

OMAN  DAILY

Observer



Exercise may tame our anxiety

To better cope with all the dispiriting news this winter about rising Covid-19 cases and so much else, you might want to get out and play in the snow, according to a new report. The large-scale study of almost 200,000 cross-country skiers found that being physically active halves the risk of developing clinical anxiety over time. **SEE P7**



Established 1981. Editor-in-chief: Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili

OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.om editor@omanobserver.om

P13

MORE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO BE UNVEILED TOMORROW



P12

KOHLI QUILTS AS INDIA TEST CAPTAIN



P20

HOP ON FOR A HEALTHY RIDE



MUSCAT

TRAINING TO GET A BOOST DESPITE COVID

In compliance with the Royal attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, and in line with Oman Vision 2040, the Directorate-General of Training at the Ministry of Labour, had diligently sought to develop human resources at the units of the state's administrative apparatuses in 2021. **SEE P2**

TEMPERATURE TO DIP FURTHER AFTER RAINS

Under the influence of the upper trough due to the low pressure, Musandam received rains with North Al Batinah receiving light rain. In many wilayats the temperature had gone down to 12 degree Celsius namely Qarn Alam - 12.0 degrees Celsius, Joba - 11.9 degrees Celsius, Maqshan - 11.7 degrees Celsius, Haima - 11.1 degrees Celsius and the lowest was recorded in Saiq - 4.7 degrees Celsius. **SEE P3**

READ IN

OPINION



LET'S TALK A WALK
Dr Hamed al Sinawi
P8

WHEN TENNIS BECAME STAGE FOR RIGHT AND WRONG DURING COVID
Damien Cave
P9

INSIDE



RUSSIAN INCURSION WOULD 'VIOLATE FREEDOM'

P6



RETURN-TO-OFFICE PLANS ARE REVISED

P7

Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for architectural design launched

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said launched the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design to foster Omani talents in architecture, design and urban planning. The award comes in line with Oman Vision 2040 for developing various governorates architecturally according to their environment and civilisational identity. The award would be

based on a specific architectural topic and a specific region or governorate. HH Sayyid Bilarab has affirmed that the award is being launched with the blessing of His Majesty the Sultan. His Majesty hailed the idea of the competition and its directions and much-admired the goals it seeks, said HH Sayyid Bilarab. He assured that His Majesty's blessing is a motive for the award to strive for its visions and



First prize
RO 20,000

Second prize
RO 15,000

Third prize
RO 10,000

Age limit **35** years

Deadline for applications:
February 5

Final results: **March 15**

aspirations. HH Sayyid Bilarab explained that the award stems from the idea of launching a local competition with a global vision to honour modern architectural and urban designs with artistic visions that combine tradition and contemporary. "The award targets Omani youth, so our mission and goals in this field lie in investing and empowering local architectural capabilities and skills, ... **TURN TO P3**



His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth with Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad al Khalifa, First Deputy Chairman of the Youth and Sports Council, President of the Public Sports Authority at the Oman-Bahrain Sports Day in Wilayat of Mussanah on Saturday. **SEE ALSO P2**

Online education returns for Class 1-4 students from today

VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

Classes 1-4 in schools of the Sultanate of Oman will revert to on-line learning on Sunday for four weeks following the decision of the Supreme Committee last week. The Supreme Committee has warned that there has been a considerable surge in cases of community-based infection as well as a rise in related hospitalisation cases in the country. As of Thursday, the number of hospital inpatients went up to 65, including six in the Intensive Care Units (ICUs). The primary healthcare centres in all governorates have registered an increase in cases, especially in the age group of 5-12 and also among the unvaccinated segments. All Indian schools in the Sultanate of Oman have decided to temporarily return to online education with the situation to be

AstraZeneca okayed for booster dose

The Ministry of Health has approved the third dose of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine to be taken by those who received the two doses of the same vaccine. This is to ensure community prevention and maintain the stability of the epidemiological situation. The ministry called on everyone to take the booster dose as soon as possible.

reviewed at the end of the month. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has said that several hotel establishments in the country continue to flout Covid-19 health protocols, which were announced considering the safety of guests and employees. Over 10 hotel establishments were booked by the ministry for various types of violations and

these include Grand Hyatt Muscat Hotel, Al Hatailli Hotel, Al Reem Hotel, Gulf Beach Hotel, Rozana Hotel, Grand Inn Hotel, Al Falaj Hotel, Al Rusayl Hotel, The White Nile Hotel, Caesar Hotel and Al Marsa Hotel. The ministry warned all hotel and tourist establishments that legal measures would include the closure of the facility. The Supreme Committee had laid emphasis on the commitment of all to endorsed precautionary measures. It stresses the need to stick to the 50 per cent maximum occupancy rate in establishments allowed to operate, particularly those frequented by a large number of people, like commercial complexes, exhibitions, conferences, weddings and sports halls. The establishments are also required to demand vaccination proof from visitors, observe the physical distance and demand that the visitors wear face masks.

RO 318m OQ Salalah project to be launched

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

Aiming at reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's position as a leading producer and exporter of LPG, OQ, the global integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman is formally launching Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) plant worth RO 318 million in Salalah on Sunday. This vital project works on processing natural gas liquids (NGLs) extracted from gas networks into LPG besides a host of other refined petroleum products and petrochemicals. The design construction of the state-of-the-art plant has been done according to the highest technical and safety standards. The various components of the plant consist of a facility for the extraction of rich gas elements such as propane, butane and condensates from natural gas. The project, along with the facilities of extracting LPG, are ideally located at Salalah Free Zone, adjacent to Salalah Port and hosts a fractionation plant, storage tanks, shipping facilities and an interconnection pipeline system that will enhance the services to greater standards contributing to the

The OQ LPG Plant can contribute to promoting the national economy and supporting the in-country added value of natural gas produced by extracting the natural gas condensates

SPOKESPERSON

national economy. "The OQ LPG Plant can contribute to promoting the national economy and supporting the in-country added value of natural gas produced by extracting the natural gas condensates", a spokesperson told the *Observer*. The plant has a capacity to process around 8 million standard cubic metres per day of lean gas to produce about 304 kilotons per year of LPG comprising 155 kilotons per year of propane (C3), 111 kilotons of butane (C4) and 38 kilotons of condensates (C5+). **TURN TO P5**





Oman-Bahrain Sports Day organised



AL MUSANNAH: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad al Khalifa, First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Chairman of the General Sports Authority and

President of Bahrain Olympic Committee. The Oman-Bahrain Sports Day event comes within the framework of the strong fraternal relations between the two brotherly

countries. It also aims to bolster partnership and cooperation in the sports field. The event included a triathlon race that saw the participation of 70 male and female athletes and paragliding and capoeira shows. HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said and Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad al Khalifa took a tour around the accompanying exhibition. At the end of the event, HH Sayyid Theyazin and Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad al Khalifa honoured the winners of the triathlon event. — ONA

Apollo Hospital Muscat Managing Director, Mr. V. T. Saileswaran received the Golden Visa



Muscat: The Government of Oman, as part of the Investment Residency program, awarded Mr. V T Saileswaran, the Managing Director of Apollo Hospital Muscat, the Golden visa, a 10-year investor visa from His Excellency Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef-Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotions (MOCIIP), in the presence of Her Excellency Asila bint Salim Al Samsami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MOCIIP) and Top Officials from ROP, in an event held at Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in Oman.

Mr. V T Saileswaran is the Managing Director of Apollo Hospital Muscat. For more than 15 years, Apollo Hospital has been Oman's most desired multispecialty healthcare provider. The Hospital has served individuals from all walks of life not only within the Sultanate but also across the country and beyond, with extraordinary state-of-the-art facilities and sophisticated medical treatments provided by renowned doctors from across the world.

Apollo hospital Muscat has been continuously working towards the betterment of society and distribution of quality health care in Oman by opening its newest Superspeciality Hospital - Apollo Super Speciality Hospital located in Al Hail. The new hospital represents a commitment to enhancing the accessibility and availability of quality health care for Oman's citizens.

Training, qualification programmes get a boost despite Covid-19

MUSCAT: In compliance with the Royal attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, and in line with the priorities of taking care of Omani human resources as part of Oman Vision 2040, the Directorate-General of Training at the Ministry of Labour had diligently sought to develop human resources at the units of the state's administrative apparatuses in 2021.

The ministry's efforts came within the framework of the specialisations assigned to it as per the Royal Decree 89/2020 related to following up the implementation of the fundamentals and standards for identifying the training requirements at the state's administrative apparatuses and the other public legal entities in accordance with the work and objectives of each unit and linking these standards to the development plans of the Sultanate of Oman.

Accordingly, the department of training and qualification was keen to activate these competencies towards human resource development in the government units through its efforts to provide qualitative training for civil state employees.

In 2021, a number of training programmes and workshops were held through the now-defunct Institute of Public Administration. A total of 53 male and female employees benefited from training programmes funded by oil firms. In addition, 156 employees from government units participated in a number of free-of-charge online training workshops conducted in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) within the experience programme for 2021.

benefiting from their programmes, cooperation has been made with a number of institutions.

Fifty employees took part in the second Arab conference of civil service bodies held by the Civil Service Bureau in Jordan under the theme "Towards flexible and creative strategies for managing the human resources in the civil service amid the coronavirus pandemic".

Thirty employees took part in the Future Skills and Human Resources Management Conference organised by the Arab Research Bureau and the Oman International Trade and Exhibitions.

As many as 110 employees took part in the seventh annual conference for customer service entitled the "experience of customers in the light of digital development" organised by Al Asail Conferences.

With regard to training grants, a number 90 male and female employees in the government sector benefited from training grants offered by brotherly and friendly countries.

The Ministry of Labour works in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to benefit from these grants in human resources development. The ministry distributes those grants to different units of the state's administrative apparatus according to the specialisation of each entity.

The Directorate-General of Training at the Ministry of Labour diligently sought to develop human resources at the units of the state's administrative apparatuses in 2021

On the other side, 5 online training programmes were implemented in cooperation with the Higher Judicial Institute in which 148 employees took part.

In terms of activating partnerships with leading local and international institutions in the field of training and



Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for architectural design

FROM P1
... to develop different regions in the Sultanate of Oman which could contribute to achieve an added value. The competition perhaps is one of the appropriate ways to invest and empower these capabilities of young people in this aspect. It may also be a gateway for them to cross into the future with more creative ideas and aspirations, and this creativity we hope will be reflected on the ground,” he said.

As for the objectives of the competition, HH Sayyid Bilarab affirmed that the ultimate goal is to listen to the voice of young people in a very special way, saying that “His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik underscored the necessity of paying attention and listening to the Omani youth. Through this award and competition we will make sure to listen to the creative ideas of young people in an artistic way that seeks towards urban development and creativity in the fields of architecture and related design. The general goal of this award is to create “Towards an innovative and contemporary Omani architectural style”, while not neglecting other goals related to the local community, or empowering and developing the capabilities of youth. The award will contribute to the realisation of the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.”

DIVERSE AND RICH
HH Sayyid Bilarab confirmed that the Omani architectural style is rich and diverse. The nature and geography of the country

have contributed to achieving this richness. The style of plains, as well as the style of the coasts differ from that of the interior regions, and perhaps designers have sought throughout the previous years to imitate those styles.

“Young Omanis who are specialised in the fields of architecture, design and urban planning can participate in the competition. We are keen not to extend the age of participants to no more than 35 years of age. We included job seekers and students, with the aim of providing a greater opportunity for young people to avoiding them competing with elders who may have more experience in this field,” HH Sayyid Bilarab said.

He said that this award competition is an opportunity for creative young people. Participants can enter this competition either as individual or in a team of not more than three people.

CONDITIONS
“We see this award as different from its local counterparts. Therefore, the idea was to focus on what happens after the announcement of the winner of the award; and particularly on the outcome of the winning project. Thus, we were keen that the idea was to utilise the project, implement it and follow it up, whether through investment, or through the relevant government agencies. The matter is that, we will make sure the winning project sees the light of day in any location in the Sultanate of



Oman.”

As for the conditions of participation in the Award competition; he stated that “we have made sure that these conditions are simple to involve the largest possible number of young people in the competition. The main condition is participation is limited to Omani youth who are not over 35 years old. There are also some technical conditions that participants can refer to on the award’s website or its social media accounts.”

PRIZES
Regarding the prizes HH Sayyid Bilarab said, “Ten competitors

“
Young Omanis who are specialised in the fields of architecture, design and urban planning can participate in the competition. We are keen not to extend the age of participants to no more than 35 years of age
HH SAYYID BILARAB

will qualify for the final stage. At this stage, the contestants will submit proposals to the jury or committee. After discussions, three winners will be declared.” His Highness said the award will add value to society in general. It would provide the opportunity for small and medium-sized enterprises to benefit from the projects that would be developed or established. The contestants will get opportunity to learn new skills and knowledge from the workshops associated with the award. At the community level, it is hoped that the award will contribute to adding aesthetic touches to leisure and tourism

sites where the public can spend time with their families and friends.”

TIMING
As for the competition cycle and the timing of its organisation, HH Sayyid Bilarab explained, “This award will be held annually targeting each year a certain governorate, a specific geographic space, or a different architectural style.

“We are keen that the award will leave its positive impact on all parts of our country, and have a contribution to the development of a facility, the modernisation of a specific tourist attraction or creating a new facility with a creative vision that is environmentally friendly”.

HH Sayyid Bilarab said, “this award was created for you, and you are qualified to present your suggestions, visions and ideas through which you seek to make a qualitative leap in the architecture and design sector.

“Therefore, the field is open to you towards creativity, proficiency, and unprecedented perceptions. Moreover, we will not hesitate to study any proposal submitted to us that meets the technical conditions set by the jury.”

His Highness stressed that “homelands are built only with the hands of their generations, and we can consider this award as an invitation to build our country, as the field is open to young people, who are worthy of their visions and aspirations in this regard.” — ONA

Caution must to enjoy beauty of nature

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

With the Sultanate of Oman’s scenic landscape, rains can become boon if people maintain caution and listen to advisories issued by the competent authorities. Spot excitement by some young enthusiasts often put the police and safety officials in a fix as they jump to danger without realising the consequences.

Rains turn the country into a place of added scenic beauty with mountains and wadis in the middle of the cities. This is all due to the balance being applied while doing world-class development and conserving the environment.

Take the example of recent rains. Some 120 millimetres of rain caused many wadis to overflow and created temporary waterfalls here and there. Amid artificial waterfalls seen generally in other GCC countries, it becomes tempting for everyone to come out of their houses and enjoy the beauty of nature.

The two days of rain caused many natural waterfalls in many parts of the country. Drive to any mountainous road and one can easily find water flowing from the rocks. At some places they were moderate while at many other they flowed like natural waterfalls.

“I drove down to Jabal Shifa road for some work after the rain subsided. It was beautiful all through as I was driving in the middle of mountains. The drive on this route has always been a pleasure, but the rain added value to it. It made the green patches



greener and there were views of water coming from the rocks,” said Ali Masood, a civil engineer by profession.

However, some fatalities that happened during the rains, are reminders for everyone to maintain patience and listen to the official announcements.

“Some level of patience is necessary for everyone, because it is not possible for the regulating authorities to be present at every nook and corner when rain starts. We maintain maximum caution and alert people through social media, and other media channels to be alert and do not

Rains turn the country into a place of added scenic beauty. Spot excitement by some young enthusiasts often put the police and safety officials in a fix as they jump to danger without realising the consequences

venture without verifying the water level in the wadis adjacent to their localities,” said an official associated with Met office.

Watching flow of water from top was mesmerising for many particularly around mountainous areas of Jabal Shams and Jabal Akhdhar. Both the places are attracting tourists for those who love snowfall and cold climate.

Not with current rain, but rains in Dhofar Governorate generally create many natural waterfalls in the governorate. A recent rain in the governorate created not less than 20 small and big waterfalls between Salalah and Hasik.

“The in thing, however is patience and following weather advisories when it rains. Due to mountainous terrains it becomes difficult to predict water level on roads and it has been noticed that the rain water coming from the mountains changes its course under the impact of pressure and current,” said Mohammed ba Omar while agreeing that rains bring special charm to Sultanate of Oman’s mountains.

Rain in some parts of country; temperature to dip

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

A sunny Saturday in Muscat turned windy and cold by evening. Under the influence of the upper trough due to the low pressure, Governorate of Musandam received rains with North Al Batinah getting light rain, according to the meteorologist at the National Multi Hazards Early Warning Centre.

According to him, ‘Light rains in Musandam will continue to early Sunday morning and up to Monday.’

Speaking to the *Observer* he said, “There is expectation of advection of medium and high clouds for North Al Batinah and Al Buraimi governorates.”

The temperature is expected to dip.

Currently, the wind experienced is southeasterly, but once the trough passes by the temperature is expected to cool down.

“After the trough the wind directly will change

to northwesterly bringing down the temperature,” said the meteorologist.

In many wilayats the temperature had gone down to 12 degrees Celsius namely Qarn Alam — 12.0 degrees Celsius, Joba — 11.9 degrees Celsius, Muqshin — 11.7 degrees Celsius, Haima — 11.1 degrees Celsius and the lowest was recorded in Saiq — 4.7 degrees Celsius.

The cloudy to partly cloudy skies over Musandam Governorate with chances of rain occasionally thundershowers is also expected to be associated with fresh downdraft wind with advection of clouds over Al Buraimi and part of Oman Sea Coast with chance of isolated rain. Over the rest of the Sultanate of Oman, the chances of late night to early morning low level clouds or fog patches are expected to continue over parts of Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, South Al Sharqiyah, North Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates.



CRAFTING A CULTURAL IDENTITY

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Al Jarz, a small axe of Musandam, was a necessity once upon a time. The axe is fixed on a long stick and this is made from the trees such as Al Majz or Jujube found in Musandam.

Al Jarz continues to have its significance today but more as a cultural identity.

Crafts of the Sultanate of Oman have a special place in society because traditions continue to be cherished even in the millennium. The country's list of craft industries include making of daggers and swords, leather, textiles, carpets, weaving, pottery, incense making, palm leave products, weaving, copper and silversmithing. Incense burners, rose water distillation and frankincense harvesting are also part of it. The list can go on with the fact that there are dedicated men and women who have been practising it from one generation to another. Today their main exposure to the public is through exhibitions.

However, way back on November 5, 1995, believing in the craft industry of the Sultanate of Oman and the support the artisans and craftsmen needed, Mona Ritchie founded the Omani Heritage Gallery with the objective of promoting and finding market for Omani crafts that are made by the nationals.

"The venture started through Marcia Dorr and Neil Richardson who were commissioned to do studies on the handicraft industry in the Sultanate of Oman", said Mona.

This is why she thought of venturing into Omani crafts. "I perceived lack of cohesive sustainability for the crafts of the country. Some organisations were selling them but with no idea of quality control or even what the market needed. Most importantly there was no feedback to the artisans."

Her success has been the network of craftspeople she developed over the years.

When asked whether craftspeople can be entrepreneurs, she said, "Yes they can be entrepreneurs if by that you mean independent businesses. But they need help in reaching the markets, marketing themselves, though many now do that via Instagram etc."

"The younger ones are more tech savvy though they too sometimes have difficulty in understanding pricing, and sometimes I feel they need to get to a wider international market", noted Mona, founder of Omani Heritage Gallery who is fascinated by the Omani lotus design. She is very protective of the design.

She recently held a gift market at the Gallery and participating with others were the renowned potter from Bahla, Zayed bin

Abdullah al Adawi. He was surrounded by young children who were fascinated watching him work with the wheel, on his part he soon began to give children the opportunity to wet their hands, apply clay and try make their own little pots. The texture and the feel of it along with creativity made the children want to linger on and try again.

Al Adawi was actually triggering inspiration in future potters. Clay pots of the Sultanate of Oman are something that is still in demand for keeping potable water cool and the decorative pots have received interest from younger generation and have also found new markets in the West and the Far East.

The pandemic, however, has created further challenges for the



craftsmen.

Fauziya al Balushi has been creating a niche for her products — incenses, perfumeries and traditional clothing, which resulted in her boutique — Mihral brand with branches in Muscat and Salalah.

Previously Boutique Mihral was assisted and supported partially by the Crafts Authority through marketing by organising and holding different events, however due to Covid-19, such events have come to standstill, which has had an effect on our business continuity as a result of avoiding the spread of coronavirus. As an impact of Covid-19's existence"

According to Khalid al Harubi, a communications adviser and founder as well as Managing Director of Impact Integrated said after having conversations with artisans, there are a number of recommendations for them to reach their potential.



PROPOSALS TO REACH POTENTIAL

- 1 Redefining crafts industry culture to embrace a "Creative Industry" mindset that promotes diversity, creativity and the digital economy.
- 2 Set a market share for the industry within the global \$500-800 billion crafts industry market, which is ripe for disruption by the more inclusive creative industry.
- 3 Encouraging industry best practices and discipline. Over-complimenting newcomers, especially aspiring artists, does more harm than good.
- 4 Investing in national non-fungible tokens (NFT) initiatives. NFTs are changing artists' relationship with their ecosystem & their intellectual property rights forever.
- 5 You cannot improve the quality of your work or gain a better market share without 3 qualities: Training & continuous improvement mindset, Patience & Discipline. Those who lack these qualities should not be considered as artists or artisans.
- 6 The first step the government can take to facilitate a better creative ecosystem is to make a Creative Licence available, this is so artists can experiment and grow without having to worry about unnecessary fixed costs.
- 7 Creative hubs are the most effective way to facilitate for an ecosystem to flourish.



Philippines includes Oman in green list

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 15

The Philippine Bureau of Immigration (BI) has included the Sultanate of Oman in the green list while people from six countries in the red list will be barred from entering the country.

Beginning on February 16, 2022, proof of full vaccination shall be made a requirement for entry of all foreign nationals allowed to enter the Philippines.

Travellers from the green list countries will have to present negative RT-PCR test results taken within 48 hours prior to departure. They will be exempted from the facility-based quarantine, self-monitor for any sign or symptom until the 7th day from arrival.

The testing and quarantine protocols of minors (below three years) shall follow the testing and quarantine protocol of the parent/guardian travelling with them, regardless of the minor's vaccination status, and country of origin. Unless symptomatic, minors 3 years and below, shall not be required to present a negative RT-PCR test result. Symptomatic minors 3 years and below shall be subject to the usual testing, and quarantine procedures for international arriving passengers.

A fully vaccinated individual is someone who has more than or equal to two weeks after having received the second dose in a two-dose vaccine; or more than or equal to two weeks after having received a single-dose vaccine.

Development projects in Al Dakhiliyah debated

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, JAN 15

Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, met with the walis of wilayats and officials of government agencies in the governorate to discuss ways to implement His Majesty the Sultan's directives issued during his last meeting with the shaikhs of the governorate.

The governor, in his speech, referred to the 11th of January Anniversary and the Renewed Renaissance, highlighting the important announcements made by His Majesty through his speeches and directives.

He pointed out the expanding role of governorates in the development of service sectors with a view to improving their performance.

The meeting discussed several matters regarding His Majesty's directives to simplify procedures and cooperation between government agencies to complete works in an integrated manner that increases efficiency. It also dealt with providing services

that live up to the aspirations of citizens and help speed up and simplify procedures.

Working teams were formed to study the actual situation and challenges, asking them to submit proposals to simplify the procedures of government agencies for the benefit of beneficiaries. The teams have to submit their reports in three months.

The meeting discussed the need to develop a unified mechanism for sending circulars and correspondences between government institutions to ensure their delivery on time.

It also considered the issue of having a communication plan between the governor's office and the rest of the institutions in the governorate to provide the office with information on important plans and projects being implemented.

During the meeting, officials of government institutions gave proposals to improve their functioning and to ease work in the various service sectors of the governorate.



■ FROM P1

RO 318m OQ Salalah project to open today

1 Capacity: 264,000 tonnes of LPG, 155,000 tonnes of propane, 111,000 tonnes of butane, and 38,000 tonnes of condensates can be produced annually.

2 While 90 per cent of the total production volume of propane and butane are exported, the remaining 10 per cent of the propane and butane products are used as LPG in Dhofar.

3 Over 150 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) benefited from OQ's ICV programme during the implementation of the project.

4 OQ awarded contracts totalling around RO 100 million to local vendors and service providers.

Touted as one of the most vital and strategic projects in the Sultanate of Oman, OQ LPG aims to meet the energy requirements of local industrial and retail consumers. Surplus output will be exported to world markets through OQ Trading, the marketing arm of the group. The plant has a capacity to produce about 837 tonnes of LPG per day, and about 264,000 tonnes per year.

About 155,000 tonnes of propane, 111,000 tonnes of butane, and 38,000 tonnes of condensates can be produced annually.

While 90 per cent of the total production volume of propane and butane are exported, along with the condensates, the remaining 10 per cent of the propane and butane products are used as LPG for domestic use locally in order to meet the necessary needs of LPG

in the Governorate of Dhofar.

Additionally, the Group is studying the feasibility of using LPG products to develop petrochemical industries to help optimise value creation.

In terms of its In-Country Value (ICV) development strategy, over 150 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) benefited from OQ's ICV programme during the implementation of the project, as

OQ awarded contracts totalling around RO 100 million to local vendors and service providers. This has resulted in creating business opportunities and providing jobs for national cadres, in line with Oman Vision 2040. The total of about RO 100 million has been announced to be the in-country added value of the project during its establishment phase and after its commissioning.

Public transport to get a boost with women-driven taxis

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

In a major step towards transforming the public transport system, the country will get women-driven taxis for the first time.

The female Otaxi service will be launched in Muscat Governorate on January 20 in the first phase.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Harith al Maqbali, the CEO of Otaxi, said that the service will be launched with nine female drivers with plans for gradual expansion.

Several people welcomed the decision and said it was a matter of time as the service was launched for the benefit of women officegoers, students, and even homemakers.



"Women are generally reluctant to travel in taxis alone driven by a male driver but this female taxi service will give them confidence," said Rachel, a schoolteacher, who has several female colleagues who use various types of private transport.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on Thursday gave its approval to Aalam A'ssahab (clouds world) company to provide a female taxi service via Otaxi's app-based bookings.

The service offers online

tracking of taxis with prices fixed set prior to the start of trips.

The licence allows female drivers/operators to choose distinctive colours for their vehicles (white and pink).

The service will provide employment opportunities for female job-seekers, allowing them to work as taxi drivers or earn additional income while they wait for jobs, an official statement said.

The Otaxi service, which has been in operation for nearly four years, allows customers to pay via cards or cash.

"Otaxi has been one of its kind and an advanced way of public transportation in the Sultanate of Oman," said Al Maqbali.



Sultanate of Oman
The Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary
Tender Announcement

The Administrative Affairs Council of the Judiciary announces its desire to re-submit the following tender:

Tender No	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
04/2022	Construction of Additional Offices at Al Khabourah Primary Court	24/1/2022	21/02/2022	Fourth	RO. 30/-

Where you can buy the tender documents electronically via the link below website :
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders shall submit their bids electronically via the aforementioned website. An electronic bank guarantee certified by one of the banks operating in the country shall be delivered at a rate of (1%) of the bid value with each bid, valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission of bids and addressed in the name of the Chairman of the Internal Committee of Tenders in the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, and the latest updates to the electronic tender system.

1- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

2- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:

Phone: +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@ta.gov.om



Russian incursion would ‘violate freedom’, says UK minister

UKRAINE CRISIS

LONDON: An invasion by Russia into Ukraine would violate the “most basic freedoms and sovereignty”, the Defence Secretary has said following a visit to Scandinavia.

Issuing a second warning in a week to Moscow, Ben Wallace said there would be “consequences” of any Russian aggression towards Ukraine. On Monday, he fired a shot across the bows, telling an event in London that Britain would “stand up to bullies”, no matter how faraway the conflict.

Tensions on the Ukrainian border continue to be fraught, with the US suggesting Moscow is preparing for a “false-flag operation” in order to spark an incursion into neighbouring territory.

The new US intelligence was unveiled after little progress was made in talks between the Kremlin and Washington and its Western allies aimed at heading off the escalating crisis.

Amid the stand-off, Cabinet minister Mr Wallace met Nordic partners this week, including Finland which shares a border with Russia.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) said he met with ministers in Sweden, Finland and Norway to discuss Russia’s continued aggression and military build-up on Ukraine’s border, with some 100,000 troops amassed at the divide.

The Defence Secretary said: “The UK and our Nordic partners are united in our approach to up-



A militant of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic checks a machine gun at fighting positions on the line of separation from the Ukrainian armed forces near the rebel-controlled settlement of Yasne in Donetsk region, Ukraine. — Reuters

holding European security.

“My discussions this week have been directly about deepening bilateral relations, shared security and the consequences of Russian aggression towards Ukraine.

“Our discussions were clear that a Russian invasion of Ukraine would be a strategic mistake, violating the most basic freedoms and sovereignty.

“Britain and the Nordic countries have a long and shared history.

“Our European neighbours and allies remain vital partners as we work together to defend our common values, counter shared threats and build resilience in our neighbourhood, the UK will always stand with them.”



The UK and our Nordic partners are united in our approach to upholding European security

BEN WALLACE
UK Defence Secretary

Labour said the threats facing Ukraine must be met with “strength and solve” by Nato and Europe, with shadow defence secretary John Healey having visited the country this week.

“The Western allies must work hard to maintain their deterrent pressure on Russia and stand by Ukraine,” said the senior opposition MP.

Giving details of the Defence Secretary’s three-day visit, the MoD said that Mr Wallace met with his Swedish counterpart, Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist, before travelling to Finland to hold discussions with President Sauli Niinisto, Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto and Defence Minister Antti Kaikkonen. — dpa

Italy’s centre-right parties want Berlusconi to stand for presidency

ROME: Former Italian leader Silvio Berlusconi looks increasingly likely to run for president in elections that start later this month, after Italy’s centre-right parties agreed on his candidacy.

Manfred Weber, the conservative German politician who heads the European People’s Party (EPP) group, also endorsed Berlusconi on Saturday.

The pan-European EPP is composed of conservative and centre-right parties from across the continent.

“As leader of the European People’s Party, I support Berlusconi for the presidency of the republic because he has shown that he has the awareness to hold the office,” Weber told *Corriere della Sera* newspaper.

In Italy, the deputies, senators and representatives of the 20 regions elect the president of the republic.

To win, a two-thirds majority is needed in the first three rounds of voting. In the fourth, an absolute majority is sufficient.

The first ballot is scheduled for January 24.

The leading members of several right-wing parties

met on Friday evening at Berlusconi’s Rome villa.

The lawmakers from the conservative Forza Italia party, the far-right Lega, the hard-right Brothers of Italy and others agreed that 85-year-old Berlusconi was the right person to become president. A later statement said he had the “authority and experience that the country deserves and Italians expect” in the current difficult situation.



Meanwhile leading leftist lawmakers

have criticised his plans to stand. Giuseppe Conte, who leads the populist Five Star Movement, described his candidacy as an “unthinkable option.”

“The figure of the president of the republic must reflect a high and undisputed moral profile. I don’t think Berlusconi can boast these requirements,” leftist politician Loredana de Petris tweeted on Saturday.

Germany’s Social Democrats also criticised Weber for supporting Berlusconi on Saturday, calling the decision to back him strange, given the fact that far-right lawmakers are also behind him. — dpa

Tongans flee tsunami after massive volcano erupts

NUKU’ALOFA, Tonga: Frightened Tongans fled to higher ground on Saturday after a massive volcanic eruption — heard in neighbouring countries — triggered tsunami warnings across the South Pacific.

“A 1.2 metre tsunami wave has been observed at Nuku’alofa,” Australia’s Bureau of Meteorology tweeted.

The latest eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcano came just a few hours after a separate Friday tsunami warning was lifted due to the eruption.

Mere Taufa said she was in her house getting ready for dinner when the volcano erupted.

“It was massive, the ground shook, our house was shaking. It came in waves. My younger

The eruption was so intense it was heard as ‘loud thunder sounds’ in Fiji more than 800 kilometres away

brother thought bombs were exploding nearby,” Taufa told the Stuff news website.

She said water filled their home minutes later and she saw the wall of a neighbouring house collapse.

“We just knew straight away it was a tsunami. Just water gushing into our home.

“You could just hear screams everywhere, people screaming for safety, for everyone to get to higher ground.”



Tonga’s King Tupou VI was reported to have been evacuated from the Royal Palace in Nuku’alofa and taken by a police convoy to a villa well away from

the coastline. The initial eruption lasted at least eight minutes and sent plumes of gas, ash and smoke several kilometres into the air.

Residents in coastal areas were urged to head for higher ground.

The eruption was so intense it was heard as “loud thunder sounds” in Fiji more than 800 kilometres away, officials in Suva said.

Fijian officials warned residents to cover water collection tanks in case of acidic rain fall.

Victorina Kioa of the Tonga Public Service Commission said on Friday that people should “keep away from areas of warning which are low-lying coastal areas, reefs and beaches”.

The head of Tonga Geological Services Taaniela Kula urged people to stay indoors, wear a mask if they were outside and cover rainwater reservoirs and rainwater harvesting systems.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre issued a “tsunami advisory” for American Samoa, saying there was a threat of “sea level fluctuations and strong ocean currents that could be a hazard along beaches”.

Similar warnings were issued by authorities in New Zealand, Fiji, Vanuatu and Australia — where authorities said a swathe of coastline including Sydney could be hit by tsunami waves.

People in surrounding New South Wales state were “advised to get out of the water and move away from the immediate water’s edge”. The Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcano sits on an uninhabited island about 65 kilometres north of the Tongan capital Nuku’alofa. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

MANILA

Philippines’ daily Covid tally at record high

The Philippines’ daily tally of new Covid-19 cases hit a record high for the third straight day on Saturday, as the health department confirmed the community transmission of the Omicron variant in the capital region.

The Department of Health reported 39,004 additional Covid-19 cases on Saturday, the highest daily count since the pandemic started, pushing the country’s total caseload to more than 3.16 million. The death toll



rose by 43 to 52,858, it added.

The cases have been spiking in the past two weeks. About half of the infections were from the capital region of Metro Manila, a sprawling metropolis of over 13 million people.

TEHRAN

Iran talks hit critical stage

Chief negotiators from Iran and Europe returned home for consultations as talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal reached a critical stage, state media in the Islamic republic said. “The negotiators will return to Vienna in two days” but expert-level discussions at the eighth round of talks would continue on Saturday and Sunday, IRNA news agency said.

The talks between Tehran and world powers resumed in late November after they were suspended for around five months as



Iran elected a new, ultraconservative government. Iran agreed the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the US.

SANAA

Yemen fighters reject UN call to free flagged ship

Yemen’s Ansar Allah fighters on Saturday rejected a UN request to release an Emirati-flagged vessel they seized earlier this month, saying it carried weapons. “The *Rwabee* vessel was not carrying... toys for children but weapons for extremists,” Ansar Allah official Hussein al Azzi said. The Ansar Allah seized the ship on January 3 off the Red Sea port of Hodeida, along with its 11-member crew, and then released a video which they said shows military equipment on board.



The UAE has described the *Rwabee* as a “civilian cargo vessel”. It said the ship was leased by a Saudi company and that it had been in international waters carrying equipment to be used at a field hospital.

As Omicron uncertainty mounts, return-to-office plans are revised

More changes could be coming soon as guidance from public health authorities continues to shift and the administration pushes to keep the economy running

It was the first workday of 2022. Many people had hoped to be heading into work, some for the first time in nearly two years. Brooks Brothers had sent out a promotional email about how to “look great at the office.” But workers across the country remained home, with little idea when they might see their offices again.

With Covid case counts soaring, fuelled by the highly contagious omicron variant, businesses are once again weighing when to reopen and what steps they need to take to do so safely.

In recent days, Jefferies, Goldman Sachs, Chevron and many more employers have delayed or changed their January return-to-office plans. Starbucks, Delta Air Lines and BlackRock have amended their Covid safety protocols, responding to shifting guidance from public health authorities.

At Jefferies, the investment bank, a memo to the staff on Monday morning from Rich Handler, the CEO, and Brian Friedman, the president, announced a new plan: “Realistically, we do not foresee us all having a safe opportunity to be together in our offices until at least Monday, January 31.”

The executives added a dose of optimism: “While nobody knows for sure, we believe (and fervently hope) this could be the last truly challenging period of this pandemic.”

The memo reflected a view, shared by some business leaders, that the spread of the omicron variant — which is more infectious but also milder, especially for the vaccinated — could usher in the endemic phase of the pandemic, and with it a wave of office reopenings that might actually be executed.

Other companies are devising new ways to keep their workplaces open.

Starbucks announced on Monday that it would reduce the number of days that vaccinated, asymptomatic workers who test positive must isolate, to five days from 10, following the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The company also said US workers would have to be fully vaccinated by February 9 or submit to weekly testing, in compliance with a Biden administration vaccine rule for large employers.

A spokesperson for Starbucks said the company gave store and district managers some leeway to decide when specific locations need to make adjustments, like opening for drive-thru orders only. “Our retail leaders are empowered to modify operations locally”, said Reggie Borges, the company spokesperson. “They’re able to make those adjustments on the fly.”

CNN, which had earlier planned a January return for some employees, confirmed to its staff in an email on Sunday that its offices would remain closed except to “those who absolutely need to be there.”

Goldman Sachs told US employees on Sunday to work from home until January 18. The investment bank, which called most of its staff back to the office in June,



Dr Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, attends a Covid briefing with President Joe Biden at the White House in Washington.

had announced just last week that it would increase its vaccination and testing requirements, even as its Wall Street rivals were returning to remote work.

More changes could be coming soon as guidance from public health authorities continues to shift and the administration pushes to keep the economy running.

Dr Anthony Fauci said on Sunday that the CDC was considering recommending that Americans test negative for the coronavirus before leaving isolation, updating a policy change it made just last month. For companies like Delta, that might mean once again altering protocols. For others, that may invite an intense set of negotiations with unions.

On Friday, the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments over the legality of the Biden administration’s mandate for large employers to require vaccinations or weekly testing. Meanwhile, the very meaning of “fully vaccinated” may soon change.

Marcia St Hilaire-Finn, who runs Bright Start Early Care and Preschool in Washington, DC, said she recently changed her coronavirus policies and approach, responding to both news about omicron and new CDC guidance. Previously, if an employee or child tested positive, she closed their classroom for 10 days. Now she requires vaccinated asymptomatic employees with Covid to isolate for just five days, though classroom closures last longer because the children are not vaccinated.

Over the holidays, St Hilaire-Finn offered a \$100 bonus to any employee who got a booster shot. She estimates that every staff member will have received a booster shot by the end of this week.

“At this point, we’re leaning more towards being open than closed”, she said.

George Colony, the CEO of Forrester Research, a consulting firm in Boston, said last month that he was once again pushing back his company’s office return.

“We expected to open our US offices in early January”, he said. “That timetable is not going to happen. We are going to stay remote.”

Colony said he was preparing for some Forrester employees to be out of commission in the weeks ahead. “I think many of us are going to get sick here in the next few months”, he said. “I expect more people will be absent, more people will be sick.”

When to bring recovered workers back will be a new challenge.

If the CDC recommends that infected workers test negative before returning to work — as many scientists have urged it to do — companies will have to figure out how to supply in-demand tests to employees. While big companies have been buying tests in bulk, smaller employers often do not have that capacity. Deciding whom to prioritise for tests, who pays for them and how to verify the results will bedevil boardrooms in the coming months.

Some firms have already begun to incorporate testing into their plans. BlackRock, the asset management firm, told its roughly 7,600 US employees before the holidays that it was “encouraging flexibility” and requiring those who continue to go into the office to be tested weekly.

Last week, it announced it would extend that policy through January 28.

How exercise may tame our anxiety

To better cope with all the dispiriting news this winter about rising Covid-19 cases and so much else, you might want to get out and play in the snow, according to a new report.

The large-scale study of almost 200,000 cross-country skiers found that being physically active halves the risk of developing clinical anxiety over time.

The study, from Sweden, focused on skiing, but the researchers said almost any kind of aerobic activity likely helps protect us against excessive worry and dread, a cheering thought as we face yet another grim pandemic season.

Science already offers plenty of encouraging evidence that exercise can lift our moods. Experiments show that when people (and lab animals) start working out, they typically grow calmer, more resilient, happier and less apt to feel unduly sad, nervous or angry than before.

Public health research studies, which often focus on the links between one type of activity or behaviour and various aspects of health or longevity, likewise find that more exercise is linked with substantially lower chances of developing severe depression; conversely, being sedentary increases the risk for depression.

A remarkable neurological study from 2013 even found that exercise leads to reductions in twitchy, rodent anxiety by prompting an increase in the production of specialised neurons that release a chemical that soothes over activity in other parts of the brain.

But most of these studies were small, short-term or mainly relevant to mice, leaving open many questions about what kinds of exercise might help our mental health, how long mood enhancements might potentially last, whether men and women benefit equally and whether it is possible

to work out too much and perhaps increase your likelihood of feeling emotionally worse off.

So for the new study, which was published in Frontiers in Psychiatry, exercise scientists at Lund University in Sweden and other institutions decided it would be worthwhile to look into the long-term mental health of the thousands upon thousands of men and women who have raced Sweden’s famous Vasaloppet cross-country skiing event over the years.

“We use participation in a Vasaloppet as a proxy for a physically active and healthy lifestyle”, said Tomas Deierborg, Director of the Experimental Medicine Department at Lund University and senior author of the new study, who has twice completed the 90K race.

To start, he and his colleagues gathered finishing times and other information for 197,685 Swedish men and women who participated in one of the races between 1989 and 2010. They then cross-checked this information with data from a Swedish national registry of patients, looking for diagnoses of clinical anxiety disorder among the racers in the following 10-20 years.

For comparison, they also checked anxiety diagnoses during the same time period for 197,684 of their randomly selected fellow citizens who had not participated in the race and were generally considered relatively inactive.

The skiers, the researchers found, proved to be considerably calmer over the decades after their race than the other Swedes, with more than 50 per cent less risk of developing clinical anxiety.

These good spirits tended to prevail among male and female skiers of almost any age — except, interestingly, the fastest female racers. The top female finishers from each

A physically active lifestyle seems to have a strong effect on reducing the chances of developing an anxiety disorder

TOMAS DEIERBORG,
Director of experimental medicine department, Lund University

year tended to be more likely afterward to develop anxiety disorders than other racers, although their risk overall remained lower than for women of the same age in the control group.

These results indicate “the link between exercise and reduced anxiety is strong”, said Dr Lena Brundin, a lead investigator of neurodegenerative diseases at the Van Andel Research Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who was another author on the study.

“It is not necessary to complete extreme exercise to achieve the beneficial effects on anxiety”, Brundin said.

The findings have limitations, though. They cannot prove exercise causes people to enjoy better moods, only that highly active people tend to be less anxious than their more sedentary peers.

The study also does not explain how skiing might reduce anxiety levels. The researchers suspect physical activity changes levels of brain chemicals related to mood, such as dopamine and serotonin, and reduces inflammation throughout the body and brain, contributing physiologically to stouter mental health. Getting outside among silent, snow-drenched pines and far from Zoom calls while training for a Vasaloppet probably does not hurt, either.

Any exercise in any setting likely should help us cope better this winter, the researchers said. “A physically active lifestyle seems to have a strong effect on reducing the chances of developing an anxiety disorder”, said Deierborg, who hopes to extend those benefits to the next generation. He plans to enter and train for another Vasaloppet in a few years, he said, when his young children are old enough to join him.

Let’s talk a walk



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

Dr Hamed al Sinawi is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

According to a recent study by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in the Sultanate of Oman, 66 per cent of the population are suffering with obesity, the majority of them are women.

The study also suggest that one in four Omanis is at risk of developing obesity. These are alarming figures especially that obesity is the main cause of diabetes and heart disease as well as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety and eating disorders.

So how did we get to this and what can we do about it?

The improvement of financial situation of the public in the Sultanate of Oman and other Gulf countries along with the combination of more fast food

outlets and lack of physical activities are the main factors behind this wave of obesity.

One can even go to the extent of blaming the delivery services and strong advertising campaigns in shaping our eating habits.

For most people food is beyond satisfying hunger, it is a way of expressing our social status. We eat out to celebrate, we also eat out to feel good and share photos of our plates and fancy restaurants in social media to announce our status to our virtual friends.

Also social events like weddings, birthdays and graduations become an opportunity to share large amount of food that is usually rich in fats and carbohydrates.

Next to our eating habits comes

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES CAN BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM AND IMPROVE BOTH YOUR PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

lack of physical activities as most of us walk less and use cars even for short commutes, no wonder that our bodies consume lots of food and burn little energy.

So what can we do to promote healthier life style?

Health psychologists can help by promoting individuals to self-monitor their eating habits and physical activity. They can also recommend ways of managing stress without restoring to comfort

eating which we sometimes do when we feel stressed, anxious or bored and give people tips to keep up with healthy lifestyle and not relapse back into old unhealthy habits.

Let’s agree that not all of us are up for gym membership or heavy weight lifting, not just because of our age, busy schedule or being able to afford gym membership, but we could be lacking the motivation to make such an effort.

Therefore, more health experts are suggesting adding small steps to our daily routine like having regular walks and parking further away from the building and walk extra distance, using the stares when possible instead of the elevators.

Using a smart watch that

calculate steps can help us get more motivated.

There are also smart phone applications such as sweat coin that gives you discounts vouchers when you complete certain number of steps. With time and dedication we can adopt more healthy habits in our daily routine.

The benefit of walking goes beyond the physical exercise as recent psychological studies showed taking a walk in the park or by the beach, hiking or swimming can improve your attention, lower your stress levels and reduce your risk of developing mental health problems.

So what are you waiting for? Grab you shoes and dress comfortably and let’s go for a walk.

France marks 400 years of master of stage and satire

RAPHAELLE PICARD, ERIC RANDOLPH

France has launched a year of events to mark the 400th anniversary of Moliere, the nation’s most illustrious and ever popular master of the stage and satire. Baptised on January 15, 1622, and probably born a day or two before, Moliere — real name Jean-Baptiste Poquelin — remains as central to French culture as Shakespeare to the English-speaking world.

When the French refer to their native tongue, it is as the “language of Moliere”.

Many of the celebrations will be staged in places that marked his life as an actor, company director and playwright, but above all at the Comedie-Francaise, created by King Louis XIV in 1680, seven years after Moliere’s death.

His plays alone will be performed at the Paris monument to Moliere until July, which began from Saturday with the original censored version of “Tartuffe”, which will be shown live in cinemas too. The play is considered to have practically invented the “comedy of manners” satirising the moral hypocrisies of high society.

“The Imaginary Invalid”, “The Miser” and “The Bourgeois Gentleman” will follow at the Comedie-Francaise, the longest-running theatre company in the world, performing his work every single year since it opened.

The theatre near the Louvre museum, “is anchored in the quarter where he lived and where he died and he’s everywhere in the air,” Comedie-Francaise actress Dominique Blanc said.

“I have a relationship with him like a friend,” she said.

Actor Denis Podalydes said he was not “superstitious” about any presence of Moliere’s spirit at the theatre. “He sleeps in his works until we play them (and then) there’s something very lively,” he said.

In Versailles, where Moliere enjoyed Louis XIV’s patronage, several of the best known plays will be performed in their original versions as “comedies-ballets”, collaborations with Baroque composer Jean-Baptiste Lully.

The town on the western edge of Paris holds a Moliere month every summer and a statue by Xavier Veilhan will be unveiled in May following a Moliere exhibition opening on Saturday.

Moliere fled Paris at 23, spending the next 13 years with a travelling troupe and anniversary events will be held up and down the country.

Saturday will see another statue unveiled at Pezenas, in the southwest, where Moliere stayed repeatedly in those early years.

The historic heart of the town will be taken over by scenes from the plays and his life. An official Moliere stamp will be offered as a pre-issue.

The CNCS national centre for theatre costume at Moulin, in central France, will open a “Moliere in costume” exhibition, at the end of May.

The Paris Opera will celebrate the anniversary with “Moliere in Music” from September. — AFP

An entrepreneur and a swindler



William H Janeway

The writer is a special limited partner at the private-equity firm Warburg Pincus, is an affiliated lecturer in economics at the University of Cambridge and author of *Doing Capitalism in the Innovation Economy*

CAMBRIDGE: The conviction of Elizabeth Holmes for fraud perpetrated as founder and CEO of Theranos has triggered intense debate about what the episode means for the innovation economy.

Did Holmes, aggressively implementing Silicon Valley’s “fake it until you make it” credo, simply run out of runway? Is the venture capitalist and Theranos investor Tim Draper right to worry that her conviction will reduce the “willingness to bet on” the type of entrepreneurs who “made Silicon Valley the innovation engine of the world”?

Or is the situation more complicated? In fact, Holmes’s trial and conviction illuminate two trends at the heart of the American political and financial economy. The first is the broad retreat from prosecuting financial manipulators as criminals, a development evident since the incarceration of Enron and WorldCom senior executives following the collapse of the 1998-2000 dot-com bubble.

Consider the difference between the aftermath of the 1980s savings and loan debacle and what followed the 2008 global financial crisis. In the former case, notes ProPublica’s Jesse Eisinger, “the Department of Justice prosecuted over a thousand people, including top executives of many of the largest failed banks.” In the latter instance, by contrast, “only one top banker went to jail.”

Eisinger’s 2017 book, *The Chickenshit Club*, documents a profound shift in attitudes within the DOJ — and especially within the Office of the US District Attorney for the Southern District of New York, which has jurisdiction over Wall Street — during the first decade of this century.

He traces this development to the 2002 liquidation of Arthur Andersen, a “Big Five” accounting firm, following its conviction for obstruction of justice relating to its work for Enron. Instead of seeking to hold individual executives criminally liable for enormous financial losses, the authorities repeatedly settled the charges in exchange for fines ultimately paid by shareholders, not executives.

The second broad trend has been the enormous flood of “nontraditional capital” (from family offices, mutual funds, hedge funds, sovereign wealth funds and individual billionaires) into venture capital-backed start-ups over the past six years. In 2021, annual capital directly committed to VC funds finally exceeded the \$100 billion raised in 2000, but more than that amount was invested by non-VCs into VC-backed start-ups, reaching a record combined total of \$330 billion, almost double the amount for 2020.

Fueled by this explosion, late-stage valuations have soared alongside public equity markets, which are driven largely by the Big Tech firms that these start-ups

aspire to emulate. Equally important, investors necessarily accept illiquidity — the legal inability to sell their shares — when committing capital to private ventures. And in many cases, like that of Theranos, they have accepted terms granting founders near-absolute control, no matter how much capital is raised.

Chief among the forces driving this bubble is the unprecedentedly loose monetary-policy regime that has prevailed since 2008. The US Federal Reserve and other major central banks have reduced risk-free interest rates to (and in some cases beyond) the “zero lower bound” and mobilised a range of unconventional instruments — under the heading of “quantitative easing” (QE) — to flood financial markets with cash. Walter Bagehot, the nineteenth-century editor of *The Economist*, summarised the predictable outcome of these policies 150 years ago:

“The history of the trade cycle had taught me that a period of a low rate of return on investments inexorably leads toward irresponsible investment. ... People won’t take 2% and cannot bear a loss of income. Instead, they invest their careful savings in something impossible — a canal to Kamchatka, a railway to Watchet, a plan for animating the Dead Sea.”

A machine that can perform 200 blood tests from a single pinprick is

worthy of Bagehot’s list.

Now that the era of QE appears to be at an end, the most likely long-term consequence will be a shift in the balance of power from entrepreneurs back towards financiers. This will be a sharp break from what we saw in 2020, when over 40 per cent of tech initial public offerings used a dual-class stock structure to entrench founder control. Pre-IPO investors in these cases can neither sell their own stock nor fire the CEO. Like Rupert Murdoch and Betsy DeVos when they bought into Theranos, they are pigeons, not partners.

Some 40 years ago, I formulated a double hedge against the radical uncertainty that attends investments in start-ups operating at or beyond the technological frontier: “Cash and Control.” Investors need enough cash to buy the time necessary to understand an adverse surprise, and enough control to do something about it (which usually starts with firing the CEO).

The nontraditional investors who have piled into late-stage VC-backed firms have plenty of cash, but they usually lack the necessary control. The Uber and WeWork sagas show that until the rules change, even leading professional VCs may have to sue to overcome the “entrepreneur-friendly” terms that they accepted. Many other start-up business models are already losing credibility. For example, as *The Information* reported earlier this month, “instant delivery start-ups” are trying out a new tactic to reduce their exorbitant cash-burn rates: “slower delivery.”

The Theranos story serves as a reminder that raising capital for a venture akin to “animating the Dead Sea” can happen only because investors, especially nontraditional ones, have become desperate in their search for positive real returns. Holmes seems to have been blessed by the Cult of the Entrepreneur, which enables founders to play prospective investors off against each other in pursuit of the friendliest deal. How else could a tech neophyte raise start-up money for such a venture from the likes of Larry Ellison, Don Lucas, and Draper on terms that gave her 100 per cent control?

Holmes’s conviction may augur another broad shift. Bloomberg’s Matt Levine often jokes that “everything is securities fraud,” because any decline in a public company’s stock is likely to trigger a lawsuit by a losing investor. But some entrepreneurial acts really are securities fraud. For those with no interest in participating in transient speculative bubbles inflated by central banks, Holmes’s conviction offers some comfort in an era of big lies. Those who worry that proper enforcement of the law will result in a loss of innovative dynamism would do well to recall that the entire digital revolution emerged in that context.

@Project Syndicate Services

Elizabeth Holmes

Founder of blood-testing startup Theranos



Photo: Nick Otto Aged 37

- Founded Theranos in 2003 at the age of 19

The company claimed to develop machines that could run a range of revolutionary diagnostic tests on a few drops of blood

- Holmes had raised \$92 million by 2010 in venture capital for Theranos
- A 2015 Wall Street Journal report revealed the machines did not work as promised, setting the company's collapse in motion

Holmes put on trial in Sep 2021

Found guilty on four counts of fraud Jan 3

Acquitted on four other charges and jury could not reach a verdict on three others

Faces the possibility of 20 years behind bars for each conviction

AFP

Education’s
Pallet of Black,
Grey, and White



Ray Petersen
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The pandemic continues its ‘blitzkrieg’ on the educational experience of young Omanis, which must leave them wondering “which way is up?” as they embark on another month of online teaching. I am disappointed for them, because I am certain

there are more sustainable options, and I feel online teaching is a ‘painless’ alternative for the educational administrators, as it throws all of the responsibility for the student experience on the long-suffering teachers... It is the lazy option.

An incredibly self-serving option, it has minimal consideration for the quality of the student experience, which is bad enough, but also it will impact upon their psyche, their ability to value themselves as academically sound. Unfortunately, it is not the educational hierarchy that feels the backlash of that deteriorating situation, but those unsung heroes of the pandemic, the schoolteachers, and most regrettably, the students. In fact, which way is up is probably beyond the comprehension of most, as they try to maintain their focus and reign in their frustration.

The managements are saying, “We can only do what we can do,” and then handing the entire length, breadth and depth of the educational experience, effectively saying, “Go online. You have Zoom, or teams, just teach like you do in the classroom,” thus reflecting their lack of educational wisdom, their genuine concern for their teachers, or their students. The discomfiting reality of the pandemic is that online teaching, and online lessons, are certainly not for everyone, teachers or learners, and are a matter of educational, and social expediency. Most concerning for me then, in this vein, are the psychological effects upon the students, and whether they have adequate support structures.

Imagine... you are a student who has been working on and off, mostly online, without the benefit of the ‘usual’ level of genuine and enthusiastic, face-to-face, one-to-one, academic or pastoral support that they both deserve and need as they navigate the tricky waters of higher-level learning. Teachers and lecturers are trained, and professionally developed in how to support students in a classroom setting during their educational training, and continuous professional development phases, but who is helping them, help the students, during this challenging time?

Teachers and students feel that they are on a one-way-ride that is un-nerving, unsettling, and playing havoc with their well-being. Right when the students need to be learning about resilience as a life skill, that will protect them as they enter the ‘real world,’ or the workforce, they are being given the least possible therapeutic and sociological guidance, and that’s not the teachers’ fault... though almost certainly, they will take the blame, the hit, despite their noble intentions.

Research by experts Barret and Turner (2001) holds that though teachers have concerns about their ability to deliver effective specific support to students with learning and social support needs, they were in fact found to have “as many, if not more, positive results than psychologists. I’m not promoting the concept of teachers as therapists, but they are! They are the first responders, the ambulance at the top of the hill!

Let’s not fool ourselves. If the United Nations considers that as many as three out of ten of us have psychological issues that require intervention, and that’s not even taking into account that a third of us are concerned about the prospect of losing our jobs... pandemic or no pandemic! And our young people... our learners... are just people... younger yes, but they are... at the end of the day... just young people. What they are good at, bad at, how they are seen by others, all matter so much to them.

How they are seen by others may be seen by parents and grandparents as a hundred shades of grey, but for these wonderful young people... a cut lunch, a torch, and a compass, are the least they need to find their way in the dark.

They live in a very different spectrum, where they have not yet developed sufficient resilience for this wild ride... where their lives, their worth, their happiness, their vitality, their level of empathy, their achievements, are either black or white, yes or no, win or lose... the institutions must do more.



RIDE OVER
FLOODS

Palestinian pupils catch a ride on the back of a driving school truck on a flooded road in the heavy rain in Gaza City, on Saturday. — AFP

When tennis became stage for
right and wrong during Covid

DAMIEN CAVE

What began as a power struggle between a defiantly unvaccinated tennis star and a prime minister seeking a distraction from his own preelection missteps has turned into something far weightier: a public stand for pandemic rules and the collective good.

And the sinner of the moment is Novak Djokovic.

Australia — a proud “sporting nation” where the year’s first tennis Grand Slam begins on Monday — hemmed and hawed about Djokovic for more than a week. Australians did not much like how their government had summarily cancelled Djokovic’s visa at the airport. After all their lockdown obedience and vaccine drives, they were also unhappy about the celebrity athlete’s effort to glide into the country while skirting a Covid vaccination mandate.

“As Meryl Streep might say, it’s complicated,” said Peter FitzSimons, an author and former professional rugby player.

But then came a stretch of extraordinary revelations that all but erased any popular ambivalence. Djokovic admitted he had not isolated himself last month while he apparently suspected, and later confirmed, a Covid infection. And he blamed his agent for a false statement on an immigration document that warned of harsh penalties for any errors.

With that, Australia’s leaders decided they had seen enough. On Friday, the country’s immigration minister cancelled Djokovic’s visa for a second time, putting his bid to win a record 21st Grand Slam title in grave doubt. If Djokovic, the top-ranked men’s tennis player, does not successfully challenge the decision in court, he will be detained and deported before competing.

In the final tally, a country far from the epicentres of Covid suffering, where sport is a revered forum for right and wrong, has become an enforcer of the collectivist values that the entire world has been struggling to maintain during the pandemic.

Djokovic sought to play by his own rules. First, he admitted submitting an entry form at the airport that falsely said he had not travelled internationally in the 14 days before he arrived in Melbourne. He had in fact been flying during that time between his native Serbia and Spain. (The misstatement was a “human error,” he said, made by his agent.)

And then there was everything he did during the time he believed he might have been exposed to Covid and eventually, in his telling, tested positive

— the Covid diagnosis that enabled his vaccine exemption in the first place.

Five days in December, more or less, sank his chances of winning an unmatched 10th Australian Open, as the world saw what his many critics have described as his selfish and reckless disregard for the health of others.

The tale begins on December 14, when, as a photograph attests, he went to a basketball game in Belgrade, the Serbian capital, with someone who later tested positive for Covid. On December 16, according to an affidavit his lawyers filed in Australian federal court after his first visa was cancelled, he took a PCR test that came back positive at 8 pm that day.

The next day, before he had received the result, he said, he took a rapid antigen test that came back negative. He then attended a junior tennis ceremony in Belgrade, where photographs show him posing without a mask near children.

Later that day, December 17, Djokovic said he learned about his positive PCR test result. But he did not then go into 14 days of isolation, as the Serbian government requires. The following day, December 18, he did a media interview and a photo shoot at his tennis centre in Belgrade. He later said he knew he was Covid-positive, calling it an “error of judgment” to follow through with the interview but saying he had felt “obliged” to.

The journalists involved said they were never told Djokovic was positive.

Many Australians saw in Djokovic’s actions both dishonesty and a disregard for others. Some questioned whether he had really tested positive in the first place, given the convenient timing for his vaccination exemption. They could almost smell the arrogance in his behaviour, and they found it rank, especially at this stage of the pandemic.

The community spirit that has defined the country’s virus response — with people grinding through lockdowns and longing for family as borders slammed shut, only to then rush out for vaccines — is in an uncertain place at the moment.

Omicron is surging, and Australians are seeing more deaths daily than at any time since Covid hit. They want the wave to pass. They crave continued solidarity.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison sought to exploit that urge when he pounced on Djokovic’s first visa cancellation, tweeting barely an hour after it happened on January 6 that “rules are rules.”

He made the point again on Friday evening after the second visa cancellation was announced, four days after a judge had restored it on procedural grounds.

“Australians have made many sacrifices during this pandemic, and they rightly expect the result of those sacrifices to be protected,” he said.

Although the immigration minister, Alex Hawke, cited what he called a risk to public health in cancelling Djokovic’s visa, doctors were less convinced that health was the issue. With tens of thousands of new Covid cases every day in Australia, and sky-high vaccination rates among the vulnerable, one athlete does not pose much of a threat.

“From a medical perspective, you can say, well, what’s the problem?” said Dr Peter Collignon, a physician and microbiology professor at the Australian National University.

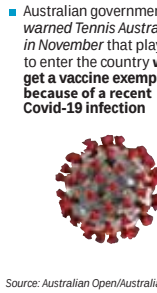
But the “Djokovic affair” is no longer — and maybe never was — just about science. Collignon said that in the third year of the pandemic, it raised the question of moral judgment. “When do we stop punishing people for making bad decisions?” he asked.

In Australia, the answer is “not yet.” — *The New York Times*

In the final tally, a country far from the epicentres of Covid suffering, where sport is a revered forum for right and wrong, has become an enforcer of the collectivist values that the entire world has been struggling to maintain during the pandemic

Different requirements:

Australian institutions battle it out over tennis ace Novak Djokovic

ENTRY TO THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN	ENTRY TO AUSTRALIA	JAN 10 COURT CASE	IMMIGRATION MINISTER
All participants must be vaccinated against Covid-19 or have a medical exemption Exemption requirements included... - A PCR test proving a Covid-19 infection within six months - Djokovic was given his AO exemption because he tested positive for the virus on December 16 - Australian government had warned Tennis Australia in November that players trying to enter the country would not get a vaccine exemption because of a recent Covid-19 infection	Border guards cancel Djokovic's visa on arrival at Melbourne on Jan 5 on grounds he failed to meet entry requirements Djokovic told the guards he was unvaccinated and presented his AO exemption, which was rejected Djokovic is moved to an immigration detention centre while lawyers lodge an appeal	Judge says government side had agreed to drop its visa decision, orders Djokovic's release Djokovic was interviewed overnight at Melbourne airport after his late arrival on January 5 He'd been given until 8:30 am to reply to the proposed cancellation of the visa, but the border agent cancelled it at 7:42 am The change in timing prevented Djokovic from consulting others and submitting a challenge to the cancellation, according to the judge	Immigration minister Alex Hawke cancels Djokovic's visa for the second time on January 14 Said he acted on "health and good order grounds" on the basis that it was in the public interest to do so The department seeks to deport the tennis superstar Cancellation effectively means Djokovic would be barred from Australia for three years Djokovic ordered back into detention on January 15
			
Source: Australian Open/Australian Immigration/AT&T	Photo: Oscar del Pozo	Photo: Oliver Bunic	Djokovic at a practice session, Melbourne, Jan 14 Photo: Martin Keep

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



Muscat edge Al Ittihad; Al Musannah stun Al Suwaiq

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 15

Muscat club registered their second victory in the league as they edged Al Ittihad 2-0 on Saturday in the 11th week of 2021/2022 Omantel League. After their loss in the previous round against Sohar, Muscat club, coached by the experienced national coach Haitham al Alawi, bounced back strongly with the win. The triumph took the capital city team to seventh point and equalised the opponent Al Ittihad who possess the same points. Munther al Wahaibi gave the hosts the lead in the 38th minute. In the second half, Shawqi al Raqadi made it 2-0 after scoring the second goal which delivered the match points to Muscat team. At Al Rustaq Sports Complex, Al Musannah returned to the winning ways as they defeated Al Suwaiq 2-1 in a thriller. Ahmed ‘Kanu’ and his team-mates played a role in the fixture after the referee showed red card for Omar al Fazari in the 44th minute and Al Suwaiq players continued the show with ten-players. The southern Batinah team managed to revert to the victory line after their defeat from Al Rustaq in the last week. The win took coach Hussain al Saadi’s men to the 19th points while Al Suwaiq remained at the 12th point. Naseeb al Ghilani and Majid

al Saadi scored for the winner while Essam al Subhi netted the regulation goal for Al Suwaiq. **SOHAR WIN** Sohar snatched a crucial 2-1 win from Nizwa at the latter’s home in Nizwa Sports Complex. Despite the loss, Nizwa player Emboyo Twetti Juniors netted the first goal for his team in the league. Sohar’s goals were scored by Ahero Romanroov and Abdo Lai in the 16th and 30th minutes respectively. With the triumph against Nizwa, the northern Batinah team registered their second successive win after the victory against Muscat team in the last week. Sohar, under new chairmanship Dawood al Shizawi, managed to reach 15 points while Nizwa are struggling at the bottom with four points only. Oman club missed a golden victory as they were held to a 2-2 draw by Al Nahdha in the dying minutes. Manaa al Mukhaini scored the equaliser for the hosts in the 90th minute to clinch one point from the match. Coach Ibrahim Somar’s men began the match strongly as they netted the opening goal by Mohsin Jawher in the tenth minute. Fahad al Hajri score the equaliser in earlier part of the second half. Dawood brought his team again in the lead but Al Mukhaini ended the match at a 2-2 draw. Al Nahdha’s tally was increased to 19 points while Oman club went up to 16.

Fifth place for Al Zubair and Al Manar Racing

DUBAI: Oman’s Al Faisal Al Zubair and the Al Manar Racing by HRT Team claimed fifth position in the Hankook 24H Dubai at the Dubai Autodrome on Saturday afternoon. Al Zubair teamed up with Dutchman Indy Dontje, Germany’s driver Luca Stolz and Austrian Martin Konrad in the second of two Mercedes-AMG GT3’s run by the Haupt Racing Team. They finished seven laps behind the leading Audi R8 LMS GT3 after completing 589 tours of the Dubai circuit. The sister Abu Dhabi Racing by HRT car finished fourth in the hands of team owner Hubert Haupt, Khaled Al Qubaisi, Raffaele Marciello and Manuel Metzger, with the outright race win after 596 laps and 24 hours of demanding racing falling to MS7 by WRT’s Mohammed Saud Fahad al Saud, Axcil Jefferies, Dries Vanthoor, Christopher Mies and Thomas Neubauer. Al Zubair said: “The race was a very good one, definitely a tough one, and we needed two cars. Coming into the Pro category, we

knew there was going to be a lot of tough teams. But from practice and qualifying, my team did a really great job, the team and all the drivers. “We really felt that we had a chance for the win but we had fuel pump issues and lost three laps. From then on, the chance of victory had gone. Definitely a tough one, but finishing fifth out of 82 cars and in the Pro category in my first 24 hours is something that I should feel proud of.” The crew began the race strongly and held fifth place throughout much of the first sector behind the two WRT and MS7 by WRT Audis, their third-placed team-mates in the Abu Dhabi Racing by HRT Mercedes and Barwell Motorsport’s Lamborghini Huracan. With just over six hours of the race run, the leading Audi had completed 133 laps and Al Manar Racing’s Mercedes was a mere one and a half laps adrift. The team pitted soon afterwards and slipped to 12th with Al Zubair taking over driving duties into the early evening. The Omani was swiftly

back up to 11th. With less than 10 hours to go, as dawn broke over the Dubai circuit, the had climbed back to fifth place with Al Zubair at the wheel, 343 laps into the race and two laps behind. But the quartet were not able to reduce the deficit during the morning and through the closing stages of the race and were forced to settle for fifth overall. The team qualified the Mercedes-AMG GT3 in third place on Friday afternoon with an average of the best three laps of 1min 59.060sec. Pole position fell to Team WRT’s Audi R8 LMS GT3, with Al Zubair’s team-mates Haupt, Al Qubaisi, Marciello and Metzger lining up in second place on the front row of the grid. The Al Manar Racing Mercedes was a mere 0.375 seconds off pole position. Teams were then permitted to carry out night-time practice on the Dubai Autodrome circuit. The Al Manar Racing Mercedes ran for 35 laps and was classified in sixth place with the fastest lap of the session set by Sainteloc Racing’s Audi R8 LMS GT3.





Steve Smith of Australia dives for his crease. — Reuters

ENGLAND STRIKE LATE BUT AUSTRALIA LEAD IN HOBART

HOBART: England's bowlers pegged back Australia with three wickets under the Hobart lights on Saturday night but the hosts reached the close of play on three for 37 with a lead of 152 runs after an eventful second day of the fifth Ashes Test.

The 8,711 crowd at Bellerive Oval witnessed the fall of 17 wickets over the day as Australia were dismissed for 303 in the opening session and England's first innings ended on 188 under the floodlights of the night session.

There was still time for England to remove David Warner for a pair, Marnus Labuschagne for five and Usman Khawaja for 11 as the visiting bowlers got movement and bounce out of the pink ball.

Warner was dismissed by Stuart Broad for the 14th time in his test career, the seamer becoming England's most prolific bowler in Ashes tests with his 129th wicket.

Steve Smith, who had scored 17 not out, and nightwatchman Scott Boland, unbeaten on three, will resume on Sunday looking to

The 8,711 crowd at Bellerive Oval witnessed the fall of 17 wickets over the day as Australia were dismissed for 303 in the opening session and England's first innings ended on 188 under the floodlights of the night session

build on Australia's lead and put the hosts on course to wrap up the series 4-0.

"Bowling them out them out for 180 odd was a really good result," said Australia captain Pat Cummins.

"There are the kind of night session you've got to be wary of, if you get caught with a new ball. I think it was a really good effort to be only really three down in really tough conditions."

Cummins had earlier taken

4-45 as the vanguard of Australia's attack as England's batting once again crumbled in the face of unbridled pace.

England made a calamitous start with Rory Burns run out with only two runs on the board, and none of the English batsmen looked like getting close to a second century of the series for the tourists.

Dawid Malan (25) and his captain Joe Root (34) put together a 49-run partnership that looked like bringing some solidity to the England innings but Cummins dismissed them both in short order.

Chris Woakes was dropped twice in his 36, and Sam Billings made a solid 29 in his first test innings before he was caught on the boundary by Boland off Cameron Green's bowling.

Australia spinner Nathan Lyon did not get to deliver a single ball in England's innings as the pacemen took the load, but he pulled off a brilliant catch at point to dismiss Ben Stokes for four.

Lyon also contributed 31 runs, including three sixes, as Australia's tailenders added 62 runs for the loss of the last four wickets in the opening session.

England's effort was not helped early on by being a bowler short, with Ollie Robinson still suffering from a back spasm that forced him off the field on Friday. The seamer did return to bowl in the evening session.

"It's a huge session tomorrow," said Billings. "Obviously they're in front of the game but we've got an opportunity to really make inroads in the morning." — Reuters

SCOREBOARD

Australia first innings: 303
England first innings: 188
Australia second innings:
D Warner c Pope b Broad.....0
U Khawaja c Billings b Wood.....11
M Labuschagne c Billings b Woakes.....5
S Smith (not out).....17
S Boland (not out).....3
Extras (LB-1).....1
Total (for 3 wks, 19 overs).....37
Fall of wicket: 1-0, 2-5, 3-33
Bowling: Broad 6-1-9-1, Woakes 5-1-13-1, Robinson 4-2-5-0, Wood 4-1-9-1

Karatsev outclasses Murray to take Sydney title

SYDNEY: Former world number one Andy Murray's quest for a first ATP title in over two years ended in defeat at the hands of top seed Aslan Karatsev at the Sydney Tennis Classic on Saturday, with the Russian easing his way to a 6-3 6-3 win.

It was a third career title for the 28-year-old Karatsev, who reached the semifinals of the Australian Open as a qualifier last year.

"It gives energy, confidence, especially when I was supposed to play the ATP Cup. I didn't. So to start the year with the title and I arrive to Melbourne already in winning matches, tournament — it for sure gives some confidence," he told reporters.

Murray, playing in his first final since the European Open in Antwerp in October 2019, started tentatively and was broken in the first game of the match as Karatsev raced into an early lead after a couple of solid holds.

Three-times major winner Murray struggled on serve throughout the opening set, landing just 48% of his first serves and committing four double faults.

The second set began

much like the first as Karatsev broke early to seize the advantage, consistently hurting Murray with a barrage of powerful winners from the back of the court.

Murray showed glimpses of his old self in the fifth game that lasted nearly 13 minutes as the Briton battled valiantly to get a break back, but Karatsev weathered the storm and held on, eventually taking the match in one hour 32 minutes.

"It was a tricky moment in the second set, 3-1 service game, 15-40. It was important moment to keep the level, keep the serve," added Karatsev, who takes on Spaniard Jaume Munar in the first round of the Australian Open on Monday.

Murray, who has faced lengthy layoffs following two hip surgeries, said in an on-court interview: "I'd like to thank my team for all their help this week. First time back in the final for three years, it has been a long road to get here, but thanks for your help."

Earlier, Spanish world number nine Paula Badosa held off French Open champion Barbora Krejickova 6-3 4-6 7-6(4) to clinch the women's title. — Reuters



Mohit bowls Shabab to victory; Ansar, Ravi help ABL Task win

MUSCAT: Mohit Patel's 4 for 20 and Khalid Kail's splendid 61 not out steered Yalla Shabab to an emphatic 5-wicket victory against Arabian Region Travel & Tourism (ARTT) in a 50-over Premier Division League match at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Al Amerat on Friday.

Haroon Khan's solid 43-ball 53 that included 6 big sixes was the only highlight of ARTT's disappointing total of 143 in 33.5 overs. Apart from Mohit's superb spell, Kaleemullah bowled well too, taking 2 for 26.

Yalla Shabab did not have to sweat hard for victory as it surpassed the total in the 25th over, scoring 147 for 5. Apart from Khalid's topscore of 61, Jitenkumar Ramanandi contributed strokeful 34 not out off only 18 including 3 sixes and 2 fours.

Brief Scores (Premier Division 50 overs): ARTT (Arabian Region Travel & Tourism) 143 all out in 33.5 overs (Haroon Khan 53 – 2x4, 6x6, Mohit Patel 4-20, Kaleemullah 2-26) lost to Yalla Shabab 147 for 5 in 24.1 overs (Khalid Kail 61 not out – 8x4,

Jitenkumar Ramanandi 34 not out – 2x4, 3x6, Sanjaya Ravindra 2-31, Moshin Qureshi 2-36) by 5 wickets.

ANSAR, RAVI STAR IN ABL WIN

Leggie Ansar Raza's magnificent 4 for 20 and Ravi's fluent 68 powered ABL Task to an easy 5-wicket win over Al Jadidi Stars in a 50-over A Division League game at OC Turf 2 in Al Amerat on Friday.

Al Jadidi failed to post a fighting total on the board, folding up for 146 in the 41st over due largely to excellent bowling by Ansar and Saud Haroon who claimed 3 for 31. Sathiyaraj Durairajan topscored with a patient 42 off 55.

ABL Task raced to the target in just 25.3 overs, scoring 148 for 5 thanks to brilliant 68 by Ravi and solid 40 by Parth Trivedi. Muhammed Waqas bowled well, taking 4 for 33.

Brief Scores (A Division League 50 overs): Al Jadidi Stars 146 all out in 40.4 overs (Sathiyaraj Durairajan 42 – 6x4, Muhammed Waqas 31 –



Mohit Patel and Khalid Kail of Yalla Shabab

3x4, Ansar Raza 4-20, Saud Haroon 3-31) lost to ABL TASK 148 for 5 in 25.3 overs (Ravi 68 – 8x4, 1x6, Parth Trivedi 40 – 2x4, Muhammad Waqas 4-33) by 5 wickets.

MOHAMMED POWERS RUWI TO VICTORY

OCT Ruwi rode on all-rounder Mohammed al Balushi's 4 for 16 and 63 off 42 to thrash PDO RC by 5 wickets in a 30-over B

Division League game at Muscat Municipality ground 2 in Al Amerat.

Mohammed was outstanding with the ball and got excellent support from Faraz Ismail who claimed 3 for 23 as PDO was bundled out for a platry 106 in 26.2 overs.

Ruwi secured victory in the 16th over, scoring 110 for 5 thanks to brilliant batting by Mohammed,



Ravi and Ansar Raza of ABL Task

whose 63 included 10 fours and 2 sixes.

Brief Scores (B Division 30 overs): PDO RC 106 all out in 26.2 overs (Zakir Khan 15 – 1x4, Mohammed al Balushi 4-16, Faraz Ismail 3-23) lost to Oct Ruwi 110 for 5 in 15.5 overs (Mohammed al Balushi 63 – 10x4, 2x6, Zubair Ali 19 – 2x4, Awais Mohamed 2-7) by 5 wickets.

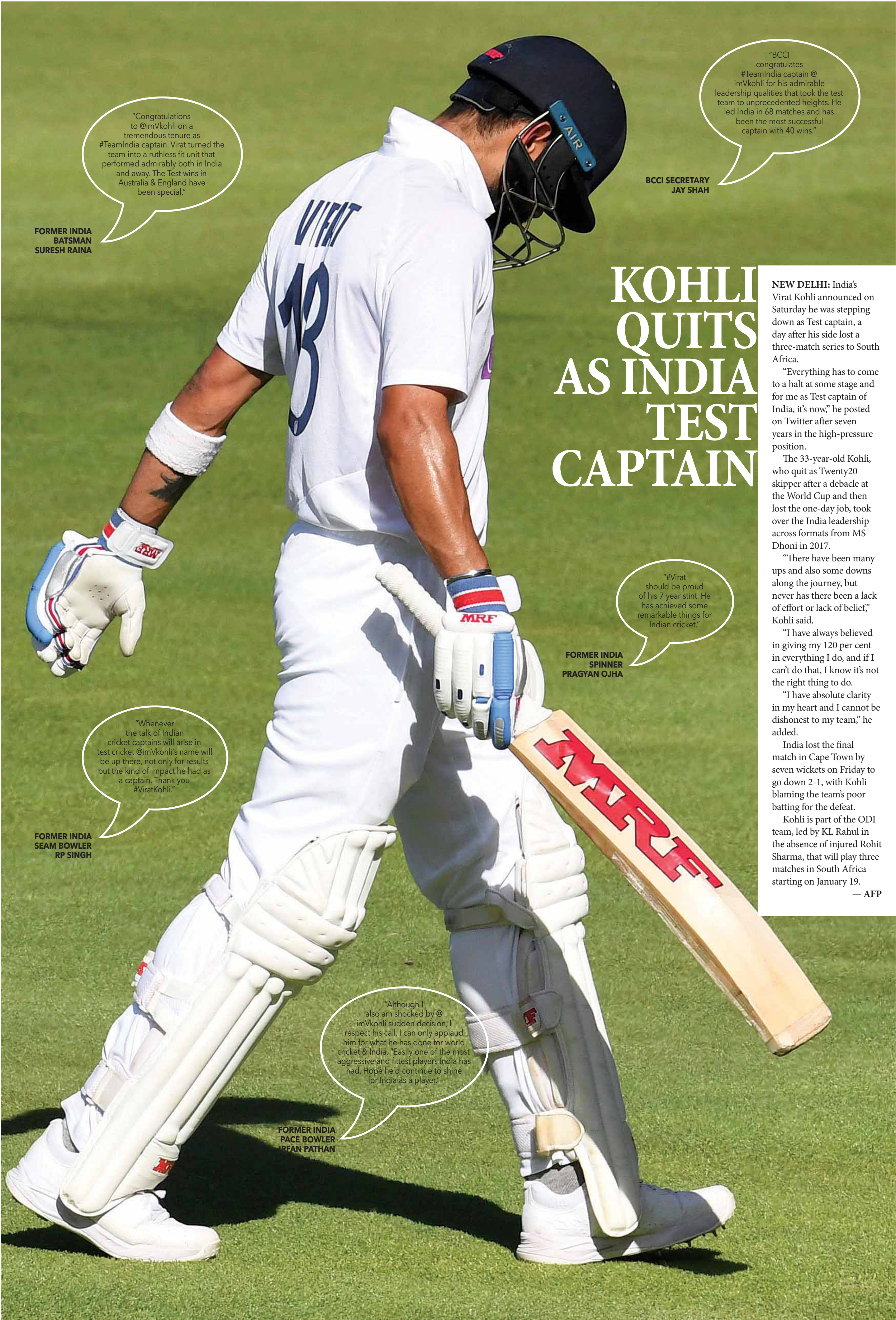
ISSA HERO OF SEEB'S THRILLING WIN

In a battle of Omani all-rounders Issa al Balushi's fantastic show overshadowed Waleed Rahim's magnificent performance as OCT Seeb beat OCT Al Hail A by 5 runs in a thrilling B Division clash.

Osman's 60 and Issa's 56 were the highlights of Seeb's 195 for 6 in 30 overs. Waleed Rahim and Suhaib Abdul took two wickets each.

Al Hail A fought hard thanks to splendid batting by Waleed (88) and Ismail Ghulam (40) but still fell short by 5 runs as it could manage to score 190 for 6 in 30 overs. Kachkoll al Balushi and Issa claimed two wickets each.

Brief Scores (B Division 30 overs): Oct Seeb 195 for 6 in 30 overs (Osman 60 – 8x4, Issa Al Balushi 56 – 4x4, 2x6, Waleed Rahim 2-46, Suhaib Abdul 2-31) beat Oct Al Hail 'A' 190 for 6 in 30 overs (Waleed Rahim 88 – 7x4, Ismail Ghulam 40 – 4x4, 1x6, Kachkoll al Balushi 2-44, Issa al Balushi 2-45) by 5 runs.



"Congratulations to @imVkohli on a tremendous tenure as #TeamIndia captain. Virat turned the team into a ruthless fit unit that performed admirably both in India and away. The Test wins in Australia & England have been special."

FORMER INDIA
BATSMAN
SURESH RAINA

"BCCI congratulates #TeamIndia captain @imVkohli for his admirable leadership qualities that took the test team to unprecedented heights. He led India in 68 matches and has been the most successful captain with 40 wins."

BCCI SECRETARY
JAY SHAH

KOHLI QUITS AS INDIA TEST CAPTAIN

NEW DELHI: India's Virat Kohli announced on Saturday he was stepping down as Test captain, a day after his side lost a three-match series to South Africa.

"Everything has to come to a halt at some stage and for me as Test captain of India, it's now," he posted on Twitter after seven years in the high-pressure position.

The 33-year-old Kohli, who quit as Twenty20 skipper after a debacle at the World Cup and then lost the one-day job, took over the India leadership across formats from MS Dhoni in 2017.

"There have been many ups and also some downs along the journey, but never has there been a lack of effort or lack of belief," Kohli said.

"I have always believed in giving my 120 per cent in everything I do, and if I can't do that, I know it's not the right thing to do.

"I have absolute clarity in my heart and I cannot be dishonest to my team," he added.

India lost the final match in Cape Town by seven wickets on Friday to go down 2-1, with Kohli blaming the team's poor batting for the defeat.

Kohli is part of the ODI team, led by KL Rahul in the absence of injured Rohit Sharma, that will play three matches in South Africa starting on January 19.

— AFP

"#Virat should be proud of his 7 year stint. He has achieved some remarkable things for Indian cricket."

FORMER INDIA
SPINNER
PRAGYAN OJHA

"Whenever the talk of Indian cricket captains will arise in test cricket @imVkohli's name will be up there, not only for results but the kind of impact he had as a captain. Thank you #ViratKohli."

FORMER INDIA
SEAM BOWLER
RP SINGH

"Although I also am shocked by @imVkohli sudden decision, I respect his call. I can only applaud him for what he has done for world cricket & India. 'Easily one of the most aggressive and fittest players India has had. Hope he'd continue to shine for India as a player.'"

FORMER INDIA
PACE BOWLER
IRFAN PATHAN



Follow us on
omanobserver.om/business



For the first time in the Sultanate,
BankDhofar introduces the PaySticker

Now you do not have to worry about forgetting your debit card. Place the sticker on your mobile phone and use it to pay by tapping your mobile phone on the POS machine.*

*The maximum payment via the PaySticker is OMR 40 per transaction, OMR 100 per day.

For more information
<https://www.bankdhofar.com/en-GB/PaySticker.aspx>



بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

*Terms & conditions apply

the best bank for you

24791111 www.bankdhofar.com

Second tranche of industrial investment opportunities to be unveiled tomorrow

Accelerated process: First tranche yields \$2.8 bn in investment pledges towards 27 projects

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 15

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) will launch on Monday, January 17, the second package of investment opportunities in the industrial sector of the Sultanate of Oman.

The portfolio of new investment projects — envisioned under the Ministry’s Industrial Strategy 2040, has been assembled in cooperation with the Oman Vision 2040 Follow-up and Implementation Unit, Omani Investment Authority, Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), Petroleum Development Oman, Nama Group, and Mazoon Dairy Company.

The event will be held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister



of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in the presence of a number of government dignitaries, ambassadors, business leaders, investors, and representatives of

GCC chambers of commerce and industry.

In the first tranche, a total of 39 projects were identified for fast track approval and implementation. Of this figure,

27 projects have received 100 per cent funding commitments totalling \$2.779 billion in investments.

These pertain to the renewable energy, industry, mining, tourism,



logistics and food security sectors.

According to Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah (pictured), Investment Promotion Under-Secretary at the Ministry, the project proposals have been identified as part of the Invest in Oman (National Investment Programme) initiative launched by the ministry to support local and foreign investment in the industrial sector.

A technical committee, chaired by the Under-Secretary, meets on a weekly basis to ensure that the requisite approvals are facilitated for these fast-track projects.

Launched in March 2021, Invest

in Oman national programme aims to strengthen and empower the private sector in leading economic development, notably by attracting investment and supporting export development — a key target of the 10th five-year plan (2021-2025).

“Through this fast track initiative, the ministry has sought to accelerate the delivery of a number of investment projects by facilitating the issuance of the requisite licenses, allocating land, signing usufruct agreements, allocating or committing energy resources, and addressing requests for tax exemptions,” Al Samsamiyah said.

She further added: “The national investment programme is one of the accelerators of the first phase of the executive plan for Oman Vision 2040, in addition to the financial sustainability programme, to help catalyse the growth of the national economy. Through the rapid intervention of the technical committee, the delivery of investment projects can be speeded up in the Sultanate of Oman.” (With inputs from ONA)

‘Transformational policies have elicited positive response’

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES: Oman Vision 2040 – a new compass and blueprint for growth and development: Al Yousuf

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

A series of policy programmes and initiatives rolled out by the Omani government in response to the recent economic downturn, compounded by the coronavirus pandemic, have garnered an “encouraging” response from the international community, according to Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

Initiatives such as the Medium Term Fiscal Plan (also known as Tawazun), the Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP), and the Invest Easy single window facility, among other longer-term programmes, symbolise a new direction adopted by the Omani government to “re-imagine economic growth, streamline business procedures and create a pro-enterprise environment that supports the ambitions of our investors”, he



The purpose of these is to increase the private sector’s resilience, attract investment, and especially aid the post Covid-19 recovery

QAIS BIN MOHAMMED AL YOUSUF
Minister, MoCIIP

said.

Addressing the London Roundtable Meeting of the Arab-British Chamber Commerce in the UK last week, Al Yousuf said the

government’s economic strategies and investment incentives aim to enhance the country’s business environment.

“The purpose of these is to increase the private sector’s resilience, attract investment, and especially aid the post Covid-19 recovery,” the minister said.

All of these initiatives align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which he described as “our compass and blueprint for growth and development”, adding: “We are proud of this action-oriented strategy designed to chart a new, bold and sustainable future for Oman.”

Al Yousuf cited in particular the Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP) which was launched in March 2021 following government interactions with local and international businesses.

The Plan, he said, is designed to support the economy by offering interest-free emergency loans, tax and fee reductions and waivers as

well as the flexibility to pay taxes in installments.

Also as part of the initiative, a 25 per cent reduction is being offered on the lease of land within the Special Economic Zone, as well as the industrial cities administered by Madayn, for the period from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022. Furthermore, foreign investors can own land of over 5,000 sq metres for commercial or commercial/residential, tourism or industry related investments, he stated.

“I want to underline to you that these are historic steps taken to ensure the right support is in place for Omani businesses, help firms get through the challenges of the pandemic, protect and create jobs, reinvigorate Oman’s economy and secure the nation’s economic future,” Al Yousuf affirmed.

Also having a positive impact on the local business environment are initiatives in support of small and medium enterprises (SMEs),

the minister pointed out.

This is evident from the latest figures of the SME Development Authority (Riyada), which saw registrations rise to just over 64,000 by end of Q4, 2021, representing a 17 per cent increase compared to figures for Q2 2021.

Likewise, the Invest Easy one-stop portal for registering new businesses is helping facilitate investment into the Sultanate of Oman by reducing cumbersome procedures and expediting approvals.

“Today, via Invest Easy, investors can obtain approval for more than 1,500 economic activities — that is approximately 88 per cent of all economic activities — issuing one document that includes all licenses and approvals from 10 leading authorities.

I am happy to share with you that since the launch of the new licensing service in April 2021, over 69,000 applicants have received approvals, 6,354 of which

are international investors — investors setting up operations across the length and breadth of Oman. That is a year-on-year rise of 351 per cent — and these are approvals issued in a matter of minutes,” he said.

Earlier, Al Yousuf hailed the strength of longstanding Omani-UK relations as attested by the fact that Britain is currently largest foreign direct investor in the Sultanate of Oman.

Also present at the roundtable meeting were Nasser al Jashmi, Secretary General — Ministry of Finance, Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President — Oman Investment Authority, Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, and Abdulaziz al Hinai, the Omani Ambassador to the United Kingdom. Present from the British side were Baroness Symons, Chairperson of the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce, and Bill Murray, British Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman.

Own the Toyota RAV4 with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: The exciting Toyota RAV4 is now available with exclusive benefits that include service 2 years/20,000 kms (Whichever is earlier), 1 year insurance or cash gift in lieu of insurance RO 250. The campaign is valid until March 9, 2022. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms and conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details.

One of the two major additions to the RAV4 is the hybrid electric model, which combines two power sources consisting of a petrol engine and electric motor.

The class-leading model, which offers the lowest fuel consumption value of 22.2km/L (As per GSO Certification. Fuel economy may vary due to driving conditions).

The second addition to the RAV4 is the Adventure model, which was established as a symbolic model to appeal to active users through enhanced Waku Doki — the equivalent of “heart-pumping excitement” in Japanese — and a more powerful image. It is distinguished by a more aggressive bumper, grille design and fog light surrounds, and exclusive 19-inch, split five-spoke wheels with matte-black accents.

The RAV4’s 2.5-litre four-cylinder engine produces 204 hp and 24.8 kg of torque and is mated to a an eight-speed automatic transmission (8AT), resulting in a quicker and smoother acceleration.

On the other hand, a hybrid system combines two power sources consisting of a petrol engine and electric motor



producing a combined power of 219 hp. It is also paired to a Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) that provides the lowest fuel consumption value of 22.2km/L (Fuel economy may vary due to driving conditions.) while delivering a new level of driving pleasure.

The RAV4’s distinct personality is completed by its expansive and comfortable cabin, which displays exceptional quality and finish throughout.

The instrument panel’s horizontal layout has a slimmer profile and a lower position than before to enhance forward

visibility. The centre console is wider and more versatile with an expanded console storage.

The RAV4’s cabin is accentuated with a range of advanced features, including wireless charging system for smartphones (Qi-enabled device), dual auto air conditioning system, 7-inch multimedia infotainment display, six-speaker sound system, power driver seat and front ventilated seats.

As with any other Toyota model, safety remains a top priority for the RAV4 that comes with an advanced safety system, a comprehensive array of safety features to protect its occupants, such as 7 SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA), Electric Parking Brake with Hold function,

Downhill Assist Control (DAC) among many others.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions and fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.

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

BankDhofar one of the most trusted brands in banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman

MUSCAT: Providing a convenient banking experience has always been the top priority for BankDhofar since its inception, putting technology and innovation at the core of its strategy to improve the experience of its customers.

This has made BankDhofar one of the most trusted brands among the Banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman for the second year in row, according to a survey conducted by *OER* magazine.

Around the Clock Convenient Banking Experience

BankDhofar customers may conduct their transactions at ease and around the clock through the highly-secured and user-friendly digital banking channels. BankDhofar’s, award-winning, Mobile Banking App offers a wide range of services. The services include; instant transfer to any bank in the Sultanate of Oman, cardless cash, mobile top-up for all telecom providers, increasing daily withdrawal limit to RO 5,000, Instant International money transfer, among other services.

Through Internet Banking, BankDhofar provides several features for retail and corporate customers.



Additionally, BankDhofar customers may access the financial services through a wide network of ATMs and CDMs around the Sultanate of Oman. The Bank launched Cardless ATM Banking Services using mobile. The first of its kind service in the world enables customers to conduct ATM transactions easily only by using their mobile numbers.

Additionally, with the user-friendly IVR system, BankDhofar customers can enrol and avail for their banking services very easily and in a fast-paced manner. Along with the services provided over BankDhofar’s digital channels, BankDhofar customers may conduct their payment transactions conveniently through BankDhofar cards with the ‘Tap & Go’ feature.

This feature allows customers to pay on the go for shopping, travelling, or for any payments.

The cards are highly secured and come with an RFID protection card and cover. BankDhofar credit cardholders may benefit from the Rewards Programme and enjoy holidays, travel, shopping, and a better lifestyle for free. Every time they use BankDhofar’s credit cards, they earn points which may be redeemed at various shopping outlets, restaurants, cafes, health clubs and spas.

24/7 Customer Engagement Hub

BankDhofar believes that customers are the core for its success and operational growth. Thus, the Bank constantly endeavours to promote positive communication and retain a sustainable relationship with its customers.

Through its Customer Engagement Hub, BankDhofar provides significant benefits to customers by offering services around the clock, including holidays, and

handles high call volumes. BankDhofar’s Customer Engagement Hub is designed with state-of-the-art facilities, and comprehensive functions including Self-Services such as Interactive Voice Response (IVR), Interactive Voice Notification (IVN) Call Centre agents, among other functions to build meaningful communication with the customers.

Revamped Branches Providing the Best Customer Experience

With its prime locations, BankDhofar exerts its efforts to enhance the overall customer experience and journey by revamping several branches across the Sultanate of Oman.

The top-notch revamped branches are designed to provide convenient banking experience to the customers, reflecting the traditional Omani culture of hospitality.

To learn more, check out BankDhofar pages on social media; Facebook (www.facebook.com/BankDhofar), Twitter (@BankDhofar), Instagram (www.instagram.com/BankDhofar), or visit the official website www.BankDhofar.com or contact the call centre 24/7 on (+968) 24791111 for inquiries.

Maserati to debut in ABB FIA Formula E World Championship

MUSCAT: Maserati announces the first step in its motorsport strategy and will make its debut in the ABB FIA Formula E World Championship in 2023.

With motorsport in its genes and rooted in the spirit of pure competition, Maserati

is the first Italian brand to compete in Formula E. The return to the track renews the racing spirit in Maserati’s DNA.

The combination of Maserati’s unrivalled racing heritage — a brand intrinsically linked with high-performance, and its innovative attitude towards electrification — aligns perfectly with the ABB FIA Formula E World Championship, the world’s first all-electric road-racing motorsport series.

Maserati’s commitment to electric mobility is powered by a lightning surge of new energy, now accelerating to run at top speed with Folgore, the full electric range. All new Maserati models will also be available in 100 per cent electric solutions including Maserati Grecale, Maserati GranTurismo and GranCabrio and the Maserati MC20 super sports car.

The ABB FIA Formula E World Championship provides Maserati with a perfect platform to showcase the unprecedented brand racing heritage and Folgore in an environment where high performance and innovation powerfully coexist.

Maserati will debut on the grid from Season 9 with the new Gen3, the fastest, lightest, most powerful Formula E racing car ever.

The Gen3 is the world’s most efficient racing car featuring a series of industry-leading design, production and technological innovations.

Since inception, Formula E’s dramatic racing on the streets of the world’s most iconic cities including New York, Monaco, Berlin, Mexico City, London and Rome has led to electric cars exported around the world today going further on every charge through increases in energy efficiency, enhancements in battery range and advances in powertrain development.



All-new Chery Pro models to enter Oman market



MUSCAT: As one of the best Chinese auto brand, Chery is reportedly in talks with several leading automotive groups and plans to enter the Sultanate

of Oman market with all new range of models. As China’s No 1 passenger vehicle exporter for 19 years in a row, Chery is accelerating the full upgrading

of products by launching the ‘Pro’ series worldwide. As key members of the series, Tiggo8 Pro, Tiggo7 Pro and Tiggo4 Pro are going to enter the Sultanate of Oman market very soon.

During year 2021, Chery has launched its all-new Pro series in market like Russia, Chile, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, enjoying great popularity among global consumers and sparking a Chery fever of ‘fashion’ and ‘technology’ worldwide. The global launch of the all-new series has boosted Chery’s sales.

In 2021, Chery posted record total sales of 961,926 units, up 31.7 per cent year on year, including exports of 269,154 units, up 136.3 per cent year on year, ranking first among Chinese passenger vehicle exporters for the 19th

consecutive year.

The surge in Chery’s global sales shows the global popularity of the All-new Pro models.

With the distinctive features of “Pro”, the series meets global consumers’ new expectations for the fashion, technology and tremendous power of cars.

The stylish Pro design adopts a new sun-star fascia, a geometric matrix diamond front grille and LED headlight design, all of which make the Pro series highly recognisable and passionate. The interior features the family-specific wrap-around cabin design, creating a dynamic and high-tech interior.

“ProTechnology” brings an advanced intelligent experience thanks to the ultra-clear central control screen,

remote start, 360-degree panoramic imaging, wireless charging and other technology configurations that surpass those of equivalents, giving consumers an intelligent driving experience beyond expectations.

Besides, the Pro series comes with more powerful and fuel-efficient engines, as Chery has the most advanced engine development technology in China, with a total of 9 engines listed among the “Top 10 Engines” in China.

With its upcoming launch in the Sultanate of Oman, the all-new Pro series will bring consumers a driving experience integrating style, technology and power, and local customers will enjoy the Pro drive experience beyond perception.



NBO 2021 net profit jumps 66.8 per cent



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 15

National Bank of Oman (NBO), the country's third largest lender, posted a net profit of RO 30.3 million for the year ended December 31, 2021, representing an increase of 66.8 per cent over the previous year's net of RO 18.1 million.

Announcing its preliminary unaudited results for 2021, the Bank reported an operating income of RO 123.4 million for the year, up 5.5 per cent from the previous year's figure of RO 117.0 million.

Operating expenses for 2021 totalled RO 63.5 million, compared to RO 63.8 million for the corresponding period

of 2020. The reduction year on year is due to various efficiency initiatives undertaken across the bank, NBO noted.

Operating profit, as a result, grew strongly by 12.6 per cent year on year, it said.

Total assets climbed 12.3 per cent to RO 4.081 billion in 2021, up from RO 3.633 billion in 2020. Net loans and advances, including Islamic financing, totalled RO 3.089 billion as on December 31, 2021, which was up 7 per cent compared to the previous year's figure of RO 2.888 billion.

Customers' deposits and unrestricted investment accounts totalled RO 2.918 billion in 2021, compared to RO 2.527 billion in 2020, an increase of 15.5 per cent.

Yamal gas pipeline continues to flow from Germany to Poland

MOSCOW: The Yamal-Europe pipeline, which usually sends Russian gas west into Europe, flowed east from Germany to Poland for a 26th successive day on Saturday, data from German network operator Gascade showed.

Since December 21, the link between Poland and Germany had been operating in reverse mode, putting upward pressure on European gas prices. The pipeline usually accounts for about one-sixth of Russia's annual gas exports to Europe and Turkey.

On Friday renomination requests, or preliminary bids, to ship gas eastbound from Germany to Poland via the pipeline on Saturday morning were down sharply at hourly volumes of 1.5 million kilowatt hours (kWh/h).

But the actual reverse flows



A worker turns a valve at a gas compressor station at the Yamal-Europe pipeline near Nesvizh, Belarus. — Reuters

seen held close to the volumes of around 7 million kWh/h seen earlier in the week, and are expected to remain in reverse until Sunday, data from the Mallnow metering point on the German-Polish border showed.

It is not clear when the pipeline will revert to westbound flows into Germany. A source said the company is expected to switch flows at some point this month, as Gazprom has paid for westbound volumes. — Reuters

MSX closes the week higher, supported by earning optimism

MUSCAT: The MSX30 Index ended the week up by 1.88 per cent. All Sectors ended positively. The Financial Index ended the highest and was up by 2.02 per cent. Services Index was higher by 1.71 per cent while Industrial Index closed up by 0.04 per cent. The MSX Shariah Index closed down by 0.16 per cent.

Barka Desalination Company SAOG [BDC] (under transformation), owner of the Sultanate of Oman's largest operating water desalination plant (Barka IWP), announced its intention to launch its Initial Public Offering (IPO).

The company will offer 40 per cent of its share capital to the public through an IPO.

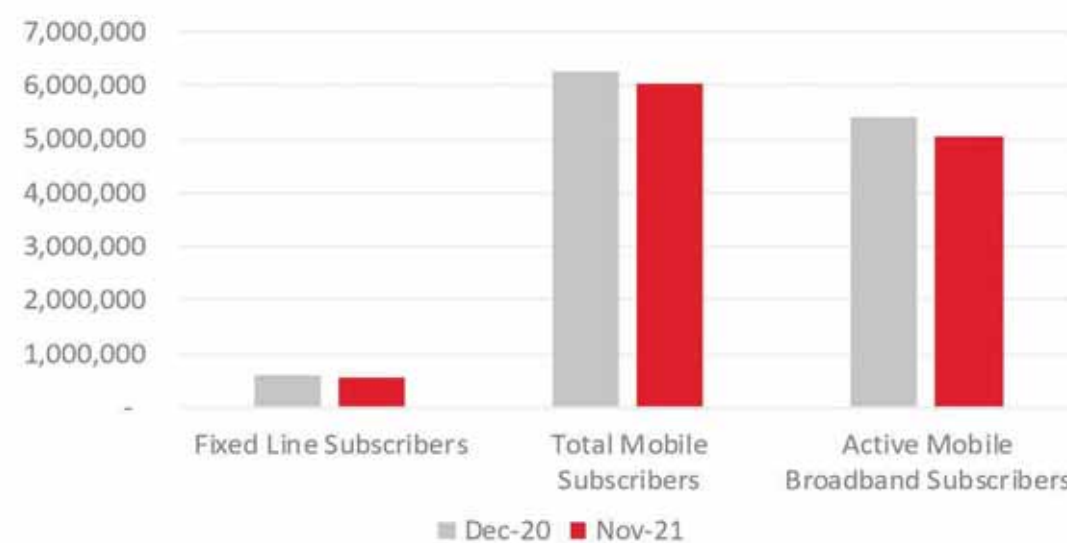
Accordingly, BDC will offer 30.2 million shares to the public through listing on Muscat Stock Exchange.

BDC plans to offer the shares in the IPO on the book-building basis in a price range of 115 baisas to 145 baisas.

As anchor investors in the IPO, National Power & Water Co LLC and Bank Muscat have committed to invest up to 10 per cent of the IPO at 145 baisas per share i.e. the highest end of the IPO price range.

Sultan bin Salim bin Said al Habsi, Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Capital Market Authority issued Decision 171/2021 establishing the Supreme Sharia Supervisory Board (SSSB) in the Capital Market Authority and issued its Articles of Association pursuant to Article 5 of the Takaful Insurance Law promulgated by Royal Decree 11/2016.

Oman Telecom Subscriber Data



Source: NCSI

SSSB was established to enhance the legislative and regulatory processes for the companies operating in the Takaful insurance business based on best international practices.

The SSSB will put in place the general policies regulating such types of companies and advise the CMA on the Sharia aspects related to Takaful insurance and contribute to developing the legislation related to the Sharia beside advice on the compatibility of the products, services and contracts of the Takaful insurance companies and deciding on issues of fiqh disputes among the members of Sharia supervisory committees in Takaful insurance companies.

A further chapter in the ongoing liberalisation of the power sector in the Sultanate of Oman shortly begins with the formal launch of the Electricity Spot Market — enabling licensed generators

for the first time to offer their surplus capacity at the most competitive rate.

Its imminent launch — the first in the Middle East — follows nearly six months of market trials by the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) which, in addition to its statutory role as the power procurer, is also the Market Operator of the new platform.

As a first step in the roll-out of the Electricity Spot Market, OPWP as the Market Operator unveiled a dedicated website to enable generators to compete for the opportunity to offer their capacity in line with specific guidelines governing the operation of the Electricity Spot Market.

Oman telecom sector data for Year-To-Date until November 2021, reveals that fixed line subscribers are down 2.8 per cent while mobile subscribers are down 4.0 per cent. Within mobile, prepaid

subscribers are down 9.1 per cent while postpaid subscribers are higher by 22.4 per cent.

Active Mobile broadband subscribers are down 6.6 per cent. Penetration levels are lower at the end of November 2021 as compared to December 2020.

Value of traded property in the Sultanate of Oman went up by 17.5 per cent in 11M/2021 to RO 2,569 million compared to RO 2,185 million in 11M/2020. Traded value of mortgage contracts during the same period went up by 4.1 per cent to RO 1,354 million compared to RO 1,301 million in same period last year.

Traded value of sale contracts rose by 46.7 per cent to RO 1,198 million compared to RO 816.6 million in 11M/2020.

Number of properties issued during 11M/2021 also rose by 30.9 per cent to 231,504 compared to 176,816 in 11M/2020.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

Sohar International's net soars 41.6% in 2021

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 15

Sohar International Bank saw its net profit climb 41.6 per cent to RO 28.34 million for the year ended December 31, 2021, up from RO 20.01 million for the previous year.

Announcing its preliminary unaudited results for the year, the lender posted a 29.0 per cent increase in net operating income (before impairment provisions) to RO 60.40 million last year, up from RO 46.83 million a year earlier.

The increase was driven by growth in all



revenue streams including gains in the sale of investment securities, it said.

Total assets climbed 14.5 per cent to RO 4.134 billion in 2021, compared to RO 3.611 billion in 2020 — a growth driven mainly by an increase in investment securities.

Loans, advances and financing (net) increased 4.3 per cent to RO 2.612 billion, up from RO 2.503 billion in 2020.

Customer deposits rose 7.3 per cent to RO 2.394 billion in 2021, up from RO 2.331 billion a year earlier. A 19.6 per cent increase in shareholder equity to RO 396.58 million was aided by a highly successful rights issue of RO 50 million, the bank added.

US grocery shortages deepen as pandemic dries supplies

WASHINGTON: High demand for groceries combined with soaring freight costs and Omicron-related labour shortages are creating a new round of backlogs at processed food and fresh produce companies, leading to empty supermarket shelves at major retailers across the United States.

Growers of perishable produce across the West Coast are paying nearly triple pre-pandemic trucking rates to ship things like



A shopper picks over the few items remaining in the meat section at a grocery store in Austin, Texas. — Reuters

lettuce and berries before they spoil.

Shay Myers, CEO of Owyhee Produce, which grows onions, watermelons and asparagus along the border of Idaho and Oregon, said he has been holding off shipping onions to retail distributors until freight costs go down.

Myers said transportation disruptions in the last three weeks, caused by a lack of truck drivers and recent highway-

blocking storms, have led to a doubling of freight costs for fruit and vegetable producers, on top of already-elevated pandemic prices.

"We typically will ship, East Coast to West Coast — we used to do it for about \$7,000", he said. "Today it's somewhere between \$18,000 and \$22,000."

Earlier this week, Albertsons CEO Vivek Sankaran said he expects the supermarket chain to confront more supply chain challenges over the next four to six

weeks as Omicron has put a dent in its efforts to plug supply chain gaps.

Shoppers on social media complained of empty pasta and meat aisles at some Walmart stores; a Meijer store in Indianapolis was swept bare of chicken; a Publix in Palm Beach, Florida was out of bath tissue and home hygiene products while Costco reinstated purchase limits on toilet paper at some stores in Washington state.

— Reuters

EU greenwash laxity could see it build back worse

Ursula von der Leyen is damaging her climate change credibility. The European Commission's so-called taxonomy is supposed to ensure investors and governments channel funds to projects that are meaningfully green. The fine print of the president's latest draft could do the opposite.

Given its kitemark status, the taxonomy's inclusion of nuclear and carbon-emitting gas projects is a setback. European politicians pressed to include them because publicly financed projects deemed taxonomy-compliant stand to benefit from European Union recovery funds and possibly an easier ride on state aid and budgetary rules.

Instead of cleaning their energy systems, they've therefore dirtied the taxonomy.

The new draft, sneaked out on December 31, is especially egregious. It allows new gas plants to be taxonomy-compliant if they emit 550 kilogrammes of carbon dioxide each year for every kilowatt of capacity.

That's equivalent to 11 tonnes of carbon emissions over the proposed 20-year lifespan. This itself is bad enough: If these stations replaced all EU coal capacity it might still create over 1 billion tonnes of CO₂, 4% of global energy-related emissions in 2019.

University College Dublin professor Andreas Hoepner, a member of the taxonomy's original technical expert group, reckons this tweak also creates a problematic loophole.

Because the allowable emissions are averaged over a 20-year timeframe, a project that spewed out way more than 550 kilogrammes of carbon a year in a shorter period can still be taxonomy-compliant.

Its developers would just need to show emissions will decline over time due to carbon capture, utilisation and storage technology, despite "CCUS" not currently being commercially viable.

The loser is the planet. Unless the draft is overhauled, more CO₂ could be emitted than Europe can afford to hit its decarbonisation targets. And the taxonomy, supposed to help stamp out greenwashing, will instead enable it.

— Reuters

Given its kitemark status, the taxonomy's inclusion of nuclear and carbon-emitting gas projects is a setback



WORKERS AT EASE

Workers are seen at a construction site in Beijing. China's new home prices fell more slowly in December than a month earlier as easing on financing curbs, and promotions by property developers helped to stabilise demand. Average new home prices in China's 70 major cities declined 0.2% in December from a month earlier, slower than a 0.3% drop in November, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. — AFP

Metaverse as a business opportunity



STEFANO VIRGILLI stefano@virgilli.com

THE METAVERSE OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES BOTH TO BUILDERS AND CONSUMERS. AT THE MOMENT THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF EXISTING METAVERSES

My latest column on the metaverse attracted a lot of attention on social media. Especially, I was asked by several readers, how can anyone look at the metaverse as a business opportunity.

First and foremost, the usual disclaimer: This column is in no way advocating any sort of investment. It is meant to be an informative piece on current business development around this very new technology.

Recently you might have heard the news that Facebook has changed its name to Meta and you might be wondering why they are doing this. Maybe you are confused on what "meta" is or how it works.

The name change due to Facebook creating their own metaverse: a digital world where users can do all sorts of things. For example: You can attend online digital concerts, like those held by Travis Scott, Post Malone, and coming up soon Justin Bieber.

The metaverse offers opportunities both to builders and consumers. At the moment there are a handful of existing metaverses like Sandbox and Decentraland.

Inside the metaverses you can be

whoever you want to be. If in your 9 to 5 job you work in an office, nothing stops you from be the entrepreneur managing a golf court in the metaverse in the evening.

These metaverses accept token and cryptocurrencies as means of exchange.

As such, they have their own currency that is traded on crypto exchanges. Right now their market performance overall negative, so probably it is not the best time to explore that.

There are also portfolio managers that have developed entire trading indexes around companies involved in the metaverse.

Slightly counter-intuitively, hardware developers producing highly efficient graphic cards are benefiting from this new technology. The metaverse is the newer and faster version of early attempts — like Second Life — to build an alternative virtual reality. Back then, the hardware available to consumers was not allowing for smooth performances, but nowadays, most commercial gamer computers are perfectly suitable of immersive experience.

Another opportunity in the metaverse is linked to land and property ownership. The "architects" behind these digital words want to maximise the profitability of each virtual square foot. There are

many projects on the web that allow for blockchain ownership of digital land.

Projects like earth2.io have been pioneers. At the cost of sounding nostalgic, I bought some land in Oman on earth2.io

Lastly, there is the whole part related to digital assets. Although nothing prohibits users from walking around in plain clothes, generally participants in these metaverses tend to showcase some of the most bizarre outfits. Such a luxury comes at a cost. Or investment, rather.

In fact, each piece of garment is linked to a blockchain contract (an NFT) which allows to resell it if the demand is high. So clothes, gadgets, and even vehicles, are all available in the metaverse.

Recently I came across a metaverse that allows for the purchase of spaceships. Which I found quite expensive given that none of them can actually fly. For the time being, metaverses are quite cartoonish, and often come across as video games.

But as technology improves, we are promised a more immersive and realistic experience. Which with all of my hope in humanity, I am still hesitant to fully welcome as being the substitute to reality. (The writer is a member of the International Press Association)

2022: A bad year for markets?



JIM O'NEILL

The author, a former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management and a former UK treasury minister, is a member of the Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development

Last month, I identified what I saw as the big issues of 2022, noting that I could not recall a time when there were so many sources of uncertainty, both known and unknown.

The main issue was inflation, and now that we are a few weeks into 2022, financial markets appear to be worrying about the same developments that concerned me. In fact, the problems we face are becoming more straightforward — depressingly so.

To understand today's financial-market behaviour, we can turn to the "five-day rule", a heuristic I first encountered during my time in finance, when eager analysts would grab hold of anything they thought might help them understand the complicated world of markets.

The rule holds that if major US stock-market indices rise during the first five trading days of the new calendar year, markets will perform handsomely for the year

overall. According to an old stock-market almanac, this had been the case 85% of the time since the 1950s.

Moreover, in cases when markets were down over the first five trading days, the market went on to have a net-negative year 50% of the time.

Given that markets were down over the first five days of this month, should we worry about 2022? Or can we take comfort in the fact that, historically, stock markets have tended to rise most years?

Given that US markets had a strong year in 2021 — after many previous years of growth had already left market valuations rather high — my instinct is to follow the five-day rule, even though there is no theoretical or intellectual reason why it need apply.

That said, it remains to be seen whether markets are more concerned about inflation or about

policy-makers' efforts to control it (or about something else entirely).

A survey of relative sectoral performance shows that cyclical stocks have been outperforming previously high-flying tech stocks, which is consistent with recent evidence suggesting that the Omicron variant is less virulent than its predecessors. If so, many countries could soon start thinking of Covid-19 as an endemic rather than a pandemic threat.

But in that case, emergency monetary and fiscal policies are still necessary (a prospect I raised last month).

For quite some time, central banks were keeping policy rates low — significantly negative in real terms — even when the underlying economies were growing at rates above their potential. But now they finally seem to be rethinking their positions, owing to the persistence of inflation.

In this regard, one interesting feature of financial-market pricing so far this year is that both market-based measures and ongoing longer-term surveys indicate that inflation expectations have remained stable.

The sharp rise in market interest rates has led to only a modest rise in real interest rates, which are still far below the levels that would be considered normal in historical terms.

One possibility, then, is that markets have woken up to the mounting evidence that both monetary and fiscal policy will be tightened in 2022 (relative to 2021), regardless of whether inflation continues to rise. To be fully consistent, one would expect a period of weakening equity markets to coincide with flattening yield curves (when short-term bond yields are similar to or higher than longer-term ones).

There have been some signs of this in the bond markets; but,

for now, it remains an interesting trend to watch.

Do these issues and the five-day rule mean that we are guaranteed to see a down year for equities in 2022? It is too early to say, because much will depend on whether stocks continue to fall further, if at all, and whether the United States and other major economies can sustain their performance.

Equally important, and underlying it all, will be evidence of productivity performance, which, ultimately, is the key to sustaining persistently strong equity markets. After years of weakness, could productivity growth finally be accelerating, creating the conditions for a new "roaring twenties"?

If so, the economic recovery could continue without the kind of inflationary pressures we have seen in the past year. But if not, we may find ourselves dwelling on these same issues again in January 2023.

©Project Syndicate, 2022

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
Choose from a wide range of brands & models
PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

Tally
POWER OF SIMPLICITY

TALLY FOR VAT

For Tally Sales, Services or Customization

Contact: Guruprasad +968 79248644, 98753781
Email: guru.prasad@asiasolutions.net
ASIA SOLUTIONS

http://www.asiasolutions.net/tally-accounting-software/

TallyPrime

SUNDAY JANUARY 16, 2022 JUMADA AL THANIA 13, 1443 AH

OMAN DAILY
Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.com

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

Tally is now available on the **Cloud**

Ask for FREE Demo

Think TALLY
Call 977 TALLY
(977 82559)

TallyPrime GOLD

TSO, Tally Solutions for Oman, by Infinity Thoughts LLC : 977 TALLY (977 82559) * sales@tallysolutionsoman.com * www.TallySolutionsOman.com

VAT REGISTRATION, RETURN FILING, TAX CONSULTANCY

Contact: 9246 9602 / 9723 0025

URGENTLY REQUIRED

An Excellent Grade Electrical Company based in Oman has immediate vacancy for:

HVAC Engineer
(Diploma / Degree in Mechanical Engineering)
Minimum 8 years experience in construction field. Clear understanding of Design / Execution / Estimation Aspects of HVAC. GCC Experience preferred.

AUTOCAD Draughtsman Diploma / BE (Electrical Engineering), AUTOCAD Certification
Minimum 5 years GCC experience in the relevant field in electrical companies.

Project Manager / Site Manager BE (Electrical)
Minimum 5 Years GCC experience in project / site management.

Electrical Engineer BE (Electrical Engineering)
Minimum 5 years GCC experience in reputed firm.

HSE Officer NEBOSH IGC Certification
Minimum 5 years GCC experience in reputed firm with minimum 3 yrs experience in PSS Construction & OHL Line.

Testing Engineer
BE (Electrical Engineering), DCRP Approved
Minimum 5 years GCC experience in reputed firm.

QA/QC Engineer
BE (Electrical Engineering), ISO 9001 Certification
Minimum 5 years GCC experience in reputed firm in QA / QC.

Candidates holding NOC / Transfer availability preferred.
Interested candidates may forward their CV & Expectations etc by Email : cvsalalah@gmail.com

SIT VACANT

URGENT NEED: We need an experienced **Civil Engineer** specialised in roads who can evaluate, study and execute road projects. For more information kindly call 25542760/25540330. Email: scpfur@hotmail.com

SIT. WANTED

CUSTOMS, logistics, freight coordinator (Kerala) 4 years experience in same field in Oman looking suitable position. I am interested on working partner also. NOC available. +968 92267276.

FOR RENT

5 BEDROOM villa in Al Athaiba. Contact 97716641.

FLATS, 2BHK and 1 BHK in Mumtaz
☎9341138/ 90991079.

FLATS, 2BHK in Ghubrah near Indian School. ☎9341138/ 90991079.

INDUSTRIAL land in Rusayl 5,000 SQM ready for construction. The price per square metre is RO 1.5
☎9328880.

SERVICES

AUTOCAD/REVIT ARCH MEP, part/full- time. Contact WhatsApp: 79037728.

A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketeers**. Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

RENT A CAR

Buttercup Rent A Car
AMAZING OFFERS

- Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
- Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎972494490.

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

trust only in the best

OUR SERVICES

- 1.CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE
- 2.OIL & GAS EQUIPMENT TRADING
- 3.MANPOWER SUPPLY
- 4.TRANSPORTATION & HEAVY EQUIPMENT RENTAL
- 5.ANTI-CORROSION COATING

TECHNICAL FOR GENERAL TRADING & CONTRACTING SPC
Office no: 31, 3rd floor, Building no: 537, Street no: 5015, Area- 24
P.O.Box: 123, P.C: 115, Ghala, Muscat
22386444 / 96790700
info@hitech-oman.com
H-TECH GROUP KSA

www.hitech-oman.com www.hitechkw.com

المجرة للشحن اللوجستية GALAXY CARGO LOGISTICS

WORLD WIDE AIR & SEA CARGO SERVICES

Location: Rex Road, Behind Modern Oman Bakery
GSM : +968 99635330 / 93569551
Email : gcloman@hotmail.com
Website : gcloman.com

Airport to Airport
Port to Port
Door to Door
FCL Services
LCL Services
Consolidation
GCC Road Transport
Professional Packing
Moving Local & International

21 YEARS of experience in Oman as an Accountant in different industries with 14 years of continuous service in a real estate company. Oman D/L and NOC available. Contact 92583726. Email: georgetvm@live.com

A FURNISHED apartment in South Al Mabelah booked only for a small expat family is offered for rent. The apartment consists of two bedrooms with their toilets and a kitchen and has air-conditioners. The rent is RO 170 inclusive of electricity, water, gas and wifi. Contact: 99379982.

VIGAS CARGO
WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR

Transportation, Packing & Cargo Services

- ◆ CARGO SERVICES BY AIR & SEA WORLD WIDE
- ◆ DOOR TO DOOR DELIVERY IN INDIA, INDONESIA & UK
- ◆ PROFESSIONAL PACKERS & MOVERS
- ◆ MUSCAT - DUBAI - MUSCAT REGULAR TRANSPORT

H.O. Ruwi 99851366 92495068

Ghubrah : 93571703
Falaj : 93571704
Store : 93571823
Misfa : 98119561
93260956

vigas.cargo@yahoo.com

AL KHOORY EQUIPMENT EST.
P.O.Box 545, P.C: 117, Al Wadi Al Kabir Area, Sultanate of Oman

Official distributor of **Schneider Electric**

Stockist & Wholesaler of Low Voltage Switchgear Products and a One Stop Solution for all Switchgear Products and Assembly

Schneider Electric Lovato DAB WEG Franklin Electric alfamar

Tel: +968 24832474, +968 79474556
E-mail: alkhooory@omantel.net.om • www.alkhoooryoman.com

Quality Comes First

Tower Cranes & Passenger Lifts:

- Sales and Rental Services
- Installation
- Maintenance Service
- Breakdown Service
- Spare Parts Supply
- Hoist & Lowering
- Support Fixation
- Dismantling

Steel Fabrication Works

NEW MANARA TECHNICAL SERVICES LLC
Mobile: +968 9853 1975, 9853 1970
E-mail: info@newmanara.com / newmanaratechnical@gmail.com
Website: www.newmanara.com

FOR RENT

Substantial Villa in Hay Al Shatti near Grand Hayatt. 3 Floors with 40 Rooms, 22 Bathrooms which is suitable for Embassy / Clinic / School / Multipurpose Office / Residential Premises.
TEL : 99643760 / 24704994

ZEN POLYNE
INDIAN BRAND BEST QUALITY LLDPE TARPULINE CROSS LAMINATED MULTI-LAYER TARPULINE

FEATURES OF ZEN-POLYNE

- U.V. STABILIZED
- 100% WATER PROOF
- LIGHT WEIGHT
- THERMO - WELDED JOINTS.
- FLEXIBLE & CUSTOMISED SIZES.
- STRONGEST TARPULINE EVER
- SUPERIOR DART IMPACT STRENGTH

RAVIRA

Please Contact: OMAN : +968 9329 1473 / 7937 1865
UAE : +971 5030 58676
Mail Id: raviraninternational@gmail.com Web: www.raviran.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crococorches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR & SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

ALL OVER INDIA EXPRESS DELIVERY

Online Tracking
TOLL FREE NUMBER 80066766

24/7 SERVICE AVAILABLE
www.alnamanicargo.com

INDIA | BANGLADESH | INDONESIA | PHILIPPINES | SRI LANKA | ETHIOPIA | ALL GCC SERVICE AVAILABLE

☎ 95587410, 99785420, 99638698, 98523831
22 YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL SERVICE IN OMAN

HO - RUWI - HAMRIYA, GHALA, AL AMRAT, SEEB, SOHAR

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omandaily.com

we shall overcome

Al Eman Dental Clinic

Flat 22, Floor 2
Abu Zaki Trading Building
Opp. Al Nahda Hospital
Sultan Qaboos Street

+968 24834113
+968 97454854
+968 96438854

Our Mission: To preserve your teeth and smile for a lifetime

EURO CHOICE FOODS L.L.C.
(Importers of Frozen, Chilled, Fresh & Dry Food Products)

Food Service
Catering Supply
Ship Chandling
Re-export
Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
Fresh & Chilled Meat and Chicken
Dairy Product & Grocery Items

Tel: +968 24435211 / 24435177
foodservice@eurochoicefoodsllc.com
www.eurochoicefoodsllc.com

SITUATION VACANT

Require a qualified and an experienced Multicuisine "Chef" for a high-profile family in Oman.

Job requirements are:

- Should have a minimum of 5 years of culinary experience and working in a formal household would be an asset.
- Prepare and develop recipes in accordance with the family and guest's nutritional needs and dietary restrictions such as lactose and glucose intolerance.
- Prepare daily meals for the family (Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner).
- Be able to cook for events and formal dinner parties.
- Be able to take full responsibility for the running of the kitchen and have good communication skills.
- Be able to work alongside a team of household staff and as a kitchen assistant that provides highest level of service for the family.
- Ensure all kitchen equipment's and appliances are kept clean and in proper working condition.
- Be creative, hardworking & have exceptional standards for cleanliness, health & safety.

Role carries an excellent salary, accommodation, food, annual leave with air ticket to hometown and medical insurance as per Oman Labor law. After 3 months of completion of service full family status will be provided.

Kindly send your CV with a recent photo to: farmchefoman@gmail.com

Now get news on the go

To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
<your name> to
96473232

ADVERTISEMENT

Sealed bids invited from interested parties to collect waste materials periodically from a large Automotive dealership at Qurum, Sohar, Haima and Salalah for following:

Mixed Metal Scrap | Empty Oil Drums
Used Oil Drums | Used Battery Big and Small
Expired and Damaged Spare Parts (Mix of Steel, Rubber, Plastics & Aluminum)
Expired Tires | Wooden Pallets
Used Cartons of Various Sizes

Interested parties having required licenses and complying with various local authority regulation for waste management, hazardous materials, used oil, collection handling transportation, storage and disposal can submit their sealed bids within 15 days to below mentioned email address scrapfinder2022@gmail.com.
Selected Vendor will also be responsible for disposal of damaged / used tires as per local regulations.

For any clarifications, please call 93384598

M M T CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE

MUSCAT: 95605353, 95605454
BARKA: 95893242, 93743308
SOHAR: 96773031, 95347988
FALAJ: 94002341, 95136067
SALALAH: 94575905, 97858656
DUQUIM: 97218831, 94002341

ROAD, SEA & AIR TRANSPORT WORLD WIDE

GTC Building, Near Badr Al Sama Hospital, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail: mmtcargo@yahoo.com
Customer Care: 96773031 / 97695454

Sea Cargo 800 Bz/Kg Express Cargo to Kerala 5 to 7 days*

+SHYCOCAN
VIRUS ATTENUATION DEVICE

DISABLES COVID FAMILY VIRUSES

ATTENUATES COVID WITH 99.9% EFFICACY INDOORS

100% SAFE
No exposure or radiation risk is involved in the use of the device

EFFECTIVE
Disables Coronavirus by up to 99.9% in 10 minutes

PLUG & PLAY
Easy installation and removal for safety and no compromise

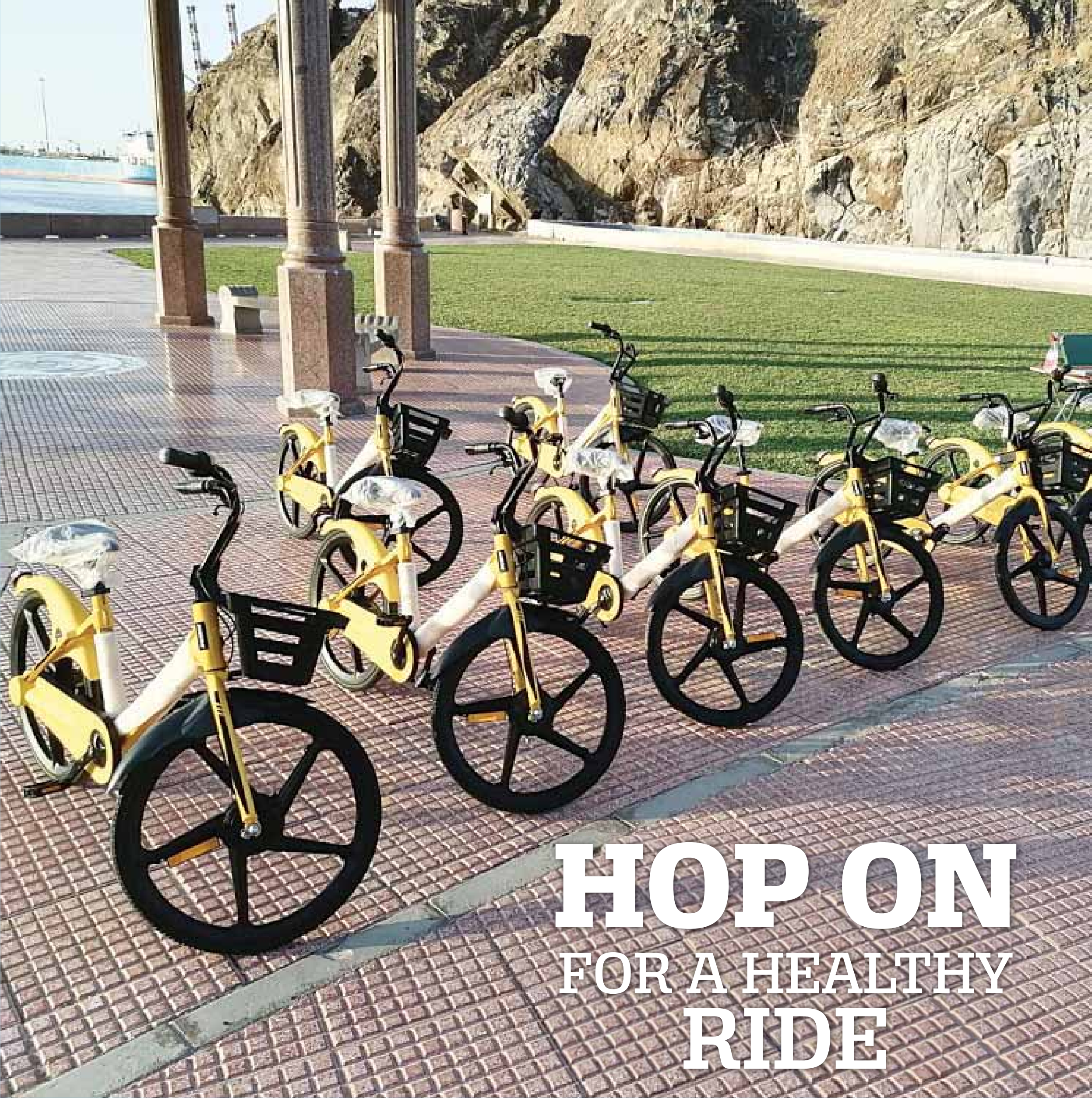
ROBUST
Strongly supporting the national request to real time

FOR ENQUIRY, OFFER OR PURCHASE CONTACT: 78478045

100% Safe & Effective

OMAN DAILY
Observer

features

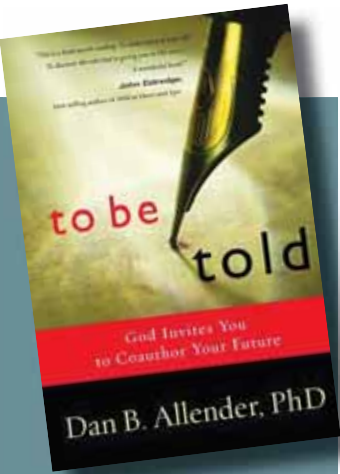


HOP ON FOR A HEALTHY RIDE

Bicycles are available at Muttrah Sea Road for those who wish to peddle and shed calories, thanks to the efforts of Muscat Municipality and Nabeel bin Khamis al Toqi... **P20**

CELEBRITIES

READ



TO BE TOLD KNOW YOUR STORY SHAPE YOUR FUTURE
BY DAN B. ALLENDER

Allender shows you how to read the stories of your life. He helps you understand the meaning that God has written into every detail of who you are. As a result, you can share your story with others and listen to their story, revealing unique aspects of God's hand at work.

Maya Angelou becomes first Black woman to appear on quarter coin

THE US MINT recently began shipping out a new series of quarters, including ones featuring writer Maya Angelou, making her the first Black woman to ever appear on a

quarter. The new coin is part of the American Women Quarters Program, which will later have coins bearing the likeness of Wilma Mankiller, the Cherokee



Nation's first female chief, Anna May Wong, the first Chinese American movie star, Adelina Otero-Warren, a suffrage movement leader and Sally Ride, the first American

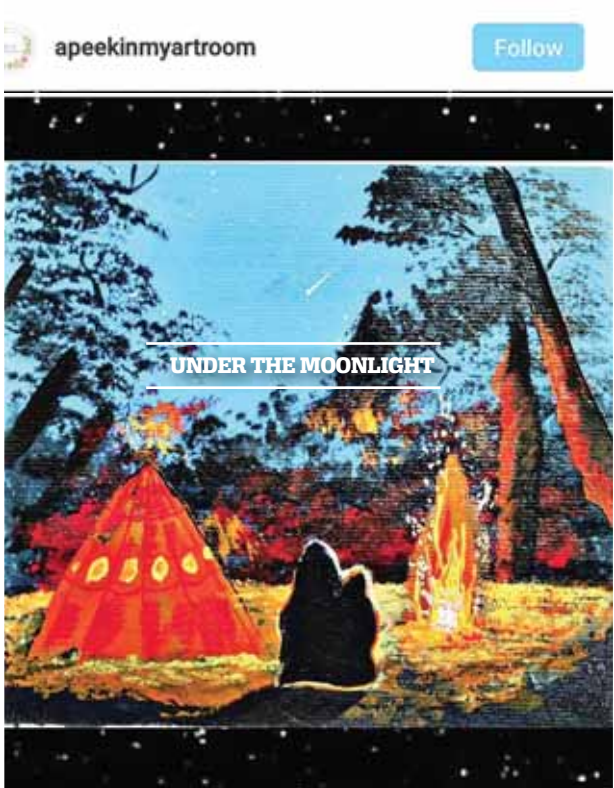
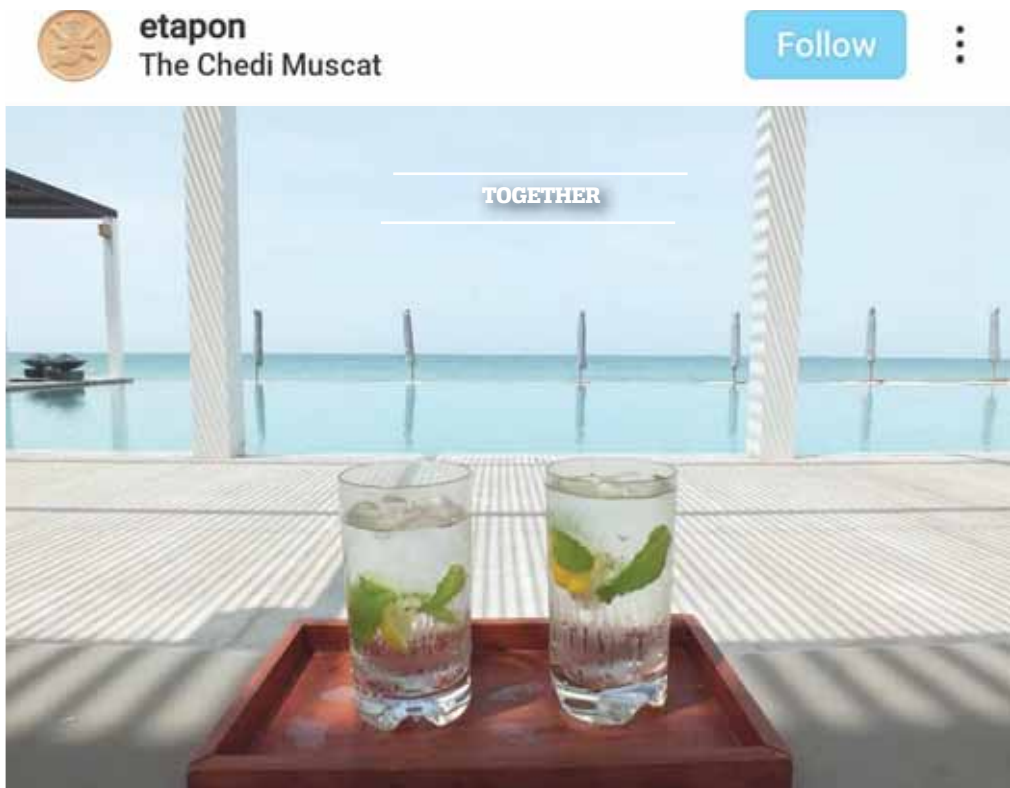
woman to go to space. The Angelou coin has George Washington on one side and shows Angelou with her arms raising up in front of a bird and beams of sunshine.

Angelou was a prominent civil rights activist. The image is "inspired by her poetry and symbolic of the way she lived," the Mint said. "It is my honour to present our Nation's first circulating coins dedicated to celebrating American women and their contributions to American history," Mint deputy director Ventris C Gibson said. "Each 2022 quarter is designed to reflect the breadth and depth of accomplishments being celebrated throughout this historic coin programme. Maya Angelou, featured on the reverse of this first coin in the series, used words to inspire and uplift." Angelou, who gained worldwide fame after the release of her memoir "I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings," died in 2014 at the age of 86. — **dpa**



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

HOLLYWOOD

Oprah Winfrey to produce Sidney Poitier documentary for Apple



OPRAH WINFREY IS helping to keep the legacy of Sidney Poitier alive.

Following the Hollywood history maker's death on Thursday night at the age of 94, Apple reportedly has a documentary about him on deck with Winfrey executive-producing and Reginald Hudlin serving as director.

The project, according to *Variety*, has been in production for more than a year.

The yet-to-be-titled film, an Apple Original Films release, will provide an in-depth examination of Poitier's life that includes the participation of his family.

In 1964, Poitier became the first Black man to win an Academy Award for best actor for his role in "Lilies of the Field."

His other credits include 1967's groundbreaking film "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," in which he starred opposite Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy.

That same year, the Miami-born Bahamian portrayed his most successful character, Philadelphia detective Virgil Tibbs, working alongside a racist white Southern police chief, played by Rod Steiger, in the crime drama "In the Heat of the Night." It was a role Poitier would reprise in two sequels.

Another one of his beloved works is 1967's "To Sir, with Love," in which he played an inner-city teacher.

Knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1974, Poitier was appointed Bahamas' ambassador to Japan in 1997.

In 2009, former president Barack Obama awarded the "A Raisin in the Sun" star with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Winfrey, who has interviewed the star on her talk show, paid tribute on social media following his death on Sunday.

"Friend. Brother. Confidant. Wisdom teacher. The utmost, highest regard and praise for his most magnificent, gracious, eloquent life. I treasured him. I adored him. He had an enormous soul I will forever cherish," she wrote on Instagram, with a photo of them hugging.

Over the weekend, the Winfrey-founded basic cable channel, OWN, replayed episodes of Poitier programming she produced through the years.

"Sidney Poitier defined manhood, he defined excellence, he defined class and elegance," Hudlin shared on Facebook. "He represented the best of the Black experience, the immigrant experience, the artistic journey and the American Dream. Blessings to his wonderful family, his 'brother' Harry Belafonte and everyone around the world who was fortunate enough to be touched by his genius."

The "House Party" director's credits include "Boomerang," as well as episodes of TV series like "The Last O.G." and "Black Monday." Hudlin directed the acclaimed 2019 Netflix documentary "The Black Godfather," examining the life of music industry mogul Clarence Avant. — **dpa**

ENTERTAINMENT

A Rising Designer Brings Hip-Hop to Homeware



TORONTO-BASED DESIGNER Sean Brown made a splash in 2020 with rugs inspired by classic CDs that you might have come across while scrolling through Instagram. In just a few years, Curves, which started with an event at a Toronto gallery, has grown into a contemporary homeware brand that offers products inspired by hip-hop (a colour-changing umbrella featuring lyrics from Mobb Deep and Missy Elliott; a grocery tote depicting music video stills), stocked by stores around the globe.

But Brown, 35, did not have a typical designer's childhood filled with trips to art galleries and museums. Growing up in a strict household in Toronto, he rebelled after his parents' divorce, landing in a group home at 14 and then in a foster home until he was 19. (He's since reconciled with his parents, he said.) As he bounced around high schools without graduating, he started designing T-shirts.

He would eventually do a year at a design school, where his interest in fashion and hip-hop intensified. Diddy in particular had an outsized influence on him. "I studied every outfit, I studied every step, I studied every chain," he said of the rap mogul. "Everything about him I studied. The cover art. The art direction. The jiggy, the shiny suits. He has so much to do

with my outlook on aesthetics."

In 2013, he and a friend started a pop-up vintage store, then came NEEDS & WANTS, a men's sportswear brand from Brown and his partners. (The label's varsity jacket landed in *GQ*) Brown began working with the Canadian R&B singer Daniel Caesar on wardrobe styling, photography, graphic design and directing. Thus began a career in the music industry, where he'd handle design in various capacities for artists like SZA and Baby Keem.

Meanwhile, he released a number of design objects, including a throw blanket and a puzzle set. When the pandemic hit, "I was like, I don't

think it's going to get normal anytime soon, so let me settle into this new apartment," he said. "I need a rug, I need a coffee table. Then it just turned into home décor." Curves recently issued the Archway Chair and Puddle Mirror.

At an interview in Brooklyn, where he was shooting and interviewing subjects for a new biannual magazine, tentatively set to be released in early 2022, Brown spoke enthusiastically about making design accessible, the influence of the video director Hype Williams and Brown's very short stint in Diddy's universe. These are edited excerpts from the conversation. — **NYT**



COLUMN



Rasha Al Raisi
rashabooks@yahoo.com

The Damned Yard

When my friend Peter came back after vacation, he gave the best gift ever: another book by his compatriot writer and Noble Prize winner Ivo Andrić. Peter had decided to gift me his personal favourite: *The Damned Yard* and other stories.

As the title suggests, the book contains 10 novellas mainly set during the Ottoman rule of the Balkan region (1459-1913). One of these novellas — my best-loved one in the collection — is *The Story of the Vizier's Elephant*. The narrative is set in a Bosnian village called Travnik, where a new Vizier — Dželaludin Pasha — comes to rule them along with his pet: a baby elephant.

The reaction of the villagers upon seeing this exotic creature for the first time is almost comical. But as the power of the Vizier declines, so does the popularity of his elephant around the village. Ali Pasha is another story about a Vizier; this time of Herzegovina around the year 1831. It covers his rise and fall from power and the atrocities Ottomans practised against their subjects, such as confiscating lands and murdering leading figures who opposed them publicly.

Also, the inner works of their politics: how public official successors got rid of their predecessors as a power display to the public and also to please their superiors in Istanbul. Another story I enjoyed thoroughly is *The Climbers* that is set in a town on a mountain plateau called Osatica. The story revolves around the expansion of a church in the town at the time of the Austrian rule in Bosnia.

Andrić's verbal dexterity is evident here as he describes the idle life of a mountain village and how people think and react when put in different situations. His subtle sense of humour draws a smile on your face while reading and his characters are easy to identify with. However, the most powerful story in the book is the one used as its main title: *The Damned Yard*. It talks about a friar called Petar who gets imprisoned in Istanbul on the charges of being a potential spy.

The Damned Yard is the name of the prison's courtyard where prisoners gather and spend their whole day before going back to their cells. In there, Petar meets many interesting characters, especially Kamil who intrigues Petar's curiosity — being of high birth and with vast knowledge of history. What crime has he committed to end up in the Damned Yard? The description of the prison, it's diverse inmates — coming from different parts of the empire — and its ward Karagöz are impressively detailed. The sense of cultural diversity that Bosnia has always enjoyed is present in all stories.

Yet, as in many multicultural societies this could lead to friction and conflict. Andrić sheds light on how Christianity and Islam come clashing at times, not in historical context only but also in practices and beliefs. In the *Guest House*, Brother Marko obsesses about converting a sick Turk guest to his faith out of certainty that he's an infidel. Unlike Petar in the *Damned Yard* who sympathises with his inmates Haim (a Jew) and Kamil (a Muslim) and keeps his occupation hidden from everyone else in fear of being treated differently. The conflict is also highlighted in the story *A Letter From 1920*, where a Bosnian Jew decides to leave his homeland out of lack of sense of belonging.

Nobody understands and represents human nature the way Andrić does within an eloquent narrative. A master storyteller whose work is thoroughly-researched, meticulously detailed, genuinely funny, thought provoking and relentlessly entertaining. A memorable reading experience from a true genius.

Rasha al Raisi is a certified skills trainer and the author of: *The World According to Bahja*. rashabooks@yahoo.com



HOP ON FOR A HEALTHY RIDE



KABEER YOUSUF

Taking a stroll along the Muttrah Sea Road wouldn't be just a walk for breathing a fresh and letting the breeze fall on your face alone, but it is more than that.

People now have the option to shed their extra calories and get fit.

A number of bicycles are available for fitness-conscious people, thanks to the efforts of Muscat Municipality and Nabeel bin Khamis al Toqi, one of the five-member Omani team that runs the bicycle venture.

Starting at 4 pm till midnight, as many as 65 bicycles are lined up for cycling enthusiasts who can make use of them for a joy ride along the beach side and check on their fitness status on a regular basis.

"We implemented the idea of cycling along with Muscat Municipality well before the Covid stuck the world but had to shut it down temporarily and now we are back with a bang. Individuals and families can enjoy a ride on the walkways of Muttrah Sea Road while devouring the beauty of Muttrah," said Nabeel.

The response from the public has been overwhelming and more girls than boys are fond of this cycling affair as they visit with their families. As an added benefit, light refreshments are served by the makeshift kiosks located next to the bicycles.

"They are available from 4 pm to 12 midnight daily except weekends and public holidays

when they are open from 4 pm to 3 am."

Corporates which are concerned about the fitness of their employees can also have contract with the service providers and their service doesn't end there.

"We provide dietary plans and advice on fitness status of individuals, advice on the duration of cycling and other information for those who have lifestyle diseases which will help them check on their fitness status."

A Ministry of Health statistics show that at least four per cent of children above the age of 5 years are overweight and more women are obese compared to men. The remedy to reverse the scenario lies in the hands of every individual who would like to lead a healthy life.

"Leading an active lifestyle, changing the eating regime are two important factors that can help get rid of those extra calories from the body," says Dr Shadha al Raisi, Director of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD).

Having high rate of obesity is paving the way for a number of non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory disease.

Fitness freaks and health experts advise to engage in some form of physical exercise like 30 minutes brisk walking 5 times a week or 20 minutes jogging to stay fit.

"People who ride bicycles and lead a healthy lifestyle never go to hospital," Nabeel shared his idea of perfect fitness.

