development of a multiple gigawatt, world-class renewable energy and green hydrogen development in the Sultanate of Oman by 2030.

BP Oman also took part in the World Future Energy Summit 2022 beside other companies in the same field.

Oman Air Holidays signs pact with CONNECT

MUSCAT: Oman Air Holidays has signed a partnership agreement with CONNECT, a subsidiary of SABCO Group, becoming exclusive travel partner for all CONNECT events on the 2022 calendar. As the Sultanate of Oman's leading provider of inbound and outbound flight and holiday packages, Oman Air Holidays will offer event delegates, exhibitors and visitors a variety of exclusive accommodation and tour packages, comprising flight tickets, transfers, excursions and bespoke itineraries and add-ons.

"The 2022 MICE season in the Sultanate of Oman is shaping up to be a busy one, and we're delighted to partner with CONNECT to facilitate and enhance the offering of exclusive hotel and tour packages available to everyone attending exhibitions this year," said Mundher



al Shaikhani, Senior Manager at Oman Air Holidays.

"With five large-scale exhibitions already confirmed on CONNECT's 2022

calendar, Oman Air Holidays has assembled customisable packages offering bespoke add-ons and itineraries for those wanting to explore Muscat and other regions in the Sultanate of Oman during their stay."

Commenting on the partnership, Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidy, Chairman of CONNECT and SABCO Group, said, "CONNECT are proud to be partnering with the Sultanate of Oman's national carrier and tour operator, Oman Air Holidays. This partnership is borne through the shared ambition to position the Sultanate of Oman as a world class hub for the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibition (MICE) industry, an industry that has a fundamental role to play in stimulating in-country trade and investment, and in achieving Oman Vision 2040."

New president for Omani-French Friendship Association

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 18

At its board meeting held last week, the Omani-French Friendship Association appointed a new president, welcomed new members of the Board and of the Events Committee, and approved an ambitious programme of events for the first semester 2022.

Sulaiman al Harthy, Chief Executive Officer of Alizz Islamic Bank, already a member of OFA,

was nominated to the position of President of the Board. All present Board members, as well as the French Ambassador, Honorary member, paid tribute to the former president, Shaikha Hind Bahwan, for her instrumental role in establishing OFA as a major bilateral association and her continued involvement.

The Board also welcomed a new member, Sergio Giorgi, new Managing Director of Total Energies in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as two new



Committee members, Fatma al Barakat and Bechir Chehab,

Managing Director of JC Decaux in the Sultanate of Oman.

After an intense agenda in the fall 2021 including a Board meeting, an 'Inspirational Women of Oman' conference, a gastronomic event at the French Residence for "Goût de France", a presentation on VAT in November, followed by an encouraging conference on adventure tourism in December, the programme of activities of OFA for the first semester 2022 will include three conferences, on perfumes in February, on digital transformation in March within

the 4th edition of the French Week, and on energy in May, as well as social and cultural events, with a networking cocktail in January, a traditional Iftar in April and a live music in June, for the "Fête de la musique".

OFA is a non-profit organisation that aims at providing a platform that promotes friendship, understanding and matters of mutual interest between French and Omani business and social communities active in the Sultanate of Oman.

Beijing will buck Fed's tightening trend

The Chinese economy is declaring independence from the US Federal Reserve Board. Gross domestic product grew 8.1% in 2021, well above target, but activity slowed sharply towards the end of the year, so the central bank surprised markets with a rate cut on Monday. Low inflation and a strong yuan give Beijing room to decouple further.

A robust export-driven recovery in the first half of 2021 gave Chinese leaders leeway to push through reforms even as their zero-Covid policy suppressed domestic consumption. But the situation deteriorated thereafter.

In the fourth quarter growth slowed to 4% year-on-year, while December retail sales fell to 1.7%, missing estimates by a wide margin.

Power generation, a useful proxy for overall demand, was down 2% year-on-year for that month. Total social financing missed forecasts last month, reflecting sluggish borrowing demand.

With US inflation rising and tapering looming, however, the People's Bank of China is well-positioned to head in the opposite direction. Core inflation came in at just 1.2% in December.

With exports surging at an average of over 20% every month, the PBoC is more worried about the yuan, which soared 8% to a six-year high against a basket of currencies in 2021.

There are upsides to a strong currency, but it could start putting exports at risk, and the need to ease is greater as officials scramble to contain fresh Covid-19 outbreaks.

Thus Monday's surprise cut to the medium-term lending facility and short-term bond repurchase guidance rates, which will probably be followed by another cut to the benchmark Loan Prime Rate on January 20.

To be sure, lower rates might not find much traction if the central government cannot spur investment. Local government bond issuance disappointed in January, as cities struggle to find projects that generate returns instead of wrecking balance sheets.

Fiscal support will take time to show up. But with so many people and companies struggling to stay afloat, the PBoC can throw them a cheaper credit lifeline at least, and not worry about the Fed. — Reuters

With exports surging at an average of over 20% every month, the PBoC is more worried about the yuan, which soared 8% to a six-year high against a basket of currencies in 2021



BUSINESS AS USUAL

Vendors wait for costumers at a market in the old city of Sanaa, Yemen. — AFP

Inflation, price hike to hit UK this year



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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

BRITISH
BUSINESSES
ARE ACTIVELY
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THEY SCRAMBLE
TO SURVIVE
AMID RISING
COSTS

Inflation will hit its highest level in the UK in recent history, going against the Bank of England's (BoE) expectations this year, according to leading analysts in London's financial district. The UK's mainstream measure of inflation will accelerate to a peak of 6.8 per cent this April, propelled higher by swelling energy bills, according to investment banking giant Goldman Sachs.

However, the cost of living will climb above Goldman's predictions if the Omicron strain solidifies the global supply crunch, potentially igniting a series of rate hikes from the BoE. "If Omicron is seen as net inflationary, then there is the risk of interest rates hitting one per cent by the May meeting of the monetary policy committee (MPC)", said Goldman.

The last time the UK interest rates were that high was February 2009 following the financial crisis. If Goldman's predictions come about, it will continue a trend of the BoE consistently undershooting its inflation forecasts since the onset of the Covid-19 crisis.

BoE thinks the cost of living will peak at six per cent this spring. It's reluctance to tackle inflation head on prompted a former rate setter to warn that the central bank will need to increase rates quicker to tamp down on the rising cost of living.

The bank "is clearly behind the curve in responding to this inflation surge", said Andrew Sentance, a former member of the BoE's monetary policy committee.

He added: "The MPC will be in catch-up mode in 2022. Interest rates are likely to end this year at 1-1.5 per cent, but further rate rises will be needed to keep inflation in check."

The MPC will announce its next rate decision on February 3. The consumer price index, the UK's main measure of inflation, has never risen above 5.2 per cent, according to Office for National Statistics records dating back to 1998.

A combination of sky-high wholesale gas prices, supply chain disruptions and huge demand driven by consumers spending cash a little more liberally after the Covid-19 unlocking will push inflation higher in 2022, said Goldman.

Households are set to be stung in April when the force of inflation culminate, led by a possible 50 per cent rise in the energy price cap to account for historically high wholesale gas prices.

Meanwhile, British businesses are actively planning to hike prices as they scramble to survive amid rising costs, according to official figures.

UK firms are intending to raise prices five per cent this year, according to the

BoE's survey of chief financial officers of British businesses. The survey of around 5,500 businesses underlines the strain firms are under to remain profitable amid rising costs.

Almost three in five firms expect to lift prices in the next three months, the highest proportion ever recorded by the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC).

Intention to lift prices is in various parts of the UK economy including retail, manufacturing and construction.

A toxic combination of an energy crunch in Europe, an ongoing labour squeeze and a recovery in oil demand has swelled firms' costs across the board. The Office for National Statistics estimate prices for materials used by British factories have jumped over 14 per cent over the last year, with crude oil prices alone up over 80 per cent.

As a result, businesses are having to rejig prices to protect their margins and remain viable in the long-term. A reduction in income arising from a slowing down in spending as consumers exercised greater caution in the face of the Omicron variant is strengthening businesses' incentives to hike prices.

In the last quarter of 2021, UK firms lost seven per cent of sales due to the Covid-19 crisis, the BoE said.

The price increases that matter for the poor



JAYATI GHOSH

The author teaches economics at the University of Massachusetts, having done so at Jawaharlal Nehru University for 34 years

The question of how best to control inflation is back on the economic-policy agenda and opinion is divided about how to address it. The mainstream view emphasises the need for tighter monetary policies and regards higher interest rates and reduced liquidity provision as justified, even if they dampen the fragile economic recovery under way in many countries.

Others argue that today's inflation is transitory, reflecting temporary supply bottlenecks and labour-market shifts, and will soon correct itself. In rich countries, policy-makers still rely mainly on macroeconomic tools to tackle inflation. But one set of price increases is different from the others — food-price inflation.

Not only does this phenomenon have a much greater direct impact on people's lives, especially in

developing economies; it also reflects more complex causes and addressing it effectively requires a completely different set of strategies. Unfortunately, governments are not discussing them sufficiently.

This neglect is deeply troubling. At the end of 2021, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food-price index was at its highest in a decade and close to its previous peak of June 2011, when many were warning of a global food crisis.

Moreover, last year's increase was sudden: From 2015 to 2020, food prices had been relatively low and stable but they soared by an average of 28 per cent in 2021.

Much of this surge was driven by cereals, with maize and wheat prices increasing by 44 and 31 per cent respectively. But prices of other food items also shot up: Prices for vegetable oil hit a record high during the year, sugar was up by

38 per cent and price increases for meat and dairy products, though lower, were still in double digits.

Food-price inflation currently exceeds the increase in the overall price index, and is even more alarming given the significant decline in wage incomes during the pandemic — especially in low- and middle-income countries. This lethal combination of more expensive food and lower incomes is fuelling catastrophic increases in hunger and malnutrition.

There are many possible reasons for the spike in food prices. Some are systemic. Supply-chain problems — especially regarding transport — have been a major factor driving price increases for a wide range of commodities. Thus grain prices rose rapidly in 2021, despite record global output of nearly 2.8 billion tonnes.

Energy prices are also important in determining the cost of

producing and transporting food. The large increase in oil prices in 2021 obviously affected the food prices faced by consumers.

In addition, more frequent extreme weather events make crop output more volatile and reduce yields. Some have argued that prices of agricultural commodities as disparate as Brazilian coffee, Belgian potatoes and Canadian yellow peas (widely used by the food industry to produce plant-based meat substitutes) rose sharply last year after weather events induced by climate change undermined output.

In March 2021, the FAO warned that increasingly frequent climate-related disasters were affecting agricultural supplies.

Droughts are the single greatest threat, accounting for more than one-third of crop and livestock losses in low- and lower-middle-income countries. But floods,

storms, pests, diseases and wildfires have also become more intense and widespread, as was evident last year.

We can expect much more climate-related pressure on food production in the coming years, with developing regions in Asia and Africa likely to be hit hardest.

The threats to food production from climate risk underscore the need for greater international co-operation to tackle global warming and its consequences. Sadly, such collaboration seems unlikely.

Unlike some of the more systemic forces affecting food supply and prices in the medium term, policy-makers could easily address the issues of stockpiling and speculation. But that requires governments to accept that these are problems and to muster the will to address them. Until they do, food-price inflation will continue to hit the world's poor the hardest.

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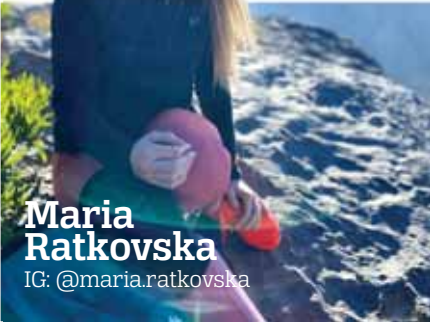
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features



25 questions to ask if you're thinking of climbing Jabal Shams summit

For many hikers in the Sultanate of Oman, Jabal Shams is the ultimate test of endurance. Climbing the summit needs a lot of preparation. Every once in a while however, people new to the country or even newbie hikers felt that it can easily be done. This can be a fatal mistake. We've compiled 25 facts you need to know before deciding to conquer the Sultanate of Oman's highest peak... **P20**



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When is the best time to climb Jabal Shams?

Based on my experience, winter (Dec - Feb) is the best time to attempt this mountain. Before selecting any day, one must check the weather forecast, as sometimes there are rains in winter, which adds to the difficulties. It is not advisable to make a plan on any rainy day. During summer it is very difficult as this mountain gets the direct rays of the sun which make the place extremely hot.

How should I prepare for this hike?

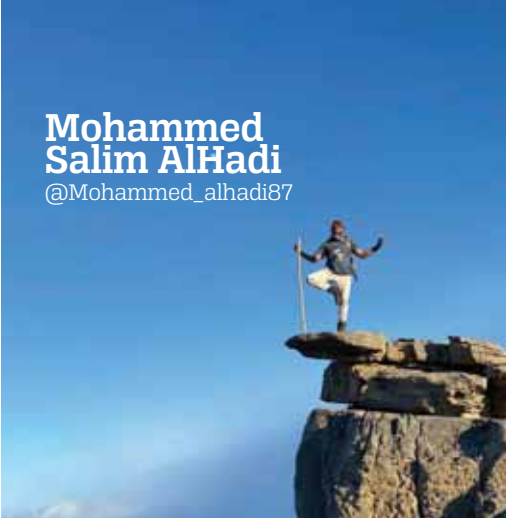
Preparing for the hike involves both physical and mental preparation, both of which are equally important. For physical preparation - increase your daily walks, practise walking with a backpack, as you'll be carrying water and food items (min of 6 Kgs on your shoulder during the hike), strength exercises, the stronger you get the less you'll be tired afterwards. Also, it is always helpful if you try a few long hikes before going to the summit which will check your stamina and endurance level. Work on your timing so that you can easily cover the entire trail by 12 hrs maximum. And then get ready mentally, visualise yourself at the summit and go for it, you can go further than you think, we are so much stronger than we think. On summit day: Find your pace, take rest if you need, have a positive mindset.

Can I do this trip solo although I am a beginner?

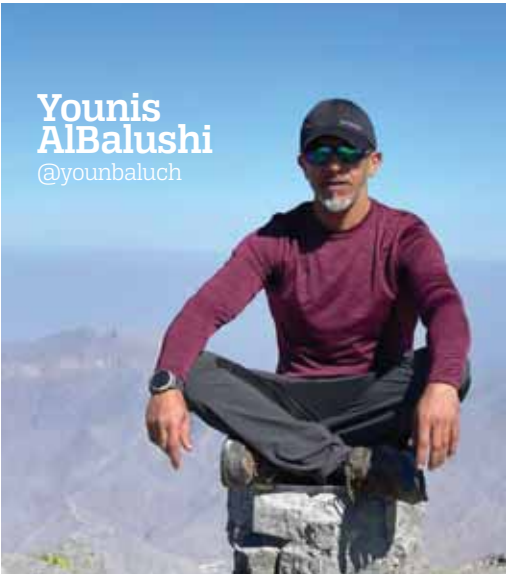
While you might have done other hikes and have prepared physically and mentally for the summit, I won't suggest any hiker go on this trail all by himself/herself. The hike is long and even an expert hiker can face any unprecedented situations. In the trail, in most of the places, there is no cellular connectivity, so the hikers are completely cut off. In case of any emergency situation, it is very difficult for the person to manage everything and get back to the base if they are by themselves. A group of 4 is ideal so that in an emergency, they can group to two and look for help.

What should I carry along with me if I attempt to do in 1 day?

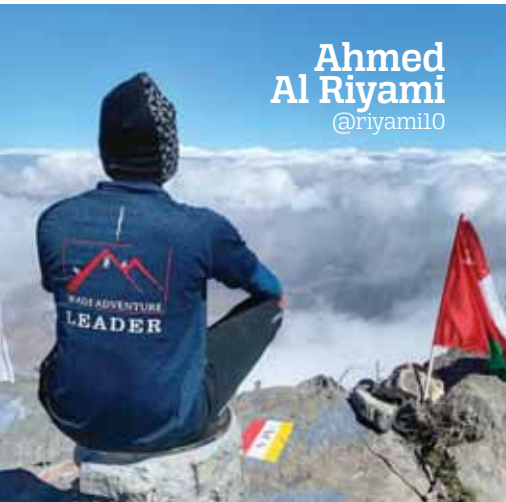
If you are doing this in winter as ideally it should be, you must carry 4-5 ltr of water (preferably mixed with glucose). Carrying very light snacks like a few baby carrots, apples, dates, nutty bars, etc. is sufficient. The quantities should be very limited otherwise, the weight of the backpack will increase which will make things worse for the hiker. Also bring headtorch, lightweight jackets (depending upon the weather forecast), gloves, a walking stick, sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, fully charged phone with extra battery back up and an emergency medicine kit.



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As this hike is long, would you suggest hiking in one day or two days?

I would say in one day if you are a person that does this kind of hike a lot. If you want to experience the climate up there, then yes, you have to try a night camp next to the compass at the summit. However, if you are a total beginner, I will suggest that you do this in two days that way you can phase yourself properly. You can camp by the first balcony we usually call the chair fettle Al Amin. You can build a camp and then continue to the summit at sunrise.

What kind of pre-cautions needs to be taken?

We call this mountain the "sun mountain" because the first rays of the sun hit this mountain first. Even during winter, the rays of the sun will be right on your face and there be no shady area to save you from this. Pack lightly but make sure you have all the right items. Inform your emergency contacts about your destination as there is no cell service in the area. Stay away from bushes as to not get bitten by snakes. Make sure you use comfortable and tested shoes. If you are camping, be mindful of the fire you create. Always follow the trail and stay with your group.

How should I plan my time frame for this hike?

Reach Jabal Shams the night before. Start your hike before sunrise. If going for a one day trip, make sure to reach the summit before 1.30 pm so that you have plenty of light coming back. Time yourself properly. Remember you are covering several kilometres of trail. Don't push it if you don't reach the target time. And always have a plan B.

If I camp, what threats should I prepare for?

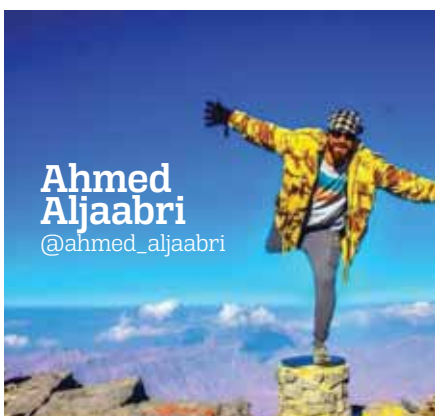
Jabal Shams, being a remote location, is home to different animals some of them venomous. So always be mindful of snakes. Expect also lots of insects in the mountain. It is advisable to have a proper tent to keep yourself safe. Based on experience, there are not a lot of dangerous wild animals in these mountains. You may encounter goats and donkeys but other than that, it is relatively safe. Always keep your headtorch at night.

In case of any emergency, how to get in touch with the rescue team?

In case of any emergency Dial 49 and get in touch with ROP. Or else If the army base is near, you can try getting in touch with them for an emergency. It is always advisable to be in a small group of at least 4 to do the summit that way, you always have a pair to go with.

What should be a good hiking plan if I am a beginner?

If you're doing it in one day, make sure to start the hike before sunrise and finish right before sunset. This means that you should be fit enough to complete 23 km in max 12 hours. For those doing two days, the best place to camp would be at the summit point or the balcony below the summit. It's a good place to catch the sunrise. Know your limits well and always seek for expert advise before embarking on a hiking journey.



Is there a camp or inn I can stay in Jabal Shams?

These days there are plenty of options available to stay at Jabal Shams. Depending on the budget one can select a resort or guest house. Camping is another good option. Sama Heights Resort is the closest one to the trail starting point. Other than this Jabal Shams Resort is just about 15 min drive from the trail. There are many guest houses which offers clean private rooms with attached toilets. I can advise Star Guest House as I have personally stayed there and liked their property.



Is camping preferable or booking a stay at an inn is better?

There's no answer that fits all. This choice depends entirely on each individual. If you're accustomed to spending time outside and camping, then camping before the summit would be a good choice for you. You can camp up on Jabal Shams plateau overlooking the canyon, or choose a more sheltered camping spot closer to the start of the Summit trail.



In case I finish my water supply, is there a water supply in the mountain that I can get drinking water?

In the Summit trail, there is no source of fresh water and hence everyone is suggested to bring the water supply along with them. Mostly 4-5 litres of water is required while doing this hike but water intake also depend on the individual.



Can you give us a better idea about the trail?

The trails in Jabal Shams are rocky. Some parts of it are natural and some parts were built by hiking enthusiasts. The carbonate units are covered with marine fossils. It is easy to spot them. The stones on the trail at many places have become slippery due to continuous stepping by the hikers. W4 is nicely marked along the path and you can always easily see the next sign all the way to the top. The surface is rough at some portions on the route so it's wise to wear good pair of boots preferably something your feet are used to it but not new and tight."



What kind of temperature we can expect in winter and summer?

The temperature in Jabal Shams can drop drastically during winter. In my experience, in the early morning, it was at 7 degrees, about 15 degrees at noon, and dropped again by sunset. In the summer, the temperature can rise up to 40 degrees Celsius at noon. It's important to dress up appropriately. My advice, make sure that you check the temperature progression beforehand. It will give you an idea of what to expect and then you can dress up as needed.



Is there any village or any locality on the way to the summit?

Once you start walking from the base point in this trail up to the summit, there is no village or locality. You will not find anyone except any other fellow hiker like you at times. So your planning has to be very meticulous. You need to be very sure that you do not run out of water, food or any other essentials. Be mentally prepared to be on your own absolutely even in an emergency.



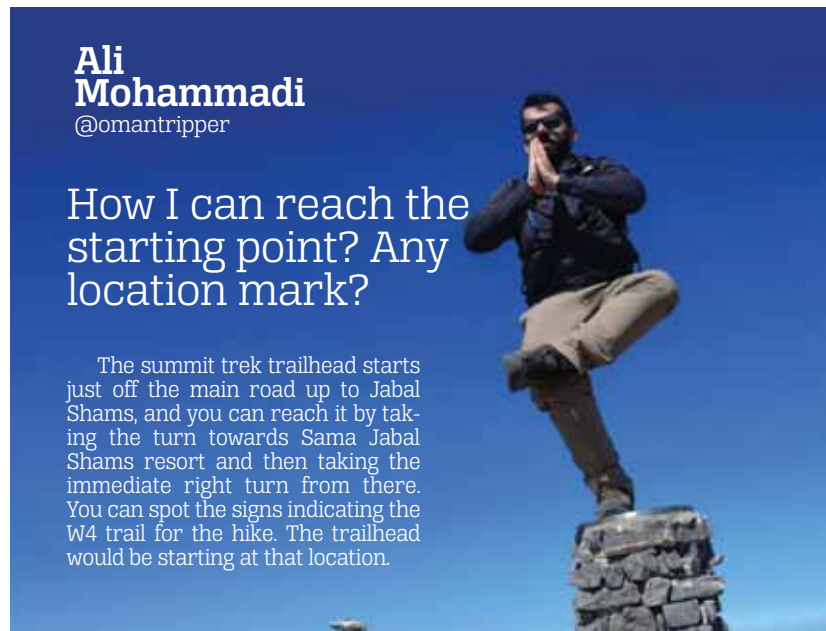
What is the ideal weather for this hike?

Due to the long-distance and Oman's harsh summer, winter is the preferred weather hence anytime between Dec-Feb is mostly suggested for this hike. However, rain is not preferred during the days of the hike so please check the weather forecast for selecting the right day to hike during the winter season.



In the entire hike, is there any area that needs assistance and is difficult to cross?

The entire trail W4 is well marked and if one follows the trail marks he/she can reach the summit point and come back to the base as well. Although assistance is not required for this hike it is not advisable to go solo. Going in a group of 3-4 can help encourage each other and take care of any emergency situation that arises. Besides a little bit of scrambling towards the end, you will not need any assistance. But you definitely need to have a decent level of fitness and endurance to complete this hike."



How I can reach the starting point? Any location mark?

The summit trek trailhead starts just off the main road up to Jabal Shams, and you can reach it by taking the turn towards Sama Jabal Shams resort and then taking the immediate right turn from there. You can spot the signs indicating the W4 trail for the hike. The trailhead would be starting at that location.



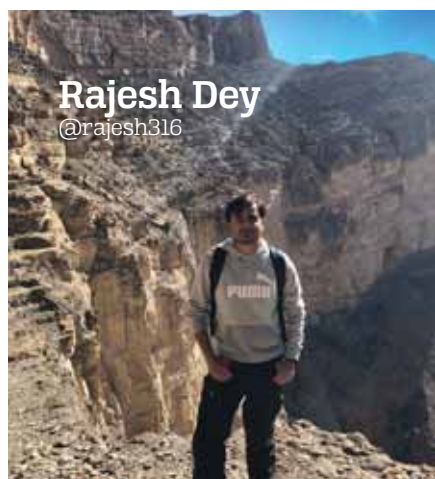
How do I know that I am on the right path?

The summit is very difficult because the elevation keeps changing. It is not one straight line that you have to trek up and down, therefore hikers can get confused about in which direction to turn. The path is well marked with red, yellow and white flag marks. Make sure to follow the path right.



Is there any phone network available?

A cellular network is extremely poor during the entire path. From my personal experience other than very few spots where you might get some Omantel network, you will be mostly cut off from the rest of the world during this entire hike. So please make sure you keep your family/friends informed about the same and your estimated time of return.



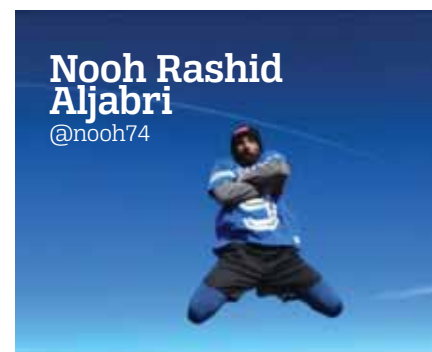
How do I understand that I am fit for this hike?

It is probably one of the most challenging treks in the Sultanate of Oman. I won't tag this as the toughest one, but it takes about an average of 10-12 hours to complete this and come back to the base. Depending upon your stamina and hiking experience, time varies from person to person. One should be able to walk 4-5 hours at a stretch at an elevation of 400-500 metres before attempting this hike. Not to forget mental strength plays a very crucial role in this trial.



I am from Oman and what are the best mountains to try to increase my stamina before I try the summit hike?

While training within Muscat city, any hill offering steep elevation is your best bet, like Saal Steps. Practising on mountains with similar terrain to the summit is a game-changer for your stamina. In my preparation, I undertook the Wakan Village summit trail and the Sifah - Quriyat coastal trail on two consecutive weekends prior to the summit. Wakan offers up to 600 mts elevation gain within 7 km and is a great route for testing your stamina. The picturesque Sifah - Quriyat trail is more challenging with 21 km of uphill - downhill at varied elevations, quite similar to the summit trail. In my opinion, these two mountain trails offer the best test for your stamina.



If I would like to camp the previous night of the hike, which is the best place to camp so that I can start the hike early?

Jabal shams is one of the best places for camping, especially in the winter. Sama hotel is right beside the starting point of the W4 trail.

If you go further down the road that goes beside the hotel you can find some good camping sites. The place surrounded by trees and surface is also flat for putting up the tent, and this is right on the trail.



Do we need ropes or any mountaineering equipment to finish this hike?

Unlike many other summits available in different parts of the world, this is one peak where no special hiking equipment/ropes/hiking gear is required. However this is one of the most challenging peaks and one needs to be fully confident about their physical fitness before they plan for Jabal Shams Summit Hike (W4).



The Parallel World of the Infrared Spectrum

By Clive Gracey

PICTURE A DOWN-AT-HEEL artist, toiling away for months to put together an exhibition, only to find that his work is misinterpreted. This is what has recently happened to me in relation to my infrared photography.

Feedback from those who have seen my infrared images ranges from “very pretty”, “sugar-coated” or “candyfloss pink”, to “poor Clive is now seeing the world through rose-tinted spectacles”. Don’t get me wrong, I am always pleased to be told that my work is beautiful, for that is what it is intended to be. However, far from simply being frivolous exercises in High Camp, my infrared photographs are intended as serious spiritual Art. Let me explain.

During my boyhood in rural Ireland in the 1970s, I struggled with the question that plagues every emerging artist early in their career: Where do I find my inspiration to create art? Then by chance one day, I found the answer to this question in the school library. While flicking through *Civilisation*, the celebrated work on the history of art by Sir Kenneth Clarke, I read that all the great Art of the past, without exception, was inspired by spiritual sentiments.

I believed with absolute certainty back then, just as I do today, in the spiritual realm and so the idea of making religious art rather appealed to me. The trouble was, as photography was my preferred artistic medium, how the heck could I make religious photographs? Photographing staged scenes in which cherubim and angels appeared to float just above the heads of mere mortals seemed to me to be a rather outdated



and overly literal way in which to represent the otherworldly reality.

Now as it happened, around that time in Physics lessons I was being bored senseless by the topic of the Electromagnetic Spectrum. On and on our physics teacher Dr O’Brian, aka Oby, droned about Gamma Rays, X-Rays, Ultra Violet Light, the Visible Spectrum, the Infrared Spectrum, Radio Waves and all the rest of it. None of this interested me in the slightest until one day Oby momentarily stepped out of character and said something that made my

ears prick up.

“We cannot see anything of the Electromagnetic spectrum outside our own little world of the Visible Spectrum, except with the help of technology”, Oby said, or words to that effect. Then came the revelation. “For example, although we cannot see infrared light with our eyes, there are photographic films that can record it.”

From that moment, it was my mission in life to get my hands on infrared film so that I could glimpse into that other realm of the Infrared Spectrum. And when I finally shot my first roll

of Kodak HIE Infrared Film and I got the results back from a lab in Dublin, I realised that I had found my way to make art that paid homage to the spiritual realm.

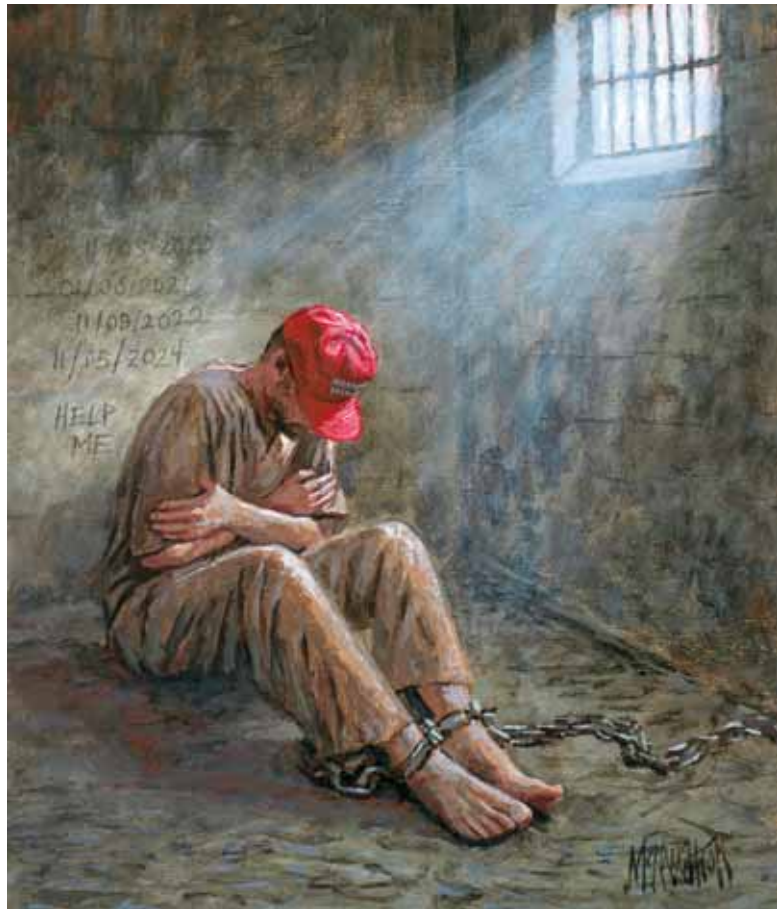
Not that I was daft enough to believe that the ethereal, spooky and breathtakingly gorgeous parallel world of the Infrared Spectrum was the spiritual realm. But it struck me that as the infrared world existed, even though we could not see it with our eyes, then infrared photographs served as beautiful metaphors for the metaphysical world of spirit which I knew also existed, even though I could not see it with my eyes. Oh, the strange contortions of the adolescent artistic mind!

Infrared films went out of production in the early years of this century and for a time I had no option but to stop infrared photography. Then a couple of years ago, I read about a company in the USA that sold digital cameras modified to specification that could “see” other parts of the Electromagnetic Spectrum. So at huge expense I ordered one that could “see” parts of the Visible Spectrum and the Infrared Spectrum, producing weirdly coloured images. When it arrived at the beginning of last year, my passion for making infrared images was reborn.

Dear reader, I take this opportunity to invite you to come see my suite of infrared photographs titled *Parallel World* currently on display in Bait Muzna Gallery in Old Muscat. Then you can decide for yourself whether they are Spiritual Art or High Camp.

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Facing Violence With Brushes and Ballots



LATE IN THE EVENING on January 5, dozens of art-world insiders received a fundraising message from Nancy Pelosi. “I’m in disbelief”, the text began. “Tomorrow is the anniversary of the violent, deadly insurrection on our nation’s capitol and several reports show Republicans surging in the run-up to the midterms. We need to send a strong message that our democracy is sacred.”

The message was typical enough of the calls to arms blasted by progressive campaigns and organisers such as ActBlue and MoveOn. But then, the kicker: “That’s why I need you to show up at the opening of artist Paul Chan’s new exhibition at Greene Naftali Gallery, tomorrow...”

“Pelosi” then recited the news release for Chan’s new show.

Flanking the Capitol dome, which swarms with rampaging stick-figures, the sun and crescent moon shed tears.

Beneath the zany, energetic portrayal of the MAGA throng, Chan includes the cartoon faces of stricken Capitol Police Officers, given X’s for eyes. The other side takes us inside the House chamber, where more stick figures run amok around the composition’s border, hanging upside down and sideways. They stare into laptops and film one another with their blocky, brushy phones.

The exhibition seems founded in the heartfelt belief — asserted by many artists in the last year — that some response to the events of January 6, 2021, was necessary. And how else can an artist respond, if not with art?



It turns out the text was a joke. But the subtext was not. The storming of the Capitol was too dire to ignore, with a half-dozen lives lost, traumatised police and hundreds of rioters facing criminal charges. Chan, an artist, activist and satirist, and a winner of the prestigious Hugo Boss Prize (as the “Pelosi” text emphasised), is not alone among those compelled to face January 6 through their artwork: The anniversary had a handful of other memorial openings.

Was Chan’s toonish but grave exhibition, which runs through January 22, a worthwhile response? Where Trump’s followers chose violence, the artist offered “A drawing as a recording of an insurrection.” The show features a single doubled-sided drawing done in brushed black ink, suspended diagonally across the gallery in a plexiglass frame. One side depicts tumbling, churning masses of protesters urged on by a blustering, Trump-like cloud. The so-called QAnon Shaman is there, centred in the banner-size composition, unmistakable with his buffalo headdress and bare nipples (Jacob Chansley — his real name — was sentenced to 41 months for his role).

But the exhibition also concedes that maybe art isn’t enough: The news release states that Greene Naftali will hold a voter-registration drive for the duration of Chan’s exhibition; those who sign up will receive an original drawing Chan made “as a gesture of appreciation for affirming the basic and inalienable right to vote in America.”

Let’s set aside the likelihood that visitors to Chan’s show in Chelsea will already be seasoned voters. It’s not clear that voting is enough, either, given that the exact event at issue was a rejection of due process, an attempt to void inalienable votes cast in Georgia, Arizona and elsewhere.

Indeed, crying moon and all, the show’s very earnestness can seem like a joke. According to the news release, Chan painted the Capitol picture with his left, “non-dominant” hand in an attempt to reduce the authority of the artist’s voice, and as an exercise in letting go. This deliberate de-skilling, a faux-naïf embrace of “pure,” even childish expression, puts the work squarely in conversation with so-called outsider art, the bloody revolt of Henry Darger’s *Vivian Girls* in particular. — **NYT**