

Farewell to Ambassador of Korea

On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received at his office on Sunday Kim Chang-Kyu, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Sultanate of Oman to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. **DETAILS ON P2**



P10

GODART, BROOKE GRAB IRONMAN 70.3 CROWNS



P13

SQUID HARVESTS IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN SLUMP 10.7% IN 2021



P20

'ESSENCE OF ARABIA' EXPLORES THE TRADITIONAL OMANI HASEER



MUSCAT

FINAL QUALIFIERS OF BILARAB AWARD

The final qualifiers for the last 10 nominated participations in Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design kicked off at the Sultan Qaboos University's (SQU) Exhibition Hall on Sunday. The process will run for two days. During the qualifiers, the participants gave detailed presentations on their projects to get assessment on artistic and engineering aspects. — ONA

DEALS TO INCREASE FOOD SECURITY

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning signed 11 agreements with various companies and private establishments to the tune of RO 20 million. Five of the agreements were inked within the framework of the Food Security Lab, while the other 6 are land usufruct agreements to set up agricultural projects. **DETAILS ON P13**



READ IN OPINION



CONNECTING TO YOUR INNER WISDOM
HYESHA BARRETT **P8**

A TRIBUTE TO ALL TEACHERS
ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI **P9**

HIS MAJESTY RETURNS HOME



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday returned home from abroad, according to a statement issued by the Diwan of Royal Court reading as follows: "Under the divine protection of the Almighty Allah, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik returned home today after a private visit he made to the Federal Republic of Germany. May the Almighty Allah guard His Majesty the Sultan and bestow His bounties on him wherever he might be. May He assist His Majesty the Sultan with lasting good health and happiness, and may He keep him as a source of resourcefulness and pride for the loyal people of Oman!" — ONA

Food reserves stable in Oman

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, Feb 27

Within the framework of constant efforts aimed at regulating import and export procedures to ensure availability of products and basic commodities in the local market, a joint meeting with stakeholders was held at the premises of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on Sunday.

The meeting was presided over by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in presence of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri,

Authorities confirmed that food reserves in the Sultanate of Oman were not affected by changes in supply chains during the current period

Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture; Salim bin Ali al Hakmani, Chairman of the Consumer Protection Authority; Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and a number of officials and representatives of public and private establishments.

The meeting discussed a number of priority issues related

to food security and the availability of basic commodities in the local markets such as wheat, rice and vegetable oils. It also reviewed mechanisms to ensure price stability and the availability of all food items and consumer goods in all governorates. Besides, the meeting discussed the importance of opening direct import lines from target markets.

During the meeting, specialists confirmed that the food reserves were not affected by changes in supply chains during the current period and that basic commodities are available and sufficient for more than six months as the authorities work in an integrated manner to ensure food balance and price stability. **TURN TO P2**

Ukraine says willing to 'try' Russia talks

KYIV: Ukraine leader Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday he was willing to "try" talks with Russia but is sceptical of them, as Kyiv and Moscow prepare to meet at Ukraine's border with Belarus on the fourth day of Russia's invasion.

"I will be honest, as always: I do not really believe in the outcome of this meeting, but let them try", Zelensky said in a video address. He added that if there was a "chance" to end war, he should take part in the talks.

Earlier, a Zelenskiy said Kyiv remained under Ukrainian control as Russian forces renewed their assault, pounding the capital and other cities with artillery and cruise missiles.

A US defence official said

Ukraine's forces were putting up "very determined resistance" to the three-pronged Russian advance that has sent hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing westwards, clogging major highways and railway lines.

"We have withstood and are successfully repelling enemy attacks. The fighting goes on", Zelenskiy said in a video message from the streets of Kyiv posted on his social media.

Russian President Vladimir Putin launched what he called a special military operation before dawn on Thursday, ignoring Western warnings and saying the "neo-Nazis" ruling Ukraine threatened Russia's security.

SEE ALSO P7

TOURISM CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has launched a promotional campaign to showcase the natural beauty of the Sultanate of Oman in France. The promotional campaign will be on public transport buses playing on the routes covering the Champs Elysees, the Eiffel Tower and Place de la Concorde. Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion at the ministry, said that the ministry adopts innovative marketing strategies to promote the unique tourism components that characterise the Sultanate of Oman.

ECONOMY ON PATH OF GROWTH

MAJLIS ASH'SHURA HOSTS MINISTER OF ECONOMY

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

The Omani economy, like all other countries, has faced many economic, financial and health challenges, during the past two years, which had a noticeable impact on the course of economic and social development included in the Oman Vision 2040 and its first executive plan — the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025). These challenges were mainly caused by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying drop in oil prices, especially during the first quarter of 2020, as a result of the significant slowdown in global economic and trade activities

This was stated by Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, when he was hosted by the Majlis Ash'shura on Sunday, during the eighth regular session of the third annual sitting (2021-2022). The meeting was chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of the Majlis Ash'shura, and in presence of Secretary General and members.

The session witnessed queries from members on several issues like the reasons for decline in indicators of Omanisation in small and medium enterprises, efforts of the ministry and authorities concerned in this

The Omani economy, like all other countries, has faced many economic, financial and health challenges, which had an impact on development

DR SAID BIN MOHAMMED AL SAQRI

regard to enhance the role of this sector, provincial development programmes and their role in the development of the governorates through development and investment programmes.

INNOVATION SECTOR

They called for the need to strengthen scientific research and innovation sector, due to the importance of education, scientific research and innovation in economic projects, in addition to the importance of activating the role of the Industrial Innovation Centre and strengthening its roles in innovation for various industrial sectors which help in economic diversification and provide job opportunities. **TURN TO P3**

Terms set for permanent govt jobs on contracts

VINOD NAIR
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Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, on Sunday issued a ministerial decision No 97/2022 on recruiting Omanis in permanent jobs in the state administrative apparatus on contract basis.

As per Article 1, the decision is based on the Royal Decree No 89/2020 establishing the Ministry of Labour, defines its functions, and adopting its organisational structure.

The contract must include details prescribed by the ministry.

Article 2 states that the decision shall be published in the official gazette and shall take effect from the day following the date of its publication.

The contract must contain details about the duration of the contract, salary (including allowances for housing, electricity, relocation, phone, specialised work if any), and for the high cost of living.

TURN TO P3



■ ASAAD BIDS FAREWELL TO KOREAN AMBASSADOR



MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received in his office on Sunday Kim Chang-Kyu, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. The ambassador expressed his thanks for the support extended to him during his tour of duty in Oman from His Majesty, the government and the Omani people, which had enabled him to carry out his tasks. He also wished His Majesty the Sultan good health, happiness and a long life and the Sultanate of Oman further development and growth under His Majesty's wise leadership. On his turn, HH Sayyid Asaad expressed his utmost appreciation to the ambassador for the efforts he exerted in serving the relations between the two countries, wishing him permanent success and the people of Korea further progress and prosperity. — ONA

Food reserves stable

FROM PAGE 1
They affirmed that the competent authorities are monitoring the availability of goods and ensuring that the prices of commodities are not hiked. The meeting discussed the possibility of providing a package of facilities to boost food reserves in the local market. This includes providing a number of advantages such as free warehouses for foodstuffs imported from target markets to ensure the availability of goods at reasonable prices. The meeting emphasised the importance of obtaining data and information about the availability of basic commodities in the market and statistics on food stocks from official sources and the competent authorities to stem the spread of rumours and false information.



Ministry of Labour conducts tests for job applicants



SEEB: The Ministry of Labour conducted job tests and interviews for citizens applying for job vacancies in government authorities in the governorates of Muscat and South Al Batinah, on Sunday. In comments to ONA, Salim bin Khalfan al Wahaibi, Head of Tests and Interviews Management Team at the Ministry of Labour, said the interviews will continue on Monday and Wednesday. As many as 1,654 job-seekers with bachelor's degree and lower qualifications will undergo tests and interviews. The job vacancies also include drivers of light and heavy vehicles. Among those, 65 applicants will be selected to fill the vacancies. The Ministry of Labour will conduct interviews for 121 applicants vying for 16 job vacancies in 17 public entities, the official said. — ONA



Oman tourism promotion campaign in Paris

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism launched a promotional campaign in Paris, capital of France. The campaign highlights the marvellous beauty of the Sultanate of Oman. The campaign was launched via public transport buses and the famous French attractions such as Champs Elysees, Eiffel Tower and Place de la Concorde. The campaign aims at re-enhancing the Sultanate of Oman as a distinct tourism destination that attracts European tourists through showcasing attractive images reflecting diverse tourism elements in Oman such as the sea, deserts, mountains and heritage sites. Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said the ministry adopts innovative marketing strategies to promote the unique tourism components in Oman, as well as highlighting the different tourism patterns and experiences that the visitor can enjoy during his/her visit to Oman.



Team from Kuwait sets record by raising largest flag on Jabal Shams

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 27

As a mark of cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and Kuwait, a team comprising photographers and hikers from Kuwait found a place in the *Guinness Book of Records* by raising the country's largest flag on a mountaintop of Jabal Shams. The event was in conjunction with the country's national day on February 25. Jabal Shams is the highest peak in the Sultanate of Oman located

in the heart of the Western Hajar Mountains in the Wilayat of Al Hamra in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. It got its name for being the place in the Sultanate of Oman where sunlight reaches first and also the site from where the best view of the sunset is available. Jabal Shams is one of the best tourist destinations, having the highest peak in the country. It suits those who love adventure sports, and for others, this is the place to enjoy its serenity.



Jabal Shams allows everyone to indulge in many activities. One can venture to the top of the mountain

nature lovers can go camping under the stars. "A team of volunteers from Kuwait were looking for a high place to raise the largest flag marking the country's national day. They found Jabal Shams appropriate to place the flag with a size of 2,742 square metres at a place which is located at an altitude of 3,028 metres above sea," said team leader Fuad Qabazard. He added that the world record for raising the largest flag on the world's mountains is a new classification registered in Kuwait's name in the *Guinness Book* that also shows brotherly bonding with the Sultanate of Oman. It took two years for the team to implement the idea of raising such a huge flag on a mountaintop, but the team was happy that it could achieve this difficult task. He expressed his sincere thanks to the Omani Royal Court and the official authorities in the Sultanate of Oman for their hospitality and services to achieve the job.



ECONOMY ON PATH OF GROWTH

FROM PAGE 1

The questions related to the extent of banking institutions and keeping pace with the digital economy and dealing with digital currencies were also asked.

COST OF LIVING

The members stressed the importance of taking into account the high cost of living in light of the current economic conditions, high prices of fuel, public services, consumer goods, taxes and fee, in addition to the low income of individuals, increase in the number of job-seekers and the number of laid-off workers and retirees, and stressing the need to look into electricity and water bills, usufruct contracts of all kinds, and subsidising fodder and foodstuff.

During the session, emphasis was laid on the importance of benefiting from energy and mining resources in diversifying economic production base, not relying on oil and moving towards strengthening other sectors such as tourism, industrial and fisheries. Majlis members inquired about the expected increase in world oil prices, and the ministry's mechanisms to deal with it in the coming period to serve the national economy.

They also inquired about the Ninth Five-Year Plan, the projects that were not implemented, and the extent to which the government has a plan to implement projects without prejudice to other projects.

During his speech, the Majlis Chairman indicated that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik pays his most generous attention to support the country's comprehensive development process in its various development aspects aimed at enhancing and enabling the performance of the national economy to achieve sustainable development and ensure the desired stability for all sectors.

Later, the Minister of Economy presented his ministry's statement, which included five main axes covering several aspects, including: assessing the process of economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman, economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the national economy, the performance of strategic programmes for the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), evaluating the performance of the development budget for the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) and the most prominent features of the budget during the current five-year plan, as well as the ministry's economic vision during the current plan for several issues.

The minister said most of the measures continued to be applied in 2021 to promote the gradual return to economic and



commercial activity and contribute to the return of economic growth after the GDP contracted by 3.2 per cent in 2020.

"Indeed, the recovery phase was strengthened during the year 2021 with the rise in oil prices, as most macroeconomic indicators witnessed an improvement in their performance during 2021, and the GDP at current prices stood at RO 24.2 billion until the end of September last year, recording a growth rate of about 12.7 per cent, compared to a decline of 16.5 per cent during the same period the previous year.

"The growth rate during the first half of 2021 stood at 10.1 per cent, compared to a decline of 15.5 per cent during the first half of 2020. All forecasts of international development institutions indicate the

growth of the gross domestic product in the Sultanate of Oman at good rates during the coming period," he explained.

OIL ACTIVITIES

At the sectoral level, the added value of oil activities amounted to about RO 7.4 billion at the end of the third quarter of 2021, registering a growth rate of 26.5 per cent compared to the same period in 2020. The contribution of these activities constituted about 30.6 per cent of the GDP. The oil sector recorded a growth rate of 7.8 per cent, and its contribution amounted to 73.0 per cent of the GDP until the end of the third quarter of 2021, compared to a contribution of about 76.3 per cent during the same period in 2020.

While the growth rate of total industrial



activities amounted to about 9.1 per cent at the end of the third quarter of the year, the manufacturing sector, which is one of the non-oil economic diversification sectors, recorded a high growth rate during this period, amounting to about 25.8 per cent, while service activities recorded a growth rate of about 7.5. The most prominent of which was the transportation and storage sector, which grew by 19.3 per cent and wholesale and retail trade by 15.3 per cent, as a result of the gradual opening of service activities sectors as a result of vaccinating a large segment of citizens and residents and the receding of the repercussions of the pandemic.

GROWTH ESTIMATE

In his statement, Dr Al Saqri spoke about

the prospects for economic growth in the Sultanate of Oman, noting that the data changed from what was planned for 2020, which is the last year of the Ninth Plan, and what is planned in the Tenth Plan (2021-2025) in light of the consequences of this pandemic, and the decline in oil prices, and the precautionary policies taken by the Sultanate of Oman to reduce the economic, social and health damage of the pandemic.

The statement added that the growth estimates for 2021 and 2022 are positive, although there is a discrepancy between the estimates of the various institutions of the level of this growth, which ranged between 1.1 per cent according to Moody's estimates and 3.0 per cent according to the estimates of the World Bank for the year 2021, while it ranged between 2.9 per cent according to the estimates of the International Monetary Fund and 7.9 per cent according to the estimates of the Ministry of Economy for the year 2022.

INFLATION

With regard to the general level of prices, the rate of inflation in the Sultanate of Oman increased during the period (January-November) of the year 2021 to reach about 1.34 per cent, compared to about -0.84 per cent during the same period in 2020, mainly driven by the increase in transport group prices by 4.48 per cent. It is worth noting that the inflation rate in November 2021 amounted to 3.56 per cent compared to its level in the same month of 2020. This is due to the high domestic demand for goods and services resulting from economic growth, high oil prices, the continuation of the impact of the local value-added tax and the rise in international prices of goods.

Dr Al Saqri also spoke of labour market and employment, noting that more than 68,000 job opportunities were generated last year, including (19,097) male and female workers in the government sector, representing (28 per cent) of the total, and (49,276) male and female citizens in the private sector at (72) per cent, of whom (13,620) were appointed for the first time and (28,989) who have previously worked. Besides, (6,667) work contracts resulting from on the job training.

He added that the number of active job-seekers until the end of January 2022 is 40,082 male and female, saying that there is an improvement in the labour market and the employment of Omanis in the private sector. "Omani employment in this sector has increased to reach a growth rate of 4.7 per cent compared to December 2020" he added.



Terms set for permanent government jobs on contracts

FROM PAGE 1

The contract will be renewed automatically if neither party fails to inform two months in advance about the unwillingness to continue.

Each of the parties may terminate the contract before the end of the contractual year

without giving any reason provided that the other party is notified of termination by a period of no less than three months during which the second party remains in the service.

The first party may waive the right of the second party to continue working after the notification or until the end of

the entire period if necessary.

The second party shall be entitled for a periodic increment on the January 1 of each year (as per the grade or the degree equivalent to his financial allocations, provided that six months have passed from the date of signing the contract).

The second party shall be

entitled to a regular leave with the salary specified in accordance with Clause (1) of the contract, and for the periods specified in the job profile.

The second party shall be entitled to a travel allowance for an official mission inside or outside the Sultanate of Oman. The second party shall, upon

the end of his service, be entitled to a grant for the period of his contract calculated according to the job profile.

The second party is entitled to provisions of the law on post-service pensions and benefits for employees.

The decision also specifies the financial rights of the second

party if the contract is terminated by either of the parties and the circumstances do not require the second party (the employee) to work for the rest of the period stipulated in the country, provided the first party (the employer) has waived adherence to the continuation of the second party's work.

Muscat International Book Fair

the 26th edition

FEB 24
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MONDAY | FEBRUARY 28 | 2022

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

THE LAND OF FRANKINCENSE & KHAREEF

BOOK FEATURING DHOFAR'S FERTILE GREEN
MOUNTAINS AND TOWERING SAND DUNES LAUNCHED

MUSCAT: The Diwan of Royal Court launched a book titled (Dhofar: Monsoon Mountains to Sand Seas, Sultanate of Oman). It was launched as part of activities of the 26th version of Muscat International Book Fair.

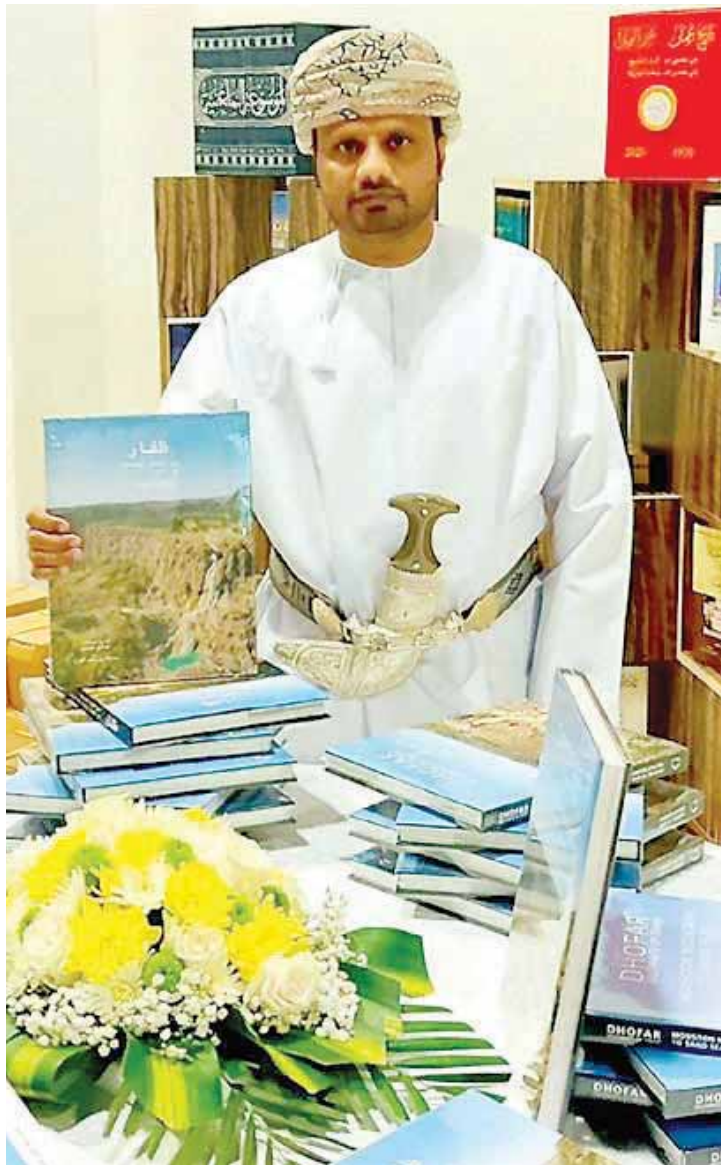
The book is written by Dr Andrew Spalton and Dr Hadi Mussalam al Hikmani.

Dr Al Hakmani, Wild Mammals' Specialist Researcher and co-author of the book, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the book contains eight main chapters, in addition to a general introduction. He explained that the first chapter of the book considers the great variety of natural landscapes in the Governorate of Dhofar, from the fertile green mountains in the south to the towering sand dunes of the Empty Quarter desert in the north.

Further chapters describe the diverse flora and fauna, the climate, water resources and the traditional livelihoods of the people of the Governorate of Dhofar. A final chapter considers environmental sustainability.

Dr Andrew Spalton, author, wildlife expert and former environmental affairs adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court, said Dhofar has been known since ancient times as the Land of Frankincense, it is today better known for its khareef season. He further said, "Dhofar is home to many species of wild plant and animal that are not found elsewhere in the world".

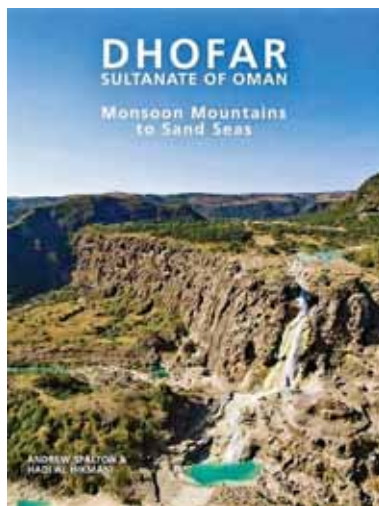
He added that Dhofar is



also home for people who have lived there for nearly 13,000 years. Until the end of the twentieth century, they depended on land and sea to provide their livelihoods. Livestock grazing was the main activity of most societies, while fishing was the principal activity of the coastal communities.

Today, the people live very modern lives but remain deeply connected to their traditional livelihoods.

The book is the first comprehensive documentation of environmental diversity in the Governorate of Dhofar, documented in wonderful and rare pictures and supported by a rich text in accurate information about plant and animal life, nature, climate and people in the region. It will be also a new addition to the Omani library, researchers, visitors and those interested in the region. — ONA



Since ancient times Dhofar has been known as the Land of Frankincense, today it is better known for its khareef season



Book fair successful in inculcating reading habit among children

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

The Muscat International Book Fair (MIBF) has been successful in raising awareness for books and has evoked good response from academics, intellectuals and students of all ages and grades. With every passing year it registered more participation, more footfalls and display of more books for all ages as per their interest and requirement.

Publishers who are taking part in the book fair after a gap of two years are generally happy over their participation and support from the organisers. Publishers coming from other countries hailed Muscat as a good destination to sell books due to interest from parents and children and support from the institutions.

They also agreed that the Book Fair has been successful in inculcating reading habits among the children.

"I have been participating in the book fair for the last five years, excluding two years of Covid. I am happy to see the same lot of students and their parents coming to the fair. They purchased more books than they used to buy in previous years and agreed that too much exposure to screens has affected their eye health", said

Abdullah, who came from UAE to take part in the MIBF.

He appreciated the readers' choice, as they kept abreast of the latest trend and were equally interested in books on history and culture.

I found some of the parents coming with their children and encouraging them to buy books from different sections. "They seem to be good collectors of books, as I got orders for a good number of books, mainly novels and culture. They have an urge to know about the world and look for authentic works even after scores of information available on the Internet. It shows their genuineness in reading and urge for right knowledge", said another book seller.

There are 361,230 titles on display at the Book Fair with 715 publishing houses from 27 countries.

Faheem from Muscat claimed to have good demand for all sorts of fictions, children books and books on English, "there has been good demand for books on 'how to learn English' and 'how to learn Arabic' from Arabic speaking people and expatriates", he said and added there has been good demand for books on photography and editing from young Omanis.

Oman Vision 2040 pavilion at book fair

MUSCAT: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-Up Unit is taking part in a corner dedicated for "Oman Vision 2040" at the 26th Muscat International Book Fair.

During its participation in the exhibition, the Unit aims at highlighting the efforts exerted to achieve the "Oman Vision 2040" in cooperation with the authorities concerned. It also aims at familiarising the

community with the Vision's document, its themes and national priorities, as well as the mechanisms adopted to follow up the progress of implementing the Vision.

Further, the Unit familiarises the society with the major national programmes launched by Oman Vision 2040, in cooperation with the authorities concerned, which represents a rapid response to requirements

of the current stage and to the local, regional and international changes.

The Oman Vision 2040 pavilion, in coordination with the fair's management, seeks to attract students of all educational levels from schools, colleges and universities who visit the Book Fair to provide them with adequate and simplified briefing about the Vision. — ONA





■ **SAF CHIEF RECEIVES KUWAIT’S CHIEF OF STAFF**



MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa here on Sunday Lt Gen Khaled Saleh al Sabah, Chief of the General Staff of Army of the State of Kuwait and his delegation, currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman. The two sides exchanged views on a range of military matters that serve the armed forces of the two countries. They also discussed several matters of common interest. — ONA

Rising oil price to pave way for budget surplus

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

As the average oil price reached higher than the levels estimated in the 2022 budget and non-oil revenues expected to record further increases this year, the Sultanate of Oman is set to see a surplus in the current year.

The average price of Oman crude for February delivery 2022 has reached \$73.14 per barrel oil although it is \$7.12 lower than January delivery 2022.

With the current oil prices at a record 11-year high of over \$97 a barrel, the average prices are expected to cross the \$75/ barrel for 2022.

Oman's projected revenue figures in the 2022 budget are based on an assumed oil price of \$50 per barrel, up from an expectation of \$45 per barrel in the 2021 budget.

According to a new report

by Bloomberg, reveals that the rise in crude oil prices above par for almost all Middle Eastern producers increased the possibility of large budget surpluses for even the weakest export if prices remained high.

“The rise in crude oil prices above par for almost all Middle Eastern producers increased the possibility of large budget surpluses for even the weakest export if prices remained high”, says the report.

The report prepared on the basis of International Monetary Fund estimates points out that the price of a barrel of oil needed for financial parity in Bahrain is the highest among the Gulf countries, reaching \$106, followed by Saudi Arabia at \$72, by the UAE at \$66, followed by Kuwait at \$65, while the price reached Only \$44 needed in Qatar.

According to data from Dubai Mercantile Exchange,

where Oman crude is traded, Oman crude for April 2022 delivery contract price rose by \$4.06 on Thursday to reach \$97.69 a barrel.

On the international market, oil prices jumped, with Brent rising above \$105 a barrel for the first time since 2014, after Russia's attack on Ukraine exacerbated concerns about disruptions to the global energy supply.

“The projected average oil price seems to be on a conservative basis considering that the current oil prices are relatively higher. Oman's fiscal breakeven oil price needed to balance its 2022 budget will be \$67 per barrel, compared with \$74 per barrel in 2021”, points out an analysis by PWC Middle East.

According to the International Monetary Fund forecast, the price of a barrel of oil needed for the financial parity of the Sultanate of Oman

in the current year's budget is \$60 per barrel.

The uptick in expected oil and gas revenues come as a result of both higher oil prices and higher oil production, in line with the OPEC-called production restraint deal.

“The Sultanate of Oman has seen its production ramp up in a stepwise manner since the middle of 2021 as the OPEC+ group gradually restores all the oil it took off the market in May 2020 in response to the Covid-19-induced collapse in global oil demand”, the PWC report points out.

The projected lower debt to GDP ratio of 64 per cent for 2022 versus 67 per cent in 2021, including the recovery of oil prices and narrowing of the budget deficit from previous years, has led to Fitch revising the outlook to stable while affirming the rating at BB- in December 2021.

Lobster fishing season starts tomorrow

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has announced the start of the lobster fishing season in the Sultanate of Oman for the year 2022. The season will continue for three months, starting from March 1 until the end of May. The ministry stressed on the importance of adhering to fishing within the specific season and using the fishing methods authorised by it. Fishing only through lobster cages is allowed to preserve this important wealth from the risk of depletion and ensure its stock's sustainability.

Last January, the ministry said

that the total violations issued by the fisheries control during the month of December 2021 amounted to 297 violations and 181 seizures, including boats, fishing vessels, engines and nets. The seized quantities of illegal fishing amounted to 3 tonnes and 739 kilogrammes, including 3 tonnes and 737 kilogrammes of lobster caught outside the season. It also said maximum violations, amounted to 182, were for not obtaining or holding fishing licenses, followed by 47 for using prohibited tools and equipment, 14 for fishing for lobster outside the season, 14 for employing expat workers and ten violations for fishing in prohibited areas and others.



جامعة صحر

SOHAR UNIVERSITY

TENDER NOTICE No. 001/2022

Sohar University invites sealed tenders from specialized, experience and authorized suppliers for **Supply, Installation, Implementation “Hyper-Converged Solution and Services Migrate Data from Current VM infrastructure to HCI Setup”** who have sufficient experience in providing similar service to Government/Private Organizations.

The tender details are as follows:

Tender	Description	Fee OR	Submission Date
001/2022	Supply, Installation, Implementation “Hyper-Converged Solution and Services Migrate Data from Current VM infrastructure to HCI Setup”	200/-	21/03/2022

The tender document can be obtained from Procurement and Contracts Department from 28/02/2022 to 03/03/2022 08:00 to 16:00 hrs at Sohar University Main campus in Sohar or by E-Mail after payment of RO. 200.000/- (Non-refundable) at the cash counter located in the Al Khauboora Building or to deposit in Sohar University Account No. 002020004411-Bank Sohar Sohar Branch. The receipt of payment has to be send to the Procurement and Contracts Department to collect the Tender Document.

Tenders offers must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed, delivered at the Sohar University premises, tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and deadline for submission of offers is **21/03/2022 15:30 hours**.

Tender should be addressed to Vice-Chancellor and deposited in the tender Box at VC Office as given below during office hours 08:00 to 15:30 Sunday to Thursday.

Vice-Chancellor - Office
Sohar University
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 421 & 289
(Procurement and Contracts Department)

Sohar University reserves the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

Pacts signed to set up incubator for converting industries



SOHAR: Sohar University signed here today 4 agreements with entrepreneurs and companies to establish a specialised incubator for converting industries.

The incubator will serve entrepreneurs to develop small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and to contribute in the Omani economy.

The agreements were signed by Dr Hamdan bin Sulaiman al Fazari, Vice Chancellor of Sohar University and representatives of the incubated firms.

As per the agreements, the SMEs will receive support to develop and achieve sustainability. The incubation will last for 12 months. — ONA

Call for Ordinary Annual General Meeting (AGM)

(Super International SAOC)

The Board of Directors of Super International S.A.O.C. inviting Its Shareholders to attend the AGM Meeting at the given date time and venue.

The Agenda and terms of the meeting are attached to the Shareholder reports. The shareholder has the right to appoint any other person on his behalf to attend the meeting and vote on his behalf on the decisions taken by the Board.

You are requested to be at least half an hour ahead of time in the meeting.

Any enquiry on the agenda can be answered by
Mr. Younis Al Namani GSM # 92949673.

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 16th March 2022.
Time: 12:30 Noon.

Venue: Super Plaza – 2nd Floor. Way No. 4805 – Al Azaeba
Muscat – Sultanate of Oman

INVITATION TO TENDER

Sohar Aluminium LLC (SA), PO Box 80, PC- 327, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman hereby invites qualified Suppliers/Contractors for the following tender:

Tender No.	: RFP 22-002
Tender Title	: Provision of Potline Basement Cleaning Services
Scope	: Sohar Aluminium invites experienced service providers who can provide the complete services including skilled manpower and equipment's to carry out the Potline basement material cleaning scope. A detailed scope will be issued to the interested bidders after validating their company profile and ability to perform the services as per required standards.
Tender No.	: RFP 22/003
Tender Title	: Provision Potline Pot Tending Services
Scope	: Sohar Aluminium invites experienced service providers who can provide the complete services including skilled manpower and supervision to carry out the Potline Pot Tending services. A detailed scope will be issued to the interested bidders after validating their company profile and ability to perform the services as per required standards.
Tender No.	: MM20-007
Tender Title	: Sale of mobile equipment
Scope	: Sale of mobile equipment which includes forklifts, Road sweepers and other Aluminium smelter related mobile equipment. Equipment is available on as is where is basis.

Kindly send your email and company profile to: tender@sohar-aluminium.com
For list of active tenders visit: <https://www.sohar-aluminium.com/en/content/tender-listing>



N Korea fires ballistic missile

SEOUL: North Korea fired what could be a ballistic missile on Sunday, military officials in South Korea and Japan said, in what would be the first test since the nuclear-armed country conducted a record number of launches in January.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that North Korea had fired a suspected ballistic missile towards the sea off its east coast from a location near Sunan, where Pyongyang's international airport is located.

The airport has been the site of missile tests, including a pair of short-range ballistic missiles fired on January 16.

Sunday's missile flew around to a maximum altitude of around 620 km, to a range of 300 km, JCS said.

Analysts said the flight data didn't closely match earlier tests, and suggested it could be a medium-range ballistic missile fired on a "lofted" trajectory.

"There have been frequent launches since the start of the year, and North Korea is continuing to rapidly develop ballistic missile technology," Japan's Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi said in a televised statement. North Korea was threatening the security of Japan, the region and the international community, he said.

The United States condemned the latest launch and called on North Korea to cease destabilising acts, but said the test did not pose an immediate threat, said the US military's Indo-Pacific Command.

North Korea's last test was on January 30, when it fired a Hwasong-12 intermediate range ballistic missile.

The largest weapon test-fired since 2017, the Hwasong-12 was reported to have flown to an altitude of about 2,000 km and



TV screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul. — AFP

range of 800 km. That capped a record month of mostly short-range missile launches in January.

Sunday's launch came less than two weeks ahead of South Korea's March 9 presidential election, amid fears by some in Seoul and Tokyo that Pyongyang may push ahead with missile development while international attention is focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"This launch comes as the international community is responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and if North Korea is making use of that situation, it is something we cannot tolerate," Kishi said.

South Korea's National Security Council convened an emergency meeting to discuss the launch, which it called "regrettable", according to a statement from the presidential Blue House.

"Launching a ballistic missile at

a time when the world is making efforts to resolve the Ukraine war is never desirable for peace and stability in the world, the region, and on the Korean Peninsula," the statement said.

South Korea's National Security Council convened an emergency meeting to discuss the launch, which it called 'regrettable'

The leading conservative candidate, Yoon Suk-Yeol, warned last week that North Korea could see the Ukraine crisis as "an opportunity for launching its own provocation."

Candidates and analysts have noted, however, that even before

the invasion North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was overseeing an increase in missile tests as talks with the United States and its allies remain stalled.

"Putin's War shapes almost all geopolitics right now, and should factor somewhere in Kim's calculus — but even 'taking advantage of distraction' seems to presume too much, since (North Korea) was already testing aggressively before the war," John Delury, a professor at South Korea's Yonsei University, said on Twitter.

China's representative on the Korean Peninsula, Liu Xiaoming, said on Sunday he spoke by phone with his US counterpart, Sung Kim, and urged the United States to address North Korea's legitimate and reasonable concerns with greater attention, so as to create conditions for restarting dialogue.

— Reuters

Iran's negotiator in Vienna for final phase of nuclear talks

DUBAI: Iran said on Sunday it will not accept any deadline set by the West to revive its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and wants "politically-motivated" claims by UN watchdog IAEA about Tehran's nuclear work to be dropped, Iranian state TV reported.

"We have answered the agency's (IAEA) questions or politically-motivated claims ... that we think were baseless. These dossiers should be closed," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh said, according to state TV's website. "Iran accepts no deadlines."

Meanwhile, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani will return to Vienna on Sunday for talks on resolving the remaining issues in indirect negotiations with the United States to revive a 2015 deal, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Bagheri Kani, who flew to Tehran last week for consultations with Iranian officials, will "pursue the negotiations

with a clear agenda aimed at resolving" the remaining issues, IRNA said.

Nournews, which is affiliated to Iran's Supreme National Security Council that is in charge of the nuclear talks dossier, said a council meeting stressed "the need to quickly resolve the remaining issues that border between agreement and dead end".

It did not name the sticking points, but the main remaining disputes appear to include the extent of sanctions rollback and questions about uranium traces found at several old but undeclared sites.

"No restriction on time can prevent the continuation of the talks for a good agreement," Nournews added.

Iran has made clear it wants an end to the oil and banking sanctions that are hurting its economy, while insisting also on the lifting of human rights and terrorism-related curbs.

— Reuters



Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani. — AFP File

'Rain bomb' pummells Australia's northeast, killing 7

MELBOURNE: A severe storm pummelled Australia's northeastern city of Brisbane on Sunday, causing evacuations, power outages and school closures as the death toll climbed to seven from accompanying flash floods.

More than 1,400 homes in the capital of Queensland state were at risk of flooding while more than 28,000 homes were without power statewide, as pristine beaches on the Gold and Sunshine coasts, which are key tourist attractions, all closed.

"We never expected this rain," state premier Annastacia Palaszczuk told a briefing. "This



This rain bomb is just really, you know, it's unrelenting ... It's just coming down in buckets

ANNASTACIA PALASZCZUK
Queensland premier



A youth wades through a waterlogged street on the banks of the overflowing Brisbane River at West End, Australia's Queensland state. — AFP

rain bomb is just really, you know, it's unrelenting ... It's just coming down in buckets."

More than 100 schools across the southeast of a state famed for abundant sunshine will be closed on Monday. State rescue services said they received 100 requests an hour for help in recent days.

Among the six killed in the flooding were a 34-year-old man who tried to swim to safety after the waters submerged his car and another whose vehicle was swept away in the most populous state of New South Wales (NSW).

About 700 people were asked to evacuate from the city of Gympie

on Saturday after the Mary River system surged beyond 72.4 feet for the town's worst flood since the 1880s.

Meteorologists said the deluge and thunderstorms would continue through Monday, before starting to ease off in Queensland, but moving south to New South Wales, where some communities at risk in its northeast have been told to evacuate.

The risk of riverine and flash flooding was "very real over coming days," said Steph Cooke, the state's emergency services minister.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

KATHMANDU

Nepal debates US grant amid protests

Nepal's parliament began debating a US infrastructure grant of \$500 million which, critics say, undermines the Himalayan nation's sovereignty as protesters opposed to the proposed funds clashed with police, officials and witnesses said.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a US government aid agency, agreed in 2017 to provide the aid in a grant to fund an electricity transmission line and road improvement project.



The aid does not need to be repaid and Washington says it comes without conditions. But opponents, many wary of US influence, say the aid would undermine Nepal's laws and sovereignty.

KUALA LUMPUR

12,000 displaced by floods in Malaysia

About 12,000 people in Malaysia have been evacuated from their homes, officials said, after heavy rains caused flooding in the country's northern states.

The tropical Southeast Asian nation was hit by bouts of bad weather over the weekend, as continuous rain swamped towns on the peninsula's east coast. Malaysia often sees stormy weather at this time of year, with seasonal flooding regularly causing mass evacuations.



Official data showed 11,831 people housed in flood relief centres in the northern states of Kelantan and Terengganu as of 4.30 pm local time on Sunday.

MORONI

Plane with 14 people crashes in the Comoros

Rescuers in the Comoros scrambled to find any survivors after a plane carrying 14 people crashed in the Indian Ocean archipelago. Airline AB Aviation said its small Cessna plane disappeared from the radar about 2.5 kilometres from its destination during its flight between the capital Moroni and the city of Fomboni on the island of Moheli.

"Search operations... have begun to find the aircraft's debris in the coastal area of Djoiezi



confirming the crash," the Comorian transport ministry said. The Comorian government said the 12 passengers were Comorian and that the two pilots were Tanzanian.



An Ukrainian Territorial Defence fighter takes the automatic grenade launcher from a destroyed Russian infantry mobility vehicle GAZ Tigr after the fight in Kharkiv. – AFP

PUTIN ORDERS NUCLEAR FORCES ON HIGH ALERT

KYIV/MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his military command to put nuclear-armed forces on high alert on Sunday as Ukrainian fighters defending the city of Kharkiv said they had repelled an attack by invading Russian troops.

US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that, “President Putin is continuing to escalate this war in a manner that is totally unacceptable and we have to continue to stem his actions in the strongest possible way”.

On the fourth day of the biggest assault on a European state since World War Two, the Ukrainian president’s office said negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow would be held at the Belarusian-Ukrainian border. They would meet without preconditions, it said.

Thousands of Ukrainian civilians, mainly women and children, were fleeing from the Russian assault into neighbouring countries.

The capital Kyiv was still in Ukrainian government hands, with President Volodymyr Zelenskiy rallying his people despite Russian shelling of civilian infrastructure.

But Putin, who has described the invasion as a “special military operation”, thrust an alarming new element into play on Sunday when he ordered Russia’s deterrence forces — a reference to units which include nuclear arms — onto high alert.

He cited aggressive statements by Nato leaders and economic sanctions imposed by the West against Moscow.

“As you can see, not only do Western countries take unfriendly measures against our country in the economic dimension — I mean the illegal sanctions that everyone knows about very well — but also the top officials of leading Nato countries allow themselves to make aggressive statements with regards to our country”, Putin said on state television.



This is terror. They are going to bomb our Ukrainian cities even more, they are going to kill our children even more subtly. This is the evil that has come to our land and must be destroyed

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY
Ukrainian President



A girl cries as she sits on a camp bed at a temporary shelter for Ukrainian refugees at the border crossing in Ubla, eastern Slovakia. – AFP

Russian soldiers and armoured vehicles rolled into Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second largest city, and witnesses reported firing and explosions. But city authorities said Ukrainian fighters had repelled the attack.

“Control over Kharkiv is completely ours! The armed forces, the police, and the defence forces are working, and the city is being completely cleansed of the enemy”, regional Governor Oleh Sinegubov said.

Reuters was unable to immediately corroborate the information.

Ukrainian forces were also holding off Russian troops ad-

vancing on Kyiv.

“We have withstood and are successfully repelling enemy attacks. The fighting goes on”, Zelenskiy said in a video message from the streets of Kyiv.

In other developments, Russian troops blew up a natural gas pipeline in Kharkiv before day-break, a Ukrainian state agency said, sending a burning cloud up into the darkness.

Ukraine’s Western allies ratcheted up their response to Russia’s land, sea and air invasion with an almost blanket ban on Russian airlines using European airspace.

— Reuters



Ukrainians and supporting people during a massive demonstration in front of the Greek parliament in Athens against the Russian invasion in Ukraine. – AFP

Lady recalls nights of agony, escape

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef



“Everything was normal, although there were some rumours doing rounds, till we heard some blasts nearby and started searching for our flights back”, Anupama Rajashekharan (pictured), a young HR executive, employed in a private company in Kyiv, said sharing her experience before running away from Ukraine.

She secured an express visa from the Sultanate of Oman through a travel agent in the next few hours and boarded the plane to Turkey. And from there to Abu Dhabi and Muscat, and now she’s with her brother in Ibri.

“They were not usual days prior to the bombings. We were all praying that the idea of an imminent war should drop by the parties involved and life gets back to normal”, Anupama, who arrived in the Sultanate of Oman on February 20, said while recollecting her story to the *Observer*.

“There were raids in our hostel, and armed men verified our identity cards and confirmed our nationalities”, she recalls the nights of agony.

All her possessions, dresses, books, and even the laptop given for servicing had to be abandoned while running for life.

“There are still hundreds of people stuck around our place. We could see many innocent

people perplexed not knowing where to go and moving here and there as many were homeless as well”, adds Anupama.

Reaching out over the phone to some expatriates in Kyiv who were stuck within the four walls of their flats, some of them said they didn’t know when they could move out.

“We are clueless if we can survive for more days. Provisions are fast depleting, and going to the airport to catch any relief flight to the homeland is beyond question as there are armed men guarding the roads”, Prince, another employee from his besieged flat in Marshala Rokossov’s koho Ave, Kyiv adds.

Fares for the flights that left Kyiv just before the bombings were equivalent to as high as RO 500 and the like but fearing the imminent anarchy, she had to buy the ticket to leave the place.

“Seeing the disasters in front of our eyes, the only prayer is that no more wars should happen on earth as losses and destruction can only lead to depression and damage to humanity”, prayed Anupama.

Egypt calls for Arab League meeting

CAIRO: Egypt on Sunday called for a crisis Arab League meeting to discuss Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a brief statement that Cairo had called for an emergency meeting at the level of the pan-Arab organization’s delegates to discuss developments in Ukraine.

No specific date has been suggested. Egypt said on Thursday it was extremely concerned about the situation in Ukraine and urged “dialogue and diplomatic solutions” to resolve the crisis.

Several Arab countries including Egypt depend on Russia and Ukraine to cover their wheat needs. The UAE called for a political solution to the Ukraine-Russian conflict.

Pope condemns warmongers

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis made an impassioned call for humanitarian corridors to help refugees leave Ukraine and said those who make war should not be deluded into thinking that God is on their side.

As some in his audience in St Peter’s Square held large Ukrainian flags, Francis said his “heart is broken” and invited people to take part in an international day of prayer and fasting for peace which he has called for Ash Wednesday, March 2.

“Those who make war forget humanity. It does not come from the people”, he said from the window of the papal library overlooking the square.

“They don’t consider the everyday lives of people but put partisan interests before everything and trust in the diabolic and perverse logic of weapons, which is the furthest thing from God’s mind.”

Germany, Austria offer free train rides

BERLIN: Germany’s rail operator said it will offer free train rides from Sunday to Ukrainian refugees travelling into the country from Poland. Up to six trains are running daily from Poland to Germany at the moment, Deutsche Bahn said, but it was preparing to increase that capacity “at short notice”.

Also on Sunday neighbouring Austria announced that its state railway company OeBB would offer free travel to those escaping the conflict. — Agencies

Connecting to your inner wisdom



Hyesha Barrett
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The writer is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat. She is affiliated with the Whispers of Serenity Clinic

To return to our inner knowledge is where true self love, intuition and inner wisdom stems from. Being with the all encompassing energy of one self is where the beginning of existence lies.

Unfortunately, due to our desire to do “good” by others and to make others happy, our own light gets dimmed and most of us don’t regain the same inner peace we were born with.

We were all born from light, divine light which is source energy. An inner knowing, strongly attached to our intuition.

As children we don’t hold back, we show our true colours, we are not afraid to be ourselves, to make mistakes, to learn and grow.

As we mature, somewhere throughout our upbringing, we learn behaviours and patterns of limiting habits, mostly from caring parents who passed on their own habits, which they themselves carried on from their parents.

We were told to sit a certain way, act a certain way, behave a certain way, think a certain way, not to

say particular nor peculiar things and we were often criticised for behaving out of the norm, which didn’t correlate with the standards imposed on us.

In turn, we stopped listening to our own inner guidance which truthfully illuminates the pathway. In essence we were directed, even dictated on how to think and even feel, in order to fit into others comfort zones and not to step out of line.

Hence our beautiful limitless love and light easily got dimmed as we could potentially offend people – the very same people who are indeed dealing with their own insecurities, self-doubts, challenges and woes.

Abiding by what is expected of us is to a degree necessary in order to assure and ensure our safety among the tribe.

In the olden days, those who didn’t were ostracised. So it comes with natural progression to follow what we have learnt from our loved ones, that when we do something a bit different, the repercussions

could potentially affect us negatively. However, when we are too indoctrinated and scared to disrupt the status quo, this results in us dismissing our intuition and in turn listening to self. Unfortunately, with that inevitably follows a lot of inner criticism.

IN THIS 21ST CENTURY, IT’S ALL ABOUT CHANGE AND TRYING NEW THINGS. BEING AT CHOICE IS WHERE WE MUST RETURN TO

Come today, the generation of pattern disruptors. Gone are the days of having one job and sticking with it throughout our whole lives.

In this 21st century, it’s all about change and trying new things. Being at choice is where we must return to. Committing to yourself. Holding compassion and being contented with saying “no” to things

that don’t serve you. It is redefining and redesigning all that which is not in alignment with what your soul merits. Maintaining that we are the makers of our own destiny, by not simply allowing things to happen to us but for us, that’s when the spark of empowerment and enlightenment will illuminate our pathway to what we are meant to do on this earth.

Setting boundaries of what feels comfortable to you, taking care of yourself and your needs, holding compassion for the days where you feel low and just need some time to relax, repose and regenerate.

From this energy you will be able to deeply reconnect with your inner wisdom, intuition and guidance.

As with any muscle, when worked on, it strengthens. Over time this will give you that required space needed to fulfill your happiness in whichever form it presents itself.

Coming back to self means opening wide to the concept that we can have our cake and eat it too. We can be all that we wish to

be. No judgement, no criticism, no cynicism, just pure trust.

So, I invite you to take the time to assess the core values that support your growth. Then flow with them, with the least amount of deviation possible.

I implore you to explore the beautiful, endless, boundless possibilities which create that limitless, expansive all encompassing joy that can only be felt from the inside out.

Your energy will shift, your mindset will expand and most importantly your body will return to listening to itself and drown out the noise of exterior distractions.

Here’s to celebrating you and your victories. Connecting to your truth will guarantee you a much more fulfilling life.

We are always thankful and grateful for the lessons passed on from older generations and adding our own twist can only enhance our mental and emotional well-being. I salute you in all your glory and wish you every success in finding your inner wisdom again.

Stranded students desperate to go home

FRANCOISE KADRI

Thousands of young Arabs who took up studies in Ukraine, often fleeing violence back home, are appealing to be rescued from a new nightmare — Russia’s full scale invasion of the country. More than 10,000 Arab students attend university in Ukraine, drawn to the former Soviet republic by a low cost of living and for many, the lure of relative safety compared with their own troubled homelands.

Many have criticised their governments for failing to take concrete measures to repatriate them and sought refuge in basements or the metro system. Few dared to cross the border into neighbouring Poland or Romania in search of sanctuary.

“We left Iraq to escape war... but it’s the same thing in Ukraine (now),” Ali Mohammed, an Iraqi student said by telephone from the western city of Chernivtsi. Mohammed said he has been calling the Iraqi embassy in Kyiv around a dozen times a day since Russia launched the invasion but no one has picked up.

“We are demanding to go home. We are waiting to be rescued,” he said. According to an Iraqi government official, there are 5,500 Iraqis in Ukraine, 450 of them students. Syrian Raed Al Moudaress, 24, echoed him.

“I arrived in Odessa only six months ago, hoping to open a new page far away from war,” he said by telephone. “I am lost. I don’t know what to do,” he said, adding he is spending most of his time hiding in a basement. Among Arab countries, Morocco has the largest number of students in Ukraine, with around 8,000 enrolled in universities, followed by Egypt with more than 3,000. “We demand solutions. The authorities must find us a solution,” to get back home to Morocco, Majda tweeted when the invasion began. “What are you waiting for? This is World War III,” she said, addressing authorities in her country, who announced measures the following day. Hundreds of students from Lebanon, gripped by a financial crisis the World Bank says is one of the world’s worst in modern times, are also trapped in the country. “The (Beirut) authorities have not issued guidelines” for our evacuation, said Samir, 25. —AFP

For some Americans, Ukraine’s fight feels close to home

RUTH GRAHAM, ELIZABETH DIAS, MIRIAM JORDAN & KAREN ZRAICK

They refreshed their newsfeeds and prayed. They tried to sleep and didn’t. Some feared for loved ones they worried over by name. Others felt the conflict in Ukraine filtered through their own experiences, shifting their plans and their sense of stability.

For many Americans, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine this past week was appalling but abstract: a violent but far-off clash whose heart-rending images and geopolitical implications could be made to disappear with the closing of a screen or the click of a remote.

But others across the United States watched with an intimate sense of foreboding. Their families and friends, memories and hopes are bound up in different ways with the country whose capital was being rocked by missile strikes.

In Parma, Ohio, it is the first thing the Very Rev John Nakonachny thinks of each morning, he said. He recalled a young woman attending services at his church, St Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral, who was in such shock and sadness for her parents in Ukraine that she could barely speak.

He remains appalled by the idea of Orthodox Christians being forced into battle against one another. Other vantage points awakened strains of unease: A Taiwanese American family in Atlanta felt anxious about what the invasion meant for their future. A North Carolina father wondered about the fate of his adopted daughter’s unknown siblings. And a 100-year-old Holocaust survivor in Texas was transported back to her own ordeal fleeing Poland.

Ruth Salton, 100, who watches CNN and reads the newspaper every



Sheryl Chen and Doug Weinstein with their son near their home in Dunwoody.

morning on her iPad, has watched with alarm as familiar images appear on the screens: civilians fleeing their homes, separating from their families, running in the streets.

Salton, who is Jewish, fled her home in Poland in 1939 and eventually landed in a remote labour camp in Siberia, where she performed hard labour for a year. She made her way to the United States and now lives in suburban Dallas with her daughter’s family. “I feel for them, I hurt for them and I exactly know how they feel,” Salton said. “We were running, we were on trains, it was the same thing. You do not know how it feels when you have to run and to be afraid. The worst thing in life is not death; it’s being frightened.” Putin has pledged to “denazify” Ukraine, a move that has been criticised as an attempt to justify his attack on Ukraine’s democratically elected government. Salton’s daughter is the founding president of

Congregation Beth, the synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, where a gunman took four hostages last month. Salton was not in the synagogue that day but attended services on the eve of her 100th birthday — less than a week after the hostage situation.

“I think the whole world should stand up and fight for freedom,” she said. “If we don’t help them, who will?” In North Carolina, Glenn Jonas recalled the emotional three weeks he spent in Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital and Odessa in 2001, when he and his wife and their 5-year-old daughter travelled to the country to adopt their younger daughter, Gracie. The infant was living in an orphanage and weighed only about 7 pounds at 3 months old, he said. The orphanage director placed the little girl in Jonas’ arms first and it was “love at first sight,” he said. “I’m not a person who believes in destiny, but I do have a sense of God’s plan.”

— The New York Times

A tribute to all teachers



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

others in first grade of school. Overall, students initiate their journey of life with teachers since the early years of childhood.

All teachers are admirable and great. They always leave no stone unturned to feed students with knowledge; enlighten them with various life experiences and necessities throughout the school years. They are teachers of life as being not merely teachers, but fathers, brothers and friends for the students. Likewise, female teachers stand as mothers, sisters and friends for the girl students as well. Teachers' role and goodwill are beyond just teaching and transforming knowledge.

They devotedly teach and benevolently raise students since childhood to make out of them good citizens who contribute in serving the nation through various walks of life. As a matter of fact,

OBSERVING
TEACHER'S DAY
ON FEBRUARY
24 EVERY YEAR
MARKS THE TIME
TO ACKNOWLEDGE
THE COMMENDABLE
DEDICATION
OF TEACHERS
TOWARDS THEIR
STUDENTS

still etching in our memory for they were unique. Perhaps, those teachers could influence our thinking in one way or another. Thus, today, we recall their inspiration that influenced our mental and spiritual growth. A teacher continues to impact a student's life far after the student has graduated. The teacher's influence works on a subconscious level, constantly shaping the personality of the student, directly or indirectly.

Certainly, everyone one of us has his unforgettable stories with teachers and school days in general. Some of these were hard stories or incidents that we experienced decades of years back. However, both the tough and easy experiences were useful ways of learning; with no pain no gain. Learning and achieving dreams have never been easy! It has been said that a teacher's purpose is not to create students in his own image, but to develop students who can create their own image.

Teaching is the core of every other profession as without teachers in all educational institutions, there will be no other professions. All those pilots, engineers, doctors and others were students someday and had been taught by teachers at schools, colleges and universities so they became what they are today. Without the teachers' encouragement and support, students' dreams would have never become true.

Therefore, observing the Teacher's Day, February 24 every year, marks the time to acknowledge the commendable dedication of teachers towards their students. At such moments of celebrations, our feelings deep down in our hearts are filled with happiness and thankfulness to our teachers. We highly appreciate the sacrifice of time and efforts they made for us. May Allah bless all teachers.

This occasion brings the time to show our all as society, students and parents our gratitude and appreciation and express sincere tribute and gratitude to all teachers for their efforts, devotion and sacrifices. Teachers spared no efforts to teach each and every student who are today serving the nation in different fields. That is all because of teachers; they made citizens handling various positions starting from leaders and decision-makers, ministers, businessmen to other ordinary employees. Dear teachers, in teaching you cannot see the fruit of a day's work. It is invisible and remains so, maybe for twenty years. A teacher takes a hand, opens a mind, and touches a heart. Thus, never give up on your students.

Undoubtedly, teachers all over the world play a very essential and influential role in everyone's life. Regardless how a teacher is, he or she could always make a difference. For students as an example, teachers make a significant contribution in shaping students personalities and attitudes towards life. Some children start their company with teachers at the kindergarten while

teachers are serving the children more than parents do! A teacher is like a candle; it consumes itself to light the way for others.

For many students, their dreams begin with a teacher who believes in them, who pulls, pushes and leads them to the next step in life.

Looking back at our school days, there are some teachers



FOR PEACE

Protesters crowd around the victory column and close to the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin to demonstrate for peace in Ukraine on Sunday. More than 100,000 people turned up at the march in solidarity with Ukraine, police said, with many protesters dressed in the blue and yellow colours of the Ukraine flag. — AFP



William A Haseltine

The author is a scientist, biotech entrepreneur, and infectious disease expert, is Chair and President of the global health think-tank ACCESS Health International

Could the Covid-19 virus evade the vaccines?

It is now well known that Sars-CoV-2 can mutate to evade vaccine protection against infection. The Omicron variants — BA.1, B.1.1, and BA.2 — can infect those who were previously infected by other variants, even when vaccinated. And though a third booster shot offers some protection from an Omicron infection, it wanes after three or four months, leaving most people susceptible to reinfection. That said, the immunity conveyed by prior infection or vaccination still dramatically reduces the incidence of hospitalisation and death.

We also have come to realise that our main saviours against Covid-19 turn out not to be antibodies, but rather another part of the immune system: our T cells. Studies show that the strength of our long-lived T-cell response to Sars-CoV-2 proteins — especially by T cells that recognise the virus spike protein — strongly correlates with the degree of protection.

There are two types of T cells, CD4+ and CD8+, which are distinguished by proteins on their surface. Because CD4+ T cells mostly assist in the production of antibodies, the CD8+ T cells are the real heroes of the story. Once they identify an invader they remember from a previous encounter, they act quickly to move in for the kill, demolishing infected cells and cutting short the life cycle of the virus.

Until Omicron, the differences in neutralisation by vaccine-induced antibodies and by monoclonal antibodies were relatively minor. But the process by which T cells recognise viral proteins is very different from that of antibodies, which recognise structures on the intact viral protein. We know that these critical structures, particularly those of the exterior spike protein, differ from variant to variant. It is precisely such structural diversity that allows the virus to evade most antibodies made in response to natural infection and vaccination.

By contrast, our T cells do not recognise intact proteins. Rather, T-cell recognition

occurs when a viral protein within a cell is chopped into short segments and cradled in the grip of a cellular protein called MHC type 1. MHC type 1 presents the viral fragment to the T cell at the cell surface, where the T cell can recognize the combination of the viral fragment presented by the MHC type 1 protein.

THOUGH A THIRD BOOSTER
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All told, T cells recognise and react to a very broad array of viral protein fragments. For Sars-CoV-2, these fragments overlap very little with the regions of the virus that are sensitive to neutralisation by antibodies. That is why T-cell responses to viral infection are generally preserved across variants. Until Omicron, vaccines that use one viral protein raised almost the same T-cell response to all variants. But now the situation has changed. Not everyone is alike when it comes to binding viral protein fragments. Our MHC type 1 proteins are diverse, and each recognises a unique set of viral protein fragments. Our reaction to viral proteins thus depends on their sequence and that of our own particular MHC type 1 set of proteins.

Consider a recent study by Gaurav D Gaiha and his colleagues, who examined T-cell responses to the Wuhan, Delta, and Omicron strains in people who have been either infected, vaccinated, and boosted, or infected and vaccinated (but not boosted). They found that most people who are infected after vaccination have strong and durable CD4+- and CD8+-positive responses to all three variants.

But there was one worrying discovery. Approximately 20 per cent of those vaccinated showed a decline of greater than 50 per cent in T-cell response to Omicron, compared to the Wuhan and Delta variants; and in some the decline was even more profound. These poor T-cell responses were not correlated with sex or age, and follow-up experiments revealed that the difference was due to lower CD8+ reactivity, rather than to the CD4+ T-cell response.

The authors therefore refined the analysis by examining T cells' ability to recognise specific fragments of viral proteins. To that end, they used a set of short protein fragments to recreate the entire spike protein, and they used a similar set of protein fragments corresponding to the virus's other structural proteins. They found that whereas T cells recognised all the viral fragments of the spike protein used for vaccination, they failed to recognise some of the protein fragments.

The authors thus speculate that CD8+ T cells' inability to respond to Omicron may be due to a lack of recognition of the mutated peptides. Indeed, their theoretical calculations are consistent with the hypothesis that changes in the amino acid sequence of the Omicron spike protein underlie the observed blind spots in T-cell recognition. Inherited differences in the ability to recognise specific protein fragments likely account for some people's failure to mount anti-Omicron defenses. The authors have conjectured that "it is possible that these individuals will have reduced protection against severe disease."

One sobering conclusion, then, is that Omicron has drifted so far from the original strain that the 20 per cent cohort in the study may not be fully protected either from infection or from hospitalisation and death. However, after finding that a third vaccine dose increases T-cell responses by twentyfold or more, even for those who respond poorly, Gaiha has a more optimistic take.

"While the Omicron spike protein was able to escape T cells in a subset of individuals," he told me, "what we learned is that this deficiency in T-cell recognition can be overcome by booster vaccination. In addition, we found that non-spike proteins could be attractive targets for second-generation vaccines to protect against future Sars-CoV-2 evolution."

Gaiha espouses the optimistic interpretation. But Omicron is a warning that future Sars-CoV-2 variants may escape protection from both antibodies and T-cell immunity. We cannot predict that a variant that evades vaccines' ability to protect against infection and serious illness will arise, but we must be prepared for such a threat, lest we remain unguarded against it.



A man walks past a government advertisement encouraging the public to take all three doses of Covid-19 coronavirus vaccine in Hong Kong. — AFP

sport

OMAR AL RASHDI,
ISAM AL BUSAIDY
BOOK SLOTS FOR
UTAH WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 27

Olivier Godart of Luxembourg emerged the men's champion as top international triathlon Ironman 70.3 was back in Oman after a gap of one year for the third edition at the weekend.

In the women's section, Lizi Brooke of Great Britain bagged the honours.

Ironman 70.3 Oman 2022 concluded with cheers for the hosts as local triathletes Omar al Rashdi and Isam al Busaidy qualifying for the Ironman 70.3 World Championship in Utah 2022.

Omar finished third in the 18-24 category in 05:51:23 while Isam completed the race in 05:05:54 and taking the 19th spot in 30-34 category.

The top-three athletes in each category qualifies for the World Championship provided they had opted for the chance.

Hashim al Farsi was the best Omani finisher by clocking 04:40:09 to take 37th position overall in the field of 316 participants who competed in the 1.9 km swimming, 90 km biking and 21.2 km run.

Mohammed al Obaidani, Race Director and Chief Executive Officer of Triathlon Middle East, said he was satisfied to stage the iconic event after missing the 2021 edition over Covid-19.

"We are really happy to see the mega event back in Oman during these difficult period. It was a satisfying effort under the challenges of the pandemic," Al Obaidani told the *Observer*.

Supported by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the iconic triathlon event had established its foot print in the Sultanate of Oman.

Godart completed the top triathlon event in 3 hours 55 minutes and 48 seconds to take the top position in Ironman.

Italy's Alessio Rispoli claimed the second spot in 04:06:54 and David Hynes (GBR) finished third in 04:10:17.

In women's section, Brooke made the top finish in 04:27:51 followed by Brazil's Flavia Meyer (04:46:08) and Great Britain's Daisy Baker (04:47:45) in second and third spots respectively.

In the team section, TriDubai ended top with home team Oman Triathlon second and Trilife.ru taking third spot.

The event kicked off in the presence of Maithaa bint Saif al Mahrouqiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism.

IRONMAN 70.3 SALALAH

Al Obaidani said now the eyes are on the Ironman 70.3 in Salalah to be held on September 24 this year.

"Last year, we couldn't hold our Muscat and Salalah editions of Ironman 70.3. After hosting the event in Muscat, now we are confident to stage the top triathlon in Salalah in September."

The Oman Triathlon Committee official said the organisers hope to attract more athletes for the Salalah edition.

"We hope more athletes will register for the Salalah event as the countries around the world are slowly coming back to normal after the pandemic effect."



GODART, BROOKE GRAB IRONMAN 70.3 CROWNS



IRONMAN 70.3 OMAN 2022 RESULTS

MEN (OVERALL)

1. Olivier Godart (Luxembourg) 03:55:48
2. Alessio Rispoli (Italy) 04:06:54
3. David Hynes (Great Britain) 04:10:17

WOMEN (OVERALL)

1. Lizi Brooke (Great Britain) 04:27:51
2. Flavia Meyer (Brazil) 04:46:08
3. Daisy Baker (Great Britain) 04:47:45

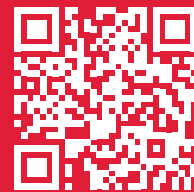
TEAM RELAY

1. Team Abu Dhabi Police (UAE) 03:50:46
2. Team Cyclekom (GBR) 04:04:01
3. Team Triathlon School World Class (OMA) 04:10:38

TRICLUBS

1. TriDubai
2. Oman Triathlon
3. Trilife.ru

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GGI organises 5x5 basketball tournament

MUSCAT: The Grand Global Investment (GGI) Company is holding a 5x5 basketball tournament with the participation of 18 elite teams from the Filipino community.

The tournament, being held in cooperation with the Oman Basketball Association, began on January 21 and will continue till March end.

The tournament was inaugurated by Dr Mohammad bin Humaid al Alawi, Director of Financial and Administrative Affairs at Jaalan Bani Bu Ali Hospital, in presence of Ali bin Humaid al Alawi, Chairman of GGI and Manuel Allan Minoza, general supervisor of the tournament.

Chief organiser of the tournament, Ali al Alawi said the tournament comes as part of Grand Global Investment Company's social responsibility programmes.

"The Grand Global Investment Company wants to promote healthy lifestyle habits among the citizens and the residents by organising various sports activities."

"The basketball tournament aims to promote the game in association with the Oman Basketball Association. We are also promoting the game by live broadcasting of international basketball tournaments in tie-up with world basketball body FIBA on the company's website

and social media platforms," Al Alawi said.

"Through these social responsibility initiatives by encouraging basketball for citizens and residents in the Sultanate, we aim to contribute in raising the standard of Oman national teams internationally and develop quality basketball players as well."

"More than 10 national and Filipino teams participated in our competition, which was supervised by the technical expert of the Oman Basketball Association and the general supervisor of the tournament, Allan Minoza," the GGI chief added.

During the pandemic period also, GGI organized a 3x3 basketball tournament on February 26, 2021 for citizens and the Filipino community, supporting the participating teams and related people in the difficult times.

From January to February 2020, the company held a football tournament for Omanis, in which six sports teams participated, including the junior, youth and Olympic teams of the Fulaj club and youth teams of the Al Wahda Sports Club in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali. They were divided into two groups and more than 100 players participated in the tournament.



Dr Mohammad al Alawi



Ali bin Humaid al Alawi



Manuel Allan Minoza

IYER LEADS INDIA TO T20I SERIES WIN OVER LANKA

DHARAMSALA, India: Shreyas Iyer smashed an unbeaten 74 as India hammered Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the second Twenty20 international to clinch the series on Saturday.

Chasing 184 for victory, Iyer led the batting charge, putting on an unbeaten 58-run stand with Ravindra Jadeja, who hit 45 off 18 balls, to take the team home with 17 balls to spare in the Himalayan hill town of Dharamsala.

India took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series with their 11th successive T20 victory and a seventh straight series win at home.

India lost skipper Rohit Sharma for one off Dushantha Chameera in the first over of their chase.

Ishan Kishan survived a nasty blow on the helmet by a short ball from Lahiru Kumara but the bowler soon got the left-handed opener out for 16.

Iyer kept up the attack on the bowlers and soon got company from Sanju Samson, who emerged from a slow start to hit 39 off 25 balls and the duo put on 84 runs off 47 deliveries.

Iyer hit Chamika Karunaratne for a six to reach his second successive half-century and finished with six fours and four sixes in his 44-ball knock.

Samson smashed Kumara for a four and three sixes but fell on the final delivery of the over as Binura Fernando pulled off a stunning one-handed catch at short third-man.

But the hosts had seized the momentum and the left-handed Jadeja joined the onslaught to complete the chase with ease.



Earlier Sri Lanka were in trouble at 102-4 after being put into bat before Pathum Nissanka, who made 75 and captain Dasun Shanaka, who hit an unbeaten 47 off 19 balls, helped the team reach 183-5.

The pair put on 58 in 26 deliveries as Sri Lanka smashed 72 runs from the final four overs and Shanaka finished off the innings with his fifth six.

The Sri Lankan openers started cautiously as they scored just 15 runs from the first four overs before Nissanka and Danushka Gunathilaka, who made 38, took

on the bowlers.

Sri Lanka lost four wickets, but Nissanka stood firm to raise his fifty in 43 balls and found

company in Shanaka to take on the Indian bowlers.

The final match is on Sunday at the same venue. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA	INDIA
P Nissanka lbw Kumar.....75	R Sharma b Chameera.....1
D Gunathilaka c V Iyer b Jadeja.....38	I Kishan c Shanaka b Kumara.....16
C Asalanka lbw Chahal.....2	S Iyer (not out).....74
K Mishara c S Iyer b Patel.....1	S Samson c Fernando b Kumara.....39
D Chandimal c Sharma b Bumrah.....9	R Jadeja (not out).....45
D Shanaka (not out).....47	Extras (LB-2, NB-1, W-8).....11
C Karunaratne (not out).....0	Total (For 3 wks, 17.1 overs)..... 186
Extras (LB-7, W-4).....11	Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-44, 3-128
Total (For 5 wks, 20 overs)..... 183	Bowling: Chameera 3.1-0-39-1, Fernando 4-0-47-0, Kumara 3-0-31-2, Jayawickrama 2-0-19-0, Karunaratne 3-0-24-0, Shanaka 2-0-24-0
Fall of wickets: 1-67, 2-71, 3-76, 4-102, 5-160	
Bowling: Kumar 4-0-36-1, Bumrah 4-0-24-1, Patel 4-0-52-1, Chahal 4-0-27-1, Jadeja 4-0-37-1	

South Africa in control of second Test

CHRISTCHURCH: All-rounder Colin de Grandhomme struck a belligerent half-century to steady New Zealand in the second test on Saturday after South Africa's seamers torched the home side's top order during a see-sawing day two in Christchurch.

New Zealand were under pressure at 157 for five at stumps, still 207 runs short of South Africa's first innings total of 364.

De Grandhomme was 54 not out and Daryl Mitchell on 29, their unbroken 66-run partnership having halted South Africa's march on a chilly, overcast day at Hagley Oval. "South Africa batted really well on a tough wicket," Mitchell told reporters.

"For us now it's about trying to put pressure back on them and see what happens tomorrow."

The Proteas, 1-0 down in the series, lost all three of their reviews seeking extra wickets but would be well pleased with their work.

Pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada grabbed three wickets and Marco Jansen two, the pair rattling through New Zealand's top order after South Africa were bowled out before tea.

"Tomorrow we're just going to



Kagiso Rabada



Marco Jansen

go hard, try to make them play as much as possible and try to force them to make a mistake because it is quite a good batting wicket," said Jansen.

"The plan for tomorrow is just to be as tight as possible."

Rabada quickly removed both New Zealand's openers, with skipper Tom Latham caught down the leg-side for a duck and Will Young nicking behind for three.

Jansen reduced New Zealand to 51 for three, having Devon Conway caught behind for 16.

Mitchell lived dangerously through his 78 balls, surviving two lbw reviews off the bowling of all-rounder Wiaan Mulder and a third in the final overs off third seamer Lutho Sipamla.

In-form batsman Henry Nicholls scored a fluent 39 for New

Zealand but trudged off ruefully after hitting Jansen straight to a trap at backward point.

Wicketkeeper Tom Blundell became Rabada's third victim when bowled for six.

South Africa started the day in a position of strength at 238 for three but lost four wickets in the morning, the spoils shared by Neil Wagner and Matt Henry.

It took tailenders Jansen (37 not out) and Keshav Maharaj (36) to wrest back the momentum with a valiant 62-run partnership for the ninth wicket before New Zealand's towering pacer Kyle Jamieson wrapped up the innings.

Wagner finished the pick of New Zealand's bowlers with 4-102, dismissing Rassie van der Dussen (35) and all-rounder

Wiaan Mulder (14) in the morning. New Zealand, who thrashed the Proteas by an innings and 276 runs in the first meeting in Christchurch last week, need only draw the match to claim their first ever series win over South Africa.

— Reuters

SCOREBOARD

South Africa first innings (0/n: 238/3):
D Elgar b Southee.....41
S Erwee c Blundell b Henry.....108
A Markram c Mitchell b Wagner.....42
R van der Dussen c Mitchell b Wagner.....35
T Bavuma b Henry.....29
K Verreynne c Latham b Henry.....4
W Mulder c Blundell b Wagner.....14
M Jansen (not out).....37
K Rabada c Mitchell b Wagner.....6
K Maharaj c Nicholls b Jamieson.....36
L Sipamla c Southee b Jamieson.....0
Extras (LB-7, W-1, NB-4).....12
Total (all out, 133 overs)..... 364
Fall of wickets: 1-111, 2-199, 3-199, 4-257, 5-261, 6-277, 7-296, 8-302, 9-364
Bowling: Southee 32-11-75-1, Henry 35-10-90-3, Jamieson 27-10-74-2, De Grandhomme 8-3-16-0, Wagner 31-10-102-4
New Zealand first innings:
T Latham c Verreynne b Rabada.....0
W Young c Verreynne b Rabada.....3
D Conway c Verreynne b Jansen.....16
H Nicholls c Erwee b Jansen.....39
D Mitchell (not out).....29
T Blundell b Rabada.....6
C de Grandhomme (not out).....54
Extras (LB-6, W-2, NB-2).....10
Total (For 5 wks, 45 overs)..... 157
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-9, 3-51, 4-83, 5-91
Bowling: Rabada 12-2-37-3, Jansen 12-2-48-2, Sipamla 11-4-34-0, Mulder 6-2-25-0, Maharaj 4-1-7-0

Shotokan Karate Centre gears up for international event



MUSCAT: Shotokan Karate Centre is completing preparations for holding the 7th Shotokan Karate Centre International Competition under the umbrella of the Oman Karate Committee, which will be hosted by Al Amal Sports Club in Ghala, Muscat Governorate, on March 4.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Humaid al Ghabshi, Wali of Al Amerat, will be the chief guest.

On the tournament and preparations for its establishment, head of the Shotokan Karate Centre, Sensei Navas mokeri said: "This international tournament comes within the centre's annual plans, where 24 clubs, centres and academies practising karate have been registered, represented by 345 male and female players of different age groups and weights."

As Sensei Yousuf al Siyabi, Secretary of Shotokan Karate Centre, stated that what distinguishes this version of the tournament is the participation

of clubs from seven countries: the Sultanate of Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Egypt, Sudan and Iran, which creates friction and competition between the players of the participating clubs and the exchange of experiences in the field of karate.

Regarding the management of the seventh international Competition, Sensei Hilal al Abdali, a member of the Shotokan Karate Centre and head of the referees committee of the Oman Karate Committee, said that the championship, in its seventh edition, will be run by a selection of referees holding international and continental badges, in addition to a group of national and resident referees.

The Shotokan Karate Centre will also hold a lecture for the coaches on the sidelines of the tournament on March 3, in the lecture hall of Al Amal Sports Club to raise some points that the club coaches should follow with their players during the competitions.



Spain's Rafael Nadal wears a traditional Mexican mariachi hat while holding the winner's trophy in Acapulco, Mexico. – AFP

Nadal downs Norrie to claim Acapulco title

ACAPULCO, Mexico: Rafael Nadal continued his perfect start to 2022, beating Cameron Norrie 6-4, 6-4 to lift the Acapulco ATP title in his first tournament since winning the Australian Open.

Nadal needed one hour and 54 minutes to beat Britain's 12th-ranked Norrie for the fourth time in as many career meetings.

"Cameron is a very solid player, he's a tricky player, he makes you feel that you cannot play comfortable against him at all", Nadal said. "I had been going through some very difficult moments in the match."

But the world number five wasn't too unsettled to claim a 91st career victory, and his fourth in Acapulco after wins in 2005, 2013 and 2020.

As he did in 2020, Nadal won this week without dropping a set.

Nadal is undefeated since losing to Lloyd Harris in the third round at Washington on August 5, 2021. He ended his 2021 season after that because of a left foot injury.

He returned to win the

Melbourne Summer Set Australian Open warm-up, then won the Australian Open for a second time to break out of a tie with Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic for most men's Grand Slam singles titles.

His victory over Daniil Medvedev in the Australian Open final was a classic, the Spaniard rallying from two sets down to triumph.

He beat the Russian again in the semifinals on Friday, just a day after Medvedev was assured of rising to number one in the world thanks to Djokovic's early exit at Dubai.

"I'm very pleased", Nadal said of his week's work. "It was a very important title for me, so I can't be happier."

He started strongly against Norrie, putting 89 per cent of his first serves in play in the first set and winning 79 per cent of those points.

Nadal pounced on his first break point in the fifth game of the first set, firing a forehand winner. — AFP

Top draw action starts at WTT Contender Muscat 2022

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 27

The WTT Contender Muscat action started at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Sunday. The preliminary rounds took place in the opening day of the competitions.

For men's singles, Saudi's Abdulaziz Bu Shulaybi defeated Iran's Navid Shamas 3-0 while Singapore's Poh Shao won the match against the Egyptian Omar Ali 3-0.

In the same round, France's Antoine Hanchard managed to win Huang Yan-Cheng from Chinese Taipei 3-2 in a strong clash.

The first ever WTT contender in Muscat boasts of more than 200 paddlers representing 41 countries. The tournament features five categories including singles (men and women), doubles (men, women and mixed).

Jiri Martonko from Czech routed Belgian Eduard Ionescu 3-1 while Tugay from Turkey clinched a 3-0 win over Layan Neumann. Indian Sanil Shetty snatched a 3-1 win over Zihni Sahin.

In the women's singles, Alaa Yehia from Egypt made her first win against Koh Kai from Singapore 3-0 while Turkey's Simay Kulakcen got her campaign with a 3-2 win over Germany's Franziska Schreiner. Spain's Sofia-Xuan Zhang beat Hungary's Mercedes Nagyvaradi 3-2 in a tight clash.

Mohamed Eldawlatly, WTT Event supervisor, thanked Oman's efforts to host and organise this



major TT event.

"This is the first ever WTT Contender in Muscat and I really thanks Oman Table Tennis Association for the hard work has been taken towards organising this major event. Oman had managed and hosted many senior

events in 2019, 2020 and this new edition in 2022. They have enough experience to handle the top class events on the right manner.

"This event registered the participation of many top-class players including many players from China.

"There are many countries which select the events based on the quality, tough competition and the high level facilities provided by the hosting. All these factors and facilities are provided perfectly by the hosts Oman", he ended.

Royal Cavalry claim tent pegging titles

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, FEB 27

The Royal Cavalry bagged the singles and teams titles in the tent pegging championship organised by the Oman Equestrian Federation at Al Rahba race tracks in Barka on Sunday.

In the concluding event of the tent pegging season 2021-22, 71 male and female riders from 18 teams participated from various government cavalry units, equestrian committees and special centres, the Nameer Equestrian School in Saham, the Horse Racing Committee in Al Mudhaibi and the Lejam Equestrian Team in Al Suwaiq.

The closing ceremony was sponsored by Hamoud bin Saeed al Nahdi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Nahdi Real Estate Services, in the presence of Ahmed bin Saif al Abri, Secretary-General and Chairman of the Competitions Committee.

The Royal Cavalry won the teams and singles titles through rider Saif bin Hamoud al Ashkari and the Leem team bagged the city titles for teams and singles through Ali bin Saleh al Balushi, while the Royal Oman Police achieved the women's title through Ghanima bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah.

The tournament included four rounds for teams and individuals.



The first round was to pick up an individual stake with a sword size of 6 cm, the second round was to cut two lemons and pick up an individual stake with a sword size of 4 cm, and the third round was for teams to pick up a picket stake with a sword size of 4 cm, and the fourth round was for teams to pick up a stake with a sword size of 4 cm.

The Royal Cavalry Team won first place in the general teams category through Hamad bin Nasser al Riyami, Hamad bin

Saif al Raisi, Safwan bin Zaid al Maamari and Saif bin Hamoud al Ashkari with 252 points. The Royal Oman Police team won the second place through Marwan bin Yousef al Balushi, Hussain bin Ali al Hosani, Salem bin Khamis al Harthy and Haitham bin Khalfan al Siyabi with 229 points.

The Royal Guard of Oman team claimed third through Rashid bin Hamad al Sawai, Salem bin Sulaiman al Qutaiti, Dhafer bin Rashid al Zaabi and Ali bin Ali bin Hamoud al Rajbi

who earned 227.5 points.

On the general individual category, Ali bin Saleh al Balushi (Leejam) claimed the top spot and second place while ROP's Hussein bin Ali al Hosani finished third.

AL LEEJAM CLAIM CITIES TITLE

In the cities team category, Al Lejam Equestrian Centre won the first place, represented by Ali bin Saleh al Balushi, Humaid bin Saeed al Munuri, Bassam bin Khalil al Balushi and Nasser bin Saif al Hashemi with 212.5 points. The Horse Committee team from Al Mudhaibi was second with riders Sami bin Ali al Haddadi, Saif bin Ali al Jabri, Muhammad bin Amer al Jabri and Saeed al Abroui collecting 195 points. The Al Lejam Equestrian Centre team from Al Suwaiq was third with 165.5 points.

In the individual cities category, Ali bin Saleh al Balushi of the Equestrian team won the first place, Nasser bin Saif al Hashemi (Equestrian Team B) was second and Sami bin Ali al Haddadi from the Horse Committee team from Al Mudhaibi finished third.

In women's section, ROP's Ghanima bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah took the top spot with 49.5 points, Royal Army of Oman riders Turkih bint Mahmoud al Balushiyah was second with 46 points and Amal al Maskari finished third with 26 points.



Al Bashayer camel festival today

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 27

The fifth edition of Al Bashayer Festival for Arab Camel Racing will start on Monday at the Al Bashayer camel racing field in Adam, with a participation of nearly 5,000 camel owners from Oman and GCC countries. The annual camel race will last for six days.

The Department of Al Bashayer Square for Arab Camels has completed the preparations for this festival, which will include 74 races over six days in mornings and evenings.

Prizes in offer are 25 cars, 16 symbols and golden sword.

Accompanying activities will be held during the festival period, including various section with the participation of governmental, private and local people, which are the exhibitions corner, the traditional village corner, the children's village corner, the musical and poetic corner, the scientific tent corner, paragliding and motorcycle shows, traditional weapons shooting competition and others.

The first day of the race is dedicated for young category 'Hagayeg' in 16 races with cash prizes for top 10 places in the morning. In the afternoon there are eight races with car prizes for the first place.





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Germany to step up plans to cut dependence on Russia gas

BERLIN: Germany will make good on plans to build two liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and up its natural gas reserves to cut its dependence on Russian gas after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Sunday.

"We will do more to ensure secure energy supply for our country," he told lawmakers in a special Bundestag session called to address the Ukraine crisis. "We must change course to overcome our dependence on imports from individual energy suppliers."

Germany has been under pressure from other Western nations to become less dependent on Russian gas, but its plans to phase out coal-fired power plants by 2030 and to shut its nuclear power plants have left it with few options.

Earlier this week Germany halted the \$11 billion Nord Stream 2 Baltic Sea gas pipeline project, Europe's most divisive energy project, in response to Russia's actions toward Ukraine. Russia has since invaded Ukraine, prompting the West to slap further sanctions on Moscow and making the energy supply issue even more pressing.

"The events of the past few days have shown us that responsible, forward-looking energy policy is decisive not only for our economy and the environment. It is also decisive for our security," Scholz said on Sunday. The quicker Germany can expand renewable energy generation, the better, he said.

In addition, Germany will increase the volume of natural gas in its storage facilities by 2 billion cubic metres via long-term options and will buy additional natural gas on world markets in coordination with the European Union, he said.

— Reuters



GERMANY HALTED THE \$11 BILLION NORD STREAM 2 BALTIC SEA GAS PIPELINE PROJECT, EUROPE'S MOST DIVISIVE ENERGY PROJECT, IN RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S ACTIONS TOWARD UKRAINE

Pacts signed to support food security projects worth RO 20 million

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 27

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning signed on Sunday a total of 11 agreements for implementation of food security related projects and initiatives valued at around RO 20 million.

Five of the agreements relate to initiatives incubated by under the framework of the Food Security Lab, while the other 6 are land usufruct agreements to set up agricultural projects. These projects will support the agricultural needs of the Sultanate of Oman in a scientific, modern and innovative manner, while complying with food safety and security guidelines.

The agreements cover the production of white and red meat, eggs, vegetables, fruits, hydroponic products and moringa oil, among other products. Those projects will be set up in the governorates of North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, North Al Sharqiyah, South Al Sharqiyah, Al Dhahirah and Musandam.

The agreements were signed by Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning and representatives of the companies implementing the projects, in the presence of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Al Habsi said that those projects cover the fields of agriculture and livestock. He affirmed that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is pressing



ahead in setting up new projects in the field of food security.

Al Habsi added that the projects are considered as the fourth package of projects signed by the ministry to achieve food security in the Sultanate of Oman. As part of its

support for food security initiatives, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is allocated additional land for the cultivation of basic crops, including wheat, in areas of the Nejd desert in Dhofar Governorate.

One of the agreements, signed

with Oman Food Investment Holding Company — a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — entails the establishment of an incubator for entrepreneurs in the Wilayat of Khasab (Musandam Governorate).

Covering an area of 105 acres, the incubator will support various agricultural and livestock projects at a cost of RO 350K.

Local Omani food start-up Tamkeen Investment has been granted 20 acres of land in South Al Batinah Governorate to support the production of 3,000 tonnes of eight different types of vegetables. Also as part of the project, a 2,000-square-metre canning and packaging centre is being established at a cost of over RO 4 million.

(With inputs from ONA)

Squid harvests in the Sultanate of Oman slump 10.7% in 2021

CONSERVATION EFFORTS: Lobster season starts on March 1

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 27

A significant slump in squid production pared the overall contribution of artisanal fishing to the total output of crustaceans and molluscs to 14,878 tonnes during the first 11 months of 2021, down from 16,652 tonnes from the previous year, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The comparative review covers the production of shrimp, lobster and squid, which dipped by 10.7 per cent during the January – November 2021 timeframe, the Centre stated.

Of the total catch 14,878 tonnes last year, lobster made up 1,119 tonnes, shrimp 1,106 tonnes and squid 12,653 tonnes.



According to a report of the Ministry of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources, the total value of the Sultanate of Oman's production of crustaceans and molluscs by the end of November 2021 amounted to RO

24.343 million.

South Al Sharqiyah Governorate accounted for 4,044 tonnes of crustaceans and mollusks, including 178 tonnes of lobster, 243 tonnes of shrimp and 3,623 tonnes of squid, with a total

value of RO 7.336 million.

Al Wusta's contribution totalled 7,037 tonnes, including 550 tonnes of lobster, 862 tonnes of shrimp and 5,625 squid, of a total value of RO 13.397 million.

Dhofar's share was 1,885

tonnes, including 389 tonnes of lobster and 1,496 tonnes of squid, of a total value of RO 3.610 million.

The Ministry of Agricultural and Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources works continuously to develop fish and marine resources, preserve fisheries and protect them from the risks of pollution and depletion, while maintaining the biodiversity of the adjoining seas in cooperation with all components of the fisheries sector and relevant authorities.

The 2022 lobster fishing season starts on March 1 and will continue until the end of May 2022 in line with the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to conserve stocks of key types of fish.

The Ministry has set seasons for catching specific types of fish to manage and protect their stocks from overfishing, especially

during the period of fertilisation and reproduction, to regulate the fishing process, avoid depletion and reduce fishing pressure and balance between stocks and fishing effort.

A season has been set for fishing for shrimp, lobster, abalone and kingfish.

With regard to the Sultanate of Oman's production of squid, its total production until the end of November 2021 amounted to about 10,744 tonnes, compared to 16,561 tonnes in the same period in 2020, where its total value was estimated at about RO 20 million.

It is caught during most months of the year, but the landing quantities begin to increase in the period following the month of June until it reaches high levels in the last quarter of each year, reaching its peak in September and October and sometimes extending to January.

(With inputs from ONA)

Bank Muscat wins Citibank STP award

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, was recently recognised by the New York headquartered multinational banking giant, Citibank, for its operational excellence in the field of dollar payments processing.

Bank Muscat won the straight-through-processing (STP) award from Citibank for outstanding performance in dollar-denominated fund transfers in both Commercial payments and Treasury payments.

The award recognised Bank Muscat's exceptional quality of SWIFT messages on dollar payments and maintaining an outstanding error-free rate for remittances.

The award was based on evaluation of the quality and accuracy of SWIFT payment messages routed through Citibank, which was above 98 per cent for treasury payments and above 95 per cent for commercial payments. Citibank is among Bank Muscat's most prominent correspondent banks for dollar payments.

Zuwaina bint Abdullah al



Sharji, Assistant General Manager — Central Operations & Change Management, Bank Muscat, said: "We are delighted to win this award once again, which affirms Bank Muscat's commitment to meeting the highest standards of quality in fund transfers. The

bank's exceptional quality in the delivery of commercial payments and transfers, facilitated by a state-of-the-art in-house payment architecture, helps to consistently maintain high SWIFT standards for automated processing throughout the payment chain

and this is backed by our highly customer-centric services."

Citibank representatives commended the operational teams involved in processing dollar payments at Bank Muscat for the error-free rate, which was maintained consistently

throughout the year.

With emphasis on multiple channels and new products that cater to different sectors, the bank is focused on maintaining its leadership in offering cutting-edge products and services, including electronic payment and online services.

Bank Muscat's customer-centric vision and the adoption of global best practices have resulted in numerous accolades in the past.

The bank's performance has been consistently lauded by the international financial and banking community for decades, with the bank winning similar awards from Wells Fargo, Standard Chartered and JP Morgan in the past. Bank Muscat was also recognised as one of the "Top 100 Companies in the Middle East" and as one of the "Top 50 banks in the Region" by Forbes Middle East in 2021.

It also won a number of awards from prestigious international publications like Global Finance, Euromoney, The Banker and EMEA Finance for its different lines of business in the recent past.

Oman Oil Marketing appoints new CEO



MUSCAT: Oman Oil Marketing Company (omanoil), one of the largest fuel marketing companies in the Sultanate of Oman — and a subsidiary of OQ Group, has announced the appointment of Tariq bin Mohammed al Junaidi (**pictured**) as the Chief Executive Officer with effect from March 2, 2022.

Tariq holds a Master's in Business Administration from Nanyang Technological University, an Executive MBA in Shipping Offshore and Finance from BI Norwegian Business School, and an MBA from the University of Western Australia.

He joins Oman Oil Marketing with over 22 years of progressive experience in different fields, the company said in a filing to the Capital Market Authority.

BankDhofar receives STP excellence award from Citibank



MUSCAT: In recognition of its outstanding performance in the execution of commercial and financial payments in US dollars, BankDhofar has received the 'Straight-Through-Processing (STP) Excellence Award' from Citibank.

The award was handed over to Bashir bin Said al Subhi, AGM & Head of Treasury, FI & Investments, at BankDhofar's premises, and was attended by BankDhofar's executive team members and representative from Citibank.

Bashir bin Said al Subhi, AGM & Head of Treasury, FI & Investments at BankDhofar said, on receiving the award: "BankDhofar has always committed to offer best customers experience, and we are proud to receive such a prestigious award from a leading international bank that recognises our dedication towards achieving the highest STP rates. The award is a testament of our efforts to meet global standards concerning international payments in US dollars."

Citibank presents the STP Award annually to financial institutions that showcase exceptional quality and meets the highest global standards

for automatic processing of international payments.

BankDhofar is presented with this recognition for automatic processing of international payments in US dollars. BankDhofar continues to provide the best customer experience, innovative products and creative services that are custom-made to meet the needs and requirements of our customers.

The combination of the thorough vision of the bank's executive management, the comprehensive operational strategy that revolves around following best international banking practices and providing best customer experience, as well as the commitment to community development and contribution to the growth of the national economy, placed BankDhofar on top of the list of best banks in the region.

To learn more, check out BankDhofar pages on social media: Facebook (www.facebook.com/BankDhofar), Twitter ([@BankDhofar](https://twitter.com/BankDhofar)), Instagram (www.instagram.com/BankDhofar), or visit the official website www.BankDhofar.com or contact the call 24/7 Customer Engagement Hub on (+968) 24791111 for inquiries.

Lulu announces winners of Mom & Me promotion

MUSCAT: Lulu Oman announced the winners of its Mom & Me promotion, which was held across all its branches in the Sultanate of Oman. The promotion, which was organised from January 20, 2022 to February 5, 2022, featured an extensive range of best maternity and baby products at affordable prices.

The winners were selected through an e-raffle draw held at Lulu Bausher on February 16, 2022. Fifty shoppers won Lulu shoppinggift card worth RO 100; 50 others received Lulu shoppinggift card worth RO 50; and 100 customers took home Lulu shoppinggift card worth RO 25.

Customers purchasing cosmetics and selected baby needs products worth RO 5 or more at any of the Lulu outlets in Oman or through Online shopping



were eligible to participate in the e-raffle draw.

Speaking about the promotion, Shabeer K A, Regional Director — Lulu Hypermarkets, Oman, stated, "We congratulate all the winners of the Mom &

Me promotion. We have been organising this promotion every year to offer parents the best products from renowned brands that are finest in terms of safety and quality.

He remarked, "It's obvious

that becoming a parent can be expensive.

From strollers to diapers, the cost of baby products often requires new parents to take a hard look at their budgets. Through this promotion, we offer our shoppers of the best deals on maternity, baby and parenting products that will help make life easier and more affordable."

Lulu hypermarkets have always set the best example of how to provide customers with the best shopping experience and maximum value for money. The hypermarket takes pride in catering to every need of its customers at every season. The special offers and exclusive seasonal promotions are part of Lulu hypermarket's initiative to continuously bring the best of the world to their customers

Own the dependable Toyota Hilux with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: The rugged, inspiring and tough Toyota Hilux is now even easy to own with exclusive benefits. The benefits include service 2 years / 20,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and 1 year insurance or cash gift in lieu of insurance from RO 200 up to RO 250. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply.) The campaign is valid up to March 9, 2022. Visit the showroom for exact details.

In Oman, the Hilux is available in two versions — The rugged Hilux with J-Deck and the sporty 4.0 Litre V6 Hilux Adventure with the A Deck. The 4.0 Litre V6 Toyota Hilux Adventure is a truly exciting mean machine that's been developed by Toyota to get your pulse racing. Check out the Hilux adventure and unleash the power!

The Toyota Hilux rises above



expectations, to deliver some of the finest on-road and off-road experiences ever. The Hilux really is two vehicles in one: a work truck through the week and a family vehicle on weekends, thanks to added comforts and safety features. Indeed the Hilux models are stunning in design and features.

Their performance & safety parameters are amongst the

best and the strong frame and suspension impart toughness for any demanding task.

Apart from this, high-quality materials are used to ensure a high durability. The distinctive Toyota grille renders the Hilux instantly recognisable. Tough deck protects cargo and increase carrying capabilities, while wheels are fitted with wide tyres for a better grip. The Toyota Hilux Adventure packs

the legendary Hilux ruggedness!

Every Toyota Hilux Adventure comes with high-end features that start with the mighty 4.0 Litre V6 Engine packing a mighty punch with 235 HP & 38.3 Kg-m Torque. It has an Auto Disconnect Differential to keep the tempo going. Equal importance has been provided to the technical superiority and safety features of the Hilux 4x4. The noteworthy features include a 2.7 Litre Petrol Engine that is available in 5-speed Manual Transmission and 6 Speed Automatic Transmission, outputting 164 HP.

For the latest press releases, test drive requests and more, please visit www.toyotaoman.com, www.youtube.com/toyotaoman, www.facebook.com/toyotaoman, and [instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/](https://www.instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/). For any further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota showroom.



27% decline in mobile malware attacks in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 27

An analysis of the cybersecurity threat landscape reveals a steady decline in attacks on mobile devices in the Sultanate of Oman, according to well-known cybersecurity specialist Kaspersky.

The overall mobile malware attacks have decreased by almost a third, as cybercriminals consolidated their efforts to focus on more complicated, dangerous and profitable threats instead, the company said in its latest report, 'Mobile Threats in 2021'.

Overall, in 2021, users in the Sultanate of Oman faced 27 per cent less mobile malware attacks than in 2020, similarly to other countries in Middle East: Egypt saw a staggering 52 per cent decrease, followed by Qatar (47 per cent), Kuwait (46 per cent), UAE (29 per cent) and Bahrain (13 per cent).



The only two countries where the dynamic was different were Saudi Arabia with a 19 per cent increase and Turkey, where the share increased by an anomalous

67 per cent.

This dynamic is a reflection of the global trend, as cybercriminals tend to invest less and less into the mainstream threats that are

successfully neutralised by modern security solution.

Instead, they choose to invest more into new mobile malware has become increasingly complex,

featuring new ways to steal users' banking and gaming credentials, as well as other strands of personal data.

For instance, in 2021 Kaspersky detected more than 95,000 new mobile banking Trojans in the world, but the number of attacks using such malware remained similar. Additionally, the share of Trojans — malicious programs capable of executing remote commands — doubled, reaching 8.8 per cent in 2021.

In addition to the strategic changes on the mobile threat landscape, experts also attribute the overall decline of mobile malware in 2021 to the enormous wave of attacks seen at the beginning of lockdown in 2020 as users were forced to work from home.

That period also saw increased use of various video conferencing and entertainment apps, increasing the volume and spread of attack opportunities. Now

that the situation has stabilised, cybercriminal activity declined as a result.

"Indeed, there have been fewer mobile attacks in general, however, the attacks we are still seeing have become more complex and harder to spot. Cybercriminals tend to mask malicious apps under the guise of legitimate applications, which can often be downloaded from official app stores. On top of that, with mobile banking and payment apps becoming even more widespread, there is a higher chance of cybercriminals targeting these more actively.

Staying cautious and careful on the Internet and avoiding downloading unknown apps is good practice, but I also strongly recommend using a reliable solution. When it comes to the security of finances in particular, it is better to be safe than sorry", comments Tatyana Shishkova, security researcher at Kaspersky.

Buffett's Berkshire posts record annual profit



WASHINGTON: Warren Buffett's (pictured) Berkshire Hathaway Inc on Saturday said fourth-quarter profit swelled, boosted by gains in many of its businesses and common stock investments such as Apple Inc, and said annual earnings reached a record high.

Berkshire also signalled renewed confidence in its own stock, repurchasing \$6.9 billion in the quarter, and boosting total buybacks in 2021 to a record \$27 billion.

But the pace of buybacks has slowed, with Berkshire, whose share price is just 2% below its record high, repurchasing just \$1.2 billion of stock in 2022.

In his annual letter to Berkshire shareholders, Buffett said buybacks make "good sense" when alternatives such as buying whole companies or more stocks appear "unattractive." He also expressed confidence in Berkshire's dozens of operating businesses such as the BNSF railroad and Geico auto insurer, after having gone six years since a major acquisition and letting Berkshire's cash stake swell to \$146.7 billion.

"Today, internal opportunities deliver far better returns than acquisitions", Buffett wrote.

Quarterly operating income rose 45% to \$7.29 billion, or approximately \$4,931 per Class A share, from \$5.02 billion a year earlier. Analysts on average expected operating profit of \$4,251 per Class A share, according to Refinitiv.

"Overall results looked good", said Cathy Seifert, an analyst at CFRA Research with a "hold" rating for Berkshire.

— Reuters

Ukrainian oil, gas infrastructure burns as West tightens sanctions

KYIV: Huge explosions from Russian attacks on oil and gas installations lit up the night sky in Ukraine early on Sunday, while Western allies tightened sanctions to banish major Russian banks from the main global payments system. Ukrainian forces were holding off Russian troops advancing on the capital Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said as the biggest assault on a European state since World War Two entered a fourth day.

But the night was brutal, with shelling of civilian infrastructure and targets including ambulances, Zelenskiy said.

Casualties from the war are unclear. A United Nations agency reported 64 civilian deaths and Ukraine claimed to have killed 3,500 Russian soldiers.

Ignoring weeks of frantic diplomacy and sanctions threats by Western nations seeking to avoid war, Putin has justified the invasion saying "neo-Nazis" rule Ukraine and threaten Russia's security — a charge Kyiv and Western governments say is baseless propaganda. Offering a glimmer of hope for talks, the Kremlin sent a diplomatic delegation to neighbouring Belarus. Ukraine quickly rejected the offer, saying Belarus had been complicit in the invasion.

However, Zelenskiy left the door open for "real negotiations", elsewhere, an adviser said. Russian missiles found their mark overnight, including a strike that set an oil terminal ablaze in Vasyilkiv, southwest of Kyiv, the town's mayor said. Blasts sent huge flames and billowing black smoke into the night sky, online posts showed.

"The enemy wants to destroy everything", said the mayor, Natalia Balasinovich. Heavy fighting took place for Ukraine's second city, Kharkiv, in the northeast, where Russian troops blew up a natural gas pipeline, a Ukrainian state agency said.

That blast sent a cloud up into the darkness, though Ukraine's gas pipeline operator said the transit of Russian gas to Europe via



Kurakhove thermal power plant is seen through a window of a helicopter in the Donetsk region, Ukraine. — Reuters

SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA'S CENTRAL BANK COULD LIMIT PUTIN'S USE OF HIS MORE THAN \$630 BILLION IN INTERNATIONAL RESERVES, WIDELY SEEN AS INSULATING RUSSIA FROM SOME ECONOMIC HARM

Ukraine was going on as normal. Kremlin-controlled energy giant Gazprom also said that Russian gas exports via Ukraine to Europe continued normally.

Russian troops later entered Kharkiv, Interior Ministry Adviser Anton Herashchenko said on Telegram. Videos posted by him and a state agency showed several military vehicles moving on a street and, separately, a burning tank. Russian-backed separatists in the eastern province of Luhansk said a Ukrainian missile had blown up an oil terminal in the town of Rovenky.

Reuters witnesses in Kyiv reported occasional blasts and gunfire through the night, then three blasts after air raid sirens went off shortly before 9 am.

Ukrainian leaders were defiant. "We have withstood and are successfully repelling enemy attacks. The fighting goes on", Zelenskiy said in a video message from the streets of Kyiv posted on his social media. A US defence official on Saturday said Ukraine's forces were putting up "viable" resistance to Russia's air, land and sea advance.

FINANCIAL NUCLEAR WEAPON

The United States and its allies have authorised more weapons transfers to help Ukraine fight and imposed a range of sanctions on Russia in response to the assault, which threatens to upend Europe's post-Cold War order.

On Saturday, they moved to block certain Russian banks' access to the SWIFT international payment system, making it harder for Russia to trade and for its companies to do business.

They also said they would impose restrictions on Russia's central bank to limit its ability to support the rouble and finance Putin's war effort. "We will hold Russia to account and collectively ensure that this war is a strategic failure for Putin", the leaders of the European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, Britain, Canada and the United States wrote.

They did not name the banks

that would be expelled. An EU diplomat said some 70% of the Russian banking market would be affected.

The allies initially shied away from targeting SWIFT transfers — a move the French finance minister had called a "financial nuclear weapon" — largely because of concern about the impact on their economies.

Sanctions on Russia's central bank could limit Putin's use of his more than \$630 billion in international reserves, widely seen as insulating Russia from some economic harm.

Google barred Russia's state-owned media outlet RT and other channels from receiving money for ads on their websites, apps and YouTube videos, similar to a move by Facebook.

Earlier, the Kremlin said its troops were advancing again "in all directions" after Putin ordered a pause on Friday. Ukraine's government said there had been no pause.

A Ukrainian presidential adviser said about 3,500 Russian soldiers had been killed or wounded. Western officials have said intelligence showed Russia suffering higher casualties than expected. Russia has not released casualty figures and Reuters was unable to verify tolls or the precise picture on the ground. — Reuters

Opec+ trims forecast for 2022 oil market surplus



A 3D-printed oil pump jack is seen in front of displayed Opec logo in this illustration picture. — Reuters

LONDON: Opec+ revised down its forecast for the 2022 oil market surplus by about 200,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 1.1 million bpd, according to a base scenario in a technical committee report.

The data — part of a report the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) prepares for Opec+ ministers — also shows stocks in the developed world standing at 62 million barrels below the 2015 to 2019 average by the end of the year.

In a previous forecast it had predicted the stocks would reach 20 million barrels above the same average by that point.

Ministers from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and allies led by Russia, a grouping known as Opec+, meet on March 2 to decide whether to increase output by 400,000 bpd in April. Sources from the group told Reuters their output deal is showing no cracks so far after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the group is likely to stick to a planned output rise despite crude topping \$100 a barrel.

Data from a separate JTC report on Sunday showed the group produced in January 972,000 bpd less than the targets outlined by the deal, compared with 824,000 less in December.

— Reuters

US LNG burns even brighter

The US liquefied natural gas export market is burning bright and Russia's invasion of Ukraine makes it even more so. America's export facilities are already largely booked. But Russia provides nearly 40 per cent of Europe's gas. Replacing even part of this would provide long-term security for firms like the \$30 billion Cheniere Energy itching to build more. America exported about 11.2 billion cubic feet (317 million cubic metres) of gas per day in January, according to the US government. That's about 12 per cent of total US gas supply, a huge jump considering exports only started in 2016. US facilities are already operating near maximum capacity but investments already underway mean capacity should rise 25 per cent this year.

It can be easily sold outside the United States. The Henry Hub gas price, which reflects prices stateside, is under \$5 per million British thermal units.

Liquefaction and shipping bring the total cost to around double that. Yet spot gas prices in Europe averaged nearly \$29 this winter.

The energy transition has boosted Asian and European gas prices. To cope, power producers are increasingly locking up gas on long contracts. Cheniere's current production is over 90 per cent contracted until the middle of next decade.

Still, high gas prices overseas benefit US LNG firms. Capacity not tied up in long-term contracts can be sold at higher prices. And completed projects can run full tilt. On Thursday Cheniere raised its 2022 adjusted EBITDA estimate by around 20 per cent, to up to \$7.5 billion.

The underlying opportunity is big. BP estimates worldwide LNG sales could reach 1,100 billion cubic metres in the mid-2030s, or over twice as much as today.

A decision to wean off Russian gas offers another opportunity, a dynamic accelerated by the US decision on Wednesday to sanction Nord Stream 2, a key new pipeline for Russian gas. Europe imported about 100 billion cubic metres of LNG per year pre-pandemic, or roughly similar to current US LNG export capacity. Russia supplied about twice as much, most via pipeline.

Cheniere started as an LNG import firm, but energy markets are volatile and it nearly went bust when shale boomed. Green energy growth could eventually dent rising gas demand at some point. But for now, the future looks bright for LNG exporters.

— Reuters

The energy transition has boosted Asian and European gas prices. To cope, power producers are increasingly locking up gas on long contracts



US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell speaks to reporters after the Federal Reserve cut interest rates in an emergency move designed to shield the world's largest economy from the impact of the coronavirus, during a news conference in Washington.

— Reuters

Fighting the last inflation war



JEFFREY FRANKEL

The writer is Professor of Capital Formation and Growth at Harvard University.

RISING INFLATION IS NOT THE ONLY EVIDENCE THAT THE US ECONOMY IS OVERHEATING. GDP GROWTH HAS BEEN RAPID AND THE LABOUR MARKET IS TIGHT

In 1955, then-US Federal Reserve Chair William McChesney Martin famously said that the Fed's job was to take away the punch bowl "just when the party was really warming up," rather than waiting until the revelers were drunk and raucous.

Decades later, in the aftermath of the 1970s inflation, it became an article of faith among monetary policymakers that they should not wait until elevated inflation showed its face before reining in an overheating economy.

Today, with inflation surging, they are developing a renewed appreciation for the punch-bowl metaphor.

During the decade that followed the 2008 global financial crisis, adherence to this time-honoured practice arguably led some central banks to pursue unnecessarily tight monetary policies. In retrospect, they sometimes overestimated the danger of inflation.

In 2021, central bankers once again "fought the last war," but this time by underestimating the danger of inflation as economic recovery began to run into capacity constraints. By the end of 2021, the US unemployment rate had dipped below 4 per cent and inflation, at 7 per cent, had hit a 40-year high. The Fed, having earlier taken the optimistic view that any inflation would be transitory, must now play catch-up.

The experience of 2008-18 suggested that expansionary monetary policy could promote growth and ultimately drive US unemployment below 4 per cent, with few adverse effects on price stability and interest rates. This conclusion required no

fundamental rethink of macroeconomic theory.

Rather, it followed naturally from the proposition that the economy at that time was operating on the low, flat part of the "LM curve" and the low, flat part of the Phillips curve (which otherwise asserts a clear trade-off between unemployment and inflation).

Consider key examples during that 10-year period when policymakers and commentators overestimated the danger that monetary easing would fuel inflation.

Lastly and more surprising to economists, was the 2016-18 period, when the US GDP rose above its estimated potential and unemployment fell below 4 per cent.

In the past, this combination had signalled an overheating economy. So, it is understandable that the Fed raised interest rates from 2016 through the end of 2018. But, in the end, very little of the feared inflation materialised, suggesting in retrospect that the economy could have been allowed to "run hot" for longer. Apparently, the Phillips curve, if not dead, was supine.

Now inflation is back on its feet. It turns out that when demand increases faster than supply, inflation results, just as the textbooks say. But the Fed, not wishing to repeat its mistake of 2018, underestimated the danger in 2021.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic caused a sharp recession, before large US monetary and fiscal stimulus drove the subsequent rapid recovery. Inflation remained absent, the textbooks would tell us, because the negative pandemic-induced shock to

demand must initially have been larger than the negative shock to supply, before the stimulus kicked in.

But there is also another, less orthodox, explanation. When an emergency or disaster strikes, causing a run on, say, toilet paper, only economists think the best response is to raise prices before inventories disappear.

If there is any truth to this hypothesis, then the recent 7 per cent US inflation may have included some "catch-up" by firms. In that case, inflation could well moderate during the coming year.

In any case, the Fed should now take away the punch bowl. Rising inflation is not the only evidence that the US economy is overheating. GDP growth has been rapid and the labour market is tight.

The Fed has almost ended QE, which hugely expanded its balance sheet. But removing the punch bowl means also raising interest rates, as the Fed is expected to start doing in March and gradually offloading the unconventional assets, particularly mortgage-backed securities, that the Fed has accumulated on its balance sheet.

The tendency to fight the last war stems from human nature. Recent events are most salient in shaping people's perceptions of how the world works.

Central bankers can justify focusing more on these developments by pointing to rapid and fundamental changes in technology and society. But, as they are now realising, a longer-term historical perspective offers wisdom derived from a wider variety of circumstances.

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A comeback for physical stores



SHIRA OVIDE

The author writes the On Tech newsletter, a guide to how technology is reshaping our lives and world.

Americans shopped online like crazy during the pandemic, right? Motivated by fear or convenience, more of us grew comfortable clicking "buy" from our sofas — including to buy sofas — and there's no turning back.

Fresh data from the US government shows something that surprised me: Physical stores beat online shopping in 2021. No joke.

Americans spent 18 per cent more on food, cars, furniture, electronics and other retail products last year compared with 2020. Online retail sales increased by 14 per cent. In other words, e-commerce lost ground last year to brick-and-mortar stores.

Admittedly, 2021 was a strange year for shopping. More of us had

the urge to browse in person than we did in the scary first months of Covid-19 in the US. Climbing prices and shortages changed what people bought and where they shopped. And one year doesn't alter the long-term trend that online shopping is grabbing more of Americans' wallets.

But the comeback for physical stores also points to how difficult it can be to predict the speed at which technologies alter our behaviours and the effects if and when they do. The future does not necessarily arrive in a straight line.

My point isn't confined to shopping, either. One of the big debates for our economies and lives is how much the coronavirus and the digital adaptations to it might permanently alter all aspects of how we spend our time,

including the future of office work, moviegoing and exercise habits. The honest answer is that we don't really know. Much has changed, but a lot has not.

Brian Wieser is one of my favourite numbers nerds and he alerted me to the fact that physical stores won in 2021. Wieser, global president of business intelligence for advertising firm GroupM, said that he'd taken to zooming out in two-year blocks of time to assess the disruptive effects of the pandemic on businesses and us.

Wieser described what he'd seen as a "new plateau" — the pandemic accelerated digital trends that were already happening and kicked our usage to a higher level. A lot of people who research human behaviour have likewise talked about the ways that we've reached

familiarity with e-commerce, remote work, telemedicine and online socialising that might not have happened until 2025 or later absent a pandemic.

Wieser's data crunching shows that we increased our shopping online more in 2020 and 2021 than we had in any two-year period since 2006.

Juozas Kaziukėnas, founder of e-commerce research firm Marketplace Pulse, posed a question to me a couple of months ago that I haven't been able to forget: Did the coronavirus really compel us to shop online more — or just shop more, period?

It's a confusing time to assess what technology has changed in us. Wieser's visual metaphor of a plateau is useful. Maybe we've reached a new level of familiarity

with and use of technologies. That doesn't mean we can predict where we go from this new perch.

We (myself included) are still terrible at predicting the future of technology and how people and societies respond to it. Sometimes a new app that we can't stop talking about turns out to be Instagram and sometimes it's Ello.

And human behaviour can change slowly, until the point when it swamps us. We might feel as though online shopping were ubiquitous, but even now more than 85 cents of each retail dollar in the US is spent in physical stores.

So which is it? Is online shopping the future of how we buy and change everything or is it a relatively small change that is having mammoth ripple effects? Yes. — The New York Times

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“Essence of Arabia” explores the traditional Omani Haseer

The ‘Haseer’ is the traditional hand-woven mat made from date palm leaves and wadi reeds which are in abundance in the Sultanate of Oman. However, the craftsmen who create these Haseers are now hard to come by. British artist James Wagstaff is now exploring various ways on how to recreate it and that exploration would lead him to an exhibit at Bait al Muzna...**P20**

READ

HOW HIGH WE GO IN THE DARK
BY SEQUOIA NAGAMATSU

A heartbroken scientist searching for a cure finds a second chance at fatherhood when one of his test subjects—a pig—develops the capacity for human speech. A widowed painter and her teenaged granddaughter embark on a cosmic quest to locate a new home planet.

CONSERVATION

Interactive museum opens in Stockholm for Swedish DJ Avicii

AN INTERACTIVE MUSEUM in honour of the late Swedish DJ Avicii was inaugurated in Stockholm on Thursday by the musician's father, Karl Bergling, along with Sweden's Prince Carl Philip and his wife Princess Sofia.



The Avicii Experience museum dedicated to the musician known for hits "Levels" and "Wake Me Up" will be open to the public in the centre of the Swedish capital from Saturday. Stockholm was the home

city of Tim Bergling, who took the professional name of Avicii. The music producer and DJ was found dead in Muscat, the capital of Oman, on April 20, 2018. Police did not suspect foul play. Avicii was suffering from psychological problems when he died at the age of 28. The Avicii Experience aims to pay tribute to him by focusing on both the artist Avicii and on Tim Bergling as a person. Part of the income will go to the Tim Bergling Foundation that is active in promoting measures to prevent psychological illness and suicide, in particular among young people. — dpa



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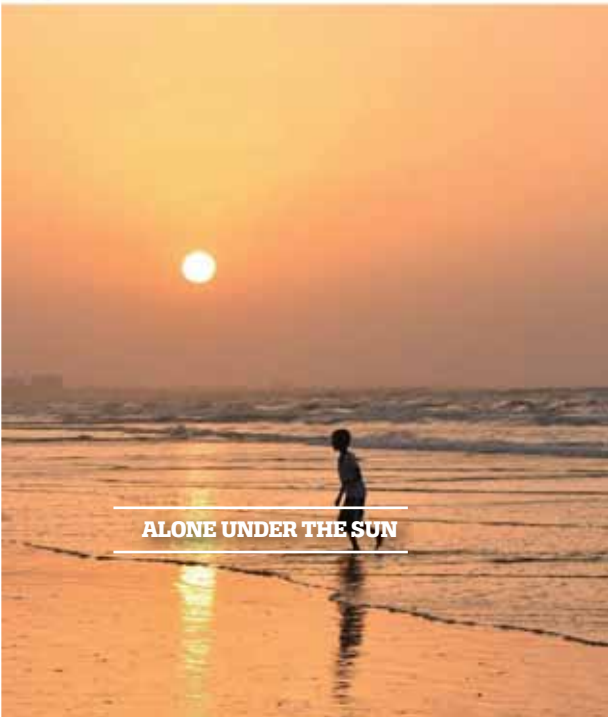


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AROUND THE WORLD

CULTURE

Rio de Janeiro is ready to party, with or without carnival



AS RIO DE JANEIRO'S world-famous carnival holiday rolls around this year without official events due to Brazil's ongoing Omicron coronavirus wave, a slew of private parties are ensuring glitter-dusted revellers will have plenty of ways to celebrate.

Rio's carnival was cancelled in 2021 due to the pandemic. The public holiday will this year not coincide with the colourful samba school parade, held in the "sambodromo," or Sambadrome, which has been postponed to April. The city's free and wildly hedonistic street parties, known as blocos, have been scrapped.

Grégoire Putteman, a party organiser who DJs as Craig Ouar, called the city's decision to cancel the blocos "hypocritical," as Rio is largely back to normal after suffering one of the world's worst Covid-19 outbreaks. He said he had to cap his Dompny party at 1,500 people, given the need to check attendees' vaccination status, and would only be able to offer free entrance up to a point. In prior years, he could bring in as many as 3,000 revellers.

"Everything is already happening in the city, there are parties every weekend, there are parties in the streets, so prohibiting them during carnival doesn't make any sense," he said. "People really want to party."

Notwithstanding the large number of private events, Rio's streets have been much calmer in the run-up to carnival this year. Normally, the blocos start appearing as early as January, filling the streets with samba bands and boozy revellers in wacky outfits. Public urination is widespread; glitter a prerequisite.

The lack of official events has not stopped tourists from arriving. Foreign languages can be heard across the city's beaches, and nearly 80% of hotel rooms are occupied, according to industry group HotéisRIO.

Alfredo Lopes, the president of HotéisRIO, said in a statement he expected that number to rise to 85% in the coming days. He credited the occupancy rates to Brazil's high rate of vaccination, allied with the real currency's weak exchange rate, which prompted many Brazilians to opt for domestic vacations.

Dani Souto, who plays under the name DJ Chânce Da Silva and runs an annual free party called ONDA at which he expects 6,000 to 10,000 people this year, said it was a shame that without the free blocos many of the opportunities for partying involved paid tickets. He also lamented the financial hit that the lack of official events would have on many of the city's residents.

"It's sad to see," he said. "Rio de Janeiro is a city that is really dependent on the carnival, and the carnival is really dependent on Rio de Janeiro."

Putteman said he thought some people may end up ignoring the bloco ban.

"Aside from all the private parties that will take place, I think lots of blocos will spring up at the last minute, and just say, 'Screw it,'" he said. — Reuters

FASHION

Gucci mixes fashion with sportswear at Milan Fashion Week return



ITALIAN LUXURY label Gucci made a triumphant return to Milan Fashion Week on Friday, with a star-studded catwalk show that featured a new collaboration with sports brand Adidas.

Pregnant music star Rihanna and her partner, rapper ASAP Rocky, "House of Gucci" actor Jared Leto and tennis champion Serena Williams were among the famous names at the catwalk show, Gucci's first at Milan Fashion Week in two years.

Like other fashion houses, the label turned to digital showcases after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. In November, it held an off-calendar catwalk show in Los Angeles.

Walking a catwalk lined with mirrors, models wore an array of trousers suits: loose, fitted, patterned, studded or with pointy shoulders. Some blazers were one-shouldered. There were nods to 1980s disco looks with sparkling suits or a shiny jumpsuit. Lace tops were frilled, shiny skirts slit.

Creative director Alessandro Michele called the collection "Exquisite Gucci".

"I use the metaphor of the magical mirror to approach the phantasmagorical power of fashion. A sacred power that radiates from the surface of the fabrics. And there I work, on this tactile surface, through cross references, alterations, loopholes and grafts," he said in show notes.

"Juxtaposing worlds and meanings. Altering the stability of perception. Manipulating and magnifying the existing. Through these interventions, I celebrate the clothes as real optical labs: magical machines that can give birth to fairy tales of metamorphosis and re-enchantment."

Michele also revealed a collaboration with Adidas, with the sports brand's logo and stripes appearing on blazers, long dresses with zipped corsets, trousers and headwear, including swim cap-like hats and baseball caps with front and back visors. Accessories included slim ties, berets and a wide range of bags. Milan Fashion Week, which is mainly hosting in-person shows this season, runs until February 28.

— Reuters

A LOOK AT THE ACADEME



Dr Zainab al Ajmi
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Active Learning in Basic Education

IN THE 'REGULAR' class, children participate in asking or answering questions without a thought-enhancing environment. Likewise, for the other children, the class climate is boring and irritating to learn. Conversely, in a class with successful active learning, teaching strategies provide an opportunity for all children to reflect, positively think, and engage with learning activities that set out to practice higher-order thinking skills such as: analysing, synthesising, and summarising.

Active learning as a teaching approach refers to a broad range of teaching strategies. According to Cambridge Assessment International Education, "Active learning is a process that has student learning at its centre. Active learning focuses on how students learn, not just on what they learn."

Children are encouraged to 'think hard', rather than passively receive information from the teacher. Research shows us that it is not possible to transmit understanding to students by simply telling them what they need to know.

Instead, teachers need to make sure that they challenge their students' thinking. Through active learning, children plan their own learning process. Indeed, with active learning children use a distinctive technique of thought where learners actively participate in activities, exercises, and projects within a diverse learning environment that allows them to listen positively, constructive and advantage conversation, deep reflection on everything that they are reading or writing. Hence, Active learning further enables children to improve their personalities and transfers them from being passive recipients to positive active learners.

Although teaching as the design is a part of active teaching in basic

education, there has been lots of focus on children's learning, how they receive knowledge and how to gain new skills. To that end, teachers use a set of principles for active learning teaching, for instance, it is imperative that activities for active learning are useful and relevant to students' interests, require them to reflect on the meaning of what they've learned, and how children learn to reason in a more adequate way, and critically evaluate their learning progress. Active learning includes a set of strategies and techniques, for instance: Role-playing is an effective way for children where they take on the roles of fictional or historical characters to explore and understand the world around them. Game-based learning: where games are used to enhance learning and give children greater involvement in learning. Collaborative learning: where children work together which promotes social problem-solving skills and teamwork. Learning by Teaching: this is a method of learning based on teaching others which encourages children to take on the role of a teacher in order to develop their learning experience.

In conclusion, both children and teachers are accomplished when the learning environment and teaching are designed with an active, student-centred approach. Therefore, in the active learning process, children can be able to participate in structuring their own learning, and most significantly, children develop their ability to become lifelong learners. Consequently, the final outcomes, and the skills they gain position them for future success. Accordingly, the effectiveness of active learning is probably most powerful when conceived as the intelligent approach to children's learning in basic education.



‘Essence of Arabia’ explores the traditional Omani Haseer



By Mai al Abri
Insta: @maial3bri

After travelling extensively through the Middle East, the British artist James Wagstaff's journey led him to Oman, where he began his fascination and contemplation of Khaleeji culture and values.

One of the main themes that emerged from this time was the symbolism and importance of the traditional Omani Haseer (mat) which his current exhibition at Bait Muzna Gallery revolves around.

The 'Haseer' is the traditional hand-woven mat made from date palm leaves and wadi reeds which are in abundance in Oman. However, the craftsmen who create these Haseers are now hard to come by. Being trained in many Fine Art practices, James began to explore various methods of recreating the Haseer out of materials that are easily preserved over time, each capturing the essence, texture and spirit of the Haseer in a different light. The exhibition also inspects all uses of the traditional Haseer and all the values it reflected into people.

James said that over time, the essence of Haseer has changed. But, he is inquiring over the loss we have suffered from over losing the value of traditional things.

"What are we willingly throwing away? As Oman and the Khalij rapidly develops, it has worked hard to stay connected to its past, but change is inevitable. Much of the change is ben-

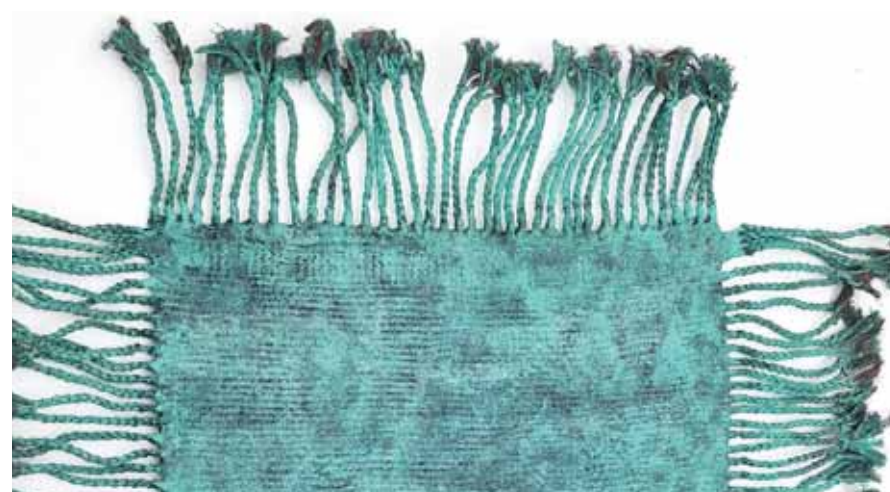
eficial, but what are the things that are being lost unintentionally? How to engage with future generations and maintain our beautiful core values for their inheritance?" he questioned.

James used visual representation to highlight the subconscious symbolism behind the Haseer being a valuable component that brings together the beauty of local culture and values. Through sculpture and installation, he explores the idea of time and the inevitable evolution of culture and tradition.

With his current works, James observed how people come together on the Haseer, how it immediately creates a sacred and holy space where one connects with God and others, where everyone is equal, where there is safety, peace, rest, even when surrounded by danger or disaster. Ultimately, questioning how and why a humble carpet can have all of these different values woven into it.

"When you enter the mat, you are protected, not affected by the outside — time and space slow down when you enter in. You are unaffected by the stresses of the world. It's such a silent protector that you are rarely conscious of the change."

These rolled mats remind us of the moveable quality of the



Haseer. It is a companion of our travel; it goes with us where we go. We have the shared connection with each other that we all have mats. They are parts of our history and become part of the history of anyone who lives here.

To produce these works, James has extensively

researched and collected all the locally made designs he could find of the traditional Haseer. Immortalising them by casting them into metals and clay, thus preserving all the virtues and rich values they represent. Over many years of experimentation with different materials and

mediums, through trial and error, the outcome is captivating. These symbols of our heritage are preserved in their purest essence and form for future generations to reflect upon.

The exhibition lasts until March 22, at Bait Muzna Gallery, Muscat.