



RENEWED RENAISSANCE KICKS OFF ON A HIGH NOTE

SULTANATE OF OMAN MARKS 51ST NATIONAL DAY TODAY



The Sultanate of Oman will today mark the 51st National Day, the 18th of November Anniversary. The event comes at a time when Omanis ponder about the achievements made so far and brace for further accomplishments, with firm resolve, under the astute leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik who pledged to hold high the banner of Renewed Renaissance, since he assumed power on January 11, 2020. The Renewed Renaissance kicked off on a high note when His Majesty called upon the people of the Sultanate of Oman to do their best to enrich domestic development and foster progress in all fields. This is considered one of the major principles of Renewed Renaissance in its quest to attain the supreme national objective of “making Oman the central point in all that we strive to achieve” — an objective whose salient features already materialised in terms of updated laws and refurbished programmes of action across all sectors. In the beginning of this year, a Royal Decree No 6/2021, promulgated the (updated) Basic Law of the State to serve as a basic pillar of continuous efforts to shape a better future for the Sultanate of Oman and its citizens and to build a solid ground for their Renewed Renaissance. **FULL REPORT ON P8&9**

STAGE SET FOR NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

The Secretariat-General of National Celebrations (SGNC) said that preparations for celebrating the 51st Glorious National Day have been completed as per precautionary measures against Covid-19. Shaikh Sebaa bin Hamdan al Saadi, Secretary-General of the SGNC, said that in addition to the military parade to be held under the Royal auspices of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, reception ceremonies will be held in wilayats. **DETAILS ON P9**

HIS MAJESTY ISSUES TWO ROYAL DECREES

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued two Royal Decrees. Royal Decree No 66/2021 on the amendment of some provisions of the Royal Decree No 29/2019 on appointing members of Oman Human Rights Commission. Royal Decree No 67/2021 on the ratification of an agreement to establish the Global Dryland Alliance signed in Doha on April 21, 2021, and its amendment protocol signed in Doha on April 21, 2021, after presenting the same before the Majlis Ash'shura. **DETAILS ON P5**

ROYAL PARDON FOR 252 PRISONERS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has issued a Royal Pardon to a number of prisoners convicted of different cases. They included 252 prisoners, 84 of them are foreign prisoners, according to an official source at the Royal Oman Police (ROP). The Royal pardon of His Majesty the Supreme Commander coincides with the occasion of the 51st Glorious National Day and in consideration of families of the prisoners. **— ONA**



Best Wishes to our Great Leader and the People of Oman

On the occasion of the 51st National Day it is our great honour to extend our sincere wishes and heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman. We pray to the Almighty Allah to bless him with good health, long life and happiness. We remain dedicated to serving under the wise leadership of His Majesty for the growth, progress and prosperity of Oman, and its loyal people.



Warm felicitations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman on the occasion of
the 51st National Day of the Renaissance

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Warmest felicitations to
HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK
and the people of Oman on the occasion
of the 51st National Day of the Renaissance.



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Felicitations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik
& the people of Oman on the occasion of the
51st National Day
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Unesco-Sultan Qaboos Prize winners feted

PARIS: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Dr Madeehabint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, Chairperson of Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, presented the Unesco-Sultan Qaboos Prize for the Conservation of the Environment, on Wednesday.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik affirmed that preservation and protection of the environment and its various natural resources are among the priorities of the development plans of the Sultanate of Oman. This is based on the firm conviction that caring for the environment and its capabilities is a global responsibility that is not bounded by the political borders of the countries.

This came in His Majesty's speech in the special booklet on the 32nd anniversary of the establishment of the Unesco-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation.

The prize presentation ceremony was held on the sidelines of the 41st session of the General Conference of Unesco, being held in Paris, France.

The presentation of the 16th Unesco-Sultan Qaboos Prize for the Conservation of the Environment, comes within the framework of the



Sultanate of Oman's celebrations on the passage of 32 years since the launch of the prize which was announced in 1989 with the aim of honouring outstanding contributions of individuals, institutes and organisations working in the fields of environmental researches, education and training.

— ONA

Heartiest congratulations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the
51st National Day of the Renaissance.



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and the people of Oman on the occasion of the
51th National Day of the Renaissance



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Congratulations to
HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK
and the generous people of Oman on the occasion of the
51th National Day of the Renaissance



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His Majesty greetings to Morocco, Latvia

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to King Mohammed VI, praying to the Almighty Allah for the return of this occasion on him to achieve further aspirations of progress and prosperity for the Moroccan people.

His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Egils Levits of the Republic of Latvia on the occasion of the Proclamation Day Anniversary of the Republic.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Levits and his country's friendly people.

— ONA

HM issues 2 Royal Decrees

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued two Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No 66/2021 on the amendment of some provisions of the Royal Decree No 29/2019 on appointing members of Oman Human Rights Commission.

Article (1) appoints the following, as representatives from the Majlis Ash'shura, Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Labour, Environment Authority, as members of Oman Human Rights Commission in accordance with provisions of articles (1) and (2) of the annex attached to the Royal Decree No

124/2008 on establishing Oman Human Rights Commission and defining its specialisations, as follows: Shaikh Humaid bin Ali al Ma'ani (as Deputy Chairman), Dr Hamood bin Ahmed bin Hamad al Yahya'ee, Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Mohammed al Rawahi and Dr Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Obaid bin Mahroos al Say'ari.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. Royal Decree No 67/2021 on the ratification of an agreement to establish the Global Dryland Alliance signed in Doha on April

21, 2021, and its amendment protocol signed in Doha on April 21, 2021, after presenting the same before the Majlis Ash'shura.

Article (1) ratifies the aforesaid agreement and its amendment protocol as per the version attached to this Decree.

Article (2) instructs the departments concerned to deposit the document of ratifying the above-mentioned agreement and its amendment protocol in accordance with their provisions.

Article (3) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

Oman hosts regional workshop on pandemic treaty

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health is facilitating with the cooperation of the Global Health Centre at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva the virtual regional workshop on options and benefits of a pandemic treaty, convened with the participation of countries in Eastern Mediterranean region. The event is held in line with the Sultanate of Oman's preparation for discussions at the special session of the World Health Assembly (WHA) from November 28 to December 1, 2021 to consider the benefits of developing a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response, with a view



towards the establishment of an intergovernmental process to draft and negotiate such instrument. The Covid-19 crisis has evidenced the need to adopt international regulations commensurate with the new level of globalisation and interrelationship among world's countries and various economic and social sectors. Therefore, the World Health Assembly established the

Member States Working Group on Strengthening WHO Preparedness and Response to Health Emergencies where the outcomes of the working groups will be reviewed during the special session. The group recommended strengthening IHR, last updated in 2005, in addition to developing an international pandemic agreement or treaty.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health and Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Foreign Ministry's Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs participated in the meeting along with a number of MoH's senior officials. Many ministers of health and technical experts at diplomatic missions and governments attended the workshop.

— ONA

Oman, Hungary discuss trade cooperation

SUHAR: The Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in the Governorate of North Al Batinah on Tuesday received Dr Tibor Szatmari, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary to the Sultanate of Oman and his accompanying delegation. The meeting discussed means of enhancing trade cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and Hungary and reviewed the available investment opportunities in the two countries. The meeting also stressed the importance of exchanging visits between the two sides to get benefits from the business opportunities, besides boosting trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. During the meeting, a presentation was given on the investment opportunities in Sohar Industrial Port and Free Zone and Sohar Industrial City. — ONA

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Dhofar Fisheries and Food Industries Company (S.A.O.G)
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Tel: 23219140, 23219141, Fax: 23219217, E-mail: difco@omantel.net.om

SUBMITTING AN OFFER TO PURCHASE SHAREHOLDER SHARES

Dhofar Fisheries and Food Industries Company (S.A.O.G) is pleased to inform our valued shareholders of the approval of the company's board of directors.

On the proposal to convert the company from a public joint stock company to a closed joint stock company, at its meeting held in 4/11/2021, after obtaining the initial approval of the Authority on 15/11/2021, where the company announces that the main shareholder the Honorable Company Hassani Trading Company submits an offer to purchase the shares of the shareholders wishing to sell (1) Omani Riyal, noting that the company has commissioned the Office of Moore Stephens LLC to assess the company's assets as on December 31, 2020, which in his report, he recommended that the fair value of the share be equal to (0.123 Baizas) per share. According to the details specified in the table below:-

Company Name	Dhofar Fisheries & Food Industries Company S.A.O.G P.O Box: 2438 P.C: 211 Web: www.dhofarfiseries.com E-mail: almamari@dhofarfiseries.com
Legal Type	Closed Joint Stock Company (SAOC)
The name of the shareholder wishing to buy	Hassani Trading Co (Partnership)
Suggested purchase price	(1) Omani Rial per share
Purchase offer start date	01/12/2021
Purchase Offer End Date	30/12/2021
The name of the brokerage company executing the purchase	Ubhar Capital (SAOC) P.O Box: 1137, P.C: 111 Web: www.u-capital.net E-mail: info@u-capital.net Contact: Mohamed Alawi 99813336 Hisham Bakthir 91733331 Mohammed Al Mashani 99421639

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Heritage & Tourism

ANNOUNCEMENT

As the financial year 2021 is coming to an end, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism announces to all companies, establishments and individuals dealing with it to necessarily submit their financial claims at the Finance Directorate and the Development Budget Department at the Ministry's Headquarter in Al Khuwair no later than Tuesday 30/11/2021.

The Ministry will not consider any financial claims received after the aforesaid deadline and shall not assume responsibility for the delay of payment as a consequence.

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Heritage & Tourism

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender No.	41/2021	Tender Name	Handling, Packaging and Shipping Incoming and Outgoing Mail (Records, Letters, Documents and Promotional Materials) of the Ministry to outside the Sultanate.
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)	25 OMR		
Tender Document Sales End Date	28/11/2021		
Last Date for Bid Submission	7/12/2021		
Grade	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth		
E-Tendering Portal	https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om		

- Interested companies and institutions registered with General Secretary of the Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E.Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Tenders should be submitted online on given website
- Bids are submitted that fulfill the technical conditions and specifications, accompanied by a tender bond from a local bank or international registered bank that has a branch in Oman of not less than (1%) of the bid value, valid for (90) days from the date of its submission.
 - Any bid that does not meet the required tender bond will not be considered
 - The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ita.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : sotie@omantourism.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085

Sultan Qaboos University

TENDER NOTICE

The Investment & Revenue Department at Sultan Qaboos University would like to invite companies to submit their quotations for:

S/N	Type of Business	Shop Location	Duration of contract in years	Date of site visit	Class	Tender #
1	Coffee Shop (Male/ Female)	College of Arts & Social Sciences	1	22/11/2021 9:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 4/21

- The priority will be for the Small and Medium Establishments (SME), which fulfils the quality requirements.
- Tenderers who wish to participate in this Tender may collect Tender Documents from The Section of Revenue and Expenditures at the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University, during the working hours for an amount of OR.25 for each tender document (non-refundable). The last date for collecting the Document is 02/12/2021.
- The Site Visit for the selected shop is necessary. It will be on the above mentioned date and time. The assembly point will be at the Investment & Revenue Department.
- The last date for submission of the quotations: 15/12/2021. The quotations should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Director of the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University and deposited in the Tender Box kept in the Department, before 10:00 a.m.
- The exterior of the envelope should be marked with the name and number of the Tender being presented and should bear no identification or mark of the Tenderer.
- The Tenderer should submit (enclose) with his tender a Bank Guarantee Document for sum of 1% of the total Duration of contract rental value quoted by the Tenderer and valid for 120 (One hundred and Twenty) days from the date specified for submission of Tender. Tender documents submitted after the deadline or without a Bank Guarantee will be excluded.
- The Tenderer should prepare the outlet in accordance with the health requirements of Muscat Municipality and the requirements of civil defense in cooperation with the concerned authorities.
- Sultan Qaboos University reserves the right to reject any quotation not fulfilling the requirements and does not bid itself to accept the highest rent or any other quotations.

Investment & Revenue Department
P.O BOX 50, P.C. 123, ALKHOD, SULTANATE OF OMAN
Tel: 24142691 – 24142682 Fax: 24142688

HM RECEIVES 51ST NATIONAL DAY GREETINGS

Greetings from Diwan of Royal Court

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received greetings on the 51st Glorious National Day from Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, which read as follows:

Your Majesty, Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, may Allah protect you.

“November days are reminiscent of happy celebrations and today we mark the 51st Glorious National Day. The people of Oman, inspired by Your



Majesty’s wise leadership, aspire for further progress and prosperity.

Greeting Your Majesty on this auspicious occasion, the personnel of the Diwan of Royal Court are honoured to renew the pledge of allegiance and loyalty and vow to exert their best effort in performing their national duty.

Your Majesty, The 18th of November anniversary is an embodiment of comprehensive renaissance and development whose roadmap was charted by the late Sultan Qaboos, May the Almighty Allah have mercy on

his soul.

Oman takes pride in the Royal tradition that Your Majesty has established for the continuation of the renaissance march so that citizens and residents could savour the riches of progress in an atmosphere of dignity and serenity.

May the Almighty Allah assist Your Majesty with divine care, grant you good health and guard you as a symbol of pride for this nation.”

— ONA

Greetings from Royal Office Minister

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received greetings from Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Head of Office of the Supreme Commander on the occasion of the 51st Glorious National Day, which read as follows:

Your Majesty, the Supreme Commander, may the Almighty Allah protect you.

“With our dear homeland Oman nowadays bedecked in an attire of dignity and grandeur, on the same memorable date — a date deeply engrained in the heart of all those who live on this benign land — it is time to celebrate a renewed, pridetworthy anniversary.

Year after year, the magnificent edifice named Oman has been constructed by the sincere hands of its loyal citizens.

The 51st National Day is time to celebrate the rebirth of a great nation.

History has been witness to the evolution of a grand portrait of this noble nation, depicted by citizens who are faithful to Allah, the nation and the Sultan. The valiant held high the banner of Oman where humans are empowered and lofty values deeply rooted.

Oman has propagated messages of peace and



humanitarianism in all parts of the world, thanks to its balanced policies of dialogue and non-interference in the internal affairs of others.

Your Majesty, may Allah protect you.

Under Your Majesty’s wise leadership, Oman is pressing ahead with its march of progress. Its people, rallying in tight-packed columns and armed with faith in the Almighty Allah, prove their aptitude to stand any exceptional test because their solidarity is stronger than all calamities.

Your Majesty,

We at Your Majesty’s Royal Office, are all honoured to renew the pledge of allegiance and vow to remain as honest guards for this nation, sacrificing everything dear in defending it. We pray to the Almighty Allah to grant Your Majesty continuous good health and assist you with His divine care.” — ONA

Greetings from State Council Chairman

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received greetings on the 51st Glorious National Day from Shaikh Abdulamlk bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

Shaikh Abdulmalik expressed deep delight and pride over the achievements brought about in Oman since His Majesty the Sultan took the reins of power on January 11, 2020.

“We aspire for a more prosperous future, following the reforms that Your Majesty has made, including the issuance of a new Basic Law of the State setting mechanisms for the transfer of power and the appointment of a Crown Prince and the restructuring of government departments”, said Shaikh Abdulamlk, noting that the reforms seek to meet the demands of the future stage of development.

Shaikh Abdulmalik said that the 51st Glorious National Day is the anniversary of celebration of accomplishments made on the domestic front, as well as the country’s stature in the regional and international arenas as a member of the world community that is keen on empowering justice and advocating dialogue and tolerance.



In his greetings to His Majesty the Sultan, Shaikh Abdulamlk expressed admiration for the Royal directives to the government to go ahead with projects of the 10th Five-Year Plan — the first step in Oman Vision 2040, as well as the Fiscal Balance Plan, the Economic Stimulus Plan and legislations to promote partnership between the government and private sectors.

The procedures, he said, place Oman on the right track for sustainable national development catering to the diversification of sources of income, the development of the labour market and recruitment climate and preparation of Oman — under themes of Renewed Renaissance — to address challenges and pursue nation building with firm resolve. — ONA

Greetings from Majlis Ash’shura Chairman

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received greetings on the occasion of the 51st Glorious National Day from Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of the Majlis Ash’shura.

“On my own behalf and on behalf of members of the Majlis Ash’shura, I am honoured to greet Your Majesty on the 51st National Day, wishing that the Almighty Allah would protect you and grant you good health and a long life”, said Al Maawali.

Al Maawali expressed his appreciation of the Royal directives of His Majesty the Sultan to accelerate the pace of services, the employment of youth and the devising of elaborate plans and programmes.

“The Omani Shura march is progressing in



line with Your Majesty’s Royal visionary planning. Your Majesty’s support for sustainable development constitutes an element of pride for this nation. We pray to the Almighty Allah to bestow His riches on Your Majesty and to protect you and Omani people. We pray to Him to eternalise the bounties of security, peace and stability on Oman. Happy National Day, Your Majesty.” — ONA

Greetings from Head of Internal Security Service

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received greetings on the occasion of the 51st National Day from Lt Gen Said bin Ali al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service.

“Your Majesty, may the Almighty Allah protect you.

On the auspicious occasion of the 51st National Day, I am honoured, and so are the personnel of the Internal Security Service, to express the best wishes and sentiments of gratitude to Your Majesty”, said Lt Gen Al Hilali.

Oman has been one of the deep-rooted civilisations as its history indicates over the ages. Its people have always exhibited noble values of solidarity, an example of which was their stance in the aftermath of the recent tropical cyclone.

Your Majesty, The 18th of November is one of Oman’s eternal days that saw the launch of the renaissance brought about progress and prosperity and will continue to accomplish pridetworthy



achievements under Your Majesty’s wise leadership.

Your Majesty,

Your loyal soldiers, the personnel of the Internal Security Service express their pledge of allegiance to Your Majesty and vow to perform their sacred duty in full faith and truthfulness.

May the Almighty Allah protect Your Majesty and may He protect you and guard you as a symbol of dignity and resourcefulness. Happy National Day, Your Majesty.”

— ONA

Greetings from IGP and Customs

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received greetings on the occasion of the 51st Glorious National Day from Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqli, Inspector General of Police and Customs, which read as follows:

“Your Majesty, the Supreme Commander, may the Almighty Allah protect you.

I am honoured, and so are the personnel of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) to express heartfelt wishes to Your Majesty on the occasion of the 51st National Day, praying to the Almighty Allah that this glorious occasion and similar



future anniversaries would always find Your Majesty in good health while the Omani people enjoying further progress and prosperity.

Your Majesty,

The great love that the

Almighty Allah placed in the hearts of Omanis to their country over the stages of history has been the moving force of developing its civilisation.

The country’s development has been making headway since the dawn of its renaissance, which has been designed and utilised to serve all those who live on this benign land.

The triumphant march will press ahead under Your Majesty’s wise leadership and farsighted vision.

Your Majesty, The tremendous efforts exerted by personnel of the ROP and other military and

security units, alongside establishments and citizens, when tackling the aftermath of the tropical cyclone last month are manifestations of the preparedness, mobilisation and professionalism of the servicemen and the National Emergency Management System.

This collective national action is testimony to the ability of your loyal citizens to safeguard the gains of the blessed renaissance. May the Almighty Allah protect Your Majesty and endow you with continuous good health and happiness. Happy National Day, Your Majesty.”

— ONA

■ MESSAGE FROM UAE RECEIVED



His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received a written message from Mohammed bin Ahmed al Bawardi, Minister of State for Defence Affairs of the United Arab Emirates. The message was delivered by Mohammed bin Sultan al Suwaidi, UAE Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, when HH Sayyid Shihab received him on Wednesday. – ONA

■ OMAN AND KUWAIT REVIEW RELATIONS



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, received at his office on Wednesday Shaikh Fahad Nasser Al Ahmed al Sabah, President of Kuwait Olympic Committee. The meeting reviewed relations and exchanged views on means of promoting them to serve the two countries. It also discussed several matters of joint interest and touched on aspects of the existing cooperation in the sports areas. – ONA

Shura to discuss 2022 budget on Sunday

MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura will host Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance on Sunday November 21 to discuss the state's general budget for the fiscal year 2022, said Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura.

Al Nadabi noted that Majlis Ash'shura will convene its third

and fourth meetings of the third annual session (2021-2022) of the ninth term (2019-2023) next week.

The minister of finance will deliver a statement at the third meeting on Sunday reviewing the financial and economic indicators of the state's general budget for the fiscal year 2022, Al Nadabi said, adding that it

will be a secret meeting.

The finance minister's statement will include several points such as the estimates of general budget, public expenditure, public debt management, subsidy policies, government's investments, economic diversification programmes, foreign direct investment, among others. The members of Majlis

Ash'shura will hold discussion with the finance minister in light of his statement, Al Nadabi said.

The fourth meeting, to be held on Monday, will be allocated to discussing the Economic and Financial Committee's report on the state's general budget for the fiscal year 2022, Al Nadabi concluded.

Oman Airports conducts annual exercise

MUSCAT: Oman Airports, represented by Muscat International Airport, recently conducted the annual exercise of damaged aircraft, which aims to provide the staff in the aviation sector with the necessary training in various cases of readiness. The exercise focused on the use of state-of-the-art equipment for the retrofitting of damaged aircraft.

The recent exercises have shown how the various equipment included in the process, which includes loading rods, pellets, cranes, low-pressure bags and other items needed to rescue the narrow and wide aircraft body.

Commenting on this event, Oman Airports stated: "This exercise is one of the qualitative



exercises in the region, where Oman Airports has the equipment and expertise to handle and transport the largest aircraft in the world. The company is continuously promoting global aviation safety through its commitment to invest in the highest standards of aircraft recovery equipment and to provide comprehensive training to the staff in the sector, in order to ensure the safety of all travellers."

The exercise was attended by Oman Airports Strategic Partners, Civil Aviation Authority, Oman Royal Police and Salam Air. The Civil Aviation Authority was responsible of assessing the exercise and the readiness of staff and equipment.

■ SHABAB OMAN II LEAVES FOR QATAR



The Royal Navy of Oman's Shabab Oman II leaves Mina Salman in the Kingdom of Bahrain for Hamad Port in Qatar. – ONA



Ministry of
Higher Education,
Research &
Innovation

CALL FOR PROPOSALS ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation
invite the qualified companies to the following:

No.	Title	Deadline for purchasing	Deadline for Submitting Offers	Document Fee
7/2021	Operation Management of Center of Excellence for Advanced Telecommunication Technology and Internet of Things	2/12/2021	28/12/2021	25 RO

First: Summary:

Center of Excellence for Advanced Telecommunication Technology and IoT aims to transfer knowledge and develop basic skills in the application of the Fifth Generation (5G) and the Internet of things (IoT), by implementing the necessary and effective training programs that will contribute in creating a skilled and practical generation trained with the necessary skills for the industrial revolutions and digital transformation. The Center aims to develop the capabilities and raise the efficiency of institutions related to the telecommunication sector, large companies, SMEs, Omani researchers, and innovators.

Second: Instructions:

- All specialized and interested local companies may obtain the document from MOHERI premises located at Innovation Park Muscat and to be collected from the Finance Department during official working hours; Sun-Thu between 08:00 – 12:00 hours.
- Companies are required to submit a bid bond with their bids in the form of a bank guarantee from a reputable bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman equivalent amount 924 OMR and valid for (90) days from the date of submittal of their offers. Offers not complying with this bond shall be rejected.
- Offers shall be submitted, signed, and stamped on the original bidding form, in sealed unmarked envelopes and addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tender Board Committee of Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation bearing the Tender number and title. The offers should not include the name of the company or what it refers to.
- Two envelopes are required for the Commercial proposal and one for the technical proposal; all envelopes shall be placed in the specified Box at MOHERI premises before 10:00 am on the deadline specified above.
- The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest/highest or any other bid and reserves the right to accept or reject any offer without giving reasons.

For Clarifications, you may contact via email: tender@trc.gov.om



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MINISTRY OF HEALTH ROYAL HOSPITAL

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDER

THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF ROYAL HOSPITAL INVITE SPECIALIZED INSTITUTIONS TO SUBMIT TENDER

TENDER NO	DESCRIPTION	LAST DATE FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENT	CLOSING TIME/ DAY/DATE	ELIGIBILITY	TENDER FEE (NON-REFUNDABLE)
682/2021/ MOH/ DGRHP-29	PROVISION OF PHLEBOTOMIST FOR THE ROYAL HOSPITAL	09/12/2021	BEFORE 10 AM ON TUESDAY 04/01/2022	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS

- All Specialized and interested Institutions registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Tenders should be submitted on line on the given website signed and sealed. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee before one day of date submission.
- The Original Bank Guarantee should be submitted to the office of Director of Finance-Royal Hospital one day before the submission date for all Tenders.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accept or reject any tender.

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OMAN CELEBRATES 51ST NATIONAL DAY

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will today mark the 51st National Day, the 18th of November Anniversary.

The event comes around at a time when Omanis ponder about the achievements made so far and brace for further accomplishments, with firm resolve, under the astute leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik who pledged to hold high the banner of Renewed Renaissance, since he assumed power in the country on January 11, 2020.

The Renewed Renaissance kicked off on a high note when His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik called upon the people of Oman to do their best to enrich domestic development and foster progress in all fields. This is considered one of the major principles of Renewed Renaissance in its quest to attain the supreme national objective of “making the Sultanate of Oman the central point in all that we strive to achieve” — an objective whose salient features already materialised in terms of updated laws and refurbished programmes of action across all sectors.

In the beginning of this year, a Royal Decree No 6/2021 promulgated the (updated) Basic Law of the State to serve as a basic pillar of continuous efforts to shape a better future for the Sultanate of Oman and its citizens and to build a solid ground for their Renewed Renaissance.

The Basic Law of the State comprises 98 articles “enhancing the institutions of the State, safeguarding its territorial unity and its social texture, protecting its cultural foundations and consolidating public rights, liberties and duties”.

The Basic Law of the State lays down a stable mechanism of transfer of rule, which reflects positively on political and economic aspects and affirms the principle of sovereignty and independence of the judiciary. It also serves as a basis of rule in the State. It makes education compulsory till the end of the Basic Education stage.

It establishes a scholarly method for thought, development of talents and encouragement of innovation- which all conform with Oman Vision 2040. Articles (5) to (11) of the Basic Law of the State organise the mechanism of entitlement or succession to the throne in the Sultanate of Oman and makes it more clear and straightforward. Article (5) states that “The system of rule is Sultanani and hereditary within the male descendants of Sultan Turki bin Said bin Sultan, in accordance with the following terms: Rule is handed down from the Sultan to his eldest son, then to the eldest son of the son, and henceforth, layer by layer. If the eldest son dies before assuming power, the rule shall pass down to his eldest son.

“If the deceased has brothers and in case the one entitled to the throne has no sons, the power shall be transferred to his eldest brother. If he (the deceased) has no brothers, the power to rule shall be transferred to the eldest son of his eldest brother. If the latter has no sons, then the rule shall be transferred to the eldest



nephew of his other brothers, in accordance with age of the brothers.

“If the one entitled to the throne has no brothers or nephews, the rule shall be transferred to the uncles and then to their sons in accordance with the sequence indicated in the Second Clause of this Article. It is a condition that the Crown Prince to assume power shall be a Muslim and the legitimate son of the Omani Muslim parents.”

Article (6) regulates the establishment of a Guardianship Council in case the power to rule is transferred to an heir aged below 21 years. The Guardianship Council exercises the powers of the Sultan provided the Sultan appoints prior to his death. If the Sultan does not appoint a Guardianship Council before he dies, then the Ruling Family’s Council appoints a Guardianship Council comprising one of the brothers of the Sultan and two of (his cousins) sons of his uncles. Article (7) provides for the appointment of a Crown Prince under a Royal order in accordance with stipulation of Article (5) of the Basic Law of the State.

The Royal order defines the powers and prerogatives of the Crown Prince, as well as the tasks delegated to him. It states that the Crown Prince shall be sworn in before the Sultan before undertaking the powers and tasks delegated to him.

The oath shall be taken in accordance with Article (10) of the Basic Law of the State. The Sultanate of Oman stands out for its exclusive practice of Shura-based democracy, set up on solid grounds emanating from Omani life realities. Shura practice evolved through various stages till it developed into present-day “Council of Oman”, with its bicameral chambers - the “State Council” and “Majlis Ash’shura”.

Each stage saw the addition of systems and laws that reinforce the tradition of Shura and respond to the expectations of citizens. To this effect, His

THE GOVERNMENT ACCORDED SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE ENSUING ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19. SPECIAL EXEMPTIONS WERE SANCTIONED TO SMES AND HOLDERS OF RIYADA CARD FOR ENTREPRENEURS. THIS IS IN ADDITION TO A PACKAGE OF INCENTIVES FOR BORROWERS, INDIVIDUALS, BANKING INSTITUTIONS, FINANCING AND LEASING FIRMS

Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 7/2021 promulgating Council of Oman Law, which comprises 78 articles.

To contain coronavirus (Covid-19) that wreaked havoc in countries of the world, the Sultanate of Oman formed a Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The Supreme Committee has been taking ‘moderate’ decisions and precautionary measures that ensure the safety of citizens and residents, while at the same time catering to social and economic implications on this benign land. The Supreme Committee is responsible for cooperation with the departments concerned and regulating social response.

It worked for the procurement of internationally approved vaccines and oversaw the implementation of a national immunisation campaign. This was commended by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik when he chaired the Supreme Committee’s meeting on August 18, 2021 at Al Maamoura Palace in Salalah. His Majesty said that, “This improvement could not have happened had it not been for the appropriate decisions taken and the efforts exerted by the departments concerned in

the Sultanate of Oman, albeit the health sector.”

His Majesty the Sultan lauded the “high sense of responsibility shouldered by all members of society through abidance with the decisions and the measures set by the authorities concerned to safeguard public health- individuals and society at large”.

The decisions resulted in the improvement of Covid-19 indicators in the Sultanate of Oman, which, the reports said, registered great decline in mortality, infection and hospitalisation rates, while recovery from the disease reached 98.5 per cent.

Meanwhile, the government accorded special attention to the ensuing economic impacts of Covid-19. The decisions, which took into account the fallouts of the pandemic on establishments and companies, included exemption from fines of some services. Special exemptions were sanctioned to small and medium enterprises and holders of Riyada Card for Entrepreneurs. This is in addition to a package of incentives for borrowers, individuals, banking institutions, financing and leasing firms.

The designation of a Youth Day in Oman (October 26) reflects the attention accorded to the young generation by His

Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. It asserts the leadership’s deep conviction in the potential of youth in promoting the country’s development.

Speaking at a meeting of the Council of Ministers he chaired in October 2021, His Majesty the Sultan underscored the significance of devising a mechanism and for opening channels of communication with youth to explain all the requirements of the development process in all sectors.

He gave directives to listen to youth and study their needs and aspirations. He also instructed governors and the authorities concerned to hold regular meetings with youth for this purpose.

He advised the officials to raise issues of interest or concern to youth, listen to their opinions and help them perform the role expected of them in contributing to the comprehensive nation-building march.

Meanwhile, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, who presided over the Youth Day celebration last October, said that the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth launched a smart portal supplied with the latest techniques that make it a prime website for talented youth, artists and innovators.

The attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the youth is also reflected in the Royal support to employment initiatives, a set of which came around in May 2021, when coronavirus pandemic had its greatest toll on local and global economic conditions, leading to the shrinkage of the labour markets. The Royal attention resulted in the launch of an executive plan to provide more than 32,000 jobs.

His Majesty the Sultan also chaired a meeting of the Supervisory Committee of the National Employment Programme (NEP) on July 5, 2021. This placed employment in the realm of national

priorities.

His Majesty the Sultan reiterated the importance of the NEP when he presided over a Council of Ministers on June 15, 2021, during which he gave directives for “devising suitable solutions to provide jobs in all departments of the State (the public sector) and private sector firms, provide analysis of job-seekers’ data and follow them up until they join the labour market”.

Omani women’s affairs take centre stage in the Renewed Renaissance thought of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who has been keen that women enjoy their rights guaranteed by law and operate alongside men in different fields of national service.

Attention to women is one of the “national fundamentals” of the country. On the occasion of the International Women’s Day, celebrated last March, The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, commended the great efforts exerted by women in the Sultanate of Oman and the rest of the world while building their nations, supporting their families and societies and contributing effectively to the management of human and global issues.”

The Honourable Lady addressed women on Omani Women’s Day this year. She said, “On the occasion of Omani Women’s Day, the 17th of October, we would like to express thanks and appreciation for every woman who advocates good deeds and elevates the values of tolerance, amity and benevolence. Our greetings go to every woman who contributes to building this dear country from her position as an active participant delivering her social, national and humanitarian duties in all fields.”

To mark the same occasion, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, issued a ministerial decision announcing the establishment of Omani Women’s Club for Sports and Cultural Innovation.

The move comes in implementation of the basic principles espoused by the Sultanate of Oman in the field of women’s empowerment. It is a symbolic gesture to promote women’s contribution to domestic development and to promote their role in sports and cultural fields. The Sultanate of Oman has been endowed with many bounties and a loyal people bound by bonds of love, collaboration and solidarity.

This became crystal clear through public support to the efforts exerted by the government of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in the aftermath of the recent tropical cyclone Shaheen that made landfall in the Sultanate of Oman on October 3, 2021. His Majesty the Sultan’s response was prompt. He gave orders to form a ministerial committee for the assessment of the damage incurred by citizens’ homes and properties in the governorates that took the brunt of the cyclone. The aim was to provide quick relief to the families and alleviate the impacts of the tropical condition.

OMAN CELEBRATES 51ST NATIONAL DAY

Speaking on this occasion last October, His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that “the restoration of normalcy to public life and the supply of basic life needs to citizens tops our priorities” and he reiterated that “the ministerial committee comes under our direct supervision”.

He pledged that he would follow-up the tasks and achievements of the committee to ensure that the panel provides assistance as soon as possible. This Royal response reflected positively through the persistent action undertaken by the ministerial committee in cooperation with sectors of the National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM). As a result, the majority of services were restored at a rate of 100 per cent.

Tenders were awarded for the maintenance of damaged roads and for building as many as 328 alternative houses for afflicted citizens. In the process, His Majesty the Sultan also gave orders to establish a National Fund for Management of Emergencies to address the aftermath of the recent cyclone and natural disasters that might happen in the future.

Nations attain their prime only through education, and this has been a principle espoused by Omanis since the outset of their blessed Renaissance 50 years ago.

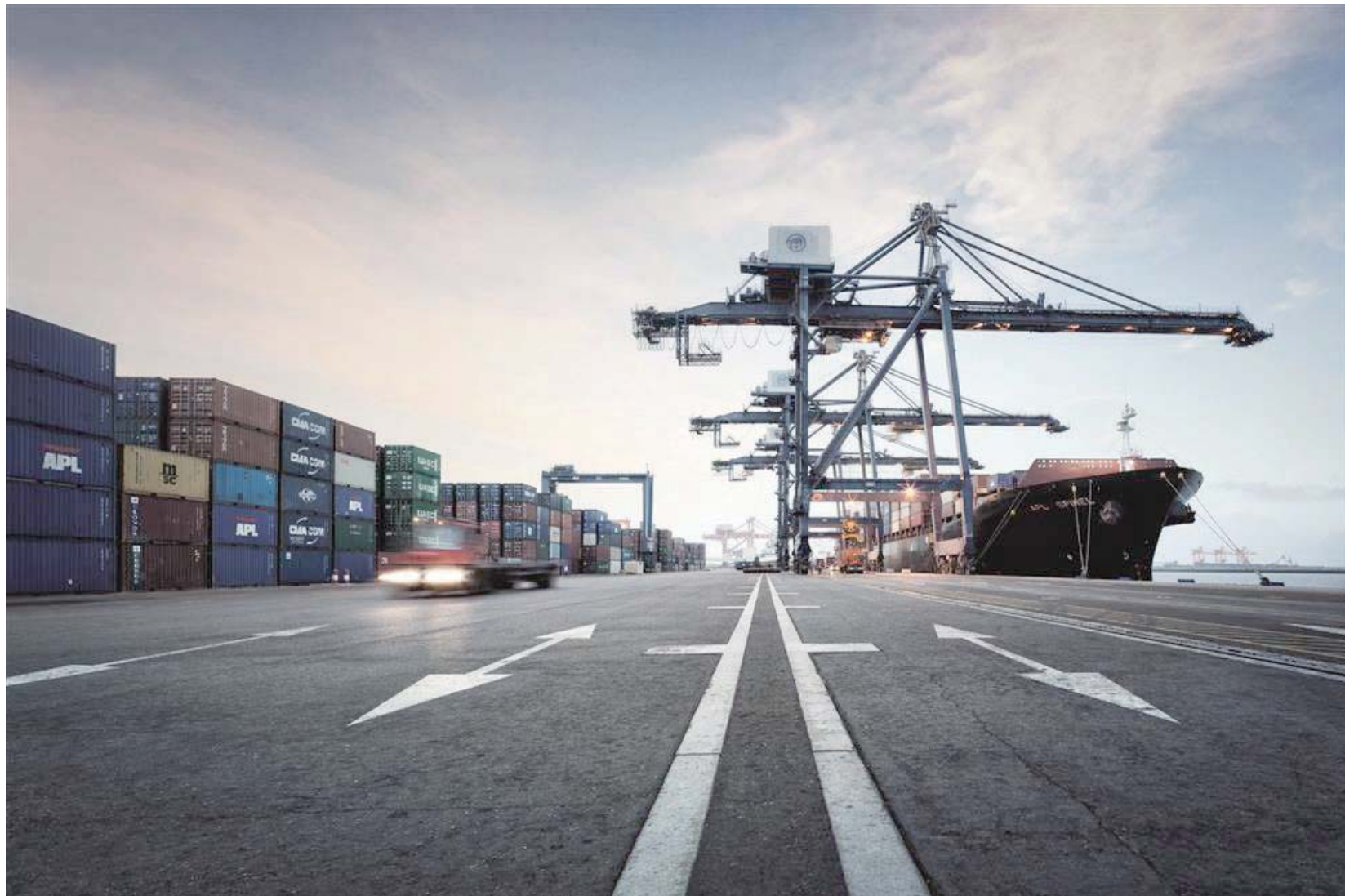
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Leader of Oman Renewed Renaissance, stressed that “attention to education figures high in the scale of national priorities”.

Accordingly, a motivating environment has been furnished for supporting the march of research and innovation. This translates into the allocation of a ministry mandated with higher education, research and innovation and the establishment of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, with branches in governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The university’s articles of association were issued in June 2021. In the same month, the Council of Ministers approved the setting up of a branch for the university in the Governorate of Musandam. It comprises a number of specialisations reflecting the Royal attention towards the development of the governorate and the realization of sustainable, comprehensive development there. In the same context, the College of Duqm was established in September 2021 in the Governorate of Al Wusta at the Special Economic Zone in Duqm.

The university is governed by the laws regulating universities and colleges in the Sultanate of Oman and the hopes pinned on the National Research and Development Strategy 2040 in line with Oman Vision 2040. Royal directives to set up six schools to the tune of RO 8,850,000 will raise the number of scholarly institutions to 2,430 schools, 11 government and private universities and 18 private colleges.

Under its Renewed Renaissance, Oman continued to accord attention to environment protection, both at the local and global levels. To this effect, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued a



PREPARATIONS COMPLETED FOR NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

MUSCAT: The Secretariat General of National Celebrations (SGNC) said that preparations for celebrating the 51st Glorious National Day have been completed as per precautionary measures against Covid-19.

Shaikh Sebaa bin Hamdan al Saadi, Secretary General of the SGNC told Oman News Agency (ONA) that in addition to the military parade to be held under the royal patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham



bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, reception ceremonies will be held in wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman. Fireworks shows will be also held in the Governorate of Muscat today (Thursday), and in the Governorate of Dhofar tomorrow (Friday) at 8 pm.

He added that within the framework of celebrating the 51st Glorious National Day, developmental projects in sectors of oil, gas and electricity will be opened. — **ONA**

Royal Decree last August to establish Khor Kharfout Nature Reserve in the Governorate of Dhofar, taking the number of such sanctuaries to 21.

The Sultanate of Oman also ratified many international agreements related to the environment protection and legislations for the same purpose at the local level. The decline and fluctuation in oil prices and precautionary measures to address the repercussions of Covid-19 affected the economies of many countries of the world.

Since Oman is not isolated from the global community, it had to take measures to address the situation. These included the initiation of a medium-term Fiscal Balance Plan (2020-2023).

Last April, His Majesty the Sultan chaired a meeting of the main committee tasked with the National Programme for Fiscal Balance to follow up the progress of the programme in its second year. The programme was designed to bring down the general debt and to secure financial sustainability. His Majesty the Sultan endorsed the initiatives submitted by the departments concerned in a bid to develop the scheme of social protection. This affirms His Majesty the Sultan’s follow-up of the conditions of citizens to ensure the sustenance of decent livelihood for them and

to alleviate the fallouts of this challenging stage.

The 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), the first leg in the executive plan of Oman Vision 2040, which is based on four axes comprising 14 ‘national priorities’, 88 ‘strategic goals’ and 68 performance indicators.

The Tenth Five-year Plan seeks to achieve a number of goals, among them “activating the economy, upgrading the efficiency of management of public finance, realizing balance among measures for rationalisation of public spending, espousing disciplined financial expansion policies, accelerating the rate of implementation of major strategic projects and government-private partnership projects, attracting more direct foreign investments, visualising growth trends based on expected oil price rate of \$48 per barrel during years of the plan and enhancing governorates’ participation in achieving goals of Oman Vision 2040”. The plan targets average annual growth of 3.2 per cent in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through emphasis on promising economic sectors like converting industries of high technological content, agriculture, fisheries, fish farming, food and agriculture industrialisation, transport, warehousing and

logistics. Total estimated revenues of the State Budget 2021 stood at RO 8.64 billion calculated on the basis of oil price rate of \$45.

The Governorates Development Programme, which emerged in implementation of Royal directives, will allocate RO 10 million to each governorate during the period of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) at arate of RO 2 million a year.

The programme envisages the execution of 28 strategic programmes and it will contribute to the goals of Oman Vision 2040. The Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP), endorsed by the Council of Ministers in March 2021 is based on five axes comprising incentives on taxes, fees and incentives for the improvement of the business and investment climate, incentives for small and medium enterprises, incentives for the labour market and recruitment, banking incentives aimed to rally efforts for the alleviation of Covid-19 impacts on the national economy and other incentives to promote economic recovery, back up economic activities and attract foreign investments. These financial procedures, topped by the medium-term Fiscal Balance Plan, showed positive results, as Oman posted growth in total revenues by 22.6 per cent and a

58 per cent decline in deficit by the end of September 2021.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expected in a report issued in September 2021 that economic activities in the Sultanate of Oman will recover and that Oman will achieve 2.5 per cent GDP growth in 2021 and 4.2 per cent growth by 2023.

The IMF also commended the measures undertaken by Oman while addressing the fallouts of Covid-19, as well as the country’s fiscal discipline and enhancement of business environment and support for stricken economic sectors. The measures undertaken by Oman improved its credit rating in various agencies, including Moody’s, which amended the Sultanate of Oman’s rating from “negative” to “stable” in October 2021 (according to 3Ba rating).

Moody’s expected that public debt in Oman vis-à-vis the GDP will decline from 80 per cent in 2020 to 60 per cent in 2024, as well as the decline of the annual government funding needs to GDP from 22 per cent in 2020 to 10 per cent. Standard and Poor’s also amended its future outlook for Oman from “stable” to “positive”.

Meanwhile, Fitch pointed out last May that the Fiscal Plan contributed to the improvement of scenarios for Oman’s financial position and expected a 6.1 per cent decline of Budget

deficit to GDP this year (2021). It also expected a 3.3 per cent economic growth for Oman by next year (2022).

The government of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik created an investment-stimulating environment through legislations, ports, free zones and logistics, coupled with a unique strategic location in the meeting point of global commercial markets, political stability and security.

The ports of Duqm, Salalah and Sohar boast a range of advanced facilities that enabled them to achieve quick finalisation of tasks and cut the distance between world ports. This is in addition to the free zones in Duqm, Al Mazayouna, Salalah and Sohar and upcoming Khazaen hub in the Governorate of South Al Batinah.

Investment incentives like tax exemptions extending to more than 30 years and foreigners’ 100 per cent ownership of properties, among other incentives, add another fillip to the Oman’s position. The political and regional changes that happened during the Renewed Renaissance period proved that the Sultanate of Oman’s foreign policy stands on firm grounds.

The Sultanate of Oman advocates principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, positive contribution to safeguarding international security, promoting common public interest through dialogue and understanding among countries and nations. These principles were affirmed by the Sultanate of Oman before the 76th UN General Assembly in New York last September.

The Sultanate of Oman’s speech stated”, Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultanate of Oman pursues its commitment to the basic fundamentals of its foreign policy embodied in good neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, respect for international law and international charters and support for cooperation among countries. Oman considers the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and through harmony and tolerance as a civilised conduct that leads to better and more lasting results than disputes can achieve”.

The Sultanate of Oman’s persistent strive to serve global peace stem from its support for many initiatives and issues, like its backing to the positive developments emanating from Al Ula Summit in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Sultanate of Oman hailed the success of the efforts of reconciliation led by the State of Kuwait.

In international podiums, Sultanate of Oman continued to reiterate the legitimacy of the Palestinian cause and the demands of Palestinian people. It also supported resolving the Yemeni issue through comprehensive political settlement, working in line with initiatives of Saudi Arabia and the UN and US envoys. This is besides Sultanate of Oman’s stand for peaceful handling of the Iranian nuclear file and Oman’s continuous condemnation of all types of terrorism. — **ONA**

The mounting arms race in the space

PAUL HANDLEY AND DIDIER LAURAS

Last year a US general made an ominous revelation: two Russian satellites in orbit were stalking a US spy satellite high above the earth. It wasn't clear if the Cosmos satellites could attack USA-245, an American surveillance spacecraft.

“It has the potential to create a dangerous situation in space,” said General Jay Raymond, head of the Pentagon’s Space Command.

The incident passed, but it marked a new stage in the mounting arms race in space, where potentially bomb-armed satellites, laser-shooting spacecraft and other technologies have moved from science fiction to reality.

The stakes were made clear on Monday when Russia launched a missile from Earth and blasted to pieces one of its satellites in a show of force. Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg called the act “reckless.” “It demonstrates that Russia is now developing new weapons systems that can shoot down satellites,” he said at a meeting on Tuesday with EU defence ministers.

The militarisation of space is as old as the space race itself — as soon as Sputnik was launched into orbit in 1957, Washington and Moscow began exploring ways to both arm and destroy satellites.

In the beginning, the biggest worry was nuclear weapons in space. In 1967, the superpowers and other countries signed the Outer Space Treaty, banning weapons of mass destruction in orbit.

Since then, Russia, the United States, China and even India have explored ways to fight in space outside of the treaty.

That competition today focuses on destroying a rival’s satellites, which are increasingly essential to every advanced military for communications, surveillance and navigation.

In 1970, Moscow successfully tested a satellite loaded with explosives that could destroy another satellite in orbit.

The US answered back in 1983, when then-president Ronald Reagan announced his ambitious Strategic Defence Initiative — the “Star Wars” programme promising precision-guided anti-missile missiles and satellites emitting laser beams or microwaves — to make the US militarily superior. — AFP

“It demonstrates that Russia is now developing new weapons systems that can shoot down satellites

JENS STOLTENBERG
Nato Secretary-General



A PHOTOCALL

A gallery assistant poses with the 'Moscow Kremlin Egg' (right) and the 'Swann Egg' during a photocall to preview the exhibition 'Faberge in London: Romance to Revolution', at the V&A (Victoria and Albert) museum in London on Wednesday. The exhibition is set to open on November 20, and run until May 8, 2022. — AFP

Jobs for nationals gain momentum



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THERE IS AN ADDITIONAL FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SKILLS, TRAINING, CAPACITY BUILDING AND CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

The Sultanate of Oman is facing the same economic and health circumstances as many other countries around the world. They have implications on public and private sectors which have adversely affected revenues. Despite all this, the recruitment of 35,000 nationals in both these sectors during the last nine months of this year is an extraordinary development. It shows that the Ministry of Labour is seriously implementing the policy of Omanisation in word and spirit at various levels.

This will ultimately result in stability and a sense of security among the national cadre in the country. The ministry is implementing strategies to ensure that skilled and qualified people get jobs in all economic activities. The speed with which the government is implementing the recruitment drive is highly satisfactory. This will certainly instil confidence among the citizens of the country.

Whatever has been achieved so far this year was not possible without huge efforts made by all sides and cooperation and coordination of all public and private sector organisations. This also shows that the aspirations of the people of the country were never overlooked.

There is no doubt that the figures published by the Ministry of Labour regarding its performance during the last nine months clearly explain the ratio of appointments in each sector. The public sector, with all its organisations, absorbed more than 19,000 male and female employees. The private sector hired more than 8,000 nationals who did not have any previous experience. More than 1,000 were hired under various initiatives of the Ministry of Labour and more than 6,000 jobs were filled by those who were trained and qualified as interns in various companies and institutions.

The country has faced several hardships and litmus tests one after another in the past two years which have adversely affected the job market. But every time, it emerged stronger thanks to the wise leadership of the country.

There is a decrease in the ratio of the foreign workers in the country in the last 9 months by 7.6 per cent compared with the same period last year. Perhaps, this was due to the economic circumstances everywhere in the world of which the Sultanate of Oman is also a part. This has also led to the national workforce increasing in the country.

The ministry has succeeded in saving

the jobs of 45,000 citizens. This shows that the ministry is working on more than one level to address labour market imbalances caused by the pandemic. From focusing on education of the people to be able to be absorbed in the job market, thinking about innovative ideas so that more and more from among them are hired as well as regulating the current work opportunities is a herculean task.

Everybody should keep in mind that the work culture in the country is drastically changing, and is always looking for alternative means so that the economy ultimately bounces back. The challenges are the same. But the method of dealing with it has changed.

There is an additional focus on development of local skills, training, capacity building and capability development so that the new generation is fully prepared to push the wheel of economic development further. This requires the internal urge of every citizen to be ready for building their future. The government can only guide and provide resources required for this. With the Ministry of Labour in the forefront, the government has proved that it has the will and the way to make people of the country embark on a brighter future.

Can Sudan’s democratic opening be reopened?



ISHAC DIWAN

THE WRITE IS A PROFESSOR AT THE ÉCOLE NORMALE SUPÉRIEURE, PARIS, HOLDS THE CHAIRE D'EXCELLENCE MONDE ARABE AT PARIS SCIENCES ET LETTRES

The 2019 power-sharing agreement between Sudan’s civilian and military leaders, which envisaged a transition to a democratic order following the removal of Omar al Bashir, was never going to be easy to implement. But following last month’s military coup, the question now is whether democracy is still even on the agenda at all.

The military and the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), representing the revolutionaries who toppled Bashir in April 2019, distrusted each other from the start, but had no choice other than to compromise after his ouster. Civilian leaders suspected that the army, which first headed the Transitional Sovereignty Council, had no intention of relinquishing power by midterm (in November

2021), as per the constitutional agreement. The army leaders were torn between a fear of street power, and a desire to protect their economic privileges while preventing retribution for past misdeeds.

General Abdel Fattah al Burhan, the head of the army (and the Council) who led the coup on October 25, has called for Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok’s government to be replaced with an apolitical administration. Burhan says that political parties have wielded undue influence on the FFC, dividing the country and blocking economic and political progress. Burhan expected domestic opposition to the coup to be muted — partly because the FFC had splintered, with some of its members criticising the government for a lack of

economic progress. He was also counting on a mild international reaction, like the one that followed Tunisian President Kais Saied’s constitutional coup in July.

But he was wrong in both cases. The coup has reunited opponents of military rule. Massive demonstrations have taken place in Khartoum and other Sudanese cities, with millions of people of all ages and backgrounds occupying the streets and threatening to paralyse the economy until the democratic transition is reinstated.

The international community has also stood its ground. The United Nations Security Council strongly condemned the coup, the African Union suspended Sudan, and most donors froze their financial support.

For now, the political situation

in Sudan remains fluid. Mediation efforts are ongoing, but success won’t come easy, as the power-sharing deal had run into grave difficulties, and returning to the status quo ante will satisfy no one. Of the transition’s three main challenges, security-sector reforms have stalled, and the domestic peace process has yet to pacify some key rebel groups. The most progress has been made on economic reforms.

But attempts to address these issues have threatened the military’s interests, increasing the generals’ insecurity. For starters, an anti-corruption drive began to uncover irregularities in some of the business activities of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which dominate the economy. As a result, calls to bring military-

controlled companies under state oversight became increasingly vocal. Moreover, there was growing popular pressure to bring to account the perpetrators of the June 2019 massacre of sit-in protesters at the army high command in Khartoum.

Further complicating the picture, the FFC is no longer the sole civilian kingmaker after the October 2020 Juba Power-Sharing Peace Agreement assigned former rebel movements a prominent role in the transitional authority.

For such reforms to have a chance of succeeding, better economic outcomes will be crucial. So far, economic reforms have proceeded briskly. Hamdok’s government has liberalised and unified the exchange rate, boosting revenues from customs duties. @Project Syndicate 2021

Sport

FRESH FACES AND MEDALISTS COMPETE AT 49ER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

MUSCAT: Oman Sail welcomes teams who looking to grasp their opportunity to make a name for themselves at the 2021 Nacra 17, 49erFX and 49er world championships at Mussanah.

The puffy easterly seabreezes and cloudless Massanah sky made for a gentle first day of the championship hosted by the resort and waterfront home of Oman Sail. The turnout to these post-Olympics championships were equally as mild, but this isn't quite the usual worlds after an Olympics.

The difference this time is there's one year lost in the Paris 2024 quadrennium due to a late

Tokyo Games and each fleet has a leader who has emerged from their deep squads to take pole position at a major event for the first time, leaving some Tokyo Olympians down in the rankings.

The young Finnish FX team of Ronja Gronblom and Veera Hokka eclipsed their fleet with an 8, 2, 1 to end day one five points clear of Norwegian Tokyo 2020 Olympians Helene Naess and Marie Ronningen. The Norwegian pair were one of three 2020 Olympians who wasted no time re-starting their campaigns after competing in Tokyo, all were in the top six of the 22-boat fleet.

“Our biggest takeaway from



Tokyo was focusing on the process and specific goals we set,” said American FX crew Maggie Shea. “The goal is an outcome we’re happy with regardless of the results.”

With only 15 boats, the Nacra 17 fleet are just as deep, but a new French team, Tim Mourniac and Lou Berthomieu top Tokyo silver

medalists from Great Britain John Gimson and Anna Burnett. Of the top 10 today, two are medalists from Tokyo, and there are two world champions.

“It was a steady first day, as far as results are concerned,” said Burnett, who stands one point behind the French. “There are a lot of new faces, especially the French are going really well. It’s nice to have these teams around us.”

Burnett and Gimson jumped right into the European Championships after the Games but then took a break, putting their hours into learning wing foiling. “We’re just getting back

into our routines,” said Burnett.

The 49ers were the largest fleet, sailing in the lighter morning winds, split into two fleets. The British team of Jack Hawkins and Chris Tomas are tied with the French pair of Kevin Fischer Guillou and Noe’ Delpach. Both are experiencing their first tastes of sitting atop a big championship.

With only the two 49er fleets needing to sail qualifiers through Thursday, the fleets are aiming for three races each day. Though the shifty warm breezes kept the scores of even the leaders mixed, the sunshine will be the only consistent factor this week.

Red Warriors’ fans disappointed after hopes dented by Japan

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 17

Oman's hopes to secure tickets to 2022 Fifa World Cup in Doha was dented by Japan after the latter defeated the 'Red Warriors' 1-0 by a late goal through Junya Ito on Tuesday.

As many as 14,123 fans attended the match at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex to support the Red Warriors. The spectators left the venue with disappointment as the fans were looking for a much improved performance that would have revived the hopes after winning against the Asian heavyweight in Osaka city earlier in September.

Oman head coach, Branko Ivankovic, said post the encounter that the team could not dedicate the win for the domestic community which is celebrating 51st National day. “Unfortunately, the team suffered a loss in the game. Japan striker managed to register a goal from a mistake. In football you have to take the advantages of the mistakes and convert it into goals and targets. I cannot talk more about the fixture until the final analysis of the game. However, I am satisfied in some parts of the game,” he added.

The Croatian coach affirmed that the players cannot

maintain the same technical level during the whole match in both halves. “The opponent was not an easy task as it is the top Asian team. The team still has some chances and we have to work hard until the concluding fixture,” he ended.

The third successive win in a row for Japan moved them into the second place with 12 points and pushed Australia to third place at 11 points. Australia and China played out a 1-1 draw in Sharjah stadium. Saudi Arabia is topping the group with 16 points after they defeated Vietnam 1-0 on Tuesday.

Japan's coach Hajime Moriyasu said that the encounter was tough as expected. “Persistence and determination led Japan to the triumph result in the match. Everyone in the team, whether played or not, worked very hard to perform well in the ground. It was a difficult match but players moved with their clear target until accomplishing the desired win,” he concluded.

The forthcoming round of AFC Asian qualifiers — Road to Qatar will take place on January 27th, 2022. Oman will take on Saudi Arabia in Riyadh while Japan will face China. Australia will play against Vietnam at the former's home turf.



ARGENTINA QUALIFY FOR QATAR 2022 AFTER 0-0 DRAW WITH BRAZIL

SAN JUAN: Argentina drew 0-0 at home with Brazil in a tense and end-to-end game on Tuesday, but results elsewhere meant the point they earned was enough to secure them a place in next year's World Cup in Qatar.

Brazil, who guaranteed their spot last week, top the 10-team South American qualifying section with 35 points and Argentina have 29, six clear of third-placed Ecuador.

The top four teams qualify automatically, and the fifth-placed side go into an inter-regional playoff.

Even the Argentine players did not know they had qualified until well after the match in San Juan. It was only after Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia recorded wins later in the evening that the Argentines were mathematically assured of their place in Qatar.

The good news came after an entertaining and hard fought game in western Argentina.

Neither side was able to impose themselves in an even game with Fred's second-half shot for Brazil that clipped the top of the bar the closest either team came to breaking the deadlock.

The goalless draw means Argentina are now 27 matches unbeaten, a run stretching back more than two years.



Argentina's Lionel Messi (C) is challenged by Brazil's Edenilson during their South American qualification football match for the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022. — AFP

The last time Brazil and Argentina played a match, the action lasted just five minutes. The game in Sao Paulo was cut

short by officials who invaded the pitch and stopped the game, accusing the Argentine players of not following the proper

Covid-19 quarantine rules.

The match this time was hotly anticipated and while it lacked goals, it did not lack action.

Alongside Vinicius Jr and Raphinha up front, Brazil started with Matheus Cunha in place of Neymar, their top

goalscorer who did not travel to Argentina amid concerns about a thigh injury.

Vinicius Jr only had the goalkeeper to beat after 17 minutes but his attempted chip went wide and Cunha's ambitious lob from his own half flew over just moments later.

At the other end, Alisson got down to save well from Rodrigo De Paul five minutes before half time.

The game opened up even further in the second half with Fred and Vinicius Jr coming close for Brazil.

But the game was still there for the taking and inevitably Lionel Messi was involved before the 90 minutes were up.

Messi was back to full fitness to start his first game since October but the Paris St Germain striker was quiet until the final seconds of the match when he forced Alisson to get down to save a rasping shot from 20 metres.

"I gave it all I could", Messi said. "This was a very intense game... It's been a while since I've been out (injured) and it's not easy to play in a game that demands this kind of pace."

"We knew it was going to be like this, a match that was tough and hard to perform in."

— Reuters

Federer hopes to return one last time from mid-2022



LAUSANNE: Roger Federer is targeting a return to the circuit in mid-2022, the Swiss star said Wednesday, hoping to play some big matches once again before bowing out in style.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion, who turned 40 in August, is working his way back from a persistent right knee injury that restricted him to just five tournaments this year.

Federer said the Australian Open in January was out of the question, while participation in the French Open in May and June and his favourite major, Wimbledon in June and July, was highly unlikely.

"The truth is I would be incredibly surprised to play Wimbledon, which is to say that Australia does not even come into play", he said in an interview published in the Swiss newspapers *24 Heures* and *Tribune de Geneve*.

Federer had been out for more than a year with two surgeries on his right knee before getting back onto the tour in 2021.

But he played only 13 matches, and underwent a third operation on the knee following his quarter-final defeat at Wimbledon in July.

He said he was targeting a "return to competition in summer 2022", but warned that "the next four or five months are going to be decisive" for his comeback.

Road to recovery

After this year's Wimbledon, Federer missed the Tokyo Olympics to undergo more surgery on his right meniscus, followed by a cartilage operation.

"This operation, I was going to have to do it anyway for my long-term well-being... to be able to ski with my children, to play football or tennis with my friends in the decades to come. My first motivation was to get back in shape for

my life as a man", he said.

Federer said he will start light running again in January and then only take up "training that looks like tennis" in March-April.

"I want to go and see one last time what I am capable of as a professional tennis player", he said. "We would all like that I could say goodbye in my own way and on a tennis court."

"And if we push the reasoning, playing again in 2022 or 2023 no longer makes a big difference: 40 or 41 years old, it's the same thing."

Federer said the question was more one of whether he was prepared to put himself through the pain day after day.

"Today, my heart answers yes. So I take things step by step," he said.

"And even if I know full well that the end is near, I want to try to play in some big matches again." — AFP

Muguruza to face Kontaveit for WTA Finals championship

MEXICO CITY: Garbine Muguruza saw off fellow Spaniard Paula Badosa 6-3 6-3 and Anett Kontaveit outlasted Maria Sakkari 6-1 3-6 6-3 to punch their tickets on Tuesday to the WTA Finals championship match in Guadalajara.

In their first career meeting, Muguruza's superior firepower put Badosa on the back foot from the outset and she broke the Indian Wells champion for a second time with a forehand winner to take the first set.

Badosa's frustration boiled over during the change over and she was unable to hold serve in the lengthy second game of the second set, giving the former world number one another early break on the sun-drenched court.

Muguruza fended off Badosa's three break point chances in an 11-minute third game to take a 3-0 lead and rolled on from there, firing an ace to go up 5-2 and sealing the win when Badosa hit a backhand into the net on match point.

"I think it's the best match that I played so far here in Guadalajara", Muguruza said.

"It was a tough match facing another Spaniard in the semi-finals... so it was tricky. But I'm very happy that I got the win."

The loss ends a breakthrough year for Badosa, who will finish the season at a career-best world number eight.

"Today was a tough day", Badosa said.



"I didn't feel myself. I didn't play the match that I was expecting."

Muguruza will have her work cut out for her when she faces the red-hot Kontaveit, who played flawless tennis to take the first set off Sakkari in less than 30 minutes under the lights in the high-altitude Mexican city.

Sakkari, who emerged the victor of a draining match the night before against Aryna Sabalenka, finally broke the Estonian's serve in the second set to force a decider, much to the delight of the fired up crowd.

The match ultimately hinged on a lengthy Sakkari service game with the Greek trailing 3-4 in third.

On break point, Sakkari

pounced on a blocked service return but rifled her forehand into the net to give Kontaveit a 5-3 lead she would not relinquish.

Two-time Grand Slam champion Muguruza is making her fourth appearance at the season-ending finals and her first in the championship match, while the eighth-seeded Kontaveit will be playing in the biggest match of her career on Wednesday.

The season-ending WTA Finals were not held last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic and were originally scheduled to take place in Shenzhen before being moved because of pandemic-related travel restrictions in China.

— Reuters

South Africa, Benin appeal to Fifa after World Cup losses

JOHANNESBURG: Fifa said on Tuesday it had received complaints from South Africa and Benin after the countries suffered defeats last weekend which eliminated them from 2022 World Cup qualifying in Africa.

South Africa lost a Group G decider 1-0 in Ghana, who converted a disputed penalty after Daniel Amartey appeared to dive.

"We have received a complaint from the South African FA in relation to this matter and will review it," a Fifa statement said.

South Africa want the match replayed and there is a precedent as they had a 2018 World Cup



qualifying win over Senegal cancelled after scoring from a wrongly awarded penalty.

Senegal won the replay and went on to qualify for the finals in Russia.

Meanwhile, Benin are appealing a 2-0 loss to the Democratic Republic of Congo in Kinshasa, which cost them first place in Group J.

They say the Congolese made four substitutions on four separate occasions during the top-of-the-table clash.

Fifa regulations permit sides to make up to five substitutions during a match, but only during three windows.

"We have asked Fifa to take the relevant measures after this obvious violation of the rules," a Beninese sports ministry official told reporters. — AFP

Oman Cricket to conduct Level 1 Course for Umpires

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket has announced Level 1 Course for Umpires as part of its development programme; Oman Cricket is scheduled to conduct a week long Level 1 Course for Umpires from Monday until November 29, 2021.

A R Srinivasan (pictured), Oman Cricket's Umpires Development Officer and Educator, the only certified Level 0, Level 1 and Level 2 Educator in the country, will conduct the course for those Umpires who completed their Level 0 certification in 2018 and 2020.

In all 22 Umpires will be attending the course.

The Level 1 course will be conducted at the Oman Cricket Academy building from 7.00 pm to 9.30 pm

from November 22-25, 2021 followed by full day sessions on November 28, 2021.

On the last day of the course, November 29, 2021, a written exam will be held followed by on-field exam in a match that will be played between two senior teams.

All those who complete the course successfully, will be eligible to officiate in all formats of the game organised by Oman Cricket, except in the Premier Division, A Division and Under-19 tournaments.

Oman is the only ICC affiliate nation to have 24 Level 2 Umpires and with this Level 1 course, when completed, will have the highest number of Level 1 Umpires as well.



Zawawi Powertech scamper to win over Al Jadidi Stars

MUSCAT: In a high scoring A Division match of the Oman Cricket League, Sunlight beat Sarco LLC by 17 runs. Batting first after calling it right at the toss, Sunlight scored 270 runs before being all out in 43.3 overs, with Iftikhar Ahmed top-scoring with 59 runs, including nine boundaries and one six. Hafiz Irfan also contributed a

quickfire 54 off 29 balls, studded with eight boundaries and two massive sixes. Sandip Patel was the pick of the bowlers, with three wickets.

In reply, Sarco LLC came close to reaching the target, falling short by 17 runs. Zahid Hafiz was the main contributor with the bat, scoring 74 runs with six boundaries and two

sixes. Rajesh Devashya and Ilyas Afreedi picked up three wickets each to derail the Sarco march towards the victory.

BRIEF SCORES: Sunlight 270/10 in 43.3 overs (Iftikhar Ahmed 59(57) 9x4, 1x6, Hafiz Irfan – 54(29) 8x4, 2x6; Sandip Patel – 53/3, Tanuj Shivakumar Shridevi 20/3) won



Al Jadidi

against Sarco LLC 253/10 in 45.2 Overs (Zahid Hafiz 74(94) 6x4, 2x6; Rajesh Devashya 35/3, Ilyas Afreedi 20/3) by 17 runs

In another A Division match of the Oman Cricket League, Zawawi Powertech had a hard-fought win over

wickets in a low-scoring game.

Nidhin Mohan was the top-scorer for Al Jadidi with 34 runs, while Nishad K S was the highest wicket taker for Zawawi, scalping four wickets for 20 runs.

In reply, Zawawi also found the going tough, but scampered their way to a win in 30.4 overs, losing eight wickets in the bargain.

Prabhakaran Kannan was the notable contributor with 26 runs, while Ali Muhammed tried to make a match of it with four wickets for 33 runs for Al Jadidi.

BRIEF SCORES: Al Jadidi Stars 116/10 in 43 overs (Nidhin Mohan 34(67) 3x4, Nishad K S – 20/4) lost against Zawawi Powertech 120/8 in 30.4 Overs (Prabhakaran Kannan 26 (21) 1x4, 2x6; Ali Muhammed 33/4) by 2 wickets

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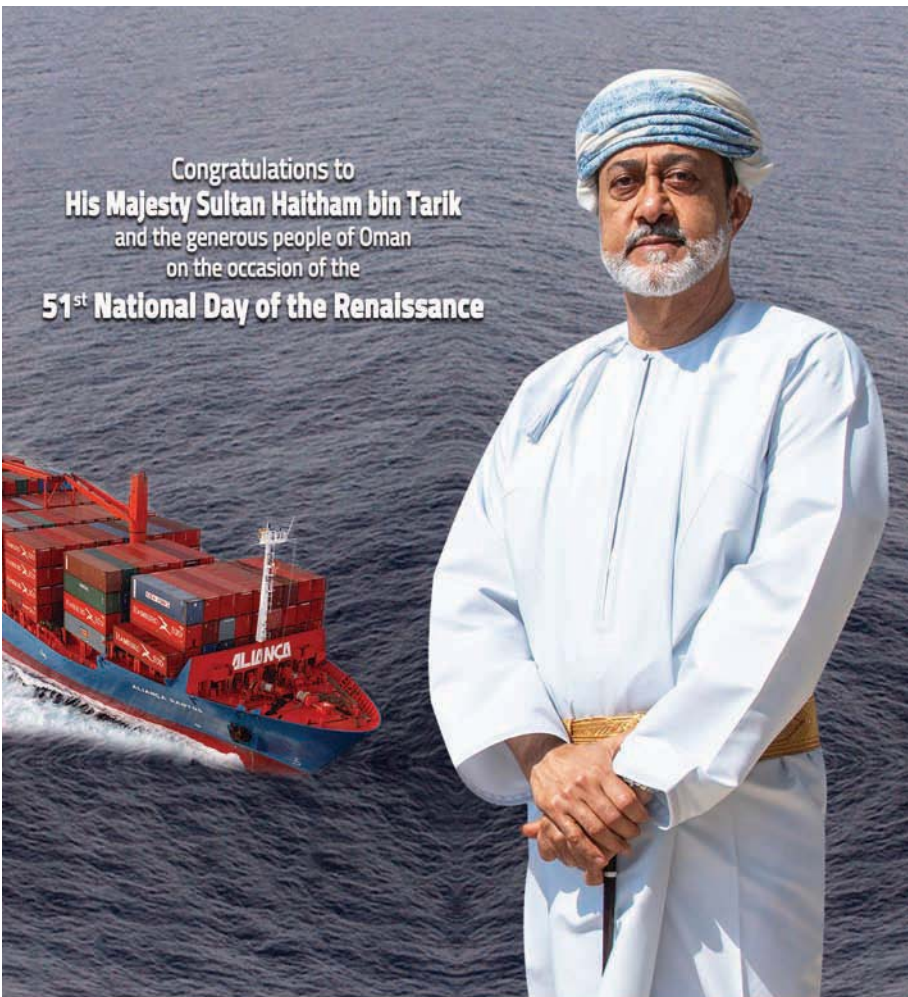
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NZ's Jamieson
to skip T20
series in India
and prepare
for tests

AUCKLAND: Cricket-NZ's Jamieson to skip T20 series in India and prepare for tests. New Zealand fast bowler Kyle Jamieson will join skipper Kane Williamson on the sidelines for the Twenty20 series in India to prepare for the test series against the hosts later this month, coach Gary Stead said on Wednesday.

The three-match T20 series begins in Jaipur later on Wednesday, three days after New Zealand lost the World Cup final to Australia in Dubai. The 6'8" Jamieson was in the World Cup squad but did not play a single match.

New Zealand took the decision to rest Williamson on Tuesday and both players will train with the test squad ahead of the first match in Kanpur on November 25.

"We decided through talking with Kane and Kyle that they won't play in this T20 series," Stead said.

"They're both going to get ready for the test matches and I think you'll find there will be other guys involved in the test matches that won't play the entire series either."

"It's a bit of a balancing act at the moment and with three T20 games in five days plus travel to three different cities it's a very, very busy time."

Stead added Lockie Ferguson is "likely to play" his first T20I since April.

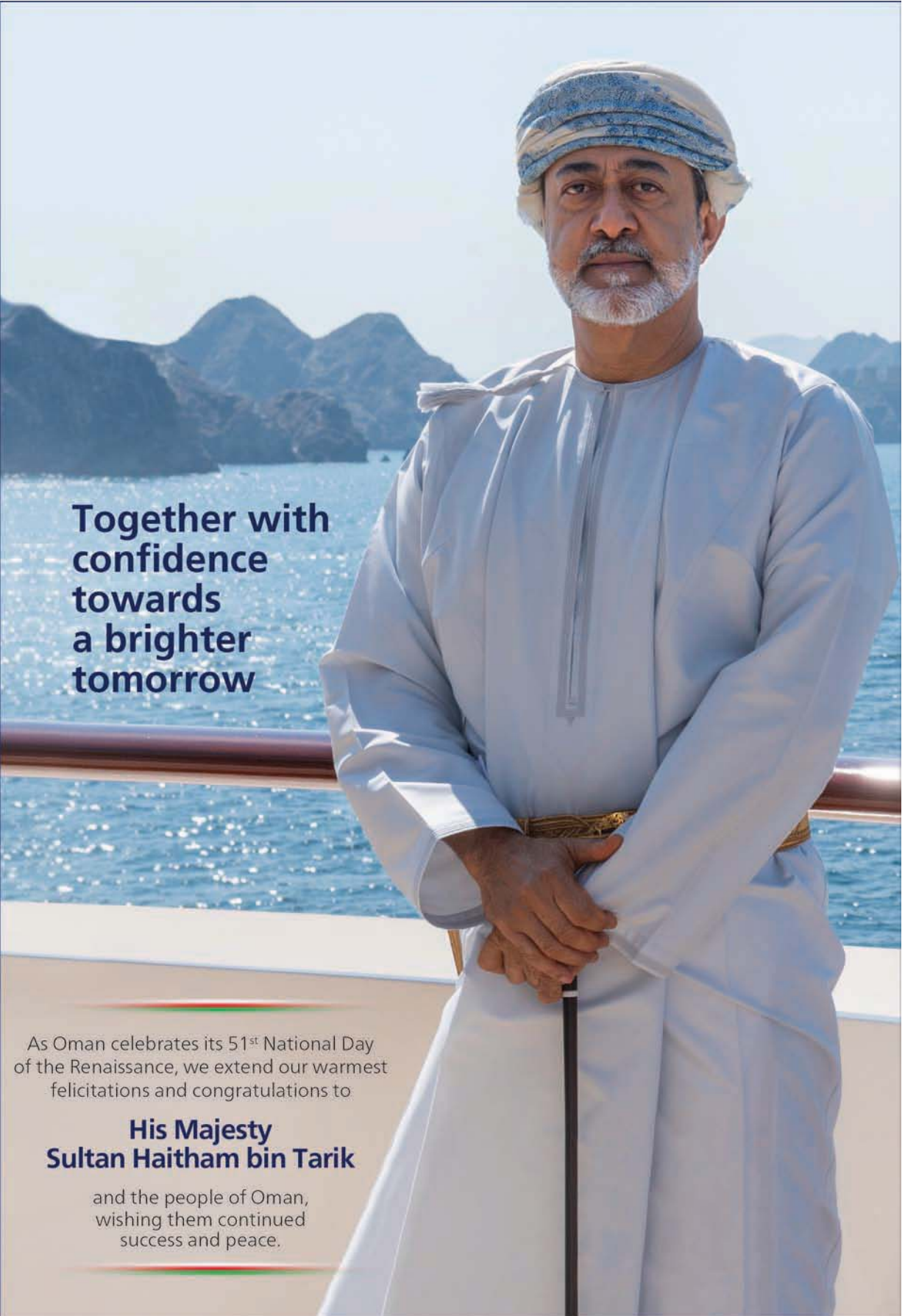
— Reuters

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As Oman celebrates its 51st National Day of the Renaissance, we extend our warmest felicitations and congratulations to

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On the momentous occasion of the 51st National Day, Saud Bahwan Group extends its felicitations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and the people of Oman.



SAUD BAHWAN Group

‘Made in Oman’ buses begin rolling out from Duqm plant

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The first batch of buses bearing the ‘Made in Oman’ label have begun rolling out from the modern assembly plant of Karwa Motors at Duqm Special Economic Zone. The imminent launch of the project – an Omani-Qatari joint venture – comes against the backdrop of celebrations marking the Sultanate of Oman’s 51st National Day of the Renaissance. Earlier this year, Karwa Motors announced that it planned to manufacture around 200 buses by the end of this year, targeted primarily at schools and educational institutions. Production is proposed to be ramped up to around 500 buses and coaches annually in the first phase of operations, eventually rising to 700 vehicles thereafter. Target markets will include passenger transportation companies and operators of long-haul inter-city travel. The landmark project is backed by Karwa Motors, a strategic partnership between Qatar Transport, the national



transport company in Qatar with a 70 per cent stake, and a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman, owning the balance 30 per cent. Project costs amount to \$90 million in Phase 1, with total investment expected to triple to \$270 million over the next two phases. The plant has been designed and equipped to assemble primarily coach buses, city buses and school buses tailored for the local and regional markets. Electric coaches are also envisaged as part of the project’s product range. Semac Oman, the local subsidiary of prominent Indian multidisciplinary design and engineering consultancy firm, Semac Consultants, was the Main Consultant for Civil Designs.

FDI climbs to \$42.3 billion

MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM: Oman attends trade policy review meeting of WTO

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 18

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, participated via video link in a review meeting of the country’s trade policy held at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva. This is the Sultanate of Oman’s third review — the first having been held in 2008, followed by the second in 2014. The trade policy review mechanism aims to contribute to improving the compliance of all members with rules, regulations and obligations in accordance with multilateral trade agreements, as well as collective trade agreements, thereby facilitating the functioning of the multilateral trading system. This is achieved by boosting transparency and understanding of member states’ trade policies. The review covers other trade policies and practices and their



impact on the functions of the multilateral trading system also enables a comprehensive policy and practice assessment process. Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said in his speech that the Sultanate of Oman, under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, benefits from a skilled and educated workforce, advanced infrastructure and a business-friendly regulatory framework, competitive investment environment, and strategic location at the crossroads of global trade routes. The number of SMEs registered with the government now totals 54,804 as of June 2021, an increase of 23.2 per cent compared to the same period last year. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) at the end of Q2 2021 amounted to \$42.3 billion compared to \$39 billion in the same period in 2020, he said. The Foreign Capital Investment Law allows foreign ownership of up to 100 per cent in most Omani economic sectors, including industry, logistics, mining, tourism, fisheries and fish farming, as well as possible sectors within information technology, health care, educational services and the green and circular economy. To sustain a positive business environment, the Invest Easy portal is now a single window for approvals relating to 88 per cent of economic activities. Since the launch of the new licensing approval service in April, nearly 54,000 applicants received automatic approvals, he said. Further evidence of the Sultanate of Oman’s strong commitment to improving the investment environment is demonstrated by Oman Vision 2040, the investor residence programme launched last September, and a retiree residency programme. (With inputs from ONA)

18 November

“While we make a covenant with Allah the Almighty to devote our life for Oman and the Omani citizens to keep its glorious renaissance and rally going, we call upon you to make a covenant with Allah the Almighty to do the same.”

His Majesty Haitham bin Tarik al Said





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and its people



Heartiest felicitations to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and the people of Oman on the glorious 51st National Day of the Renaissance. As we celebrate this momentous day, Sohar Aluminium reaffirms its sincere vows of loyalty to His Majesty and asserts its continuous endeavours towards its economic, social and cultural goals, in a manner that embodies a clear-cut vision and expectations towards a more prosperous future for the Sultanate of Oman.





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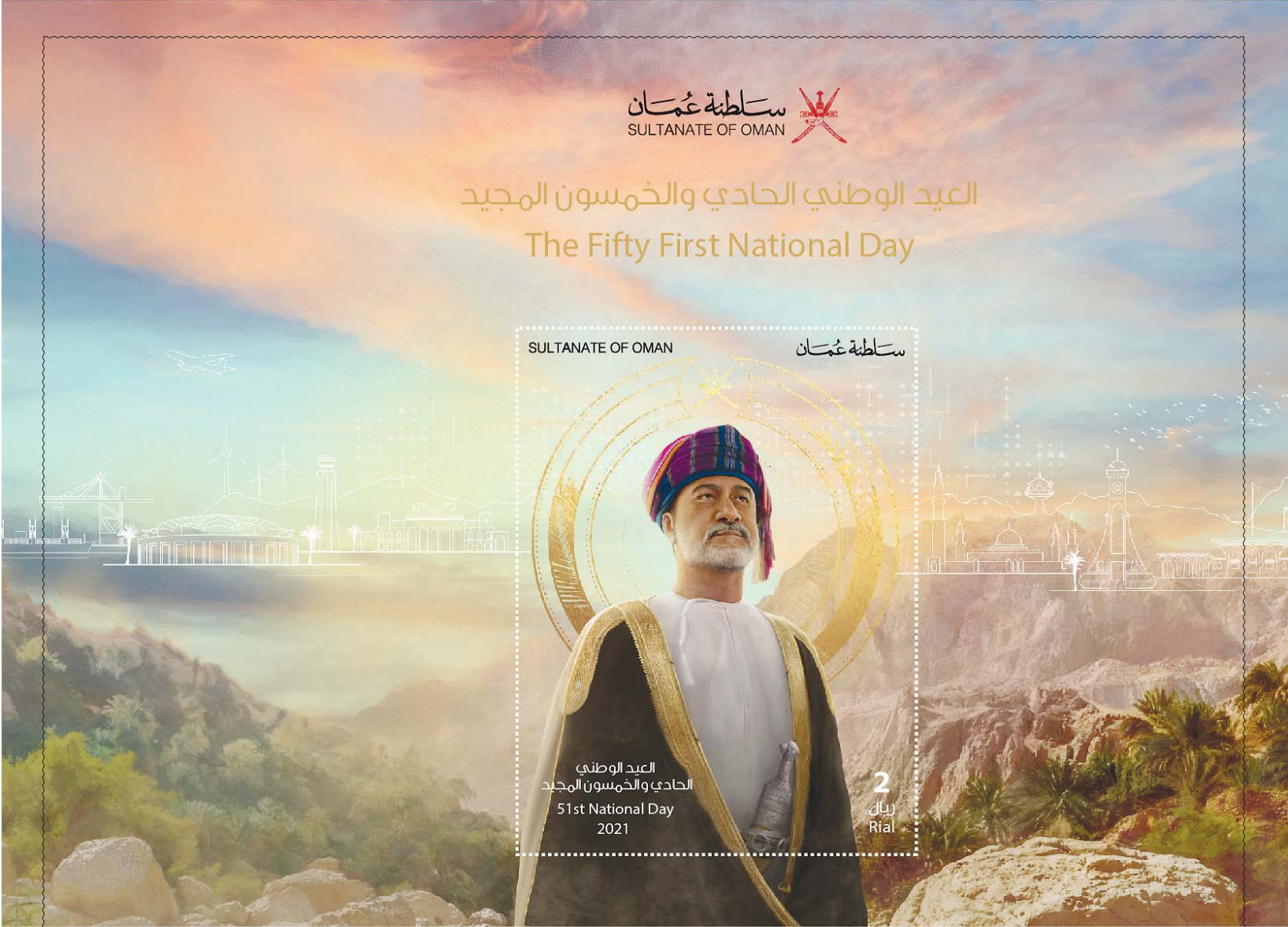
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OMAN POST LAUNCHES 51ST NATIONAL DAY OF THE RENAISSANCE STAMP

MUSCAT: Oman Post issued a commemorative stamp to mark the momentous occasion of the 51st National Day of the Renaissance, presenting a portrait of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The stamp serves as a symbol to reflect on the Sultanate of Oman's milestones over more than five decades of its renewed Renaissance. The artistic and aesthetic characteristics of the stamp include various elements that symbolise some of the Sultanate of Oman's iconic developmental milestones.

To further celebrate the 51st National Day of the Renaissance, Oman Post will be launching a collection of items in the coming days including a canvas with a portrait of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. In addition, Oman Post will launch a limited-edition medal curated with the same design of the 51st National Day of the Renaissance stamp.

The 51st National Day of the Renaissance stamp, its souvenir sheet, and the upcoming other items will be available at the recently opened Stamps and Collections Shop at the Opera Galleria in Muscat. Collectors can also order the new items via WhatsApp on +96897730684.

ahli islamic rewards 51 winners cash prizes totalling RO 102,000



MUSCAT: Celebrating the Sultanate of Oman's 51st National Day of the Renaissance, ahli islamic has announced special draws, offering cash prizes totalling RO 102,000, for 51 lucky winners (RO 2,000 per winner).

The draw will be streamed live on ahli islamic social media pages in the presence of bank officials. ahli islamic has called on all its customers to continue saving, while maintaining a minimum balance of RO 100 in their Qitaf accounts. Through this simple scheme, the bank aims to expand the base of winners and reach the largest possible number of eligible customers who can qualify to enter the draw and win valuable prizes.

Unveiling the details of the upcoming draw, Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, Deputy General Manager and Head of ahli islamic, said, "At ahli islamic, we share joy with the citizens and residents of the country.

We are pleased to celebrate with our esteemed customers the anniversary of National Day by providing them even greater opportunities to win cash prizes, which will motivate them to save more and achieve their dreams and aspirations of a more stable future — for themselves and their families.

"On this glorious occasion, I extend my heartiest congratulations to our leader His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, and to the Omani people. May Allah secure this glory for many years and may our country enjoy the rewards of safety, stability and prosperity."

He further affirmed that the bank would continue to offer innovative services and products that live up to customers' expectations, and contribute to widening its customer base with provisions of faster and easier banking solutions that are consistent with their needs.

He also pointed out that the Qitaf prize scheme, which includes draws for a variety of customers, has, since its launch, been instrumental in changing the lives of many winners. It has become an inspiring and motivating event for account holders to continue saving and planning for their future.

Qitaf not only aims to raise awareness on the importance of savings in the society, but also provides investment opportunities. ahli islamic seeks to reward more than 4,200 customers from all branches of the bank with prizes totalling more than RO 1,250,000, throughout the year. Qitaf offers weekly and monthly cash prizes, along with a cash prize of RO 100,000 per quarter, for one winner.



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SUSTAINING THE GREEN SHOOTS OF AN ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Moody's estimates that higher oil prices will account for around half of the expected reduction in the fiscal deficit to less than 2 per cent of GDP in 2021 from 18 per cent of GDP in 2020.

The Sultanate of Oman's economic recovery, after several years of malaise brought on the global downturn and coronavirus pandemic, is truly under way. Oil prices are buoyant, the budget deficit is shrinking, and employment creation for Omanis is on the uptrend.

This recovery, coinciding with the 51st National Day of the Renaissance, is even more satisfying because of the Omani government's commendable success in halting the spread of the coronavirus infection through its aggressive vaccination drive.

The outlook has never been more promising. In its latest report on the country's fiscal performance, the Ministry of Finance announced that resurgent oil prices averaging \$57.4 per barrel during the first nine months of this year helped slash the Sultanate of Oman's budget deficit to RO 1,030 million, representing an impressive 58 per cent decline compared to the corresponding figure of RO 2,448 million for the January - September period of 2020.

By the end of September 2021, public revenue increased by 22.6 per cent to RO 7,367.6 million as compared to RO 6,011.8 million registered in the same period of 2020.

Over the past months, the Sultanate of Oman witnessed some improvement in oil prices that averaged US\$57.4 at the end of the 3rd quarter of 2021, which has raised net oil revenue to RO 3,908.5 million and gas revenue to RO 1,422.0 million.

Hydrocarbon exports have remained the primary revenue earner for the country. While daily oil production slid slightly to an average of 957,000 barrels per day during the January - September 2021 period, down from 959,000 bpd during the corresponding period of 2020, average oil prices were significantly higher this year.

It rose to an average of \$57.4



per barrel this year, up from \$49.1 per barrel for the period under review last year.

This uptick in oil prices translated into net oil revenue of RO 3,908.5 million this year, up from RO 3,0038.9 million for the corresponding period of 2020, representing a growth of 28.6 per cent.

Likewise, gas revenues surged 38 per cent to RO 1,422 million this year, up from RO 1,030 million in 2020. Also buoying public revenues during the first nine months of this year was a 45.2 per cent jump in current revenue to RO 2,004.1 million, up from RO 1,380.3 million for the corresponding period of 2020.

Non-tax revenue amounted to about RO 1,034.1 million, which included RO 613.3 million of dividends was received from various government investments. Additionally, tax and fees revenue totalled RO 969.9 million.

Spending for the period was also kept in check. Total expenditure amounted to RO 8,397.6 million this year, which was marginally lower by 0.74 per cent compared to last year's tally of RO 8,460.1 million.

Also easing the fiscal burden on the government this year was the creation of Energy Development Oman (EDO) with the mandate to independently raise the financing requirements of Block 6 licensed to Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the

country's largest producer of hydrocarbons.

As of September 2021, Energy Development Oman (EDO) became fully operational and thus all government obligations related to the oil and gas production expenditure has been transferred to EDO.



In August, EDO announced that it had successfully secured a \$2.5 billion debut financing transaction involving the participation of a number of local, regional and international banks. The positive report comes on the heels of upbeat assessments by a number of credit rating agencies that had revised the Sultanate of Oman's economic outlook.

Moody's revised the outlook on the Sultanate of Oman's credit rating to stable from negative and affirmed its rating at Ba3.

According to Moody's, the change in outlook reflects the

significant easing of government liquidity and external financing pressures, mainly as a result of the ongoing implementation of the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan and significantly higher oil prices since the middle of 2020, which will underpin a steady decline in the direct government

debt burden to around 60 per cent of GDP by 2024.

The Medium Term Fiscal Plan targets, among other things, a reduction in the Sultanate of Oman's public debt from 80 per cent in 2020 to 60 per cent by 2024, a decline in the government's gross financing need per annum from 22 per cent in 2020 to 10 per cent during 2021 - 23, and a decline in the Sultanate of Oman's current account deficit from 13 per cent in 2020 to 4 per cent during 2021 - 23.

According to Moody's, resurgent oil prices are expected to positively impact the Sultanate of Oman's twin deficits - the fiscal deficit and the public debt - effectively returning them to pre-pandemic levels within the next couple of years. It noted however that it improved outlook is contingent on the scrupulous implementation of fiscal adjustment measures set out in the government's National Programme for Fiscal Balance (Tawazun). Moody's estimates that higher oil prices will account for around half of the expected reduction in the fiscal deficit to less than 2 per cent of GDP in 2021 from 18 per cent of GDP in 2020.

Furthermore, based on Moody's assumption that prices continue to average above \$60-65/barrel in 2022-

23, fiscal deficits will likely remain small in the medium term, underpinning a large and likely durable reduction in the government's gross financing needs to less than 10 per cent of GDP per annum during 2021-23 from more than 22 per cent of GDP in 2020, it stated.

In addition to reining in expenditure, the Tawazun programme proposes rollbacks of all subsidies (save for those targeted at economically vulnerable sections of the national population), controlling the public sector wage bill, freezing budgetary capital spending, diversifying and growing non-oil revenue streams, and potentially introducing a personal income tax on high-income earners.

Buoyant oil prices will help whittle down the government's soaring public debt to around 67 per cent of GDP in 2021, down from a peak of nearly 80 per cent of GDP last year.

This reduction will be driven by the growth of the hydrocarbon sector buoyed by higher oil prices.

By 2024, and assuming oil prices will remain resilient, the Sultanate of Oman's debt burden could decline back to pre-pandemic levels of around 60 per cent of GDP, said Moody's.

Complementing high oil prices in driving the reduction of the twin deficits over the medium term is the government's decision to pass its long-standing budgetary burden in relation to the hydrocarbon sector to the newly established Energy Development Oman (EDO), the ratings agency noted.

That budgetary responsibility amounted to an average of \$4.8 billion annually over the past five years, contributing around 6.5 - 7 per cent of GDP to the fiscal deficit every year.

Moody's also underlined the importance of a transformation of the Omani economy and the government's revenue base particularly as many leading countries move away from hydrocarbons towards greener energies. Hydrocarbon exports currently account for over 70 per cent of government revenue. Adding to the optimistic outlook,



The preliminary indicators of the country's economic performance are 'very reassuring and constantly improving'.

Evidence of this improvement can be seen in particular in the labour market, with as many as 32,000 Omanis set to receive employment this year

**DR SAID BIN
MOHAMMED AL
SAQRI**

Minister of Economy

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, recently noted that the preliminary indicators of the country's economic performance are "very reassuring and constantly improving".

Evidence of this improvement can be seen in particular in the labour market, with as many as 32,000 Omanis set to receive employment this year, he said. Based on initial performance indicators, there was a 10 per cent improvement in the country's economic performance during the first half of 2021, compared with the corresponding period of last year when the economy underwent a contraction, Dr Al Saqri said.

Various international ratings agencies had also upgraded the country's sovereign ratings, corroborating evidence of an improvement in the Sultanate of Oman's economic performance notwithstanding lingering pandemic-induced challenges.

The Ministry of Economy along with the Oman Vision 2040 Follow-Up and Implementation Unit, have been assigned roles to monitor important indicators related to increasing foreign investment, financial sustainability and rationalisation of spending.

In all, there are 430 programmes and initiatives set out in the 10th five-year plan for implementation in this regard by various entities, he said. At the same time, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is developing a dashboard that links all ministries, enabling the easy monitoring of how various government agencies perform in the implementation of their programmes outlined in the 10th Plan.

The 10th five-year plan, he said, seeks to achieve several overall objectives, including achieving a real average GDP growth rate of around 3.5 per cent and increasing the private sector's contribution to investment to about 60 per cent.

At the same time, the real growth rate of non-oil activities is projected to rise to 2.3 per cent annually, and an increase in the investment rate to about 20 per cent of GDP.



Growth, jobs and inflation clash in Biden Fed choice

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's nominee as the next chair of the Federal Reserve, expected as soon as this week, will inherit an economy headed for the fastest annual growth in a generation with wage increases flowing to the lowest-paid workers, strong hiring, and household bank accounts flush with cash.

They'll also inherit a situation where homes, cars, food and clothing are becoming steadily more expensive, and whether it's current chair Jerome Powell for a second four-year term or a promotion for current Fed Governor Lael Brainard, dealing with that inflation shock carries risks for both the president, the economy and the Fed.

Rising prices have already begun to sour the public mood, pushing Biden's approval numbers to the lowest point of his presidency, cited in polls as a concern that crosses party lines and income brackets and which is shared even among those for whom higher prices have been offset by ongoing government payments.

For the Fed, it has presented an old problem in fresh circumstances — with tangled

global supply chains, a hard-to-read and potentially diminished US labour market, and rising prices potentially forcing them to raise interest rates and slow growth before the economy recovers the jobs and workforce levels seen before the coronavirus crisis.

It's a choice both Biden and the Fed hoped could be avoided in a drive to push job growth further and deeper into the economy, on the expectation inflation would behave roughly the same as it did before the pandemic. "Six per cent inflation is not the right level of inflation, we can all agree on that," said Nela Richardson, chief economist for payroll processor ADP, citing recent consumer price increases, at a 30-year high, that have wiped out rising wages and far outstripped the Fed's 2 per cent target.

The Fed still expects that high pace of price increases to be "transitory," but "wealthier consumers have the luxury of time," Richardson said. "Low-income less-skilled consumers do not.

As much as I understand the transitory argument, waiting it out is not the best option for some



US President Joe Biden speaks in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. — Reuters

people."

Biden said on Tuesday he would make a decision on the Fed in around four days. Powell's current term ends in February and whether Biden chooses him or Brainard — both have been interviewed — the nominee will need to go through a confirmation hearing and vote in a closely divided Senate.

But a process that began as a somewhat clear-cut choice — stick with the Republican Powell for continuity and bipartisanship or tap the Democrat Brainard to

reward supporters and pursue a broader remake of the central bank — has turned trickier.

Both are practiced central bankers who have worked together for years and shared in remaking Fed policy to put more emphasis on jobs and allow some higher inflation to do so. Both will have to wrestle in coming months with the same dilemma of how far to let those inflation risks run before taking action.

"No matter how this comes out there would be a lot of continuity in Fed policy. Both

No matter how this comes out there would be a lot of continuity in Fed policy. Both of these players have long track records

JAMES BULLARD
St Louis Federal Reserve President

of these players have long track records," St Louis Federal Reserve President James Bullard said on Tuesday on Bloomberg Television. But politically the landscape for Biden has changed from one where the Fed could keep its prime focus on jobs to one where the fortunes of the president and his party may need a dose of inflation fighting as well.

Objectively much is going right. The economy added more than half a million jobs in October and analysts expect strong employment growth ahead given the near-record number of openings reported by firms and the willingness to offer higher wages.

Households are still sitting on large cash balances as a result of pandemic stimulus programs — and are willing to spend based on retail sales that continued strong in October.

Families with children are receiving monthly payments that have cut poverty rates and should, ostensibly, ease the sting of higher food and gas prices.

Yet Biden seems to have gotten little or no credit for that. In a recent Reuters/Ipsos poll inflation was cited by strong majorities of Democrats and Republicans as a "very big concern for me," an opinion that did not vary by much across education levels, income or among parents, many of whom receive the monthly child tax credits.

Republicans have zeroed in on the issue as a potent one for next year's midterm elections, and some Democratic lawmakers and economists as well have called on the Fed for tougher action. The Biden administration, like many at the central bank, also believes the current run of inflation is a temporary byproduct of ramping up the global economy after the pandemic.

— Reuters

Bank Nizwa, IFSB to support growth of Islamic finance development



MUSCAT: A key advocate of Islamic finance in the country, Bank Nizwa has been at the forefront of progressive change in the Islamic banking sector while continuing to offer innovative Sharia-compliant products and services.

In line with its mission to spread awareness and boost interest in the community about Islamic banking practices, Bank Nizwa recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Islamic Financial Service Board (IFSB) at the 15th IFSB Summit held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was signed between Shaikh Saif bin Hilal Nasser al Mawali, Board Member of Bank Nizwa, and Dr Bello Lawal Danbatta, Secretary-General of IFSB.

On signing the agreement, Shaikh Saif al Mawali said, "We are indeed delighted to be an IFSB member bank and we look forward to working closely with IFSB to attain new milestones through thoughtful, well-strategised

and prudent collaborations that serve our mutual benefits and objectives.

"The growing popularity of Islamic finance in the region has led to an increase in demand for innovative Sharia-compliant products and services that meet the varying needs of the industry."

To enhance their relationship and collaborate to further the institutional synergy for the overall development of Islamic Finance in the Sultanate of Oman and the region, Bank Nizwa and IFSB will jointly undertake several initiatives to achieve its goals.

Dr Bello Lawal said: "We at IFSB are delighted to join hands with Bank Nizwa for enhanced capacity building, awareness and development of Islamic Finance in the Sultanate of Oman and region.

"We are very positive that enhanced this synergy between two prestigious entities shall prove fruitful in achieving joint objectives."

Oil prices drop on oversupply warnings

LONDON: Oil prices fell on Wednesday after the International Energy Agency (IEA) and OPEC warned of impending oversupply and as Covid-19 cases in Europe increased the downside risks to demand recovery, though a fall in US gasoline stocks curbed losses.

Brent crude futures dropped 32 cents, or 0.4 per cent, by 1410 GMT to \$82.11 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell 43 cents, or 0.5 per cent, to \$80.33 a barrel. The IEA on Tuesday warned that while the "oil market remains tight by all measures, ... a reprieve



A worker collects a crude oil sample at an oil well operated by Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA in Morichal, Venezuela. — Reuters

from the price rally could be on the horizon... due to rising oil supplies." The agency said high price

levels will see US oil production rising again in 2022, accounting for about 60 per cent of its forecast of 1.9 million barrels per day for non-OPEC supply growth.

On Tuesday, OPEC Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo said the group sees signs of an oil supply surplus building from next month adding that its members and allies will have to be "very, very cautious".

New waves of Covid-19 cases in Europe which drove some governments to reimpose restrictions also weighed on prices. — Reuters

Head out to adventurous journeys in the GAC Motor GS4 i-4WD

MUSCAT: The specially introduced GS4 i-4WD is specially built for the Sultanate of Oman. Equipped with impressive power, capability and technology, it makes an ideal 4WD SUV for those looking to enjoy thrilling off-road and on-road experiences. The GS4 i-4WD makes a bold and eye-catching statement with its sleek profile that is enhanced with the 'Flying Dynamics' grille design.

The new improved design of the headlights, taillights and the alloy wheels makes its overall appeal, contemporary and elegant. Making every journey outstanding with power-packed moments is the 1.5L, 150 HP, turbo engine. This is paired to a 6-speed automatic transmission.

The result is low fuel consumption and quieter transmission power. The new eagle-eye projector headlights with LED DRLs provide a greater light distribution, resulting in optimum visibility at night. LED DRLs create better



vision and is comparable to those offered on luxury vehicles.

The LED combination taillights are inspired by the arrow fletched with feathers-like design that make the GS4 i-4WD easily stand out from the rest. The interior of the GS4 i-4WD is as interesting as the exterior.

A new 10.1-inch HD Touchscreen with Apple CarPlay, Bluetooth Connectivity and other vital features offers a more fun way to stay connected even on the go. The screen is linked to a wide-angle reverse camera assisted with dynamic guidelines that provide greater convenience and makes

parking hassle-free. Exclusive automatic air conditioning with a built-in air quality system with negative ion air purifier ensures you and your loved ones breathe fresh and purified air. Dedicated rear AC vents along with USB charging ports keep the rear passengers at ease. The GS4 i-4WD has impressive storage space that is perfect for your short or long journeys. The large 450L luggage compartment encourages you to make the most of your experiences.

Besides this, there are 24 well-designed storage space in the car to meet multiple

requirements of the passenger. In terms of safety the GS4 i-4WD stands out with a list of safety features.

The tyre pressure monitoring system helps keep an eye on low tyre pressures and high tyre temperatures too. These assist in safer driving experiences. The electronic stability programme assists the driver in safe braking in case of any untoward incidents. It also has safety features to avoid slipping/sliding while driving uphill or downhill at low speeds.

The latest intelligent 4WD system maintains excellent composure on harsh terrains and lets you also negotiate off-road drives with full confidence. The Central Differential Lock when activated helps you get further by allowing you to tread on the most challenging surfaces with ease.

95 per cent high strength steel body work of the GS4 provides maximum safety and stability. A testament of this is the fact that the roof can bear 4.5 times the roof pressure.

Bitcoin miner’s green patina is fool’s gold

The California Gold Rush had its hydropower phase, and cryptocurrency could be entering one too. Bitcoin miner Iris Energy relies mainly on renewables, especially water, for its electricity-sucking operations. This somewhat novel twist might help underpin its initial public offering valuation, but the climate-saving hype feels overblown and cannot mitigate other serious risk factors.

With each bitcoin worth near an all-time high of some \$60,000, it’s hardly surprising that investors are eager to back digital prospectors. Part of the backlash, however, relates to the astonishing levels of power required — currently around 119 terawatt hours annually, according to Cambridge University estimates, or more than the Netherlands uses.

Tesla quickly reversed a decision earlier this year to accept bitcoin as payment because of environmental concerns.

Swedish authorities last week urged the European Union to ban cryptocurrency mining to help meet energy transition targets.

In that context, the green hue to three-year-old Iris proved timely. It touts a strategy of locating operations in markets oversupplied with clean energy where the Australian company also theoretically is positioned to help support electricity grids when needed.

It’s better than depending on fossil fuels, but it is massive energy consumption nonetheless for an activity with dubious economic or social benefits. The business model also can be replicated. There’s no shortage of other worries.

Founders Daniel and William Roberts stepped back in to run Iris in September after parting ways with a chief executive who lasted less than five months. The brothers also will keep control with a special class of stock, relegating ordinary shareholders to second-class status. Raising capital helps, but also lurking amid extensive risk factors familiar to cryptocurrency aficionados is the mother of them all: “There is substantial doubt about our ability to continue as a going concern.”

That may partly explain a valuation discount using a quirky measure of anticipated computing power known as contracted hashrate capacity.

— Reuters

There is substantial doubt about our ability to continue as a going concern

DANIEL ROBERTS
Founder, Iris Energy



A BULL IN CHARGE

A man poses next to the ‘Charging Bull’ (known as the Wall Street Bull) replica statue in front of Sao Paulo’s stock Exchange (B3) headquarters. B3, the Brazilian stock exchange, inaugurates the sculpture of the Golden Bull, which symbolises the financial market in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

— AFP

Was COP26 cheap talk?



XAVIER VIVES

The author is professor of Economics and Finance at IESE Business School

WHILE “INEFFICIENT FOSSIL-FUELS SUBSIDIES” WILL STILL BE “PHASED OUT,” THE IMPLICATION IS THAT “EFFICIENT” FOSSIL-FUEL SUBSIDIES REMAIN AN OPTION.

Blah, blah, blah.” That was how the young climate activist Greta Thunberg characterized this year’s climate summit in Glasgow (COP26) – even before it began. She was right, in a way. Talk is cheap whenever international agreements lack effective mechanisms to verify and enforce commitments.

Gatherings like COP26 tend to lack credibility, even when they are presented as a “last chance” to prevent the end of the world as we know it. Nonetheless, such meetings help to raise awareness about the problem and potential solutions, and that is better than the denialism of past years.

True, the final agreement produced at COP26 appears weak, considering that the goal of keeping global warming below 1.5° Celsius is now barely alive. Instead of “unabated coal power” being phased out, now it will be “phased down,” a crucial change inserted at India’s insistence (and with China’s acquiescence).

While “inefficient fossil-fuels subsidies” will still be “phased out,” the implication is that “efficient” fossil-fuel subsidies remain an option. But, remember, talk is cheap.

Given India’s high dependence on coal, it is perhaps better that it has set its net-zero emissions target for 2070 rather than proclaiming a “mid-century” commitment that is has no intention of upholding.

More broadly, there are two main obstacles to attaining the world’s stated climate goals. The first is geopolitical, exemplified by Russia’s use of natural gas as a strategic tool to divide Europe between those using nuclear power as an energy-transition technology (France) and those using gas (Germany).

Even more important are major rivalries like the one between the United States and China. Here, there is some good news: COP26 seems to have induced the world’s two leading polluters to declare that they will work together to combat climate change. (We will know if this is more “blah, blah, blah” if and when bilateral military tensions increase.)

The second big obstacle is disagreement over how to compensate less-developed countries for forgoing or abandoning carbon-intensive technologies. The question is not only who foots the bill but also how financing should be delivered.

The history of development aid is not particularly encouraging. And although

it is well established that a global price for carbon is necessary to deal with the negative externality that greenhouse-gas emissions represent, implementing such a regime is difficult. Carbon markets remain mostly underdeveloped.

The deal adopted by almost 200 countries at COP26 will allow countries to meet their climate targets by buying offset credits representing emissions cuts made by others. This system will bring more clarity, but it is open to manipulation.

Worse, it permits countries to carry forward carbon credits registered since 2013 and created under the Kyoto Protocol, potentially setting the stage for a flooding of the emissions market and an artificially low carbon price.

The COP26 agreement also encourages the public and private sectors to mobilize more climate finance, and to foster innovation in green technologies. To that end, one promising model is Operation Warp Speed, the US public-private partnership that made possible the extremely rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines. The financial sector’s role in transferring resources from brown to green technologies will be crucial. *Copyright: Project Syndicate 2021*

Rich countries’ double standards on taxation



JOSE ANTONIO OCAMPO

The writer is professor at Columbia University

The last two years have thrown into sharp relief the structural injustices that underpin the global economy. As the Covid-19 pandemic drove an estimated 88-115 million people into extreme poverty, the world’s billionaires saw their wealth increase by more than 25 per cent.

And while countries in the Global North are now administering vaccine boosters, those in the Global South continue to struggle to secure even first doses for their populations. This appalling level of inequality is inextricably linked to rampant cross-border tax abuse, which is being perpetrated by both multinational corporations and wealthy individuals.

By refusing to pay their fair share of taxes, the world’s wealthiest actors rob poorer countries of the revenue they desperately need to confront the pandemic, such as by securing vaccine doses and supporting vulnerable citizens. G20 leaders claim — with much

self-satisfaction — that they are addressing the problem: They recently agreed to establish a global minimum corporate tax rate, thereby ending the “race to the bottom” fuelled by global competition for foreign investment. But the agreed rate is just 15 per cent, and targets only a sliver of the profits of 100 multinationals. This will do about as much to help poor countries as a glass of water would do to put out a wildfire.

The new State of Tax Justice report — published jointly by the Tax Justice Network, Public Services International, and the Global Alliance for Tax Justice — illustrates the scale of the conflagration: \$483 billion in public revenue is lost to cross-border tax abuse each year.

That is enough to vaccinate every man, woman and child on the planet three times over. Of the total losses, corporate-tax abuse by multinational companies accounts for \$312 billion, with offshore tax evasion by wealthy individuals accounting for the rest.

While wealthier countries technically bear a larger share of those losses, it is poorer countries that suffer the most.

In fact, while high- and upper-middle-income countries lose some \$443 billion to abusive international tax practices annually, that amounts to just 10 per cent of their public-health budgets. Low- and lower-middle-income countries lose about \$40 billion — the equivalent of a staggering 48 per cent of their public-health budgets.

Moreover, it is wealthy countries that are to blame for this state of affairs. Not only have they refused to tackle the problem in a meaningful way; they provide the financial services that enable international tax abuse. The United Kingdom, together with its network of overseas territories and Crown Dependencies, is responsible for 39 per cent of the overall losses.

The Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland account for another 16 per cent. Taken together, the OECD countries

are responsible for 78 per cent of revenue losses to international tax abuse each year. The double standards are astounding. After all, it was under the OECD’s inclusive framework on tax base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) that the much-touted G20 tax deal was designed. Some of the same countries that are enabling all this tax abuse — most notably, the UK and Switzerland — are also blocking a waiver on intellectual-property rights that would enable a massive vaccine rollout in the Global South.

This raises serious questions about whether the OECD is the right institution to coordinate global tax negotiations. True, the OECD opened the way for over 100 non-OECD members to have a voice in the negotiations. But several developing-country proposals were left out of the final agreement.

Not surprisingly, poor countries were far from satisfied. As the G20 was meeting in Rome late last month to endorse the deal, the G77, representing 134 developing economies, reiterated

its longstanding call to establish a global tax body at the United Nations, which would take responsibility for reforming global tax regulations and cracking down on offshore tax havens.

The proposal — under which the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters would be transformed into an intergovernmental forum — was first advanced in 2004 by then-UN secretary-general Kofi Annan and me, as Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

The G77 echoed our call in 2015, at the UN Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa.

A global UN tax body is also a key recommendation of the UN High Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda, and of the Independent Commission for Reform of International Corporate Taxation (ICRICT). (I proudly served on both.)

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features



National Day memories through the eyes of an expat

BY SHIVANI SARAT

“FEEL OLD YET?” the Sultanate of Oman asked me today.

Many of our parents came to the Sultanate of Oman at the early days of the Renaissance and became an integral part of the Omanis' national effort to build the country that we know today. Some of them saw the beginnings of a country separated by challenging mountains and a wide expanse of desert and nothingness ultimately growing to a nation that has become a beacon of peace and tolerance in the Middle East.

Today, the Sultanate of Oman celebrates its 51st National Day. Proud flags and coloured led lights bedecked the streets. Fireworks will adorn the sky, the flags hoisted proud and high with the national anthem reminding everyone of the achievements that were delivered in the last half a century.

The peaceful white awakens memories of the tall buildings dotting the capital and the marbles that make up the awe-inspiring Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque and the Royal Opera House. It speaks of mountain goats and fair clouds, of dishdasha and white silk scarves sold not just in the ancient stalls of Muttrah Souq but including that of Nizwa, Bahla, Salalah and wherever souqs are a necessity in the interiors of the country. It reminds us of Almarai milk and laban, of Al Safia frozen food. And how can we ever forget shawarma and hummus?

Bright red reminds me of Mwasalat trips and munching Oman Chips. It's the red light on busy streets and the reflection of the neon Lulu sign on my window when in the middle of summer, it rains. It's the mesmerising beauty of the red hue of sunlight along the shores of Shatti, the red roses and the giant slides of the rose garden, and sometimes, the poignant mountains that have seen the rise and fall of villages and civilisation.

The joyful green symbolises the fertile soils of the desert, the greenery of Jabal Al Akhdhar and Salalah and the date laden gardens of villages not just in the mountains but even those close to the sea. It's the small shrubs fighting for life at the corners of roundabouts, and the

giant baobab trees that created its own kingdom in the lush Samhan mountains.

The Sultanate of Oman has given us many symbols that will forever remind us of the ancient beauty of the country. The silver khanjar adorning Omani men reminds us of valour and the kindness of the natives. It also speaks of the protection bestowed to those who dare to dream, to those who find a home within the confines of the Sultanate of Oman. Here, for as long as there was the Renaissance, we were welcomed and felt at home.

Those that came before us saw the era before the taxis, where weekends meant heading to Ruwi Street and vacations meant basking in the beautiful Sur beaches. We are a generation walking in the footsteps of the ancients listening to the whispered stories of every fort, of every castle, of every park. For a brief moment, may that moment be 30 years or less, we create warm memories that when it's finally time to leave, we all softly whisper, “We may not belong to the Sultanate of Oman, but the Sultanate of Oman belongs to us.”

JUST ONCE MORE

Growing up in the Sultanate of Oman, I always dread leaving.

What if I had to leave for college? What if my parents move and I can't come for vacation? Current conditions had made that a reality for a lot of foreign workers in the Sultanate of Oman.

Even if this is not home, hearing that welcome note that in Arabic says, “Welcome to Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman, the temperature outside is 45 degrees Celsius” as the plane lands always brought a warm feeling that you are coming to a place you know.

But for those leaving, possible not to return, there's always a whispered wish of just once more.

Just once more: To walk by the cornice, listening to the sea and the beautiful noise of Muttrah Souq; pointing to the Sultan's ship and the Riyam Park on the way. Shawarmas with dew are an emotion, special mention to Istanbul and Camilia while we cycled to the Clock Tower.

Just once more: to experience the halwa of Eid, the spectacle of the festivals, the dances, the camels and the songs of the natives. We've made many friends here and we loved and lived our best lives under this sky.

Just once more: the falafels, hummus and garlic paste and laban in summers. The Softie ice cream and walks in Ruwi and the eventual hanging out in Al Shatti. Trips to the Nizwa Fort and the turtle beaches. The Khareef season in Salalah. To see the Sultanate of Oman lit up during national days, the flags flying proudly. Muscat festivals, the seas and sand. Al Hoota Cave, Jabal Al Akhdhar and long summers with a chance of rains.

We've made memories in the Sultanate of Oman. The nostalgia hits with these casual photos in our gallery. We may not belong to the Sultanate of Oman, but the Sultanate of Oman will always belong to us. These, with bittersweet wanting, are some national day memories through the eyes of an expat.

ENTERTAINMENT

READ

HOUSE OF GUCCI

BY SARA GAY FORDEN

An account of the murder of Maurizio Gucci in 1995; the basis of the film.

'Harry Potter' stars, but not J K Rowling, to reunite for TV special

“HARRY POTTER” STARS Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint are reuniting with other cast members from the blockbuster film franchise for a special 20th anniversary TV retrospective, movie studio Warner Bros said on Tuesday.

But “Harry Potter” author J K Rowling will not be among those making a personal appearance on the show.

Robbie Coltrane, who played Hagrid, Tom Felton (Draco Malfoy), Helena Bonham Carter (Bellatrix Lestrangle), Gary Oldman (Sirius Black), director Chris Columbus and other stars of the eight movies will join the former child actors for “Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts” on the movie set in London where the first film was made.

The special will be broadcast on January 1 on streaming platform HBO Max. Warner Bros and HBO are owned by AT&T.

The retrospective will see the cast return to the original Hogwarts boarding school sets that were featured in the first film “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone” (“Philosopher's Stone” in the UK) released in November 2001.

The film franchise based on Rowling's stories about an orphaned boy with magical powers took in some \$7.8 billion at the global box office.

Rowling's name was not included in the announcement on Tuesday but she will feature in archive footage that will be shown in the special, a source familiar with the matter said.

Rowling's opinions on transgender issues in the last year



have been a cause of controversy, with some in the LGBTQ community accusing her of transphobia.

The TV special is one of several 20th anniversary events planned by Warner Bros, including a TV quiz contest

for Potter fans hosted by Helen Mirren, which will include cameo appearances by some of the cast and celebrity fans including comedians Pete Davidson and Jay Leno. — Reuters

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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Historic Rome villa with world's only Caravaggio mural is up for auction



ARE YOU LOOKING for a lavish home in Rome and have half a billion euros left over to spend? Look no further: Villa Aurora, a property and art gem in the Italian capital, is for sale.

The property, which stretches over 2,800 square metres including a lush garden, is home to the only known ceiling mural by Italian Baroque artist Michelangelo Merisi, better known as Caravaggio.

The villa is what is left of a country house established in the 16th century by Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte and later sold to its current owners, the noble Ludovisi family.

It goes on auction on January 18 with an opening bid of 471 million euros (\$ 535 million).

The sale is the result of a long-running inheritance dispute following the death of former owner Prince Nicolo Boncompagni Ludovisi in 2018 and involves his third wife.

Princess Rita Boncompagni Ludovisi, who was born and raised in Texas but has lived in the villa for 18 years, told Reuters that Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates had once been interested in buying the property, as well as an emir from Qatar.

"I just pray and hope that whoever buys it will love it as much as we have," she said as her voice broke with emotion.

In 1597, Cardinal Del Monte, a diplomat and art patron, Caravaggio, at the time in his early twenties, ordered the painting of the ceiling of a small room on the first floor, which he used as his alchemy laboratory.

The 2.75 metre wide mural was painted in oil directly on the plaster and depicts an allegorical scene with the gods Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto representing the transformation of lead into gold.

Caravaggio painted his own face and body on each of the three figures. The mural alone is valued at 310 million euros.

The villa owes its name to a fresco by another Baroque artist, Il Guercino, which adorns the huge ceiling in the entrance hall and depicts Aurora, the goddess of dawn riding on her chariot.

Protected by high walls, the villa is located near the famous Via Veneto, where Federico Fellini's "La Dolce Vita" was recorded in 1960.

Villa Aurora is also filled with sculptures, antiques and statues, including a Renaissance master attributed to Pan Michelangelo. — Reuters

HERITAGE

Indonesia's batik-makers turn to mangroves as demand grows for eco-dyes



IN A QUIET mangrove forest in central Indonesia, a man moves gingerly across vegetation distinguished by its big, wooden stilt roots, searching for fallen mangrove fruits that rest on leaves or float on the water.

Gathering a handful of what looks like string beans, the man, a batik craftsman, heads home to make natural dye from them.

For the past four years, Sodikin, 48, and his group of batik makers have shifted from using chemical materials for colouring to mangrove-based products, cutting costs and helping the environment.

"We use natural materials so as to preserve the mangrove forest at the same time," Sodikin, who uses only one name, told Reuters as he processed dried fruits before boiling them to extract colour. "We do not cut down the trees and we only take fruits or leaves that have fallen."

Batik is a traditional Indonesian dying used in patterns and drawings, typically on fabric and finished textiles.

Mangroves play an important role for Indonesia's natural environment, serving as barriers against tsunamis and providing important ecosystems for fish and crabs.



They are also a more effective absorber of carbon dioxide emissions compared with rainforests or peatlands.

Despite being duller than synthetic dyes, natural dyes are more environmentally sustainable and have a greater market value because of their quality and durability, according to Erwin Ardli, a mangrove ecologist at Jenderal Soedirman University in Indonesia.

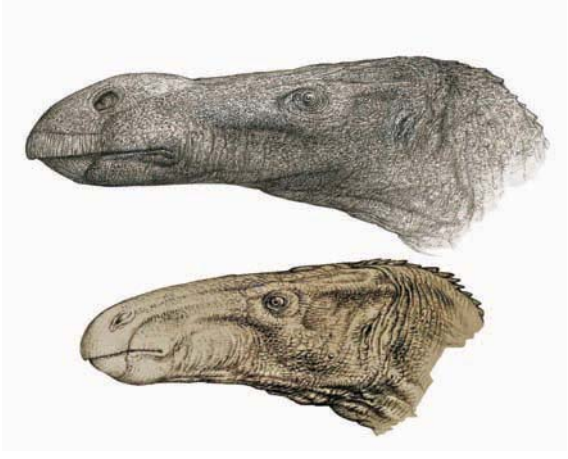
"We've seen the interest for natural dyes increasing, and especially for middle- to upper-class people, they seem to be proud to wear clothes using these natural dyes rather than synthetic dyes," he said.

Batik gallery owner Iiting Budiarti agreed, saying items with natural dyes can fetch double or triple the synthetic ones.

— Reuters

DISCOVERY

Retired doctor discovers dinosaur with 'unusually large' nose



A NEW SPECIES of dinosaur with an unusually large nose has been identified by a retired GP who spent lockdown rummaging through boxes of hundreds of old bones.

Jeremy Lockwood, who is studying for a PhD at the University of Portsmouth, set himself the task of cataloguing every iguanodon bone discovered on the Isle of Wight.

As the 64-year-old from Chale, near Ventnor, Isle of Wight, sorted the bones from the collections of the Natural History Museum in London and the Dinosaur Isle Museum, he discovered the unique "bulbous" nasal bone.

Dr Lockwood, who studies in the school of environment, geography and geoscience, said: "For over 100 years, we'd only seen two types of dinosaur on the Isle of Wight — the plant-eating Iguanodon bernissartensis and Mantellisaurus atherfieldensis.

"I was convinced that subtle differences between bones would reveal a new species, so I set out to measure, photograph and study the anatomy of each bone.

"My background is medicine, so I've studied anatomy and was always struck by the fact that the bones we find in humans all look exactly the same.

"I've seen dinosaur bones that are reportedly from the same species, but I've been baffled as to why they would look so different.

"Last year during lockdown, after four years of going through boxes and boxes of bones, I decided to reconstruct the skull of a specimen, which had been in storage since 1978, and to my astonishment I noticed the end of its nose was bulbous.

"This discovery made it one of the happiest days of lockdown because it was a sign there really was something different about this particular dinosaur from the Isle of Wight."

Dr Lockwood, working with Professor Dave Martill, from the University of Portsmouth, and Dr Susannah Maidment, from the Natural History Museum, has now named the new species Brighstoneus simmondsi, for a study published in the *Journal of Systematic Palaeontology*.

Brighstoneus is named after the village of Brighstone on the Isle of Wight, which is close to the excavation site and latter part of the name is in honour of Keith Simmonds, an amateur collector, who was involved in finding and excavating the specimen. — PA Media/dpa



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Learning to learn: Not easy, but not incredibly difficult

By Ray Petersen

HIGHER EDUCATION, or HE, is something that very much lives up to its name, but not as most think as a simple progression of learning, 'big brother' style. The dynamic of learning undergoes significant change, and it's not always clear that either parents, or students, genuinely understand the difference.

So, in a primary, or basic education environment, much of the learning is, for the want of a better description, "spoon-fed." Progress is gradual, yet seen as a big picture over these formative years, quite dramatic, as pupils go from play-times and play-learning to forming task completions, and making simple extensions. For a wickedly simple example, they learn that $2 \times 2 = 4$, $2 \times 3 = 6$ and $2 \times 4 = 8$, possibly on the basis of repetition and memory, later making extensions of the same process, like $2 \times 10 = 20$, $2 \times 11 = 22$ and so on. They learn simple logic and concepts.

From age 10 to their teens, maybe as far as 16, the pupil learners undergo significant physical, emotional, and social development, but most critically their understanding

of wider obligations, and their place within a wider, not quite global circle. It is not only personal and social development, but an acknowledgement of grander schemes, a greater understanding of faith and the beginnings of responsibility.

The transition from secondary school ages, to higher, college or university education, is fraught with many elements of uncertainty, as the learners undergo physical change too, with voices changing, and gawky awkwardness being replaced by athleticism, elegance and grace, yet few realize the intense academic changes soon to be almost forced upon the unsuspecting young adults.

Few parents, and even fewer schools, appropriately prepare the youth for their higher education (HE). Yet, it is a wonderful opportunity for secondary teachers to implement the study responsibilities of HE in a way that they too learn greater flexibility in learning delivery, but it's the students of today, who face hitting a brick wall!

Unless they have embraced collective learning, learned to ask every question they have ever had, and unless they embrace the concept of embracing their own decisions and justifying them, university life is a woeful experience. Not understanding questions, statements, quotes, philosophies, or obli-

gations, and most being far from home, must be akin to a castaway experience.

However, there is a way around it, that active, which should mean all, parents can utilise. Every second weekend, give your teen something to research, and present to you on Sunday or Monday evening, either at, or immediately after the evening meal. Not their thoughts, but what three or four prominent national and global identities say or think on a specific topic, along with a summary, and their own take on the topic.

It will teach them to look for other people, prominent in their field, and to gain an understanding of how the world sees things. It will make them conscious of deadlines, and their need to understand concepts in order to form their own opinions. It will give them an opportunity, and the experience of explaining their own, and other perspectives. Most of all, it will show them that you understand their rocky road, you care about their future, and you care enough to listen.

Albert Einstein said, "The beauty of a liberal education is not learning facts, but training the mind", while as parents we must emphasise that the only time success comes before work is in the dictionary!



New York auction smashes record for Frida Kahlo work

A RARE PAINTING by Frida Kahlo sold in a New York auction house on Tuesday for almost \$35 million, a record price for a work by the iconic Mexican artist.

At the same sale, a painting by French artist Pierre Soulages also broke a record for his work by reaching \$20.2 million.

As expected, the self-portrait of Kahlo entitled "Diego y yo" ("Diego and

painter, a feminist icon, famous around the world.

In the painting, Rivera's face appears on Frida's forehead, above her distinctive eyebrows and dark eyes from which a few teardrops fall.

The depiction of Rivera, who at the time was close to Mexican actress Maria Felix, as a third eye symbolises the extent to which he tormented her thoughts, art experts say.

Kahlo and Rivera mar-



ried each other twice. She died aged just 47 in 1954.

"Diego y yo" last sold at Sotheby's for \$1.4 million in 1990.

Soulages' painting, which had spent more than 30 years in a private collection, corresponds to the red period of the century-old French artist.

It sold for \$20.2 million after a heated battle between several bidders, some of them in Sotheby's auction room and others on the phone, greatly exceeding the previous record reached in 2019 of \$9.6 million euros in Paris. — AFP

me", 1949), where the face of the painter's husband Diego Rivera appears on her forehead, smashed the former record of \$8 million set by a Kahlo in 2016.

That made it the most expensive Latin American work of art in history sold at auction, the previous record having gone to a painting by Diego Rivera himself, whose work "Los Rivaless" (1931) sold for \$9.76 million in 2018.

"Diego y yo" is emblematic of Kahlo's self-portraits, known for their intense and enigmatic gaze that made the Mexican



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We express our sincere greetings to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik**, the courageous people of Oman and all residents of this kind land on Oman's 51st National Day.





National Day of the Renaissance

A FRIEND TO ALL

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samuelkuttyvp

The Sultanate of Oman follows a foreign policy that is based on a vision of peace and maintaining friendship with all. It is a policy of non-interference and diplomatic balancing. And it embraces dialogue and tolerance as guiding principles in addressing all issues.

Immediately after ascending the throne on January 11, 2020, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik announced that the Sultanate of Oman would continue to remain as a facilitator of peace — a stand maintained by his predecessor late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and policies that align with Oman Vision 2040.

"We will follow the same line as the late Sultan, and the principles that he asserted for the foreign policy of our country, of peaceful coexistence among nations and people, and good neighbourly behaviour of non-interference in the affairs of others," he said in his first public remarks.

The wisely weaved foreign policy since the beginning of 1970 has helped the country make new friends and receive world acclaim and respect. The Sultanate of Oman has never severed diplomatic

We, in the Sultanate of Oman, are part of this interconnected world with which we share common interests and destiny. We are pleased with what pleases the world and regret what is harmful to it

SAYYID BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDY

Foreign Minister

relations with any government in the world.

On the contrary, it has enabled the Sultanate of Oman to actively facilitate negotiations in the Middle East and it plays an active part in a regional community of nations living in harmony, in relationships which assure security and stability while fostering the economic growth and cultural development essential to all our futures.

The Sultanate of Oman's foreign policy advocates good neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, respect for international laws and charters, support for cooperation among countries and the enhancement of opportunities for internal dialogue.

Emphasis is laid on the need to resolve differences in a spirit of harmony and tolerance that has always been the mainstay of the country's civilisation. And this leads to better and more lasting results than could be achieved by conflict and strife.

As stated by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy before the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September last, "We, in the Sultanate of Oman, are part of this interconnected world with which we share common interests and destiny. We are pleased with what pleases the world and regret what is harmful to it. Therefore, we strive with all our energies and capabilities to contribute to the advancement of peace at all regional and international levels."

The Sultanate of Oman strictly adheres to the values and principles and upholds a balanced and constructive approach in dealing with all issues.

TURN TO P30



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51st

National Day of the Renaissance

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National Day of the Renaissance



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FROM P1

A FRIEND TO ALL

Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, the Sultanate of Oman has always reiterated its well-founded political stands, which proved to be constant through sustained, positive diplomatic efforts towards issues of the region. The diplomatic efforts of the Sultanate of Oman are supported by an exchange of high-level visits between the Sultanate of Oman and other GCC states.

Testimony to this is the tangible progress made between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in political, economic, social, cultural and security spheres. The Sultanate of Oman supported and welcomed positive developments that resulted from Al Ula summit held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

As for the Yemeni crisis, the Sultanate of Oman goes ahead with its persistent efforts to work with Saudi Arabia, the United Nations envoy and all other parties concerned, with the aim of ending the conflict by reaching a permanent ceasefire to facilitate humanitarian efforts to provide the needs of the brethren in Yemen, especially medicine, healthcare, food, fuel and housing.

The Sultanate of Oman supports the fair cause of Palestinian people and their legitimate demands for independence from Israel, and their right to establish their own independent state in accordance with the international law, relevant Security Council Resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Sultanate of Oman was the only state to maintain diplomatic relations with Syria after 2011 and has tried to contribute to peace negotiations in Syria.

The Sultanate of Oman condemns all forms of terrorism and supports all efforts

Testimony to this is the tangible progress made between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in political, economic, social, cultural and security spheres. The Sultanate of Oman supported and welcomed positive developments that resulted from Al Ula summit held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

and strategies aimed at its eradication as it clashes with civilised ethics, human values and threatens global security and stability.

The Sultanate of Oman also calls for eliminating threats to international maritime trade. It urges full adherence to treaties, agreements and the international law to ensure freedom of navigation in a manner that secures the flow of trade between countries and enhances opportunities for economic growth.

In order to strengthen global partnerships to achieve sustainable development, the Sultanate of Oman has always sought to cooperate with regional, Arab and international organisations and bodies. On the regional level, the Sultanate of Oman cooperates with the Gulf Cooperation Council in exchanging experiences and knowledge and capacity building.

The Sultanate of Oman is always keen to fulfil all its international and regional obligations towards different organisations. It recognises its international responsibility in different causes that aim to serve humankind in several fields.

It also plays an important role in the convergence of views among neighbouring and friend countries. It has always sought to assist belligerent states in conflict resolution. This important role has been welcomed internationally. Proud of its history, culture, language and heritage, and recognising its responsibility as a member in the international community, the Sultanate of Oman seeks to find a mutual understanding between cultures, which, in turn, disseminates the culture of peace and cooperation among states.



Warmest
Congratulations to
**His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik**
and the nation of
Oman, on the occasion
of **Oman's 51st**
National Day.



العيد الوطني
الحادي و الخمسون للشهبة



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We salute the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

and extend our sincere greetings to the people of Oman
on the occasion of the 51st National Day of the Renaissance

Muscat Finance continues its endeavors towards
His Majesty's Vision 2040 in enabling the
progress of the nation and the dreams of its people.

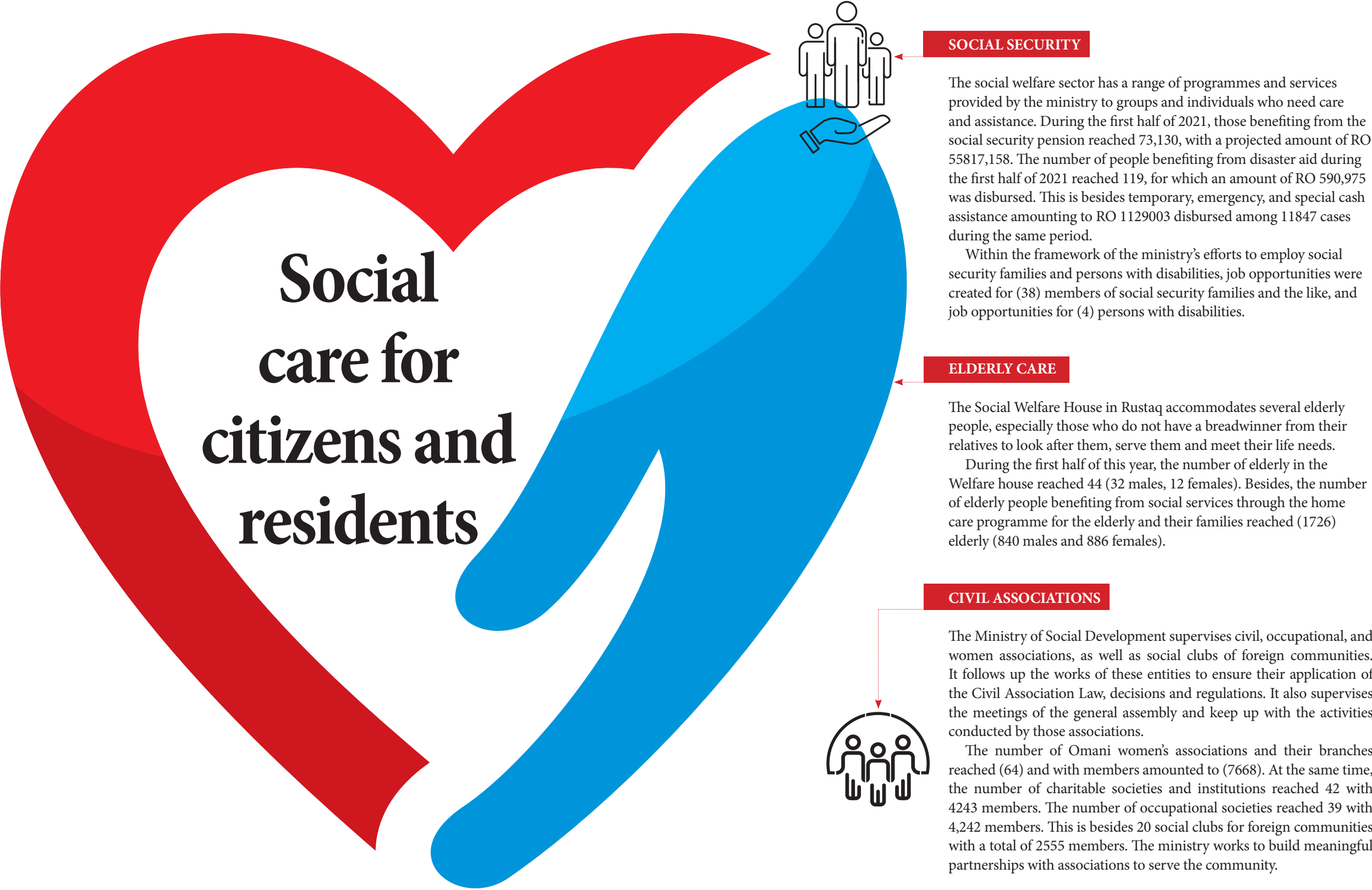


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National Day of the Renaissance



THE SOCIAL WELFARE SECTOR HAS A RANGE OF PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE MINISTRY TO GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO NEED CARE AND ASSISTANCE

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
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The Ministry of Social Development seeks to develop its programmes, activities, and services directed to various segments of society so that each individual can invest his full potential to achieve an adequate standard of living in a cohesive family and a prosperous society. This is done through the programmes of support, empowerment, rehabilitation and training of families and cases capable of work and production. According to the mechanisms and services of protection and social care within a framework of sustainable development integration and within the priorities, plans and targeted social policies, all of this is done in partnership with the relevant authorities.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
With the aim of enabling, rehabilitating and caring for persons with disabilities to rely on themselves in managing their lives, the Ministry offers a range of different welfare programmes and social services for this category, including the 'Vocational Evaluation and Rehabilitation Centre', which aims to rehabilitate the disabled who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation. The number of people enrolled in the center's programmes during the first half of 2021 was (104), of whom (57) were males and (47) were female.

The 'Al-Aman Rehabilitation Centre' also provides social, health, rehabilitation,

psychological and therapeutic services. The total number of children enrolled in the center is 296, including 192 males and 104 females.

There are also Al Wafa' Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities that aim to care for children with disabilities between the ages of (2-14) years of both genders suffering from various simple and medium mental disabilities, hearing disabilities and motor disabilities. The number of those enrolled in Al Wafa centres reached 2340, including 1382 males and 958 females, distributed in 28 centres in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

There are also private rehabilitation centres supported by the ministry, which provides services for persons with disabilities, working alongside the role entrusted to government institutions and centres. They provided services during the first half of 2021 for 1275 enrolled, including 947 males and 328 females. The ministry provides a set of prosthetic devices and other support services for persons with disabilities, whose number stood at (1106) individuals, including 525 males and 581 females. The number of persons registered in the disabled card system granted to persons with disabilities reached (685) persons, 442 are males and 243 are females.

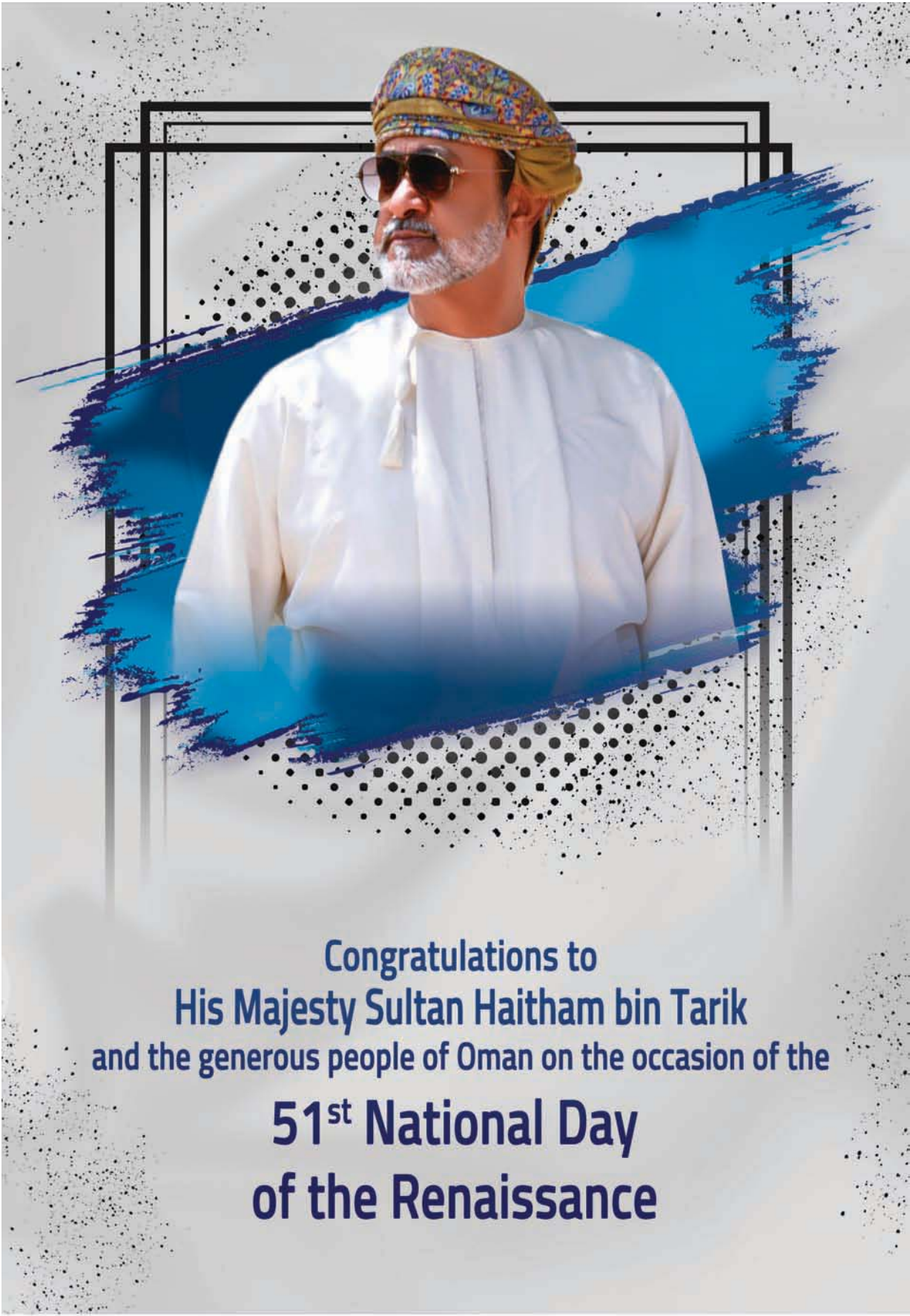
FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
With the aim of developing and protecting the family, preserving its entity and cohesion, and providing the appropriate environment for it through

plans and projects directed at empowering, developing and raising the efficiency of family members socially and economically, the Ministry worked to provide various social programmes and services such as counselling services for people who suffer from some social, economic and psychological problems, to minimise or limit these problems and to find appropriate solutions to them in light of the rapid life changes and influences.

The number of beneficiaries from the family counselling services office reached 803, including 325 males and 478 females during the first half of 2021.

Beneficiaries from phone counselling through the dedicated line reached 17 calls with four males and 13 females. The ministry's Family Protection Department also works on developing awareness and care plans and programmes, providing the necessary protection services for various family members, and dealing with cases that are exposed to various family problems and issues. The Department often deals with issues of women exposed to dilemmas. The number of those women reached 12 cases in the first half of this year.

As for the number of cases of children subjected to abuse, according to the number of reports received by the 'Child Protection Line' on the toll-free number (1100), there were 372 cases, 185 males and 187 females. Also the number of cases of children exposed to abuse dealt with by the Child Protection Committees reached 782 cases, (413 males and 369 females). The number of human trafficking cases reached 4, all of the expatriate nationalities, and they were provided with the necessary care and were treated according to the applicable law in this regard.



Congratulations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the generous people of Oman on the occasion of the
51st National Day
of the Renaissance



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National Day of the Renaissance

The nation in 51 years



1970
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos comes to power



1970
Omani Rial Saidi replaced Gulf Rupee



1970
Oman International Services was formed to provide ground handling services at Bait Al Falaj Airport



1971
The Sultanate of Oman joins the Arab League

1971
Oman joins the United Nations

1972
Omani Rial replaced the Omani Rial Saidi

1973
Seeb International Airport opened in 1973



1973
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) was established



1974
Port Sultan Qaboos starts operations in Muttrah

1976
First Five-Year Development Plan was launched (1976-80)

1976
Oman gets the first seawater desalination plant in Al Ghubrah



1977
Deadly cyclone strikes Oman, Masirah Island affected



1978
Oman Football Association was established in 1978

1980
The end of the first five-year plan

1980
Oman and the United States signed a military cooperation agreement



1981
GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) was formed comprising the Sultanate of Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar

1981
Oman Aviation Services is a joint-stock company



1982
Olympic Committee of Oman was launched



1982
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos visits United Kingdom

1983
Oman Aviation Services launches services to Salalah

1984
Omani athletes participated in the Summer Olympics of Los Angeles 1984

1985
15th National Day of Oman celebrated

1986
The Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Muscat opens.

1990
Sultan Qaboos Centre established in Washington DC

1993
Oman Air was founded

1997
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos issues decree that women can stand for election and vote for Majlis Ash' shura. Two women were elected

1998
Muscat Festival organised for the first time

2001
The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque opens in Muscat.

2002
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos extends voting rights to all citizens over the age of 21

2004
Dr Rawya bint Saud al Busaidiyah becomes the first woman minister with a cabinet portfolio

2006
The Sultanate of Oman and the United States sign the free trade deal.

2007
Cyclone Gonu, the strongest storm to hit the region in decades disrupts oil production

2008
The torch for Beijing Olympics passes through the Sultanate

2009
The Sultanate of Oman wins Gulf Cup for the first time



2010
Oman successfully hosts the Asian Beach Games



2011
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos restructures government, appoints new ministers

2012
Royal Opera House (ROH) inaugurated in Oman

2014
All commercial activities moved from Port Sultan Qaboos (PSQ) to Port of Sohar

2014
Opening of Duqm Airport

2015
Two women were elected to Majlis Ash' shura

2015
Oil production exceeds one million barrels per day for the first time

2016
Oman deregulates petrol and diesel prices

2016
National Museum of Oman opens

2018
ROP announces new traffic rules with points system launched for the first time

2018
Opening of the New Muscat Airport terminal

2018
Oman wins Gulf Cup for the second time

2020
His Majesty Haitham bin Tarik al Said succeeds to the throne on the death of late HM Sultan Qaboos

2020
His Majesty restructures government with 28 Royal Decrees

2020
Citizens of 103 countries can enter the Sultanate of Oman without a prior visa and can stay for 14 days

2021
Value-Added Tax (VAT) introduced in the Sultanate for the first time

2021
75% of the population fully vaccinated of Covid-19 in Oman





National Day of the Renaissance



SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS

IN THE PRE-PANDEMIC YEARS, MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT WAS RANKED AMONG THE BEST AND EVEN CLOCKING EVEN 15 PER CENT GROWTH IN ITS CATEGORY

VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

The early days of the Sultanate of Oman's aviation were centred around the now MBD area, where tiny turboprops operated from a narrow airstrip.

Opened in 1929, the Bait Al Falaj was used both for military and civilian purposes, but the scene shifted to Seeb International Airport in the early years of the Blessed Renaissance in 1973.

According to aviation historians, in those days passenger flights were mainly used to ferry the employees of the Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO) from the capital to the old exploration fields.

The Bait Al Falaj airport with basic facilities was mainly used by Gulf Air, which along with Oman Air, continued as one of the national airlines until 2007.

The Seeb International Airport was officially launched on December 23, 1973, and the name was changed to Muscat International Airport on February 1. 2008, to associate it with the

host city. Muscat International Airport has a gateway to the Sultanate and has played a keen role in the country's emergence as a major tourist and investment destination. According to sources in the Civil Aviation Authority, "The Sultanate is strategically located within eight hours of flying time from majority of the world's population."

BRAND-NEW TERMINAL

The brand-new terminal of the Muscat Airport was opened on March 20, 2018, and it has a capacity to handle 20 million passengers a year. The terminal covers 580,000 sqm and features 118 check-in counters, 10 baggage reclaim belts, 82 immigration counters, 45 gates and is capable of even the A380s.

In the pre-pandemic years, Muscat Airport was ranked among the best and even clocking even 15 per cent growth in its category.

The contribution of the civil aviation sector to the GDP in 2018 amounted to about \$3.9 billion, despite various types of challenges, the flight movements at Muscat International Airport grew by 6.3 per cent per year between

2013 and 2018 while passenger traffic increased by 12 per cent per year between 2013 and 2018 reaching at airports in Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Duqm airport.

It may be noted that aviation suffered major setbacks in 2020-21 the air travel was restricted to special and essential services to limit the spread of the Covid-19.

The Civil Aviation Authority has signed transport bilateral agreements with more than 100 countries, including the United States, to connect the Sultanate of Oman with different continents with the help of national airlines.

In January 2017, CAA issued the first Air Operator's Certificate (AOC) for Salam Air to operate as a low-cost airline.

The national airline, Oman Air, was founded in 1993 and travels directly to various destinations in Asia, Africa, and Europe. The airline has codeshare agreements to offer more options to its regular and loyal passengers.

In October 1998, Oman Air was admitted to the international aviation industry trade group International Air Transport Association (IATA).

The budget airline, Salam Air, complements the legacy carrier Oman Air and operates several scheduled seasonal flights to destinations in Asia and the region.

With the ease of travel restrictions expected in 2022 and liberal visa regime for tourists, airports in the Sultanate of Oman are only expected to fly up into the sky.



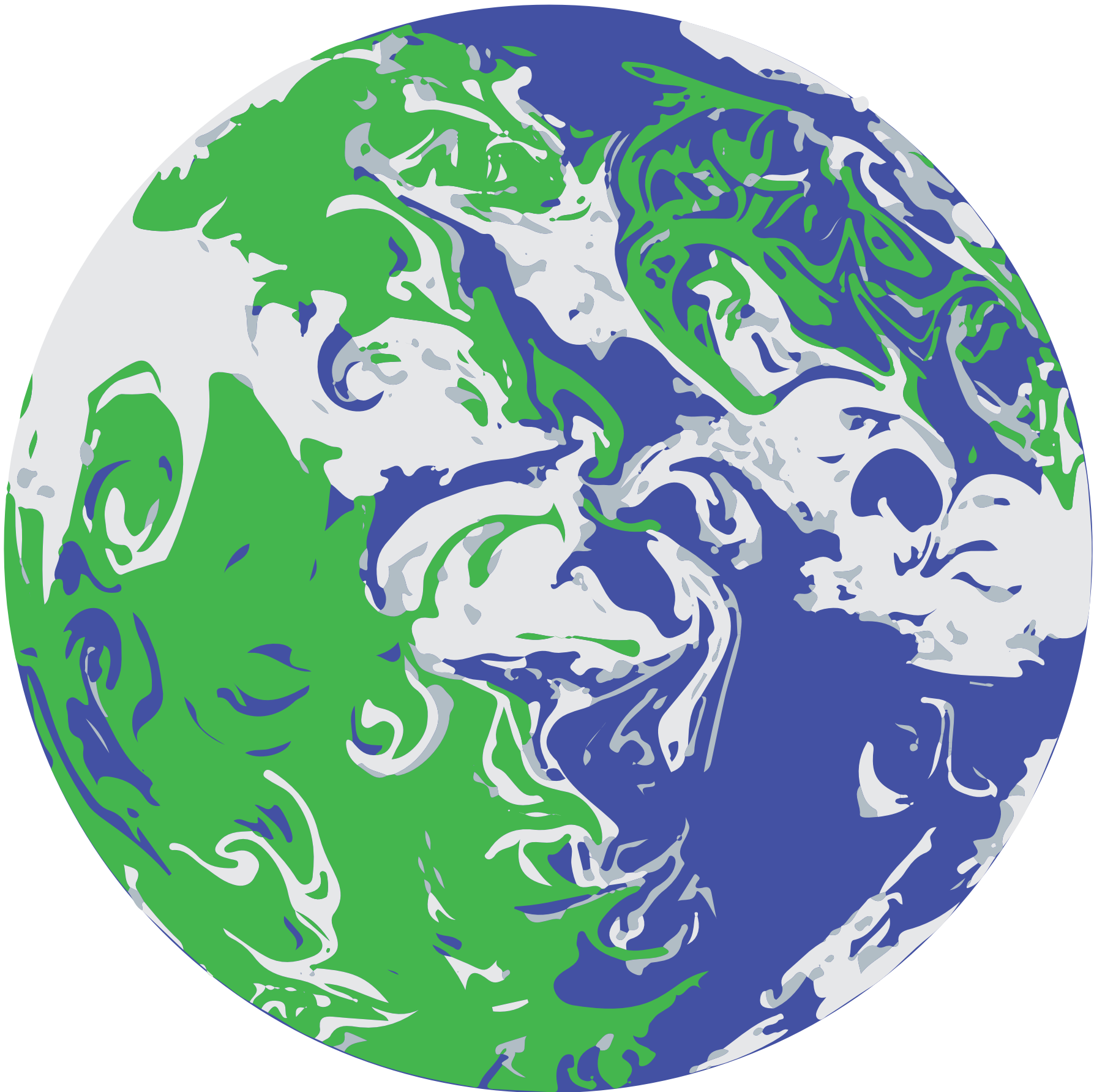
National Day of the Renaissance



THE GLORIOUS MARCH FORWARD



National Day of the Renaissance



COMMITTED TO CONSERVATION

WAY AHEAD OF THE COP26 THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE UK’S SCOTTISH CITY GLASGOW, THE SULTANATE OF OMAN ENDORSED THE RATIFICATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT ON APRIL 24, 2019 AND CALLED IT A CONCLUSIVE STEP FORWARD IN OMAN’S COMMITMENT TO JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

The Sultanate of Oman stands firm for the cause of the environment. It is known for adopting the best practices to conserve the environment. Since the world leaders have shown concern over climate change at the recently concluded global forum COP26 (October 31 - November 12, 2021), the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to the cause of the environment is firm.

Way ahead of the COP26 (Conference of the Parties) that took place in the UK’s Scottish city Glasgow, the Sultanate of Oman endorsed the ratification of the Paris Agreement on April 24, 2019 and called it a conclusive step forward in the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to join the international efforts to combat climate change.

The Sultanate of Oman cited its reason for endorsing the Paris

Agreement. In its statement, the Directorate General of Meteorology at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) said, “The Sultanate of Oman is one of the most vulnerable countries in West Asia to the adverse impacts of climate change and has a heightened degree of awareness and concern about global warming and its adverse impacts.”

The country has set environmental standards for others to emulate and pro-actively promoted the cause of the environment to ensure that the planet earth remains a better place to live for the coming generations.

To raise the environment safety bar, the Sultanate of Oman started the Unesco-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Protection in 1991. It was the first such effort in the Arab world on an international level. The first recipient of the award was an environmental institute in the State of Filakroze in Mexico in

1991 itself.

There is a fully-fledged establishment, Environment Authority, to address all the environmental issues.

Besides government authorities, non-government agencies extend voluntary support to the government in preserving the environment. The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) was established in the year 2004 by a group of like-minded environment lovers. Since its inception, the ESO has taken up many environmental issues and raised awareness to conserve the environment.

MAXIMUM CARE

Even as the current pandemic has hit all sorts of activities, the ESO has been working to save the environment by releasing educational booklets and videos asking people to give maximum care for the environment.

The Sultanate of Oman’s care

for the environment has drawn attention from many national and international agencies, and there has been continued cooperation between the Sultanate and the United Nations in projects related to climate change, the protection of the ozone layer as also to improve efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Some of the Sultanate’s environment projects to conserve rare Omani species like turtles, leopards, Arabian Ibex, Arabian Gazelle, Sooty Falcon, and Houbara Bustard survey project have evoked good responses from environmentalists. These projects are so unique that some of them have attracted the attention of a large number of tourists.

MOST FAMOUS TREE

Among the Sultanate’s governorates, Dhofar has the distinction of being the richest in flora and fauna. One of the most important and widely known species is Luban or Mughereh (Boswellia sacra) that grows naturally in the arid areas of the Dhofar mountains. This tree has the distinction of becoming the most famous tree in ages.

In old times ‘Luban’ was considered an expensive commodity. Today, the tree’s gum known as frankincense is very popular for cosmetic, medicinal, and incense purposes. Dhofari

Luban is great in demand from all kinds of tourists coming to Salalah.

Recently it has gained commercial recognition and is being exported to many Arab, Asian, and European countries.

There is a very thin line between the environment and heritage. Every place has a unique environment that converts into heritage over time. The Sultanate of Oman thus is proud to have five Unesco declared World Heritage Sites. They hold unique importance to the conservation of both – environment and heritage of the Sultanate of Oman. Among the sites are Aflaj irrigation systems, Land of Frankincense; Bahla Fort; Archaeological sites of Bat; and the Ancient City of Qalhat. It is very easy to demolish the old and build new in the name of development.

The Omani authorities, however, have been cautious in preserving the country’s past and setting examples for others to emulate.

Besides being home to many flora and fauna, the country attracts birdwatchers from around the world. It has a unique reserve to conserve some rare species of turtles in Ras Al Jinz. Its pristine beaches are rare symbols of conservation of the environment. Protection of mangroves and backwaters showcase the country’s commitment to the environment.





National Day of the Renaissance

A RARE SHOW OF SOLIDARITY WAS SEEN AMONG THE OMANIS AS WELL AS THE RESIDENTS, WHO LAUNCHED AID CONVOYS AND VOLUNTARY CAMPAIGNS TO AL KHABOURAH, AL SUWAIQ AND AL MUSANNAH. VOLUNTEER TEAMS COMPRISING EMINENT ATHLETES AND PUBLIC FIGURES PARTICIPATED IN THE RESCUE AND RELIEF OPERATIONS. THEY FORMED GROUPS TO CLEAN THE HOUSES AFFECTED BY THE CYCLONE

SOLIDARITY EASES IMPACT OF SHAHEEN

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On October 3, tropical cyclone Shaheen hit the Sultanate of Oman, causing great damage up to the extent of evacuation in coastal areas and postponement of flights to and from the capital city Muscat.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) dealt with 2,341 situations during and after the tropical situation of Shaheen. The CDAA teams were deployed with their equipment and mechanisms in the areas affected by the cyclone.

CDAA also dealt with people who were trapped in vehicles in wadis and the rescue of people due to the high water level in their homes. In addition to reports of firefighting, land rescue, water rescue, ambulance calls and other communications of a humanitarian nature.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the losses due to the cyclone were concentrated in the wilayats of Al Khabourah, Al Suwaiq and Al Musannah, where 362,000 people were affected, from 51,000 families, including 38,000 families of citizens. Besides, 66,000 buildings were affected, containing 91,000 units, 67,000 units of which were intended for housing and 22,000 were profitable facilities.

The Centre also monitored the damage of 99,000 cars, 1,072 mosques in the three wilayats, as well as 14

health centres, 102 government schools and large areas of land and agricultural crops.

And to assess the damage suffered by citizens' homes and their various properties in the governorates that were directly affected by the tropical cyclone Shaheen, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik ordered the formation of a ministerial committee to provide support and assistance necessary to mitigate these effects on people as soon as possible.

HM the Sultan also directed the need to expedite the repair of the infrastructure that was damaged as a result of these conditions, in addition to taking the necessary measures to speed up the restoration of other damaged services. Accordingly, the royal orders also came to establish a national fund for an emergency in the wake of the tropical situation in light of the urgent need to strengthen and support society and help those affected and better prepare for the future.

The fund's goal is to deal with the losses caused by Shaheen as well as with any natural disasters that may occur in the future. Its financial resources come from the state's general budget and the donations and aids, while its financial and administrative matters are organised according to a system issued for this purpose.

The Ministerial Committee in charge of evaluating the effects of Shaheen decided to pay an urgent initial aid of RO 1,000 for each

damaged house. The aid for collateral damage varied in amounts ranging from RO 600 to RO 200.

The Ministry of Social Development said that it had visited more than 22,800 cases as the fieldwork team assessed the damage of families in the governorates of North and South Al Batinah until October 19, with an achievement rate of about 86.7 per cent in fieldwork. The inventory work, however, continued without stopping. The teams also dealt with 4,175 cases in Wilayat of Al Musannah, 11,801 cases in Al Suwaiq, 5,791 cases in Al Khabourah and 1,040 cases in Saham.

Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance and Chairman of the ministerial committee, explained that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning had been assigned to make the necessary plans to build 328 houses for the residences that were completely affected by the tropical situation.

After all the hard work to restore services of infrastructure, the National Committee for Emergency Management announced the end of the relief and urgent rehabilitation phase for the tropical situation Shaheen, and the return to normalcy, starting from October 21, 2021.

In order to enhance national cohesion and stand by the side of those affected by the tropical situation Shaheen that ravaged the northern governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, several major companies and small and medium enterprises, besides voluntary teams, rushed to stand by the affected and support the competent authorities in overcoming this crisis.

A rare show of solidarity was seen among the Omanis as well as the residents, who launched aid convoys and voluntary campaigns from all regions to the wilayats of Al Khabourah and Al Suwaiq in North Al Batinah Governorate and Al Musannah in the south, where the value of the aid exceeded RO 30 million(\$77.92 million). Volunteer teams comprising eminent athletes and public figures participated in the rescue and relief operations. They formed groups to clean the houses affected by the cyclone.





National Day of the Renaissance

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As the number of job-seekers in the Sultanate of Oman is registering a steady increase, the Sultanate has paid special attention to its human resources as it is the backbone for its development. Thus, it provides them with a number of services according to their needs.

The roll-out of the National Employment Programme (NEP) is helping the Omani labour market to fill it with nationals who are qualified and skilled in their respective fields.

The programme, which stems from Oman Vision 2040, seeks to fill the gap between knowledge and skills needed by the labour market so that the unemployed get jobs depending on their availability.

Education and training have long been fundamental to the Sultanate's long-term development plans and central to Oman Vision 2040. The government has always stressed on upgrading education that suits the labour market needs with focus on technical and vocational education.

One of the goals in Oman Vision 2040 is developing a favourable environment to attract talents in the labour market. For this purpose, it outlines, "a national system that empowers human capabilities in the educational sector and nurtures scientific research, innovation, and creativity to build a knowledge-based economy and society".

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik approved the launch of the programme in June with a target of finding sustainable solutions to provide jobs to nationals in both public and private sectors, in addition to keeping a track of their data till they enter the job market. As a result, the Ministry of Labour has in recent weeks intensified the drive to create employment opportunities for nationals by training and arming them with additional skills.

Reports indicate that the number of beneficiaries of the training programme associated with employment and on-the-job training in the private sector has reached 4,400 people.

In May last, His Majesty the Sultan issued a directive to offer 32,000 jobs to Omani citizens this year. As part of the decision, the authori-

ties have to implement a plan to employ Omani citizens in various jobs, of which 12,000 will be in the civil, military and government sector, according to the actual needs of the various institutions.

More than 1,000 nationals have already joined military service in the last week of October this year. During the same period, the Ministry of Labour announced 332 jobs in the private sector.

In the beginning of September this year, the ministry signed an agreement for job-oriented training with Nama Group as part of the Omanisation initiative, and to replace 800 technical job opportunities in the electricity sector.

An agreement was signed between the ministry, Oman Broad-band Company and Oman Fibre Optic Company to provide training associated with direct employment or self-employment for 70 technicians. An agreement has also been with Oman Society for Petroleum Services to train, qualify and employ a number of Omani job-seekers in the energy, minerals and other sectors according to the needs of the labour market.

There are also agreements with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and Oman Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Development Foundation to finance the training programme for Omani job-seekers in the field of mobile phones and tablets repair.

The Miran platform is an initiative to boost online training that will provide people with training material online along with traditional education.

Among the steps taken to encourage the hiring of Omanis are raising expatriate employment fees for supervisor and specialist roles, and Omanisation of certain positions such as manager posts at petrol stations and roles at optical stores, and the launch of an education financing initiative between the MoL, the Ministry of Education, and some banks in the country.

Positions to which Omanis can be hired include drivers of vehicles that transport fuel, agricultural materials and foodstuffs, administrative and financial roles in insurance companies, sales, accounting, management and finance jobs in commercial complexes, and auditor positions in car agencies and companies that sell automobile spare parts.

ABILITY

FOR A SKILLED JOB MARKET

THE ROLL-OUT OF THE NATIONAL
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME IS
HELPING THE OMANI LABOUR
MARKET TO FILL IT WITH NATIONALS
WHO ARE QUALIFIED AND SKILLED
IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS

In a recent interview to Oman TV, Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, said that NEP will focus on creating plans related to different sectors and studying the smoothness of business in terms of identifying job opportunities and the types of qualification and training required.

With regard to Omanisation, he told the national channel, "We look at the sectors in which appropriate nationalisations can take place in accordance with the programmes that are planned, studied and shared with production parties to reach the best practices."

The Oman Vision 2040 stresses on improving educational outcomes that have become necessary to build Omanis' confidence in their identity and commitment to their social values. "This is attainable through increasing the quality of basic and higher education and developing scientific and educational curricula, so that graduates are acquainted with

c o m -

petitive qualifications and employability skills to enter the local and international labour market," it envisions.

Such graduates, according to the programme, will have an adequate level of productivity and competitiveness to build a knowledge-based economy, enhance job security in the private sector and foster a participatory relation between the private and the public sectors.

OMAN VISION 2040

Oman Vision 2040 defines the national priorities to be achieved through parallel work streams, with the aim of promoting the Sultanate of Oman's position in the different fields over the next two decades. The vision equally outlined the strategic directions, goals and key policies to translate ambitions into action plans underpinned by clear milestones and timelines and progressing against a set of local and international indicators to measure and evaluate the performance in a transparent manner.

KNOWLEDGE



National Day of the Renaissance

HERITAGE AN ASSET



Kadm cafe, Bahla Souq

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM IS TO PRESERVE THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF OMAN’S SOCIETY AT LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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Oman’s heritage is one of the nation’s assets and a striking tourism attraction.

Taking it to the next level is the youth of Oman who are investing in the heritage structures from traditional homes to community buildings and making it tourism homes and cafes.

The pandemic might have slowed down the momentum but the minute the lockdown was lifted the young entrepreneurs were ready to receive the visitors.

Leading the trend is the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The objective of the ministry is to preserve the cultural heritage of Oman’s society at local, regional and international level. The ministry has also been promoting a sense of pride and belonging among the citizens.

The youth has caught on, but has also seen its higher potential in tourism business. Their keenness to give tourists an authentic experience has triggered a vast interest amongst domestic tourists.

While the pandemic introduced the concept of staycation after

the lockdowns along with organisations and workplaces coming back to normalcy with care, a weekend away, away from city lights and sounds, deadlines and pressure have become something domestic tourists are taking a liking to. There is an element of nostalgia as well.

“It takes me to my childhood memories”, said a citizen who is settled in Muscat with a busy career. A resident tourist reflected, “We are creating memories and this is Oman etched on our minds forever”

Ali al Yahyai was content working alongside his father in the family business based in agriculture, but he was also attracted to the tourism and hospitality industry. This resulted in Hotel Apartments Bahla Jewel in the year 2018. But by 2020 the pandemic had set in just when business had been established.

Excited to see tourism back in business Ali looked at the attractions of the place, “Bahla has a lot of opportunities for heritage and cultural tourism. There is so much for people to explore and we are here to introduce them to a world that existed before as can be seen at the Bahla Fort, which

is in the Unesco Heritage List, but also our heritage that continues till today such as the pottery.”

On the ground floor he has started a boutique for men — a concept he introduced to encourage young SMEs.

“Anyone who has products and collections and does not have a shop can market it right here”, said Ali. The concept has caught on and many youth have tied up with him. They specifically cater to bride grooms.

He said attractions of Bahla include the very nature of Bahla, “We also have cane sugar factories, pottery, agriculture, farms, perfect weather and lots of nature spots. AL Jabal Al Akhdhar is just a few kms away”, he explained.

Just walking through the alleys of Bahla Souq also brings back the old world charm.

The souq has also become meaningful once again. There has been renovation while the elderly are coming back; the youth are also making their presence as can be seen as in the case of café Kadm. The Kadm has designated cozy rooms with different themes such as abstract, Greek and Bahraini in addition to the normal outlet. It is

all within the souq.

Alongside modern concepts, traditional shops continue to exist — for instance Suleiman al Yahyai has retired from his service in the government which had taken him to many parts of Oman. Throughout his stations he bought antiques and collected them, until when it came to retirement time he had his own antique shop in the souq. He has a collection from coins to radios to utensils to footwear and not to forget indigo and wooden blocks for fabric printing. If one is willing to sit with him he is all ready to narrate his stories and his special collection of King Rosemary and Al Ellan — herbs. However he has frequent visitors and buyers.

The Bahla Souq continues its traditional role and that is where men gather for conversations.

Just a few kilometres away is Abdullah bin Hamdan al Adawi Trading Clay Pots Factory and Sale.

How many pots he makes a day depends on the kilo of clay that is going to be utilised and most importantly the size of pots.

“Sometimes I make 200 pots a day if they are small in size. I am now working on a medium sized pot. In this case I can make about 30 to 35 pots a day”, said Said al Adawi who has been making pots for 45 years. He says the medium sized, closed neck pots are still in demand because people still prefer to store drinking water in them as

they are stored cool, especially in summer. Orders come from Bahla, Nizwa, Fanja etc.

As he finished working on the water pot, he demonstrated the making of a decorative pot.

“My great, great grandfather and generations before have all been involved in pottery. As a youngster at the age of seven or eight I used to come and help my family in the workshop. I was a teacher by profession but in the evenings I used to enjoy joining my family and when I retired from government I was most happy to come and practice pottery full-time. Now my children join me in the evenings”, Said noted.

The reddish clay that is strongest is from Al Hamra, the whitish and light coloured clay is from Bahla, which is used for decoration and storing cool water and the yellow clay is Italian.

His pots are not just in the local markets they have now found markets in England, Australia and last year it was exported to Thailand and Sri Lanka. They are also in demand in the UAE and Kuwait. Meanwhile Abdullah al Adawi does not use a wheel for his pottery. He uses his bare hands and the pots are gigantic.

“I take a few days to complete my pots because they are done part by part, step by step just like making a building. It can take up to three days because they are heavy”, explained Abdullah.



On this occasion of Oman's 51st National Day of the Renaissance,
we would like to extend our sincere greetings to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and to the people of Oman.



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His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and to the people of Oman.

شركة عمان للفورمالدهايد الكيماويات
Oman Formaldehyde Chemical Company L.L.C.





51st

National Day of the Renaissance

OCTAL

OCTAL sends its warmest greetings and congratulates
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman on the momentous occasion
of the 51st National Day of the Renaissance.

The ongoing transformation of the Sultanate continues
with vigour and purpose under His Majesty's wise leadership and
OCTAL is proud to be part of this renewed renaissance now and into the future.

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