

P7

WALKING  
THROUGH HISTORY  
IN THE OLD TOWN  
OF AL HAMRA



P9

STRONG INVESTOR  
INTEREST IN  
OMAN HYDROGEN  
BLOCKS





**MUSCAT**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC), will celebrate International Human Rights Day on Monday. During the celebration, six humanitarian initiatives will be honoured for their roles in providing free shelter for children with cancer and their families, providing psychological, counselling and educational support, monitoring the psychological, social, cultural and health challenges faced by young people, and providing a safe and supportive environment for child development. **DETAILS ON P3**

**SQU STUDENTS 3RD IN PETROCOP OLYMPIAD**

Students from Sultan Qaboos University won third place globally in the 2022 PetroCop University Olympiad competition, which is organised annually by the Russian Nafta University for oil and gas engineering students. The competition aims to develop an oil field to increase production for five consecutive years through a simulation programme reality, while developing students' petroleum concepts and testing their abilities to analyse data and make decisions based on their understanding of the subjects of their specialisation. This competition consists of two phases. — **ONA**



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4 KILLED AS CYCLONE HITS INDIAN STATE

P5



LET'S TALK ABOUT MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

P6

# Sultanate of Oman to mark Armed Forces Day

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate of Oman will be marking the Armed Forces Day, which falls on December 11 every year, on Sunday.

The Sultan's Armed Forces have achieved a lot in terms of training, organisation, operations and armament thanks to the attention accorded to it by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander.

Under His Majesty's leadership, the Sultan's Armed Forces continue to effectively carry out its great missions and national roles utilising modern-age methods and technologies to conserve the bounties of security and stability in the Sultanate of Oman in an optimal environment that is suitable for keeping development plans in place and translating them into a tangible reality for

## MoD, SAF to get postal stamps

The Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces will celebrate the issuance of postal stamps for the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces in cooperation with Oman Post, as part of the Armed Forces Day celebrations. The celebration will be held under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence, in the presence of the chief of staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces and a number of senior officers of SAF and officials from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Oman Post. — **ONA**

the benefit of citizens all over the country in accordance with the requirements of Oman Vision 2040.

The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) have seen several forms of development and modernisation since the outset of the blessed Renaissance initiated by late Sultan Qaboos, may his soul rest in peace. Hence, SAF always remained as a mighty fort and a strong shield that protect the national achievements and safeguard the nation.

SAF continue to support the development plans and make great contributions in various situations.

The Sultan's Armed Forces will carry out a number of events at its various units to mark the Armed Forces Day. — **ONA**

# Forum on emerging companies on Monday

**MUSCAT:** HH Sayyid Belarab bin Haitham al Said, Honorary President of the Omani Promising Start-ups Programme, will preside over the launch of the Investment and Emerging Companies Forum organised by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority in cooperation with government institutions at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, on Monday.

The two-forum aims to spread the culture of emerging companies in the field of innovation and advanced technologies and benefiting from international experiences, opening broad horizons for

promoting emerging businesses regionally and internationally and exploring innovative solutions for funding.

The forum will provide an opportunity for the Omani start-ups to obtain funding to upgrade their businesses.

The forum will focus on three major pillars namely: capacity building of emerging businesses, funding and investing in technology-based emerging companies and start-ups and the legislative environment which incorporates the laws governing the start-ups.

The forum will start with a session titled 'the future of entrepreneurship and emerging companies'. **TURN TO P4**

## RAINS LIKELY IN MANY WILAYATS

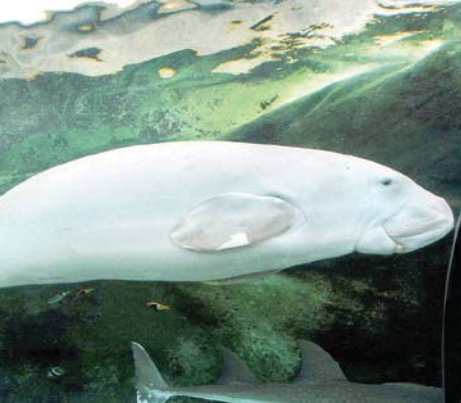


The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has said there are chances of rains of varying intensity, including thunderstorms ranging from 10 to 40 mm in the coming hours till Sunday morning. Rains may lead to overflowing of wadis in parts of the governorates of Muscat, South Al Batinah, South Al Sharqiyah, North Al Sharqiyah and Al Dakhiliyah. Forecast indicates chances of sporadic rain, ranging from 5 to 15 mm, in parts of the governorates of North Al Batinah, Musandam, Al Wusta and Dhofar. The Civil Aviation Authority calls on everyone to take precautions during rain, not to cross wadis, avoid low-lying areas, and not to venture into the sea during rains. **SEE ALSO P4**

# Nearly 10 per cent of marine life threatened with extinction

**GENEVA:** The effects of human activity from climate change to pollution are "devastating" marine life, with nearly a tenth of underwater plants and animals assessed so far threatened with extinction, the latest Red List of Threatened Species showed.

The report's release coincides with a UN summit on nature in Montreal where the UN chief Antonio Guterres has urged countries to end an "orgy of destruction" and pass a deal to halt and reverse habitat loss. More than 1,550 of some 17,903 marine plants and animals assessed by the



Wuru, a four-year-old female Dugong, swims in her tank at the Sydney Aquarium. — **Reuters**

International Union for Conservation of Nature are at risk of extinction, according to the latest list which acts as a barometer of biodiversity and is published several times a year.

**DEVASTATING IMPACT**

"It shows that we are having quite a devastating impact on marine species," Craig Hilton-Taylor, head of the IUCN Red List, said.

"Underwater, you can't really see what's going on. And so by assessing the status of the species it gives us a real indicator

of what is really happening there, and it's not good news."

Hilton-Taylor said the portion of marine species facing extinction was likely much higher than current data shows because those analysed so far have tended to be widespread fish species, not currently under threat.

Populations of the dugong, a plump, grey herbivorous mammal commonly known as the sea cow, have fallen to fewer than 250 adults in east Africa and fewer than 900 in the French territory of New Caledonia, the IUCN said. — **Reuters**



# More footfalls likely at Football Fan Festival

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, DEC 10

The Football Fan Festival, a part of the 'Oman World Cup Programme', has drawn in thousands of football fans from all over the country and abroad. More fans are expected as the tournament enters the final stages.

Apart from match broadcasts, a wide variety of contests, activities, competitions and food stalls will keep visitors entertained.

Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, said, "We are incredibly pleased with the overwhelmingly positive response to the Football Fan Festival. It is very encouraging to see such promising results after so much time, dedication and effort continue to be put into this project by several teams, volunteers, contractors and small businesses. Now, with the tournament heating up and the anticipation building for the finals, we are looking to ramp up the festivities even higher."

Sultan al Masroori said, "This is my second visit to the festival. I thoroughly enjoyed my first, so I decided to bring my family this time so that they could enjoy the same



This is my second visit to the festival. I thoroughly enjoyed my first, so I decided to bring my family this time so that they could enjoy the same fun experiences I had. This event is perfectly suitable for families

SULTAN AL MASROORI

Education in the Governorate of Muscat.

To ensure the event is accessible for everyone to enjoy, the entrance fee has been set to RO 2 per person (free entrance for children four and below). This ticket price includes unlimited free access to all games, shows, entertainment, challenges and contests. There are, however, only a limited number of tickets available each day. Therefore, it is highly recommended that all fans and their families pre-book tickets via the festival's website.

fun experiences I had. This event is perfectly suitable for families. I also hope this festival will serve as a stimulus for other institutions to host events that better reflect the aspirations of visitors."

Maheer al Ajmi and his son, Ali al Ajmi, said that the festival's activities and children's football games helped stimulate children's love for football and help them display their talents.

Giorgio Buffoni, who was visiting the festival with his family,

said, "I think the Fan Festival is really nice; it's very well organised. We feel this is much better than the other places we visited. There are more things to do, especially with the children."

Nasser al Derai said, "My first visit to the festival was a delight. I was fascinated by the fun atmosphere, the professionalism with which it was organised, and the variety of events and activities aimed at a range of age groups.

The festival's organisation is clearly driven by innovative and forward-thinking people. Perhaps the most captivating aspect of such events is the number of people that gather together. I would love to see more integrated events that bring smiles to the faces of families and children as the Football Fan Festival has done. As for the World Cup, my intuition tells me that Brazil will be crowned champions."

A new daily prize draw for

visitors is the latest addition to the Football Fan Festival activities. It runs each match day until the end of the tournament. All daily visitors who get their tickets scanned at the Football Fan Festival are entered into a draw to win exciting prizes.

The festival will also host the award ceremony of the Football Fan Festival Championship for Students of Muscat Governorate Schools 2022, organised in collaboration with the Directorate-General of

# CHARITY FAIR OF USED BOOKS CONCLUDES



VINOD NAIR  
@vinod\_nair

A charity exhibition for used books, organised by College of Economics and Political Science, concluded at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Muscat. The proceeds of the three-day exhibition, held at the Mall of Oman, will be allocated to contribute to building the largest complex for orphaned children in the Sultanate of Oman. Compared to previous years, the exhibition had a large collection of 16,000 books in both Arabic and English.

It also had separate stalls for novels, Islamic law, children, culture, economics, political sciences, medicine and health sciences, and human development.

According to organisers, the exhibition was also aimed at making people read, taking part in volunteer activities, and preserving books.

Books were collected from different regions in the country. Speaking to the Observer, a volunteer said, "We had both Omani and expatriate visitors showing interest at the large collection of books on display, which is also for a noble cause."



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# Ancient ruins and quaint charm of Al Nazooh draws visitors

TEXT& PHOTO  
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Al Nazooh sits on the parallel road to Wadi Bani Henai on a mountainous plateau.

This village consists of towers and houses built like those old Omani neighbourhoods.

Despite the privileged location of this village, all its houses are deserted and only tourists and enthusiasts of the Omani architectural style frequent it. Most of the towers and houses suffer from erosion and collapse but still stand tall thanks to strong building materials with which they were built hundreds of years ago.

Visitors who wander among its alleys can marvel at the architectural design, which is in line with the nature of the terrain on which the towers and houses of the village were constructed. Another highlight is the network of water channels set up for supplying drinking water and irrigation.

One can enjoy the panoramic view of the houses built of mud and stones, against the green background of date palms, mangoes, lemons and other trees.

This village is also surrounded by archaeological sites dating back more than 3,000 years. On the western bank of this village there are remains of some ancient walls and tombs, and all of these relics are physical evidence indicating the presence of human settlements during successive historical eras.

The residents of this village are still



practicing traditional occupations inherited from their ancestors such as farming, herding and beekeeping.

"We prepare different types of vegetable oils. Some of these oils are used in meals while others are used to treat stomach pain, skin allergies, headaches and neurological diseases," villagers said.

This village is highly accessible as its proximity to the main street that connects the public prosecution office of Wadi Al Hooqain with Wadi Bani Henai) saves visitors' time.

"Visiting this village is not much of a bother. One can see historical remains here. But visitors must not tamper with the archaeological sites as they bear witness for future generations," locals said.

On the western hills of Al Nazooh, there are signboards asking tourists to preserve the historical and archaeological heritage that surrounds this village. Some are of the opinion that these are not enough and call for restoration of ruined premises. Sites that contain ancient tombs and rare rock inscriptions must be fenced.



# Pandemic leads to less grocery visits, more quantity of items

SAMUEL KUTTY  
@samuelkuttyvp

Along with nutritional and health deterioration, the Covid-19 pandemic has altered people's food shopping attitudes in addition to their eating patterns.

In the wake of disrupted food supplies caused by the coronavirus outbreak, consumers worldwide have been prompted to reconsider how and what they eat, as well as their purchase decisions.

As witnessed in several countries, Covid-19 was linked to fewer shopping trips and increased purchases per trip. The Sultanate of Oman is no exception.

"Given the perceived risk of shopping at a supermarket, consumers have decreased the number of grocery visits and purchased more on each visit to minimise their virus exposure", reveals a new study.

Titled "Observations on food consumption behaviours during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Oman", the study published by Frontiers in Public Health included a broad population of 356 adult consumers in Oman, and the respondents were invited to share the online poll with their friends and relatives.

Many questions were raised in the research about the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on food-related activities, such as food shopping, cooking, diet, and waste.

As much as 84.2 per cent of the participants said that they go shopping less often than customary, while 39.6 per cent stated that they purchased more and much more quantity than usual on each shopping trip.

"As more people shop online to escape congested supermarkets, the digitisation of food retail is speeding fast. This supports a general trend in the GCC area, where online shopping has grown significantly since the pandemic's beginning", the authors of the study stated in the report.

At the same time, several respondents still bought food in person to check the quality and freshness of the items.

In addition, due to food safety concerns, the consumption of local food products



As more people shop online to escape congested supermarkets, the digitisation of food retail is speeding fast. Online shopping has grown significantly since the pandemic's beginning

## OSERVATIONS ON FOOD CONSUMPTION IN OMAN

rose. Concerns about the transmission of the virus grew with the pandemic and an increasing number of people want to know where their food originates from.

"A preference for local products was generated by the unfounded belief of

consumers that imported items represent a safety concern", the study found.

A locally produced item is thought to be handled fewer times and therefore has a higher perception of safety. It may also be related to the distribution of global food chains and the resulting lack in the provision stream of imported items. In fact, the pandemic and associated actions caused substantial distortions in the food supply chain via logistical interrupts and restricted access to markets for commodities.

There have been some modifications in food-related activities.

According to the findings, 56.1 per cent of the cohort ate out less, and 44.6 per cent ordered fewer take-out or fast food meals. Moreover, 54.2 per cent of those polled ate more with family members, 54.2 per cent cooked and prepared food much more frequently, 46.3 per cent cooked a lot, and 28.1 per cent ate more between meals.

# OHRC to mark Human Rights day tomorrow

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, DEC 10

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Human Rights Commission, OHRC, will celebrate International Human Rights Day on Monday, in the presence of His Highness Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd al Said, Secretary-General at the Secretariat-General for the Council of Ministers at the Civil Aviation Authority hall.

During the celebration, six humanitarian initiatives will be honoured for their roles in providing free shelter for children with cancer and their families; providing counselling and educational support, monitoring the psychological, social, cultural, and health challenges faced by young people, and providing a safe and supportive environment for child development. These initiatives provided support to parents to create a safe and healthy social and psychological environment and to build partnerships with government and private institutions and civil society organisations.

In addition, OHRC has been keen



on its early intervention to deal with disabilities that may occur to children, raise the level of community awareness about autism spectrum disorder, activate the role of the injured and enhance their participation in society, protect children from exposure to exploitation, and enhance their confidence in themselves and their communities.

International Human Rights Day comes in commemoration of the day on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948.

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# New technology college to plug skills shortage

KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabeeryousef

A new college under National University has received approval from the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI). It will be operational from next year to groom skilled technicians in various fields.

College of Advanced Technology will be the fifth college under National University (NU), which has three other institutions currently catering to both citizens and expatriates alike.

The university has also secured a letter of interest from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University for collaboration to establish the new College of Advanced Technology, besides forging agreements with several universities and organisations for academic and professional engagements, including Manipal University, Yenepoya University, Digital University, Kerala, ASAP Kerala, Indian Maritime University, Chennai.

"We are happy to announce that the new College of Advanced Technology will cater to the needs of modern day job market by moulding the technocrats of tomorrow and will commence operations in the fall of 2023," said Dr Salim al Araiimi, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University told the Observer.

He further said that a feasibility study was submitted to the MoHERI and it started rolling before the pandemic halted many projects and its addition to Oman's education arena will add value to the graduates being produced in the local as well as international markets. "We have produced 10,000 graduates, 1,000 doctors and medical staff, and Oman Medical College has been ranked the No 3 in Oman, and our aim is to be in the top 300 universities in the world as per Oman Vision 2040," said Dr P Mohamemd Ali, Chairman of NU.

"We have students from over 31 countries and a good mix of staff as well as academicians from more than 16 countries. International students are provided with student visas for their stay in Oman. The university has several schemes to support financially disadvantaged students such as merit-cum means scholarships and deferred tuition fee payment options," he said.

NU has forged academic partnership arrangements with some renowned institutions abroad. These include Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland; West Virginia University School of Medicine- USA; University of South Carolina-USA; Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai - India; JSS University Mysore - India & NIT Durgapur- India, to raise the academic standards of the National University.

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# Students display musical talents in Nizwa



AMAL AL RIYAMI  
NIZWA, DEC 10

The Directorate-General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate organised a talent festival under the auspices of HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Salim al Said.

Approximately 160 students from Al Dakhiliyah schools displayed their talents in singing, instrumental music and poetry recitation. Saif bin Mubarak al Julandani, Director-General, and other officials witnessed the event at Nizwa Cultural Centre.

The ceremony opened with a speech by Saif al Abdali, Assistant Director-General for Education Affairs at the Directorate-General of Education, in which he said: “The Ministry of Education has



been trying to identify talented students, working to refine them and adopt them in a manner that develops and promotes them in various fields of knowledge, skill, practice and experience.”

“This celebration highlights our students’ talents in musical skills. This celebration also comes with the participation of the students of the boarding schools in the country’s celebrations of the Glorious National Day and an embodiment of the directions of Oman Vision 2040 aimed at promoting the values of citizenship, loyalty and belonging in the hearts of young people,” Al Abdali said.

Individuals and groups performed musical compositions. The ceremony was accompanied by an exhibition.

## South Indian actor to perform in cultural show

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, DEC 10

South Indian actor-turned-politician Suresh Gopi will lead the star show at the Qurum Amphitheatre on December 23.

The star show, named “Tharum Thalirum”, will feature acclaimed Indian stars such as Honey Rose, Navya Nair along with other stage artistes. It is organised by Snehatheeram or shore of love, a group of people who love art, culture and charity.

The event host, Lakshmi Nakshatra of Flowers TV channel, is the winner of Best TV Anchor 2022. Kumar Sahil, a known Bollywood performer, stand-up comedians Jobi Pala, Anoop Kalabhavan, Krishna Kumar and Nishabh, along with Oman-based artistes, will also perform.

Formed in 2019 with like-minded people, Snehatheeram aims to nourish and encourage talents in arts and culture besides extending a helping hand to the needy.

Chief of Snehatheeram, Sreekumar Kottarakkara, Suvish, technical coordinator, Shashidharan, Ajeesh Vasu and Sreelatha Suresh said the evening would be packed with diverse activities.

### ■ ‘DISCOVER SOUTH AL BATINAH’



The activities of the programme “Change the atmosphere and discover South Al Batinah” are continuing in Al Batinah South Governorate, which is organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The programme includes various activities, including a relay race and a running race in two categories - for a distance of 400 and 800 meters, and a car exhibition, in addition to theatre activities and entertainment competitions for children and families. The event also included a market for productive families, which included the products of families in the governorate and home projects. The event also witnessed performances by bands who played Omani and Gulf tunes and melodies, in addition to marine activities, including water bikes and kayaks. — ONA

## Oman Sail and TRANSOM announce agreement

**MUSCAT:** Oman Sail has signed an agreement with TRANSOM Catering to become the official catering partner of the 2022 44Cup Oman, taking place at Al Mouj Muscat from December 7 to 11. The agreement was signed by Oman Sail CEO, Dr Khamis al Jabri, and TRANSOM Catering CEO Thomas Grieser, on November 29 at Oman Sail HQ.

TRANSOM Catering operates the largest kitchen in the Sultanate, equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and working 24 hours a day to provide the highest standards to its clients which include major international airlines

and government services.

Throughout the four-day 44Cup Oman event, TRANSOM Catering will be managing the hospitality on land in the race village and on the water for event crew and VIP guests.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, “We are delighted to welcome TRANSOM Catering to be part of the 44Cup Grand Finale in Oman. The company has an impressive track record at serving large-scale operations and is one of Oman’s true success stories. Being part of a showpiece final like the 44Cup Oman is a milestone for both Oman Sail and our partners and we

are looking forward to welcoming the teams to Al Mouj Marina in December.”

Thomas Grieser, CEO of TRANSOM Catering, said, “This is a unique opportunity to show visitors from around the world how warm and welcoming Omani hospitality can be. On the shores of Al Mouj Marina, just metres from the racing action, we will be serving the very best snacks, drinks and culinary creations from our menu and leaving visitors with an incredible impression of the Sultanate of Oman.”

Oman Sail’s RC44 team,

supported by Asyad Shipping Company and known as Team Asyad Shipping, will be lining up alongside the ten regular teams from Great Britain, Monaco, France, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland for the final leg of the five-stop international tour which concludes in Oman.

This is the first time that Oman has hosted the RC44 Tour since 2014 when Oman also hosted the final round. Each team will compete in identical RC44 racing yachts and there will be between three and four races per day during the four-day regatta.

## Rains may lower night temperature

VINOD NAIR  
@vinot\_nair

Northern governorates of the Sultanate of Oman received heavy to moderate rains on Saturday evening while parts of Muscat and South Al Batinah received showers in the morning.

Images and videos showed that several areas in the Wilayat of Seeb were flooded due to heavy rains though traffic was not affected.

Light to moderate showers were also reported from other parts of the city such as Ruwi and Qurum.

Later in the evening, Al Khabourah and Saham in North Al Batinah reported heavy rains with authorities urging motorists to exercise caution while driving.

Oman Meteorology has said that sporadic rain (sometimes thunderstorms) is likely to continue in the governorates of Muscat, South Al Batinah, South Al Sharqiyah, and parts of the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah and North Al Sharqiyah on Sunday.



Night temperatures in Muscat are likely to drop to 20 degrees Celsius, Suhar 19 degrees Celsius, Saiq 8 degrees Celsius. There are chances of sporadic rains in the Governorate of Musandam and the

coastal areas of the Governorate of North Al Batinah.

“A drop in minimum temperatures is also expected on Sunday due to the northwest winds in the Sultanate of Oman.

The minimum temperatures on the mountains are likely to drop to below five degrees Celsius with chances of frost formation in the evening/dawn on Sunday,” the Meteorology office said.

## Forum on emerging companies on Monday

**From page 1**

Sixty emerging companies will participate in the accompanying exhibition to display their advanced innovations and technologies to investors. The next and final day will see the signing of deals and agreements between emerging companies and investors.

The programme also comes within the framework of the steps taken to strengthen the system of emerging companies based on innovation and technology in the Sultanate of Oman by empowering the

owners of innovative ideas and supporting the establishment of emerging companies in this field and linking them to business, investment and financing opportunities in order to achieve expansion in the local and global markets, and work to raise the ranking of the Sultanate of Oman in international indicators related to innovation, technology and ease of doing business. It also aims to contribute to spreading the culture of start-ups in educational institutions and enhancing community awareness of their importance. — ONA



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## In brief

### ■ SHANGHAI



### CHINA TACKLES MEDICAL SUPPLY SNAGS

China said on Saturday it would stop checking truck drivers and ship crew transporting goods domestically for Covid-19, removing a key bottleneck from its supply chain network as a dismantling of the country's zero-Covid policy gathers speed.

The country last week made a dramatic pivot towards economic reopening, loosening key parts of the Covid policy in a shift that has been welcomed by a weary public but also is now stoking concerns that infections could spike and cause further disruptions.

With Beijing requiring less testing and letting those with mild to no symptoms quarantine at home, the focus has shifted to ensuring adequate provisions of medicines and shoring up the country's healthcare system, which experts say could be quickly overwhelmed.

### ■ TUNIS



### TUNISIANS PROTEST AGAINST PRESIDENT AHEAD OF POLLS

Hundreds of Tunisians protested on Saturday against President Kais Saied a week before elections to a new parliament created by his constitutional changes, accusing him of an undemocratic coup.

Saied shut down the previous parliament last year and ruled by decree before rewriting the constitution this year to give the presidency more powers, moves rejected by most political parties.

Saied has said his actions were legal and necessary in order to save Tunisia from years of crisis and has repeatedly said he will not become a dictator.

### ■ LONDON



### HARRY AND MEGHAN DEFEND DOCUMENTARY

Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan have rejected criticism of a documentary about their lives, with a statement from their spokesman saying that the couple had never cited privacy as a reason for stepping back from the royal family.

In the first three episodes of the much-anticipated documentary, the couple — the Duke and Duchess of Sussex — made a series of disclosures, with Meghan recalling her first death threat, Harry talking about wearing disguises to their dates, and previously unseen footage of their son Archie.

MORE SUPPORT CAN HELP END WAR IN 2023, SAYS BORIS JOHNSON

# US announces new Ukraine aid

WASHINGTON: The United States announced new military aid for Ukraine, which a British envoy said involved Moscow seeking hundreds of ballistic missiles and offering unprecedented military support in return.

Meanwhile, the Russian-installed administration of Ukraine's Kherson region said on Saturday that it had begun changing locally circulated Ukrainian hryvnia currency into Russian roubles, with hryvnia circulation in Moscow-controlled areas of the region to end on January 1.

In a video published on Telegram by the region's Moscow-appointed administration, Andrei Peretokin, head of the Russian central bank's local branch, said: "For the sake of the convenience of residents and to allow for a smoother integration of the region into the Russian economic space, this week banks in Kherson region began currency exchange operations." Previously, the Russian-installed administration had said that both the rouble and hryvnia would be accepted in Kherson region.

Russian forces took control of most of Kherson region in the early days of Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine, and declared it annexed to Russia in September after a referendum condemned by Ukraine and Western countries.

Less than two months later, Russian forces withdrew from Kherson city under pressure from a Ukrainian counteroffensive, while continuing to hold most of the region's territory.

### MORE SUPPORT

British former prime minister



People gather near a residential building destroyed in recent shelling in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict in Donetsk, Russian-controlled Ukraine, on Saturday. — Reuters

Boris Johnson has urged western countries to "look urgently" at what more they can do to support Ukraine in the hopes of ending the war against Russia as soon as next year.

The former prime minister, who was hailed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as a key ally in the country's fight against Russia, used an article in the Wall Street Journal to argue that ending the war as soon as possible is "in everyone's interest, including Russia".

He said that while the significant financial commitment to Ukraine is "painful" during a period of budgetary constraints, "time is money, and the longer this goes on the more we will all end up paying in military support".

Johnson has remained a vocal

supporter of Ukrainian efforts since leaving office in September.

His successor Rishi Sunak, who visited Kyiv last month, has pledged to continue UK backing for Ukraine.

The former prime minister wrote: "There is no land-for-peace deal to be done, even if Putin were offering it and even if he were to be trusted, which he is not."

"Since the war can end only one way, the question is how fast we get to the inevitable conclusion."

"It's in everyone's interest, including Russia's, that the curtain comes down as soon as possible on Putin's misadventure. Not in 2025, not in 2024, but in 2023."

Johnson warns that next winter could prove even more difficult than this one, as gas supplies run low for countries once reliant on

Russian fuel. "It is time to look urgently at what more the West can do to help the Ukrainians achieve their military objectives. That's the only plausible basis on which a conversation about the future could begin."

He also rejected any suggestion that Nato provoked Vladimir Putin into invading Ukraine, as he said the response from western countries to Russia's war had helped "atone" for years of failing to stand up to the Kremlin.

"Decades of western lassitude and irresolution about Ukraine's status, enticed the bully to make his mistake."

"The West has atoned for this failure with a stunning display of coherence and unity since February. We must be stronger and bolder." — Agencies

Thailand hits 10 million visitors as tourism recovers

BANGKOK: Thailand celebrated the arrival of its 10 millionth international visitor of 2022 on Saturday, according to the tourism authority, as the kingdom consolidated the recovery of its Covid-battered travel sector.

Thailand welcomed some 40 million people in 2019, but then the pandemic hit and travel was decimated as nations tightened border controls to contain the coronavirus.

With those restrictions easing worldwide Thailand's travel numbers have begun a slow recovery and the government expects to generate nearly \$16 billion in tourism revenue this year.

Traditional dancers and drummers at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport on Saturday welcomed passengers arriving on a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight that authorities believe clocked the 10-million milestone.

"The sky is open," Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-cha said in a speech at the airport.

"We would like to build confidence that Thailand is still one of the (top) tourist destinations of people around the world." — AFP

# 4 killed as cyclone hits southern Indian state

CHENNAI: A cyclonic storm killed at least four people in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu on Saturday, the top state official said, as heavy rain and strong winds buffeted several districts damaging property and causing power outages.

Cyclone Mandous, which made landfall late on Friday night, damaged 185 houses and huts, Tamil Nadu's chief minister, M K Stalin, told reporters. The storm uprooted 400 trees in the state capital Chennai, a hub for auto makers and technology firms.

Nearly 25,000 people, including disaster relief

personnel, were involved in the relief work, and more than 9,000 people were moved to safety in 201 relief camps, Stalin said.

"We are still assessing damages", he told reporters, as he visited some of the affected areas.

Mandous had weakened from an earlier severe category as it swept past Sri Lanka, where schools were closed on Friday due to high air pollution levels from the storm.

It was expected to gradually weaken into a low-pressure area, India's meteorological department tweeted on Saturday.

— Reuters



A woman stands in a house damaged by high tides at Pattinapakkam beach in Chennai on Saturday following the cyclonic storm Mandous. — AFP

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDER

The Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C) announces to float Tender No. TANWEER- 18/2022

**Reinforcement works in existing H.V Electrical Distribution work by replacements of all existing rusted, corroded OHL components in Rasmadrakha Area (Feeder 1)**

### The Conditions:

- 1- Collection of Tender:** Interested Companies with grade "C" and Above which registered with Tanweer, Tender Board and Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) for Electrical Works may obtain the tender documents from Procurement & Contracts Department, Rural Areas Electricity Company at Al Seeb, till the date of **22 December 2022** against a non-refundable amount of RO (50/-) for each set of documents. The fees for the tenders shall be deposited on Tanweer account 0423010783090041 – Bank Muscat and for more information please contact via email address i.e. [tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om](mailto:tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om) , or call us on phone number: 24250824
- 2- Bank Guarantee:** The Tenderer should enclose original bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC (Tanweer).
- 3- Offers Submission:**
  - A- Original bid bond along Cover letters** shall be placed by bidders inside the red waxed Tender's envelopes as communicated to bidders by Tanweer. Tender soft copy must be serialized according to the numbers of the tender items.
  - B- Tender bids** shall be provided separately on a CD Roms, along with original cover letters in each envelop. Bids and cover letters shall bear the bidder's official seal and must be signed in either blue or red ink, but not black. A true soft copy of the bids shall be provided on a CD in an inner envelope marked "Copy". Bids who do not comply with these requirements will be overlooked.
- C- Bidders** shall write the following details on the cover of CD:
  - Tender name and number.
  - Addressed it to the **Chairman of Minor Tender Committee**, Rural Areas Electricity Company.
  - Prequalification / Technical Proposal / Commercial Proposal / Bid Bond.
- 4- Submission Location:** The Completed bids in CD should be deposited in the Tender Box at Tanweer Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 12:00 PM on the date of **12 January 2023.**
- 5- Tender Price (R.O):** 5% VAT is inclusive.
- 6- Rural Areas Electricity Company** without mentioning the reason is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender and not bond to refund tender purchase fees if you are not qualified to participate the tender.

For more information, please call: 80077787  
Or visit our Website: [www.tanweer.nama.om](http://www.tanweer.nama.om)



Tanweer

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Global media’s cashed-up carousel

Is bigotry and intolerance on the rise? Or have we just become more sensitive? Or are we being wrangled by the world’s media, yet again?

There certainly ‘appear’ to be rising tensions globally during the last year, whether in the realm of international politics and conflict, such as in the Ukraine, where again, it appears that one man’s obsession seeks a forlorn conclusion. Even in the spiritually enlightened realm of religion and faith, where a sense of tolerance, and a hope that its diversity, were becoming reconciled, in the wake of the pandemic, to matters of consideration and opinion.

Particularly loathsome rhetoric emerges daily, inspired by fascist and supremacist organisations that is both hurtful and unacceptable. Yet rather than seeking to expose the anarchy, the media sensationalises their deeds and their oratory. Yes, they label their invective as ‘disgusting,’ ‘appalling,’ and so many other adjectives, but by giving them column inches the global media is sensationalising their words and deeds for only one reason... to create fear, because those in fear seek reassurance, and where... in the media of course. It’s a cashed-up carousel, a not-very-merry-go-round.

“We recognise,” writes Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, “hate speech as an attack on tolerance, inclusion, diversity and the very essence of our human rights norms and principles.” Yet for some reason, even though it undermines the values, culture and traditions of our communities and societies, we allow it to simmer, no, to seethe, and nurture violence, conflict, pain, and suffering, erasing any truly held concept of either dignity, or respect. We must, somehow, convince those with grandiose political dreams, and whose means are through violence, that those dreams, political by nature, can only ever truly be successful... if achieved politically.



Ray Petersen  
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

After all, if staying well, and alive is a common objective, and a common challenge, who needs conflict? People don’t! Stories, plays, poetry, and films... they need conflict, don’t they? They need the diversity and antagonism of light and dark, good, and bad, weak, and strong, love and hate, all part of a managed maelstrom of contrived conflict, of pain, of disappointment, of frustration, of plots that simply could not interest us without their plots, their schemes, and machinations. But these are all flights of fancy, concocted, orchestrated, devised, and designed to capture our imaginations...

They are a release valve, our escape, and here there are wounds and injuries that do not cause us pain, absences that do not hurt us, lost loves that we can bear, insults that run off us and are forgotten in an instant. Why even snow doesn’t limit us, rain doesn’t get us wet, the Sun doesn’t burn us, or the wind sting our faces. Why? Because literature and the arts are the place for pain. Not real life. We don’t need pain, agony, suffering, or torment... that’s why corporal punishment is no longer allowed in schools, because our societies, that is us... we... have decided suffering is not for people, but for fancy.

Whatever, or ‘whoever’ is to blame for any conflict, we need to be mature about its resolution, and have common responses to aggressors and aggression. They certainly go looking for trouble, and that very action, that philosophy of theirs, simply demonstrates that their problem, their fight, is with themselves. Bullies always get their comeuppance in the end, as history has shown us time and time again, but much of the reason they gain prominence in the first place is not because we give them an opportunity, but we give them a reason... our posturing may feel right, and may even be right, but if we can’t see that we are being manipulated into programmed responses, we have not evolved except technologically.

HATE SPEECH IS AN ATTACK ON TOLERANCE, INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND THE VERY ESSENCE OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS NORMS AND PRINCIPLES

CLEARING THE WAY



A snow plough clears snow from the taxi ways at Manchester Airport, Manchester, Britain, on Saturday. – Reuters

Let’s talk about men’s mental health

A few years ago, I attended a workshop dedicated to discussing mental health at work. One of the speakers shared his experience with bipolar disorder. He talked about his first episode when he experiences high energy levels and believed that he was a prophet and started preaching to his family members. He would hold a copy of the holy Quran and start reading it loud and offering a strange explanation for the verses. His wife became very concerned about his behaviour and tried to convince him to go to a hospital, but he refused saying that he never felt better in his life. It took several hours of persuasion from his parents and when he went to a hospital, and he was admitted and given treatment. He talked about his recovery and how this experience changed his life and how the support from his family and colleagues gave him the strength to carry on. After a few weeks of resting, he was able to go back to work and excel in what he is doing.

According to the World Health Organization, men are more likely to commit suicide three times more than women and they are less likely to seek professional help when they have psychological problems.



Dr Hamed al Sinawi  
@alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

ACCORDING TO THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, MEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO COMMIT SUICIDE THREE TIMES MORE THAN WOMEN AND THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP WHEN THEY HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Several factors such as society’s expectations and traditional gender roles are behind men’s reluctance to seek help. In many societies, men are not expected to show emotions and certainly not those of sadness or hopelessness as they are considered feminine qualities. Therefore it’s not surprising that some men express their psychological distress by adopting unhealthy behaviours such as violence, addiction to drugs or alcohol, gambling, and having multiple sexual partners.

According to recent studies, men with depression may exhibit different symptoms such as irritability, sudden anger, increased loss of control, risk-taking, and aggression which are less likely to be present among women with depression. While some men experience physical symptoms such as a racing heart, discomfort in the stomach, or headache so they end up consulting their doctor about physical symptoms that are caused by their emotional distress.

This makes it difficult for doctors who are not well-trained

in mental health to make the correct diagnosis and provide the most appropriate therapeutic intervention.

So what can be done to help men seek and receive appropriate care?

The first step is better education about mental health to the public and those working in the healthcare sector. Special awareness campaigns are likely

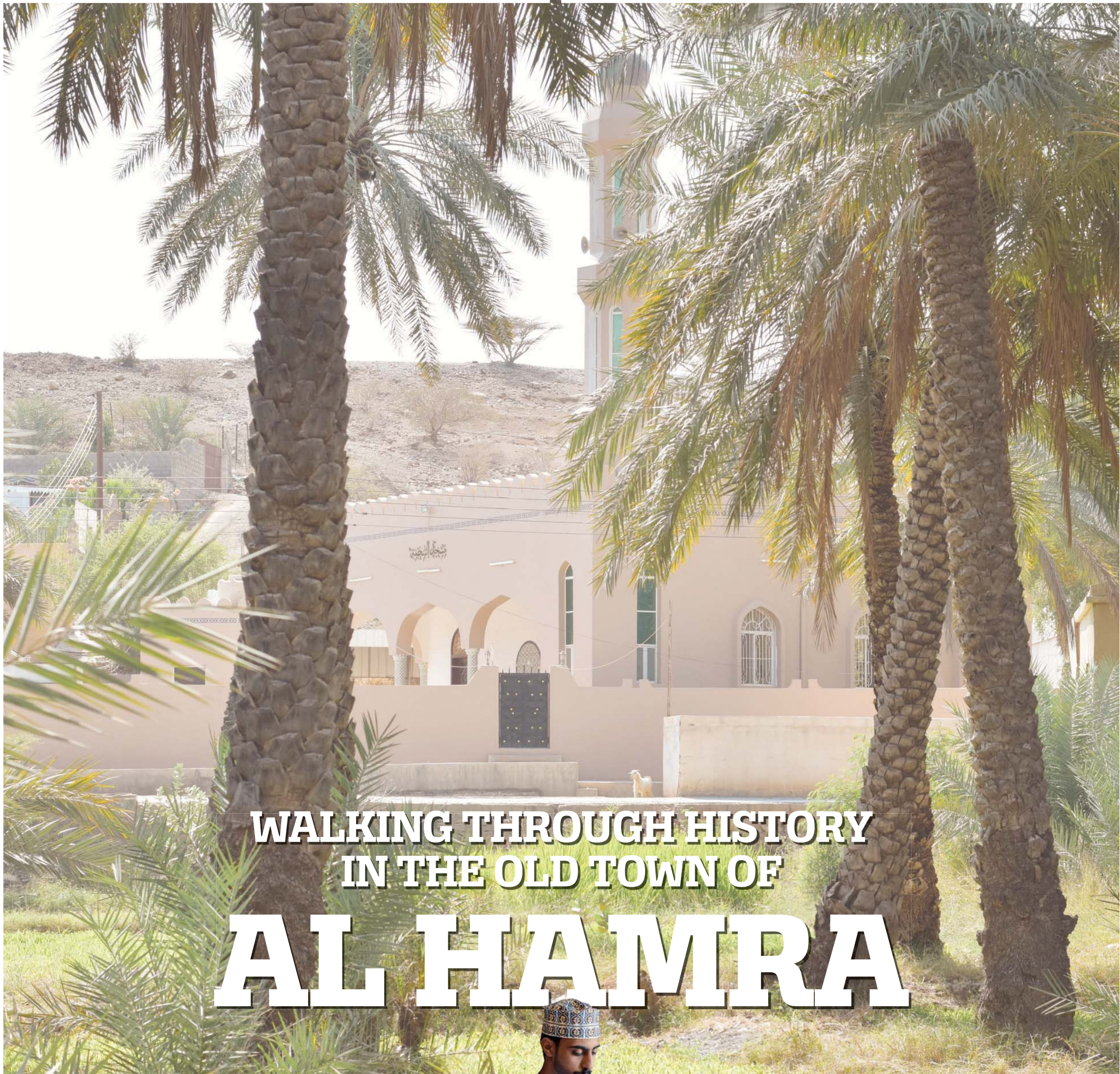
to help break the stigma and address gender biases. Some countries are engaging other agencies in providing informal support such as religious leaders and work-based counsellors. Some of the most vulnerable groups who may suffer from loneliness such as the elderly who are widowed or live with minimum social support would need to be noticed and

supported. Sports are a good medium to prevent mental illness and bring young men together. Inviting sportsmen who experienced mental health problems to share their experience will install hope and encourage others to seek help when they need it.

Remember, whether you are a man or a woman, you are not alone, so don’t suffer in silence.



Men with depression may exhibit different symptoms.



## WALKING THROUGH HISTORY IN THE OLD TOWN OF AL HAMRA

BY OLGA VELIKAYA  
INSTAGRAM: FACE\_A\_STORY

**A**N oasis amid the arid Al Hajar Mountains was a sight to behold. The ancient town of Al Hamra in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate was home to extraordinary ruins, mud-brick houses, and a large plantation of date palm trees. Because we reached the green haven from the new quarter of the town, we got to see a spectacular view and escape the scorching heat. Large crowns of graceful pinnate leaves shielded us from the sunlight. Instead of taking the direct path through the plantation, we followed the falaj (irrigation channels). As a result, the large oasis turned into a maze with new discoveries at every turn. Some old light brown houses were well-preserved or renovated, while others were in ruins.

The sign of Bait Al Safah led us to an open engraved wooden door. Little did we know that behind the door was the whole world of Omani traditions. A young man dressed in a dishdasha and kummah sat behind the desk in the dimly lit room with a high ceiling and mud walls. After giving us our tickets (RO 1 for Omanis and RO 3 for Non-Omanis), Marwan showed us around the ground floor which consisted of two rooms. The space was mainly used for storage and making date syrup. Marwan offered us some syrup, and the thick brown nectar tasted sweet and pleasant and reminded me slightly of plum jam.

The heart of every home was a kitchen, and this living museum was no exception. In fact, the kitchen area was a live demonstration of many Omani traditions. With the help of other women, Fatma, our charismatic guide, explained each step in English. First, she roasted a handful of Yemeni coffee beans on a gas stove, and within minutes a familiar delicious aroma filled the room. After that, she showed us how grain was ground into flour. An older woman dressed in bright traditional clothes then expertly used the sticky dough to make paper-thin bread. Made with just flour, water and salt, the lace-like bread was deeply flavourful. As we moved on to beauty tips, we saw how moringa oil was extracted from the seeds and was used for a radiant complexion. The final demonstration involved making a bright yellow-orange paste with saffron and sandalwood for glowing, healthy skin.

Next, we entered the Majlis, which was airy and bright with many small windows. The Majlis was a sitting room covered with oriental carpets and dozens of pillows where visitors could sit down and enjoy some coffee. In any house, it wasn't just a place for social gatherings and receiving guests, but also for discussing local events and news, solving problems, etc. Aside from Omani coffee and sweet Khalas dates, we could also enjoy some tea there. Dates were typically eaten in odd



numbers, such as three, five, or seven. In the past, a farmer would eat 11 or 13 dates for breakfast to have the energy to work all day.

A changing room was another unique feature of the museum, where men and women could dress up in traditional Omani clothing. My favourite attire was a long purple knee-length embroidered tunic, loose-fitting trousers, and a matching chiffon scarf. Other rooms were filled with various old objects, such as books, spoons and jewellery, collected from neighbouring abandoned houses.

At the end of the tour, visitors could go to the rooftop where the family used to sleep in summer. Since the museum offered an experience like no other, it was buzzing with tourists, and multiple languages could be heard: Italian, German, French and Serbian. More than 100 visitors came on weekends and about 60 on weekdays during the winter season.

Apart from Bait Al Safah, there were other renovated buildings on the same street, including two small hotels. Walking through the ruins, I wondered what life was like when those houses were built hundreds of years ago. Several men sat and chatted under the palm trees while a flock of sheep was grazing on lime-green grass. I noticed that the farm ground was divided into lots: some were bigger, while others just had one tree. As in the morning, the area was quiet. It was a true oasis of peace and fertile land.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

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AROUND THE WORLD

MOVIES

‘Avatar’ sequel finally premieres 13 years after original



**THIRTEEN YEARS AFTER** James Cameron released the highest-grossing film of all time, “Avatar”, the film-maker finally premiered its long-awaited sequel in London on Tuesday. “Avatar: The Way of Water” takes audiences back to the enchanting world of Pandora, where in the first film the native blue Na’vi people battled human colonists for the moon’s natural resources. Set more than a decade later, “The Way of Water” sees actors Sam Worthington and Zoe Saldana return as Jake Sully and Neytiri, now parents of five children. Their peaceful life in the paradise-like jungle is interrupted by the return of the “Sky People”, the Na’vi name for humans, who are after Sully. To protect their family and their tribe, Sully, Neytiri and their children flee to a far-flung territory and seek refuge with the oceanic Metkayina clan. Their bodies and skills suited to forest life, the family must quickly learn the ways of the water to survive while facing their enemy’s nearing threat. “This was a labour of love spread out over a decade, so it’s great to finally be able share it,” Worthington told Reuters at the film’s world premiere. “This is a heart-wrenching story, it’s mighty, it’s very powerful, you hope that it connects (with audiences) but it’s not just the carbon copy of the first one, we’ve really expanded the world, we’ve expanded this family unit.” Saldana said reprising her role was “emotional”. “It was exciting, it was also very scary because obviously Jim had raised the stakes for himself, that meant that everybody was going to have a brand new challenge to have to deal with,” she said. Sigourney Weaver plays Kiri, Neytiri and Sully’s adopted daughter. Her biological mother is Dr Grace Augustine, who Weaver played in the original movie. “The whole thing was such an amazing adventure,” she said. Released in 2009, “Avatar” ranks as the top-grossing film of all time with more than \$2.9 billion in global ticket sales. Four “Avatar” movies are planned through 2028. “I never had any doubt that this day would come because I’d read all four of the scripts ... but I think that the enormity of the task, of the world-building ... creating this whole new level of detail ... that was difficult,” producer Jon Landau said, adding most of the third movie had been filmed. “We will continue to explore new locations on Pandora, we will continue to meet new and diverse clans.” — Reuters

DINING

Meet the Spanish twin chefs who earned a third Michelin star



**WHEN THEY WERE** just eight years old, Spanish twins Sergio and Javier Torres set a goal: they wanted to become chefs who were among the top in their field. To achieve this, they strategically split up to get training in different esteemed kitchens around the world, published books on cooking and presented a popular TV show. **THE PLAN WORKED** Over four decades after they surprised their family by saying they wanted to be chefs, Sergio and Javier’s Barcelona restaurant, Cocina Hermanos Torres, was awarded a third Michelin star last month. “We developed a plan, that I think is a perfect plan,” a smiling Javier, 51, said at the restaurant, one of only 13 in Spain and Portugal with the top three-star ranking from the prestigious French guide. “When we started to go out of Barcelona, we thought that Sergio would take one path, I would take another, and we would never coincide until we were ready,” he added. The journey took the twins — who grew up in a working-class Barcelona neighbourhood — to different elite restaurants in Spain, Switzerland and France. Before moving to Paris where he worked with top French chef Alain Ducasse, Sergio spent two years at the award-winning Le Jardin des Sens in Montpellier which is also run by twins — Jacques

and Laurent Pourcel. “We were separated but every month we met up in a restaurant, ate well, we spent the little money we had and developed the next steps of our strategy,” said Sergio as he sat beside his brother. **GRANDMOTHER INFLUENCE** Each brother specialised in different areas — one learned to cook meat and vegetables, the other fish and bread, he added. Both siblings credit their grandmother for their passion for cooking. She was part of a wave of people who moved from the southern region of Andalusia to the more industrialised Catalonia in the northeast in search of a better life following Spain’s devastating 1936-39 civil war. “Our grandmother looked after us, and since she was in the kitchen all day we literally grew up in a kitchen,” said Sergio. After earning two Michelin stars with their previous project “Dos Cielos” and becoming familiar faces thanks to their participation in a cooking show, they decided to open Cocina Hermanos Torres in 2018. The twins visited some 200 possible locations before settling on an industrial building near Barcelona’s iconic Camp Nou football stadium. They invested nearly three million euros to convert it

into the restaurant, which seats a maximum of 50 people at tables with no wall separating them from the three workstations where staff prepare meals. “We wanted to reflect what we experienced in our childhood, which was a kitchen and a table, and everyone around the table,” said Javier. **DIFFICULT ROAD** The tasting menu costs 255 euros (\$265), with another 160 euros if it is paired with wine, a stiff price in a country where the monthly minimum wage is around 1,000 euros. Praised for its creative and playful cuisine, among the dishes served is cured squid with poultry broth and an onion soup with Parmesan cheese and truffles. “You will experience flavours that you have never experienced before, because you will discover a cuisine where you will like what you don’t like,” said Sergio. On a recent visit at noon, 50 staff members — many of them young — are busy at work finalising details before customers arrive. “It seems like today a chef is like a ‘super star’. It’s a very difficult road, very difficult, with long hours and it’s very hard to make it, it takes tremendous perseverance,” said Sergio. “You have to risk it, go for broke, give it your all because if you don’t, you are not living,” he added with a smile. — AFP

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE

Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

# Talk to grandparents

**YOU MAY THINK** you already know your family stories well. Between childhood memories, reunions and holiday gatherings, you may have spent hours with your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles absorbing family traditions. But do you really know as much as you think? In fact, I have always been fascinated by the stories told by our grandparents and those tales that are passed down from generation to generation. But what made me bring up such a topic, I was really surprised when I found out that many other people know very little about the life of their parents and grandparents, despite the fact that they lived in some interesting decades. Even friends, some of whom specialised in history and excelled in it, were ignorant about the history of their families. It is true that perhaps our elders share some familiar anecdotes again and again, but still many of us do not have a broader sense of the world in which they lived, especially what it was before we came. The people I met know very little about the early life of their grandparents or parents. Few can remember any personal stories about the time when their grandparents or parents were children! The beautiful thing is that we ourselves and our children must be aware that when talking to our ancestors, for example, we come to know completely new worlds. Indeed, you may hear some things that you expected at times, but you will be convinced of the value of preserving these family histories. So when you ask a relative about the house they once grew up in, ask them what their windows looked out on? What did they hear when they got up in the morning? When you ask for a description of an old man’s childhood home and the neighbourhoods they toured, you’ll hear stories that put you in a rich sensory world that you don’t know much about. So ask about family dinners and your relatives who have taught you about expressing feelings. Ask about their worst first dates and where they buy their clothes. And remember, the most important questions can be the simplest! Hence, after hearing such moments, you will notice how our children will see their grandparents in new ways. But even hearing about ordinary life can be very interesting, because what was normal for your grandparents may not be normal for you! Therefore, try to find an opportunity to talk to your grandparents and parents closely. You will certainly be surprised to hear the oral history of times gone by. In the end, just as the precious oral and historical literatures of entire societies around the world are lost through migration, death of languages and failure to ask questions. There is a danger that the personal stories of your family may also be lost forever. Our parents and grandparents have unique snapshots and memories of the world and in getting to know them, you can not only preserve the past but also create real meaning and lasting connection with it. Finally, remember in families and communities, there are secrets to be discovered! The author is a physician, medical innovator and a writer.



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# Strong investor interest in Oman hydrogen blocks

MUSCAT: Engineer Abdulaziz bin Said al Shidhani, Director General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, confirmed that investor interest in two blocks offered by the government for green hydrogen development in Duqm has been significant.

As many as 40 companies have so far requested pre-qualification documents to participate in the auction round, he said. In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he added that around \$20 billion in green hydrogen investments are targeted by the year 2030 through the implementation of Phase A of the auction programme.

A total of six blocks will be offered during the two rounds of Phase 1 with the second round due to launch in the second quarter of 2023, he said.

He added that according to the plan drawn up by the Ministry of



Energy and Minerals along with Hydrom, the first set of project agreements will be signed during Q1 2023.

This will be followed by the announcement of new blocks in Dhofar Governorate, agreements for which will be signed by the end of next year.

Output from green hydrogen projects will total around one million tonnes by 2030 in line with the ministry's Green Hydrogen Strategy.

Al Shidhani said the ministry is currently studying the best options for developing current legislation in order to attract more investments in the field of green hydrogen, and to develop a clear-cut strategy for the energy transition journey.

The goal in the first stage is to export green hydrogen, while exploring the potential to develop local demand. In this regard, the Ministry of

As many as 40 companies have so far requested pre-qualification documents to participate in the auction round. Around \$20 billion in green hydrogen investments are targeted by the year 2030 through the implementation of Phase A of the auction programme

ENG ABDULAZIZ AL SHIDHANI  
Director General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen

Energy and Minerals is working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, and government companies represented by Hydrom, OQ Alternative Energy and Asyad Group in exploring new markets for export and utilisation.

To this end, Oman is capitalising on memorandums of understanding and cooperation signed between the Sultanate of Oman and a number of countries targeted as markets.

Work is also under way to develop infrastructure investment packages that Hydrom will coordinate with specialised government companies on a commercial basis. At the same time, the Oman Sustainability Centre will follow up the implementation of Oman's plans for each sector and its commitments to zero carbon neutrality by 2050, he added.

— ONA

## US financial conditions eased as war on inflation continues

WASHINGTON: Over the past six weeks or so, US mortgage rates have fallen, stock prices are up, and yields on corporate debt have dropped, all signs that financial conditions are easing even as the Federal Reserve continues to wage war on 40-year-high inflation.

But unlike this past summer, when Fed Chair Jerome Powell pushed back hard in the face of a similar set of market moves, US central bankers may this time be mostly okay with it.

The Fed next week is expected to slow what's been a blistering pace of interest rate increases this year, with Powell telegraphing a half-of-a-percentage point increase in the policy rate, to a range of 4.25-4.5 per cent.

The Fed raised rates by 75 basis points at each of its last four meetings as it sought to lift borrowing costs high enough to bite into economic growth.

Anticipation that December's smaller rate hike means the Fed is closer to ending rate hikes altogether, along with data showing inflation may be cooling and remarks from Powell that he and his colleagues "do not want to overtighten," has fuelled the recent easing in financial conditions.

That's despite Powell and other policymakers repeatedly saying they are not done raising

rates, and won't be until they are convinced that inflation, now running at 6 per cent by the Fed's preferred gauge, is headed down to the Fed's 2 per cent goal.

Still, BNY Mellon Investment Management economist Sonia Meskin said, "they don't appear to me as concerned about the loosening of financial conditions" as they were in the summer, when rate hikes had only just begun.

"I would expect him to reiterate that they're going to keep policy restrictive for some time, but I don't think he is likely to say anything beyond that, and the reason is, they actually want to keep their options open," she said.

The Fed will likely need to raise the policy rate "somewhat higher" than the 4.6 per cent policymakers projected in September, Powell said late last month.

Fresh projections by Fed policymakers released after next week's meeting are expected to reflect that, along with a forecast for no cuts to the policy rate until 2024.

But inflation data or readings on the labour market could come in lower than expected, allowing the Fed to lean into the easing in financial conditions and stopping rate hikes at a lower point than otherwise. — Reuters

## Asyad sees potential for Hydrogen Valleys centred at Omani ports

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, DEC 10

A new report commissioned by Asyad Group — Oman's integrated logistics group — envisions the potential for the nation's three main seaports at Suhar, Duqm and Salalah to be developed into 'Hydrogen Valleys' with a view to strengthening the country's positioning as a global-scale producer and exporter of green energy.

The report, titled "The Potential of Hydrogen Transition for the Ports in the Sultanate of Oman", was released during the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2022 (GHSO) Exhibition and Conference that concluded in Muscat on Thursday.

Put together on Asyad's behalf by Oman Hydrogen Centre (OHC) and Dii Desert Energy, a prominent international think-tank, the report charts the way ahead for Oman's ports to be fully integrated with the country's future hydrogen ecosystem.

"It is without doubt that all three ports could be developed as hydrogen valleys, which could serve as catalysts to develop the entire hydrogen value chain in the country," the report said.

"All three ports shall develop a specific positioning with different unique selling propositions, with a well-coordinated long-term strategy as a key pillar in the energy and development strategy of Oman Vision 2040."

Asyad Group, a subsidiary



of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), describes 'Hydrogen Valleys' as a cluster of different elements of the value chain, such as facilities for zero/low-emission hydrogen production, storage, distribution, and final use in one geographical area, thereby forming an integrated ecosystem.

Besides contributing to lower hydrogen costs, Hydrogen Valleys enhance the port's investment appeal, increase adjacent industry localisation, and promote the utilisation of low-emission hydrogen.

In a message, Asyad Group CEO Abdulrahman al Hatmi said the report shows how Asyad Group is "ideally positioned to utilise its maritime muscles, superior brick-and-mortar infrastructure and innovative mindset to secure the necessary logistics competencies to support the national, regional

and global drive to net-zero".

"This exploratory document provides a comprehensive view of the advanced capabilities of our three deep-water ports of Duqm, Suhar and Salalah to achieve our decarbonisation targets and act as forward logistical operating bases for worldwide clean energy transport. With their ideal locations, our ports are prime regional and global candidates to become vital hydrogen logistics hubs, and later fully fledged hydrogen valleys,"

Al Hatmi stated. Significantly, the location of hydrogen hubs in the vicinity of Omani ports will also contribute to in-country value (ICV) by extending the existing supply chain and attracting new energy-intensive industries, says Asyad Group.

"As pioneers in hydrogen

applications, ports can help green existing industries, such as refineries, ammonia plants, or steel plants, and implement mobility solutions within and beyond their borders.

With Carbon Capture and Storage (CCUS), ports can further support their decarbonisation plans by producing low-carbon hydrogen, possibly using captured CO2 as a feedstock for synthetic fuel production," the report explains.

According to Asyad Group, the Sultanate of Oman should also aspire to become a global green energy production and bunkering hub. Omani ports, for example, are well-positioned to become a mid-way bunkering hub between Rotterdam (the Netherlands) and Singapore in the emerging hydrogen derivatives market, it says.

Muriya and SB Architects to design next stage of Hawana Salalah masterplan

MUSCAT: Muriya, Oman's most diversified real estate developer, has engaged leading international architecture and design practice SB Architects, to design the next stage of development at Hawana Salalah.

Slated to be launched soon, the one million sqm game-changer will be the biggest residential project at Hawana Salalah to date. Muriya, the developer of Hawana Salalah and Jebel Sifah, is a partnership between the internationally acclaimed developer of fully-integrated towns, Orascom Development Holding (ODH) and the leading government arm for tourism development in Oman, Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN). ODH prowess spans three continents as developers of luxurious waterfront destinations including El Gouna, Egypt; Andermatt, Switzerland; Luštica Bay, Montenegro; as well as Hawana Salalah and Jebel Sifah in Oman to name but a few.

# Bank Muscat extends support to Omani Committee for Sports for the Deaf

MUSCAT: As part of its strong commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility and efforts to deliver long-term benefits to society, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, recently presented several laptops to the Omani Committee for Sports for the Deaf, which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The event was held in the presence of Sayyida Naila bint Hamad al Busaidi, Chairperson of the Omani Committee for Sports for the Deaf, and Talib bin Saif al Makhmari, Head, Community and Media Relations, Bank Muscat.

The laptops will contribute to the training of committee members with various hearing disabilities on different areas including the use of computer programmes in sports and education.

Sayyida Naila bint Hamad al Busaidi, Chairperson of the Omani Committee for Sports for the Deaf, said: "We are very happy to collaborate with Bank Muscat on this initiative and thank the bank for its keen interest in enhancing partnership with organisations working for the welfare of hearing-impaired persons. The committee is keen to continue partnering with different institutions so as to be able to provide members with



suitable means to develop their educational and sports skills.

"These types of initiatives are very important as they help persons with disabilities enhance their participation in society and play a successful role in the community."

Speaking on the occasion, Talib bin Saif al Makhmari, Head, Community and Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said: "Bank Muscat always attaches great importance to those initiatives that focus on strengthening our partnership with educational, sports, community

and charitable institutions. In this regard, we are pleased to strengthen our partnership with the Omani Committee for Sports for the Deaf by providing these specially-configured laptops, which will help members of the committee develop their knowledge and skills in the best possible manner. We wish them all success and will continue with such initiatives that help provide the best services to our society."

The Omani Committee for Sports for the Deaf aims to promote various sports for the benefit of

hearing-impaired persons.

In particular, the committee organises the formation of teams to compete at international sports forums for persons with hearing disabilities.

As a forward-looking financial institution, Bank Muscat has been partnering with a number of non-governmental organisations for the welfare of persons with disabilities including the Oman Association for the Disabled, Al Noor Association for the Blind, Al Aman Rehabilitation Centre and the Association for Early

Intervention for Children with Disabilities.

Over the past four decades, Bank Muscat has been keenly contributing to the establishment of a culture of social responsibility within the Sultanate's corporate sector in order to benefit all.

The bank is also focused on sustainability as a basic running theme in all its activities and constantly strives to enhance its partnership with the community in line with its efforts to be an enabler of growth and development. Bank Muscat runs several long-term social responsibility projects including the Al Wathbah SME Academy, which is currently providing advanced entrepreneurial training to 30 Omani entrepreneurs for free.

This year too, the bank extended its support to 20 youth sports teams as part of its flagship Green Sports Programme. Bank Muscat also continues to closely partner with the Royal Oman Police to curb cyber fraud through repeated awareness campaigns for the general public.

Bank Muscat also recently completed, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development, the 10th annual Tadhmun programme that benefitted over 200 social welfare families.

## Bank Nizwa: Premium Islamic banking partner in Green Hydrogen Summit 2022

MUSCAT: The most reliable Islamic bank in the Sultanate, Bank Nizwa, took part in the Green Hydrogen Summit 2022 based on its vision to adopt and support sustainable practices. Held under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufer, Minister of Energy and Minerals, the event witnessed the presence of several high-profile attendees including their excellencies, experts, investors and advisers in the field of green hydrogen.

Taking place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), the summit



sought to ensure the development of a green hydrogen economy and promote it due to the many benefits it provides including the diversification of energy sources. In addition, it represented a unique opportunity for Omani and international companies to collaborate and contribute to energy security on a global and local scale, as well as to achieve economic growth.

The bank's strategy to explore and support sustainable practices is in complete harmony with this approach.

## Sohar Islamic wins best advisory for Shariah-compliant investments award

MUSCAT: Reflecting its strong advisory capabilities as joint lead managers, Sohar Islamic — Sohar International's Islamic Window — was recently awarded the coveted 'Best advisory for Shariah-compliant investments' title at the Alam Al Iktisaad Islamic Banking and Finance Awards 2022.

The award recognises the bank's efforts in the successful closure of the issuance of Government of Oman Sovereign Sukuk worth RO 150 million — an initiative that reflects the trust and confidence Ministry of Finance placed upon Sohar Islamic as a financial partner.

The award ceremony took place at the Hotel Crowne Plaza, Qurum, and welcomed HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik al Said as the chief guest and was hosted by Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Mashani. Delivering the keynote address at the summit was Tahir al Amri, Executive President of the Central



Bank of Oman, while Malik bin Abdullah al Mahrouqi, Adviser to the Executive President Office, Central Bank of Oman, was the esteemed guest of honour at the event.

The summit, which proved to be an excellent networking platform, witnessed the attendance of a cross-section of industry leaders, market experts

and key government officials, as well as allowed for the felicitation of exceptional performance and achievements of Islamic banks and financial institutions that have set new benchmarks in the Islamic banking and finance industry.

Commenting on receiving the award, Abdul Wahid al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer, said: "Sohar Islamic continues to

deliver superior banking services showcasing the bank's aspiration to contribute positively to Oman's economy. As the financial partner, we are delighted to contribute to the successful closure of the issuance of Government of Oman Sovereign Sukuk.

"This deal was very important and reflects our strong commitment and the confidence investors place in Sohar Islamic. This award goes beyond recognising Sohar Islamic's strong capability to provide innovative, bespoke and superior Shariah-compliant advisory services — it also serves as a testament to the bank's dedication to contributing to the nation's development goals.

"By providing a holistic offering, Sohar Islamic has also been able to bridge the gap between those providing investment opportunities in the market and Shariah-conscious investors."

## Muzn's Kids Wakala account ensures a secured future for children

MUSCAT: Every parent's ultimate goal is to ensure a safe, secure and comfortable future for their child. With a Kids Wakala account from NBO's Islamic window Muzn, achieving that ambition has never been easier.

With a minimum deposit of just RO 50, and a minimum recurring deposit of just RO 10, account holders can enjoy numerous benefits including attractive saving options with a healthy return on investment, and Takaful coverage for the ultimate peace of mind. What's more, a parent or guardian does not have to be a Muzn customer in order to open a Kids Wakala account for their child.

Salima al Marzouqi (pictured), Chief Islamic Banking Officer of Muzn, said: "At Muzn we aim to create new possibilities for our customers that are guided by strong ethical practices. Our Kids Wakala account is just one of the ways we fulfil this, while helping people build a positive relationship with their finances from the very start.

"It's easy to set up and provides a great way to teach children about the importance of saving, while ensuring their future is taken care of, no matter what life brings."

Available for children up



to 18 years of age, the Kids Wakala account comes with Takaful Life and permanent disability risk coverage with a double deposit benefit up to RO 75,000.

This means that in case of a claim, the Takaful Insurance Company shall pay an extra amount equal to the deposit as a benefit for the child. Hence, the higher the amount deposited, the greater the protection against unforeseen circumstances.

As the first Islamic banking window in Oman, Muzn is committed to fostering the development of the Sultanate of Oman's Islamic finance sector, while offering its customers the best banking experience without compromise.

With an all-encompassing range of Shariah-compliant banking services delivered to a growing customer base, the bank ensures convenient, headache-free Islamic banking products that are accessible to all.

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**His Majesty Administers Oath to New Minister**



**MUSCAT:** Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saïd bin Hamoud al Ahmed al Haddadi, Chairman of the Supreme Court Sayyid Khalifa bin Saïd bin Khalifa al Busaidi, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court Shaiikh Al Maabhar bin Abdullah bin Issa al Harthy, took the oath of office at Al Bahi Palace on Thursday.

**NEW NO 50 BANKNOTE FOR THIS MONTH**

**MUSCAT:** To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Renaissance and in commemoration of the recovery of its founder late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a sixth series of new NO 50 banknotes, which will begin circulation this month.

CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. **TURN TO P4**

**STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN**

**SAMUEL KUTTY**

**MUSCAT:** The frequent orders and fervent appeals by both physical and mental health experts, we should discipline ourselves, social distancing guidelines are falling on deaf ears.

A drive around the downtown Muscat and its adjoining areas reveals how recklessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder. While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental health experts, we should discipline ourselves, social distancing guidelines are falling on deaf ears."

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# Oman LNG mulls green energy cluster in Sur

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, DEC 10

Oman LNG's efforts to establish a green energy cluster within Sur Industrial City continue to make headway with the support of the National Hydrogen Alliance (Hy-Fly), a major grouping of national energy companies, and public and private organisations that have joined forces to help drive Oman's energy transition.

On Thursday, Hy-Fly revealed that a techno-economic feasibility study into the proposed development of a Hydrogen and Energy Transition Cluster at Sur is being led by the Sustainable Energy Research Centre (SERC) of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) jointly with Hy-Fly's Project Management Office, presently overseen by the Renewal Energy Unit of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

"As one of the strategic objectives of the National Hydrogen Alliance



(Hy-Fly), Oman LNG is pleased to spearhead the first techno-economic feasibility study to explore the opportunities of decarbonisation and energy

transition in Sur Industrial Estate in a hub-and-spoke approach," officials stated in a video clip on the initiative on Thursday. "Furthermore, the study

includes exploring low carbon business opportunities by utilising available carbon dioxide at Sur Industrial Estate for the production of low carbon products, as well

as assessing potential business opportunities in creating carbon dioxide infrastructure and network, to enable carbon capture utilisation with the other industrial estates in Oman, and strategic partnership with partners around the world," they added.

A number of Omani researchers of SQU's SERC facility have been roped in to participate in the study. They visited the industrial park – part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), as well as the massive gas liquefaction plant of Oman LNG at Qalhat near Sur. As part of their study, the research team also engaged with visiting experts from South Korea and representatives of the wider hydrocarbon industry in Oman.

According to Oman LNG, the proposed Sur Hydrogen and Energy Transition Cluster will lead to a number of investment opportunities and benefits.

Besides contributing to

the overall national goal of decarbonising industries and the wider economy, the initiative will result in significant natural gas savings while also opening up new low-carbon business opportunities.

Furthermore, it will help contribute to capacity-building in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and to the achievement of Oman's Net Zero target by 2050.

Importantly, the project will help strengthen Oman LNG's bid to secure an extension in its mandate from the Omani government to operate beyond 2025, when its current 25-year concession expires.

The Qalhat plant is emerging from a multi-million dollar, multi-year capacity restoration, debottlenecking and rejuvenation programme aimed at boosting efficiency and ensuring long-term sustainability.

## How to reduce or avoid crypto risk



STEFANO VIRGILLI  
stefano@virgilli.com

The author is a member of the International Press Association

Many readers might have come across the word FTX in the past few weeks and linked that to the entire crypto industry.

I am writing this column as someone who works in the industry and to point out some facts that might - on the one hand - take credibility away from some crypto players, and on the other hand strengthen the commitment to further develop the industry for those who have good intentions.

Because I work for a liquidity provider, market maker, and venture capital firm, I need to clarify that these are my own opinions, and not necessarily the position of the firm I work for. A quick recap of the facts first.

The largest crypto exchange in the world by volumes is Binance. Binance was also one of the early investors in the second largest crypto exchange: FTX. About a month ago, FTX came under fire when the CEO of Binance Changpeng Zhao, commonly known as "CZ", sent out a tweet describing how - in layman terms - Binance was stepping back from supporting and participating in FTX due to some unspecified risk concerns.

Within a matter of hours, documents and evidences were released to indeed validate CZ's concerns. By the end of the day, chaos had already filled the markets, with a massive wave of fear, uncertainty and doubt (FUD).

The next 36 hour were some of the most bizarre hours in the

crypto history. Everyone started pulling out their funds from FTX fearing that withdrawals might have been suspended. That generated a spillover of funds from more risky accounts to the less risky ones exposing the lack of risk mitigation in the way FTX was managing the funds of the clients.

So, if you are catching up with the story, now, you might have heard that centralised exchanges are more risky than decentralised exchanges in crypto.

To a certain extent, that's really true because when you put your crypto on a centralised exchange, you are not really owning the funds, but you are entrusting the centralised exchange with your tokens.

Generally speaking, centralised crypto exchanges are supposed to be safer than decentralised exchanges because of the regulatory guidelines that they are supposed to follow. In the case of FTX however, the malpractices were obvious, and the funds of the clients were jeopardised.

On the contrary, decentralised exchanges are entirely in your hands when it comes to protecting your funds. That is because your cryptocurrencies are linked to the access keys that the exchange gives to you when you create your wallet.

The obvious risk is that you might lose the keys to your decentralised wallet. In that case, there is nothing much that you can do to recover your cryptocurrencies.

Another safe option to keep your cryptocurrencies is to use a cold storage wallet. This is a hardware device that you connect to your computer to access your wallets. If you lose the device, you can buy another one and recover your funds using the same key words that were given to you when you creating the wallet.

Having your cryptocurrencies on a cold storage wallet keeps them safe but does not provide you with the flexibility that you need if you want to trade regularly. A mix of all safekeeping could be a rational thing to do.

## India's anti-trust regulator clears Omani consortium's acquisition of Sembcorp Energy

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, DEC 10

The Competition Commission of India (CCI), the anti-trust regulator of India, has cleared the proposed acquisition of Sembcorp Energy India Ltd by Oman-based Tanweer Infrastructure SAOC, according to a report by Indian news agency PTI.

The deal has been cleared under the green channel route, wherein a transaction that does not raise any risk of an appreciable adverse effect on competition is deemed to be approved on it being intimated to the anti-trust regulator.

Tanweer Infrastructure is indirectly owned by a consortium led by Oman Investment Corporation SAOC in partnership with the Ministry of Defence Pension Fund, Sultanate of Oman.



In a release on CCI's website, the competition watchdog said it has approved the deal. The proposed combination relates to the acquisition of 100 per cent shareholding of Sembcorp Energy India Ltd (SEIL) by Tanweer Infrastructure.

In September, Singaporean utility firm Sembcorp Industries announced the sale of its entire

stake in its India unit to an Omani consortium for Rs 11,734 crore (approximately RO 550 million) as part of its decarbonisation drive.

"There is no (direct or indirect) horizontal, vertical, or complementary overlap between the activities of Tanweer Infrastructure and SEIL in any plausible relevant market in

India.

"The proposed combination is notifiable to Competition Commission of India under section 5(a) of the Competition Act, 2002," CCI said.

SEIL is an independent power producer which directly owns and operates coal-fired power plants in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

## Oman records increase in production of motor fuels

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, DEC 10

The production in Oman of premium automotive fuel M95 increased by 9.7 per cent, to reach 12.18 million barrels, until the end of October 2022, compared to the same period in 2021, according to the latest report issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

On the other hand, the sales of M95 decreased by 0.8 per cent to reach 10.51 million barrels, while exports amounted to 2.74 million barrels, an increase of 93.1 per cent. The report indicated that the total refinery products decreased by 2.2 per cent until the end of October 2022, compared to the same period in 2021.

The data showed an increase in the production of ordinary motor fuel M91 by 1.3 per cent until the end of October 2022, compared to the same period in 2021, to reach 11.33 million barrels. Its sales amounted to 10.83 million barrels, with an increase of 48.8 per cent, while sales amounted to 10.83 million barrels. Its exports decreased by 61.8 per cent,



to reach 1.51 million barrels.

Meanwhile, diesel sales increased by 11.5 per cent, to reach 12.42 million barrels, while exports decreased by 26.5 per cent, and production increased by 12.2 per cent until the end of October 2022 compared to the same period in 2021.

The data showed an increase in aviation fuel sales by 104 per cent to reach 2.51 million barrels, and an increase in its production by 34.4 per cent to reach 6.38 million barrels, while its exports amounted to 3.83 million barrels, an increase of 8.1 per cent until the end of October 2022.



SUNDAY | DECEMBER 11 | 2022 | JUMADA AL ULA 17 | 1444 AH



Morocco's Youssef En-Nesyri celebrates scoring their first goal with team-mates. – REUTERS

# Morocco down Portugal to become first ever African semifinalists

**DOHA:** Morocco became the first African nation to reach the World Cup semifinals as Youssef En-Nesyri's first-half goal sealed a tense 1-0 victory over Portugal on Saturday at Al Thumama Stadium.

The Atlas Lions, also the first Arab team to make the last four, added Portugal to their list of European scalps with a resolute second-half performance.

Cristiano Ronaldo has likely played his last World Cup match after making an ineffectual appearance as a second-half substitute, failing to score his first knockout-phase goal at the tournament.

Morocco took a 42nd-minute lead through En-Nesyri's header as they came on strongly late in the first period. Portugal piled on the pressure after the break but an injury-hit Morocco, without three of their four first-choice defenders once skipper Romain Saiss was forced off, hung on despite being reduced to 10 men in added time.

The partisan crowd undoubtedly helped the North Africans over the line, although Portugal struggled to create many clear-cut chances as they lost a World Cup quarterfinal for the first time.

Five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo was sent on early in the second half by coach Fernando Santos but could not rescue the Euro 2016 winners.

Instead it was another famous day for Morocco, after previous upset wins over Belgium and Spain, on penalties, in Qatar.

Walid Regragui's men will face England or holders France in the semifinals at Al Bayt Stadium on Wednesday. Morocco will believe they can topple either of those sides, having still only conceded once at this World Cup.

Portugal enjoyed the majority of possession in the opening half-hour, but Joao Felix's fifth-minute diving header, saved by goalkeeper Yassine Bounou, was the closest either side came to an early goal.

Morocco always looked dangerous, though, and Selim Amallah ballooned a shot over and Sofiane Boufal curled straight at Diogo Costa for the Africans.

**EN-NESYRI STRIKES**

It was no surprise when Morocco did forge ahead

shortly before the interval. Portuguese goalkeeper Costa came for a cross from left-back Yahya Attiat-Allah he was never going to get to and Sevilla striker En-Nesyri did the rest with a towering header.

Portugal almost equalised seconds later in spectacular fashion when Bruno Fernandes crashed a bouncing ball from the right-hand side of the box against the crossbar.

A crazy few minutes before half-time also saw Attiat-Allah, only playing in place of the injured Noussair Mazraoui, blaze wide after another rapid counter.

Portugal's players were still appealing for a penalty after Fernandes threw himself to the ground under pressure from Achraf Hakimi at the other end.

Morocco almost doubled their advantage four minutes after the restart as Costa just about managed to prevent Hakim Ziyech's free-kick from the right from flying all the way in.

Santos wasted little time in summoning his captain, sending on Ronaldo and Joao Cancelo in

the 51st minute. Morocco, already without injured defenders Mazraoui and Nayef Aguerd, were dealt another blow when Saiss was stretchered off.

Portugal started to lay siege to the opposition goal and Fernandes came close to levelling again when he fired narrowly over from the edge of the box.

Morocco were largely keeping Portugal at bay, but Bounou had to be at his best to tip over Felix's drive with eight minutes remaining.

Eight minutes of injury time were largely spent with Portugal camped in the Morocco half and Ronaldo almost had his moment when his low strike was kept out by Bounou.

Morocco substitute Walid Cheddira was harshly sent off for a second yellow card in the space of two minutes.

Zakaria Aboukhmal should have put the game to bed only to dink straight at Costa when clean through.

But his team somehow held onto their lead to write their names in the history books as Pepe headed wide from close range right at the death. — AFP



Argentina's Lionel Messi and Emiliano Martinez celebrate qualifying for the Semi Finals. – REUTERS

# MARTINEZ HEROICS AFTER MESSI MAGIC SEES ARGENTINA INTO SEMIS



Argentina's Emiliano Martinez saves a penalty missed by Netherlands' Virgil van Dijk during the penalty shootout. – REUTERS

**LUSAIL, QATAR:** Goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez was the shoot-out hero after some Lionel Messi magic almost meant nothing as Argentina had a lucky escape into the World Cup semifinals 4-3 on penalties over the Netherlands after squandering a two-goal lead at the death.

Martinez saved the first two Dutch penalties from captain Virgil van Dijk and Steven Berghuis, and Lautaro Martinez clinched matters after team-mate Enzo Fernandez had been denied by the post in the final minute of extra time with the score locked at 2-2. Messi fed Nahuel Molina with a sensational pass to score in the 35th, and then calmly converted a 73th-minute penalty as Argentina seemed well on course with a 2-0.

But substitute Wout Weghorst headed the Dutch back into the game in the 83rd and then forced extra time 11 minutes

into stoppage time in an extraordinary free-kick trick play.

Messi tied Gabriel Batistuta on an Argentinian record 10 goals at the World Cup and can gain sole possession of the record in the semifinal and the final or third-place game as he aims to win the biggest prize in football at last in his fifth appearance.

Messi will claim the overall World Cup match record if he plays in the remaining two games. He played his 24th match on Friday, with record holder Lothar Matthäus of Germany one ahead on 25 matches.

The Copa America champions next meet Croatia on Tuesday after the 2018 runners-up shocked record five-time winners Brazil 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 deadlock in 120 minutes.

The Dutch failed to reach the last four for the third time in four editions and suffered a shoot-out loss to Argentina just as in the 2014 semifinals. — dpa

# VAN DIJK VERY HURT AFTER NETHERLANDS KNOCKED OUT OF WORLD CUP

**V**IRGIL VAN DIJK was left “very hurt” after the Netherlands were knocked out of the World Cup on penalties by Argentina on Friday. Goals from Nahuel Molina and Lionel Messi looked to have Argentina coasting to the semifinals, but substitute Wout Weghorst scored twice late on to force the game into extra time.

Neither team could find a winner in the additional 30 minutes, but Emiliano Martinez saved from van Dijk and then Steven Berghuis before Lautaro Martinez fired home the deciding spot-kick to knock the Netherlands out.

Van Dijk spoke of his frustration at his team pulling themselves back into the contest, only to lose on penalties.

“I’m very disappointed that we’re out of the tournament, after a very eventful game,” the Liverpool star told reporters.

“We showed great character, we came back last 15 minutes, got extra time then it’s penalties.

“Unfortunately we couldn’t get the job done. We’re going home. I’m very sad about that, but that’s life. We lost on penalties, and that’s the thing that is difficult. It’s like a lottery.

“We practiced penalties a lot but unfortunately, he [Emiliano Martinez] made two great saves and we’re out.

“I think we were confident, but you can’t replicate a full stadium where 80,000 fans are whistling against you and a different goalie that you don’t face in training.”

Netherlands captain Van Dijk took the opening penalty of the shoot-out, only to see his low effort saved by Emiliano Martinez down to the goalkeeper’s right.

When asked about his spot-kick after the match, the centre-back said: “I never took it in the Premier League, so it’s quite difficult. It’s never easy, you’re under pressure, but I was looking forward to it, I was ready for it.

“He saved it, fair play to him. Bad for us, bad for me. I’m very sad, but unfortunately things like this happen in life and it’s about how you deal with it.

“I’ll be very sad for the next period and I’ll regroup, be with my family, and think about good things in life.

“These things happen unfortunately, you can miss. But it doesn’t mean you feel fine, I’m very hurt and I felt like I let my guys down a bit. It’s about turning that feeling into hunger for the rest of the season.”

Van Dijk’s defensive partner Nathan Ake echoed his skipper’s sentiments on the disappointing manner of the Netherlands’ exit, having done so well to get back in the game.

“We can be proud. Obviously we wanted more but it wasn’t to be,” Ake explained. “We stayed in the game, we tried to fight back. In the end, it’s painful.

“Maybe in extra time we should’ve pushed on a bit more, but the legs were a little bit tired.”

Ake was also asked for his thoughts on an ill-tempered game that produced 15 cards, more than any other World Cup clash in history.

“That’s part of football,” Ake added. “They love their country, they want to fight for their country and we have the same. It’s an emotional game. Everyone wants to go through.

“In the end, the penalties decided the game and not the referee.” — dpa



FAN



A supporter of Morocco poses for a picture on the stands ahead of the Qatar 2022 World Cup quarterfinal football match between Morocco and Portugal. – AFP



A Portugal supporter looks on prior to the quarterfinal football match between Morocco and Portugal. – AFP



A Morocco supporter cheers ahead of the quarterfinal football match between Morocco and Portugal . – AFP



France fan with a painted face inside the stadium before the match. – REUTERS

# Z O N E



Morocco fans inside the Education City Stadium. – Reuters



England fans inside the stadium before the match. – REUTERS



France fans outside the stadium before the match. – REUTERS



A Morocco supporter prays before the start of the quarterfinal match between Morocco and Portugal. – AFP



Morocco fans are pictured in fancy dress inside the stadium. – Reuters



Morocco supporters wave their national flag before the start of the match. – AFP

# ‘Naseya’, ‘Shuaa’ snatch titles of Al Bairaq camel fest



WALEED AL JAHWARI  
MUSCAT, DEC 10

‘Naseya’, owned by Badr bin Hamad al Junaibi, won the festival title of the camel race for ‘Fatameen’ category for one year old, and ‘Shuaa’, owned by Khalid bin Obaid al Balushi, won the beginners’ title in the concluding activities of the third edition of Al Bairaq festival for camel racing.

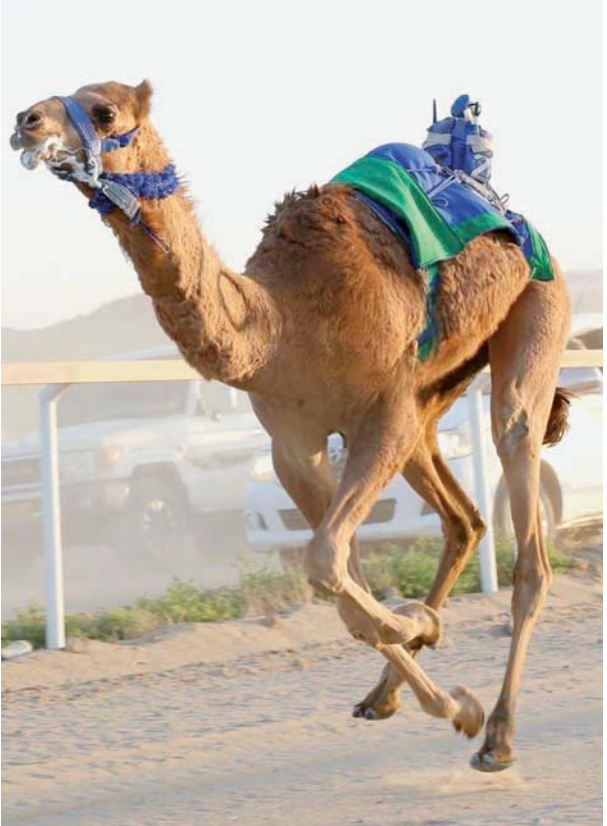
The event is sponsored by Azwa Company for Technology and Public Services, which is owned by Muhanna bin Mohammed al Fazari, and held under the auspices of Shaikh Waleed bin Suleiman al Rajhi.

As many as 200 camels took part in the Al Bairaq festival for ‘Fatameen’ category, which is for one year old male and female camels. There were six races for 1,200 metres and eight races for 1,500 metres at the Al Dhraa camel track in the Wilayat of Sinaw on Friday.

In the main 1,500-metre-long race for camels which are not taking part for the first time, ‘Naseya’, owned by Badr bin Hamad al Junaibi, took the top honours after finishing in two minutes and

7 seconds, ‘Monther’, owned by Ghasib bin Ali al Fazari, claimed the second race, Salim bin Nasser al Junaibi through ‘Ghazal’ came first in the third race, Mahmood bin Said al Jahhafi through ‘Hamloul’ bagged the fifth race honours, ‘Farah’, owned by Jabir bin Obaid al Junaibi, finished on top in the sixth race and Salim bin Mohammed al Hakama through ‘Shaheen’ came top in the seventh race.

In the beginner competitions for 1,200 metres, ‘Shuaa’, owned by Khalid bin Obaid al Balushi, finished the race in one minute and 42 seconds to clinch the title, the honours of the second and third races were snatched by ‘Musafer’ and ‘Ghazr’ both owned by Abdullah bin Al Saghir al Fazari, the fourth race was won by Hamoud bin Mohammed al Balushi through ‘Mahawesh’, in the fifth race, ‘Wazen’, owned by Ghasib bin Ali al Fazari, came first, ‘Al Muhandes’, owned by Hamad bin Salim al Ghafli, grabbed the sixth race honours, ‘Hedoor’, owned by Hamoud bin Ali al Zari, claimed the seventh race title, and the eighth and last race was won by Ghasib bin Ali al Fazari.



# Competition heats up on 2nd day of 44Cup finale at Al Mouj

MUSCAT: Conditions proved perfect for the second day of racing at Al Mouj Muscat Marina where the nine teams in this year’s 44Cup finale took to the water for three races. A northerly wind peaking at 15 knots allowed the RC44 one designs to plane on the downwind legs and show their speed all afternoon.

Oman Sail’s Team Asyad Shipping team, taking part in a 44Cup event for the first time, learned a valuable lesson after a slight collision with Torbjörn Törnqvist’s Artemis Racing which led to a small hole in Artemis’ sacrificial stern and derailed Team Asyad Shipping’s progress in the second race. Overall, the first two days of racing have been a challenging introduction to a very tough international tour, but the experience will be valuable for the future.

Nasser al Mashari, skipper onboard Team Asyad Shipping, said, “We have a good wind today, and I think the team are doing a very good job. So far, so happy, and we are learning every day. This event is part of our sailing strategy 2032, and we are training now to compete in the future. There is already a lot of improvement in the team, we are getting there. I am sure with more training we will improve further. Tomorrow, we expect lighter winds, but we are



hungry to race in all conditions.” Today’s first race saw Hugues Lepic’s Aleph Racing continuing her winning ways. In today’s first race they made gains out on the left of the first beat, then found a good lane out to the right, setting them up with a solid lead at the top mark ahead of Artemis Racing. Following this with a 2-4, the French team was the lowest scoring boat of the day, elevating it from



fourth to second place overall. Artemis Racing’s tactician Andy Horton added, “We battled back really hard. The guys sailed really well, and we were in the pack with just good boat handling and speed.” Fortune was also smiling upon them: “We won the little battles today — we had a leeward mark rounding with Team Nika and we came in and had room to go right. If they had been 2m

further forward, they would have been able to get clear air in front of us and we would have had an awful one. Similarly, there were just a couple of crosses and tight lanes that we lived in that were game changers.” After two mid-fleet finishes, Chris Bake’s Team Aqua won today’s third race by which time the wind had reached its peak. “I was a bit rusty in the first two races. In the last race we joined the dots up pretty well,” admitted Bake. “We had a good start and powered through and went all the way out on starboard — one tack and in. We got a few favourable shifts.” Team Nika’s run of supreme consistency only came to an end in today’s final race when they posted a fifth, however at this halfway stage of the 44Cup Oman they continue to lead with a six-point margin, although now over Aleph Racing. Behind it is close with just six points separating second place from Nico Poons’ fifth placed Charisma. The 44Cup Oman is organised by Oman Sail and also supported by official event partners Oman Air, Al Mouj Muscat, Kempinski Hotel Muscat, Tanuf Water, Transom Catering, environmental partners Environment Society of Oman (ESO) and UN Clean Seas, and the new EQ range from Mercedes-Benz Oman.



India's Ishan Kishan poses with the man of the match trophy at the end of the third and final one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Bangladesh and India at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong. – AFP



Bangladesh's Mustafizur Rahman plays a shot during the third and final one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Bangladesh and India at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. – AFP



Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan Miraz pose win man of the series award at the end of the third and final one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Bangladesh and India. – AFP

# Kishan double ton helps India crush Bangladesh

**CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh:** Opener Ishan Kishan hit the fastest-ever double century in one-day internationals in just 126 balls to set up a 227-run consolation win for India in the third match against Bangladesh on Saturday.

The left-handed Kishan, who made the team in the absence of injured skipper Rohit Sharma, powered India to 409-8 with his 210 off 131 balls including 24 fours and 10 sixes.

He and Virat Kohli, who made 113, put on 290 runs for the second wicket — the seventh-highest partnership in ODI history.

Bangladesh were bowled out for 182 in 34 overs but won the series 2-1 after their opening two victories in Dhaka.

India's 409 was their fourth-highest ODI score and the highest-

ever total against Bangladesh by any team.

Kishan raised his maiden ODI hundred with a four as he let out a scream, and kept up the charge to convert into a double ton off Mustafizur Rahman as he and Kohli danced in the field.

Kishan is only the fourth Indian batsman to score an ODI double ton after Rohit — who has done so three times — Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag.

India lost Shikhar Dhawan for three in the fifth over after being invited to bat first, but Kishan hit back with a string of boundaries and took control of the innings with Kohli.

Kohli was dropped on one by skipper Liton Das, who spilled an easy catch at short mid-wicket, and soon got into his groove but



Bangladesh's captain Liton Das (2R) poses with cricket officials and the winners trophy at the end of the third and final one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Bangladesh and India at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. – AFP

remained happy to play second fiddle to the attacking Kishan.

Kishan finally fell to a well-judged catch in the deep by Liton off Taskin Ahmed as he walked back to a standing ovation.

Star batsman and former captain Kohli hit Ebadot Hossain for six to register his first ODI century since August 2019 off 85 balls.

It took his century count in all three formats to 72, surpassing former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting.

Tendulkar remains top with 100 international tons in a stellar career that ended in 2013.

India lost quick wickets including stand-in skipper K.L. Rahul for eight and Kohli in the space of three balls, but Washington Sundar's quickfire 37 led the visitors past 400.

In reply, Bangladesh kept losing wickets including Liton out for 29 and Mushfiqur Rahim bowled, for seven, by left-arm spinner Axar Patel.

Shakib Al Hasan attempted to put up some resistance with his knock of 43 before left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav bowled him as Bangladesh lost half their side for 124.

The rest of the batting fell flat as pace bowler Shardul Thakur struck twice — including the key wickets of Afif Hossain and Mehidy Hasan Miraz — in the space of four balls across his two overs.

Thakur took three wickets while Axar and tearaway quick Umran Malik took two each. The two teams will play two Tests with the series starting in Chittagong on December 14. — AFP

# Durant and Irving combine for 67 pts in Nets win, Pelicans beat Suns



Atlanta Hawks guard Trae Young (11) drives to the basket against Brooklyn Nets center DayRon Sharpe (20) and forward Kevin Durant (7) during the second quarter at Barclays Center. – USA Today Sports

**BERLIN:** Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving eclipsed 30 points each in the Brooklyn Nets' 120-116 home win over the Atlanta Hawks on Friday.

It was also the return of Ben Simmons after a five-game stint on the side lines, starting and contributing six points, seven assists, six rebounds and four steals in 21 productive minutes.

Durant top-scored with 34 points on 14-of-25 shooting, while Irving was just as good, scoring 33 on 11-of-21 shooting while chipping in 11 rebounds. Mostly known for his offence, Durant blocked two shots, raising his season average to 1.7 per game — the eighth-best figure in the league.

Trae Young was solid for the Hawks with 33 points (12-of-25 shooting) and nine assists, but he committed a game-high eight turnovers. He is the only player in the NBA averaging at least 25 points (27.2) and nine assists (9.5).

With the win, the Nets have now taken six of their past seven, improving their record to 15-12 after starting the season 1-5.

Pelicans stay top of the West

Entering the game as the top two teams in the Western Conference, the New Orleans Pelicans rode a terrific Zion Williamson performance to a 128-117 win against the Phoenix Suns.

Williamson was unstoppable offensively, scoring a game-high 35 point son 13-of-17 shooting, adding seven rebounds and four assists. Of his 20 games this season, it is the ninth time he has scored at least 25 points on 60 per cent shooting.

There are 14 players shooting 59 per cent or better from the field this season, and of those, only Anthony Davis is averaging more field goal attempts per game (17.5) than Williamson's 15.4.

Embiid's early dominance almost goes to waste

Joel Embiid tied the Los Angeles Lakers' whole team in the first quarter with 20 points each, but the Philadelphia 76ers needed an over time period to come away with a 133-122 win.

Embiid was eight-of-nine from the field in the first quarter for his 20 points, going on to finish with 38 on 14-of-19 shooting, 12 rebounds and five assists. Team-mate DeAnthony Melton helped out with a career-high 33 points on 11-of-16 shooting, hitting eight of his 12 three-point attempts.

Anthony Davis continued his strong form with 31 points (nine-of-13 shooting) and 12 rebounds, but he missed a potential go-ahead free throw in the final seconds, before the Lakers were outscored 13-2 in over time. — dpa



DALIC CREDITS WIN TO

NEVER  
SURRENDER  
APPROACH

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH  
DOHA, DEC 10

CROATIA coach Zlatko Dalić credited his side's character to fight till the end for the comeback win over Brazil in a well-contested Fifa World Cup quarterfinal in Doha on Friday.

"Brazilians were skillfull and difficult to dominate in the match. We demonstrated our capability of fighting hard with a no-surrender approach. We were not ready to concede defeat after Neymar's goal in the extra-time," Dalić said during the post-match press conference.

The Croatian coach said it was a great feeling of satisfaction after the equaliser was scored by the substitutes.

"After the goal by Neymar, we still had the hope to pull one back. The substitutions were not intended with a strategy but they instilled a fresh energy to the team."

On a query about mercurial player Luka Modric, Dalić said it is no surprise after working with him all these periods.

"Modric is a phenomenal player. His seriousness and work ethics for the game is really commendable. He is a gentleman and inspiration to the Croatian team. Whether it is Croatia or Real Madrid Modric gives his best."

On a question about the goal celebration of the players, Dalić said he had instructed the Croatian players not to dance or mimic after a goal.

"We have professional and high-quality players who cannot be written off in any match"

Replying to a query on their back-to-back penalty shoot-out success, the Croatian coach dedicated it to the confidence of his players.

"We are not penalty specialists. It is not easy to take on the penalties. It shows the character and self-confidence of the players and their ability to make correct decisions when it matters."

"From the start of the tournament, we took it one

game at a time. We were focused to give our best in each game of the World Cup," he said.

Commenting on their midfield prowess, Dalić said: "Ours is one of the best midfield in the tournament due to the players' hard work and serious approach to the game."

**TITE STEPS DOWN**

Brazil coach Tite confirmed he will exit the national team coaching role after a tenure of six years.

The 61-year-old had said before the tournament he would stand down regardless of his side's performance.

"It is a painful defeat but I go in peace. It is the end of a cycle," said the former Corinthians manager.

Tite left no room for a return as Brazil coach.

"I already said that a year and a half ago. I didn't come here to win and then turn around and say I was going to stay. People who know me know that"

Star striker Neymar, who scored the goal for Brazil in the quarterfinal, said he cannot give a 100 per cent guarantee of continuing play for Brazil.

The 30-year-old said he will check all aspects before confirming his decision. "I am not closing any doors on the national team but I am also not guaranteeing 100 per cent that I will return."

"I need to think a bit more about this, what is best for me and the national team."

The Paris St Germain forward equalled Pele's official goalscoring record of 77 in 124 appearances for the Brazil men's national team during the match.

Neymar played in three World Cups for the Selecao, helping them reach the semifinals in Brazil 2014 before missing the 7-1 drubbing by Germany in the last four with injury.

"It is an awful feeling. I think this is a worse feeling than what happened at the last World Cup," said Neymar, referring to Brazil's 2-1 quarterfinal defeat by Belgium at Russia 2018.

"We fought really well and I am proud of my teammates. We showed great character throughout the tournament."