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HM SENDS GREETINGS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Ali and the people of his country. **-ONA**

HM GREETES EMPEROR OF JAPAN

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Emperor Naruhito of Japan on the occasion of his Birthday. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to Emperor Naruhito. His Majesty also wished the people of Japan further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**

Founded 1975 · Volume 47 No. 1 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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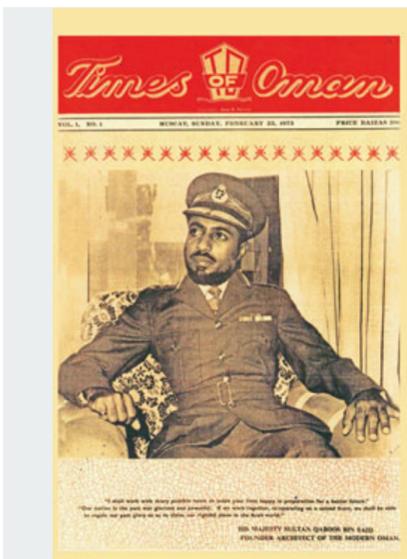
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The 47-year journey of Times of Oman

Forty-eight years ago, in late 1974, an English newspaper was perhaps just a dream for the people of the Sultanate of Oman.

So then, was the birth of *Times of Oman* sheer destiny? To a large extent, yes! *Times* would not have come into existence if that single telex message from Singapore had not reached late Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali's desk while he was serving as director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The much-talked about telex came from a company called Flying Tiger Corporation based in Los Angeles, USA, asking for an overflight permission and as the director of the department, it was part of Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali's duty to give permission to commercial flights, military flights and personal flights flying over Oman.

They had sent the telex to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressing the country as, 'Muscat, Oman, Saudi Arabia'. Infuriated by the content of the telex, Essa could hardly keep his emotions under control. After three days of soul-searching, he asked himself: Should we blame them for making this error or are we at fault?

In the 70s, there were neither any radio or TV stations. The absence of an English newspaper kept Oman in obscurity. It was then that the idea of *Times of Oman* germinated. And then, there was no looking back!

Beginnings are never easy and as expected, it wasn't for *Times* either. Time ticked on until D Day, February 23, 1975 arrived!

The Sultanate of Oman witnessed the birth of *Times of Oman*, the country's first English daily, in an exciting tabloid format.

It endured competitive challenges, sustained the growing pains and had brushes with unforeseen difficulties to become the most popular English daily of Oman. Since then February 23 is a day of great significance no matter which milestone it crosses.

Though Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali is no longer with us, his sons have kept alive his legacy, and continue to honour the spirit with which this publication was first created. Today *Times of Oman's* readership includes millions who visit timesofoman.com and the paper's diverse social media platforms.

Apart from being a market leader on the newspaper front, *Times of Oman* has also expanded further by launching TFM and TTV.

In another first, *Times of Oman* released the country's first e-paper in the early 2000s.

Coincidentally, the funeral prayers and burial of the late Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali were performed on 23 February, 2013, exactly 38 years after his dream was first realised. *Times of Oman* will forever remain his lasting legacy to all of us.

EDUCATION

Indian schools will now take students of all nationalities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Children of all nationalities will be allowed to seek admission to Indian schools in Oman for the new academic term.

A member of the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman has said that the decision to allow expatriate students of all nationalities was taken owing to the large number of seats now available in Indian schools in the country. There are roughly 39,000 students learning at Indian schools, down from a peak of about 46,000.

"However, we will only know the actual number of students once we resume physical classes next term," said the board member. "What has happened is that



many of our students went home to India during the pandemic, and continued their online learning from there. A final count can

therefore only be taken once they come back.

"The reason we have opened admission to children of all nationalities is because we now have many places in our schools," he added. "This is for two reasons: First, many expatriates left Oman during the pandemic, and second, we have opened a new school in Bausher that gives us the ability to accommodate more children.

"As a community school system for Indians in Oman, a majority of our students are Indians, and although we always encourage students of other nationalities to join us, there was simply no place to accommodate them because there were no seats available. Even the Indian students were forced to seek admission elsewhere."

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Rising trend of Oman oil price continues

1 Oman oil continues to rise and is just a few dollars short of the historic \$100. The official price of Oman oil for April delivery reached \$96.54, ONA said. The rise is because of the tension on the Ukrainian-Russian border, according to Khalfan Al Touqi, writer and economic analyst. **>A3**

WORLD
Russia recognises Donetsk, Luhansk

2 Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree recognising the independence of breakaway regions Donetsk and Luhansk and announced it in a televised address to Russians. Earlier, he held phone calls with French President Macron and German chancellor Scholz. **>A6**

MARKET
Oil up, stocks sink over Ukraine crisis

3 Oil surged nearly 5 per cent and stocks dropped after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered forces into separatist regions of eastern Ukraine. Russia is a major energy producer and the tensions over Ukraine have brought wide swings in volatile energy prices. **>B1**

THINGS LOOK UP AFTER 2 YEARS OF COVID-19

OMAN	Total cases	Recoveries	Recovery rate	Total deaths
	377,948	359,445	95.1	4,238

Renewed hope and optimism in the air as recoveries rise, casualties decline

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As Oman marks two years since the COVID-19 pandemic came to this country, there is a feeling of hope and renewed optimism that this year will be far better than 2020 and 2021.

More than 95 percent of people in the country who contracted COVID-19 have recovered from the disease, while the number of COVID-related deaths has decreased significantly. Of the 377,948 people who were infected by the virus, 359,445 have recovered. Unfortunately, however, 4,238 people lost their lives to COVID-19.

As on 9 February, more than half a million people had been administered booster doses, and more than 6.67 million COVID vaccine doses had been administered to eligible sections of the population. Until that date, some 1.77 million Omanis and 1.4 million expats had been jabbed with one dose, and 1.66 million Omanis and 1.31 expatriates had received two.

The first cases of the coronavirus in Oman were reported on 24 February, 2020, ushering in a period few of us had ever seen. Universities and schools switched to online-only modes of learning, travel was severely restricted as the airport closed temporarily and a series of lockdowns were enforced to keep the populations safe and release the immense pressure faced by hospitals and healthcare workers. **>A5**

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4TH MARCH
Oman to host World Walking Championships

MUSCAT: The World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships (Muscat 22) will start on 4 March 2022 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The two-day event to be hosted by the Sultanate of Oman is being organised by the World Athletics, in cooperation with the Oman Athletics Association.

As many as 1,000 male and female runners from 60 countries from around the world will participate in the tournament to contest the seven laps of the race.

The championship will witness the participation of the Omani national team, consisting of 16 players distributed between two general categories for a distance of 20km and 35km, in addition to the male category for a distance of 10km.

Teams from about 60 countries



tries from all over the world will participate in the tournament to compete for seven categories, namely the 10km walk race (age below 20) for both genders, 20 km walk race for females, 8km sequential walking race (master class), 35km walk race (unisex), 20km walk race for males and a 10km walk race (master class - unisex).

The championship's referees list will include 80 Omani referees who will be responsible for

the competitors' adherence to the championship's procedures and regulations before the start of the races. It also includes 22 international referees distributed in the race tracks to ensure fair competition for all competitors.

The World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships is organised every two years by the World Athletics. The event is a long-distance walking race. It is considered different from running in that there must be one foot in contact with the ground at all times.

It is worth noting that the tournament was scheduled to be held in the Belarusian city of Minsk, but it was cancelled and postponed several times due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and travel restrictions. **-ONA**

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CENTRAL BLOOD BANK

People urged to donate blood in Oman

MUSCAT: The Department of Blood Banks Services has urged people to donate blood at the Central Blood Bank in Baushar. According to the Department of Blood Banks Services, blood levels at the Central Blood Bank

in Bausher indicate a decrease in the number of units for most blood types. The department has also urged everyone to come forward and donate blood to meet the needs of people.

Research project on organisational pride wins award

Principal investigator Dr. Omar Durrah, Associate Professor at Dhofar University, was awarded for his research on 'Organisational pride as an antecedent of employee creativity in the petrochemical industry'



They should also enhance attitudinal pride by celebrating success and highlighting key organisational achievements to make employees aware of the success records of the company, including market share and position or company growth and image.

He also suggested that managers should consider information about both the organisation as well as the employees while developing marketing communication messages to strengthen attitudinal pride and encourage corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities in the organisation to boost positive attitudinal pride toward their organisation. Besides, they should strive to strike a work-life balance for their employees to stimulate attitudinal pride, reduce organisational cynicism by increasing co-worker trust and by decreasing job stress. They should also include organisational attitudinal pride in their annual employee surveys in addition to other criteria, such as employee satisfaction.

The research team included Dr. Kamaal Allil, and Dr. Moaz Gharib, both Assistant Professor at Dhofar University, Dr. Souzan Hannawi, Assistant Professor at Wadi International University (Syria) in addition to Dr. Omar Durrah. The research project was published in European Journal of Innovation Management with an impact factor 4.691.

Dr. Omar said, "We are extremely honoured that our paper was selected for the National Research Award. Being recognised, being seen, heard and appreciated for our contributions to research is a great honour. This award is both a validation and vindication of the tireless work that has gone into our research paper. We share this achievement as a team."

Sultanate of Oman. Employing a simple random sample technique, they collected data using a questionnaire from 278 respondents working in five major petrochemical organisations in Oman. Data were examined using structural equation modeling.

Dr. Omar maintained that the results of the study indicated that both emotional and attitudinal pride were at moderate levels in the companies surveyed. So was the level of creativity in the petrochemical companies. He further said that the findings revealed that attitudinal organisational pride was the only dimension that had a direct, significant and positive bearing on creativity, while emotional pride had little to do in fostering creativity.

According to Dr. Omar, based on the results of this study, it can safely be argued that attitudinal pride has a significant effect on creativity. Attitudinal pride can be viewed as a form of collective pride arising from the need for employees to be identified with a particular group, such as their organisation. Dr. Omar, therefore, suggested that managers should, besides focusing on the organisation as a whole, pay more attention to the events that generate attitudinal organisational pride and avoid events that decrease it.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Thirteen research projects in various innovative fields of national interest received the 8th National Research Award instituted by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

Principal investigator Dr. Omar Durrah, Associate Professor at Dhofar University, was among the recipients of the award for his research on 'Organisational pride as an antecedent of employee creativity in the petrochemical industry'.

Dr. Omar Durrah and his team aimed to explore the impact of two aspects of organisational pride (emotional and attitudinal) on employee creativity in petrochemical companies in the

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Oman oil poised to touch \$100

The rise in oil prices is because of the tension on the Ukrainian-Russian border, say analysts



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman oil continues to rise and is just a few dollars short of the historic \$100.

A statement issued by the Oman News Agency (ONA) said, "Today, the official price of Oman oil for April delivery reached \$96 and 54 cents."

Speaking exclusively to the *Times of Oman*, Khalfan Al Touqi, writer and economic analyst, said "the rise in oil prices is because of the tension on the Ukrainian-Russian border." He pointed out that Russia's oil and gas sector is little affected by this ever-growing tension, in fact, it stands to gain from the crisis. I do not expect a full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine. At its worse, it may be a limited military strike.

Possibilities

"If at all the situation escalates into a full-scale war, a third world war cannot be ruled out. That is because Europe is heavily dependent on Russian gas, oil and food. Ukraine too, on the other hand supplies food items to countries in Europe."

He asserted that these tensions were escalated by Russia for some political and material gains. So, it will calm down sooner than later."

Al Touqi said, "I do not think the price of a barrel of oil will rise

High oil prices will cause inflation to rise in countries importing goods. The Sultanate too is an importer of many goods. However, as an exporter of oil it will also see rise in income and be able to pay off debts quicker

above 100 dollars. Before it does, the two sides will de-escalate tension and the prices will return to

80-85 dollars." He added the rise in the price of oil has two sides-- the first is negative and the other positive. The rise will cause inflation in countries importing goods and that includes the Sultanate of Oman, since they import a majority of goods. The positive side is that the government will pay off the debts and the credit level of the Sultanate will rise.

Impact of sanctions

Dr. Mohammad Al Wardi also spoke to *Times of Oman* about the current oil prices: "Oil prices are approaching the \$100 mark due to the escalating tension between Russia and Ukraine."

Dr. Al Wardi stressed that if harsh sanctions are imposed on Russia, oil and gas prices will remain high for a long period, which will be in the interest of the oil producing countries in general and the Gulf countries, in particular.

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MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM
 1,160 VIEWS

 Morning Minute video
 The Morning Minute video had 1,160 views and 49 likes on Instagram.

MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK
 14,200 VIEWS

 Oman to introduce toll roads in some parts of the country
 Maghrib Minute video
 The Maghrib Minute had 14,200 views and reached 40,300 people on Facebook.



Times of Oman through the ages



1975



1978



1980



1984



1986

2013



Doyen of journalism in Oman passes away



Essa pioneered a genre of journalism that will continue to inspire media professionals

With it not always an end, to a property or to the burning millstone, it may be said that there are a few extraordinary individuals who have a purpose beyond the usual of time. By conceiving something new to write and give to the world, Essa bin Mohamed Al-Sayid, who passed away on February 23, 2013 in Doha, Qatar, was one of those individuals. He will be remembered for his immense contribution to journalism and society.

HM sends greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Saïd has sent a message of greetings to President Donald Trump on his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his message, His Majesty the Sultan has wished his steers greetings and wishes to the president and his country's people further progress and prosperity.

Four killed in Bangladesh clashes

Dhaka: Bangladesh police fired live rounds yesterday in fierce clashes with hardliners demanding the conviction of bloggers they accuse of blasphemy, killing at least four people and injuring about 200.

UK immigration wave

Britain is expecting a second wave of immigration from East Europe next year - this time from Bulgaria and Romania.

Oman-Spain trade up

Trade between Oman and Spain has soared, rising from OMR20 million in 2009 to OMR300 million in 2011.



Fat chance of slimming B5

Pistorius released on bail pending trial for murder

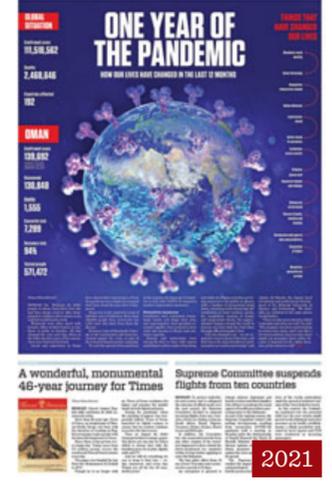


PRETORIA: South African Paralympic icon Oscar Pistorius was freed on bail yesterday pending a high-profile trial for killing his girlfriend. Pistorius, 28, was charged with the murder of his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, 29, on February 14. He is accused of shooting her four times in the head while she was in the bathroom. Pistorius is accused of firing the shots from a bedroom door.

Russia hits out at 'US ambivalence' on Syria



MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the United States yesterday of having double standards in Syria, saying it had blocked a UN Security Council statement condemning a car bomb attack in the Syrian capital. Lavrov said a new statement from the Russian embassy in Damascus said that Washington had blocked a statement condemning "terrorist attacks" near the Russian embassy in Damascus. He said that Washington was "double standard" in Syria.



2021

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PARIS SUMMIT

Sultanate participates in ministerial forum for cooperation in Indo-Pacific

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Ministry, took part in the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, which was held in the French Capital, Paris on Tuesday.

Oman's delegation

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was led by Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs.

The Ministerial forum was inaugurated by Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Foreign Minister and Jo-

sep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission.

Global issues addressed

The forum, which comes within the context of the European strategy for Indo-Pacific cooperation issued on 16 September 2021, addressed global issues related to climate, biodiversity, oceans, clean energy and health, as well as communication, digital issues, security and defense issues. — ONA



PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL

HM sends condolences

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Jair Bolsonaro of the Federative Republic of Brazil on victims of the floods and landslides that affected Petropolis City due to

torrential rains. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sympathies to President Bolsonaro, families of the victims and the Brazilian people, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. — ONA

SULTAN OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

HM sends greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Maj-

esty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to Sultan Bolkiah. HM also wished the people of Brunei Darussalam further progress and welfare. — ONA

ROYAL HOSPITAL'S NATIONAL ONCOLOGY CENTRE

Tumour removed successfully

MUSCAT: A medical team from the Royal Hospital's National Oncology Centre on Tuesday met with success in conducting a radiotherapy for a patient suffering from a cardiac tumour.

The local excision of the tumour was followed with precise mapping and intensive radiotherapy that enabled the team to continuously monitor the patient's condition.

Dr. Thuraya Nassir Al Hajri, Consultant and Head of Radiotherapy Department at the National Oncology Centre, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the risks involved stem from the rare occurrence of such cases and



the application of radiotherapy therein at a global level, as well as the intensity of radio waves needed to eliminate the tumours,

while the heart is in continuous motion, without damaging the adjoining tissues.

"There was apprehension from the probability of heart clotting or muscle weakening during the radiotherapy session, leading to the patient's death," said Dr. Thuraya. This time, we safely conducted a total of 30 radiotherapy sessions in a span of six weeks, she added.

"This case constituted the topic of a scientific paper published in a Cambridge University journal that discussed the causes of cardiac tumours, their symptoms and their treatment by adequate radiotherapy, as well as the associated difficulties. — ONA

PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR SOCIAL INSURANCE

PASI gets 5 certificates of merit

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) has received five certificates of merit—four of which with commendation—from the International Social Security Association's regional forum on good practices in Asia and the Pacific.

A first project, titled 'Developing Collection Mechanisms' (of insurance bill, collection companies, electronic payment gateways, virtual accounts, remote cheque deposit), was aimed at promoting the culture of paying subscriptions through e-payment channels and underling the significance of the same in terms of

speed and accuracy.

The second project, on 'Implementing the Quality Management System', sought to improve transactions carried out at the PASI and to provide sustainable services that meet the requirements of customers—with high quality and efficiency.

The third project, titled 'Cooperation Programme with Academic and Educational Institutions in the Sultanate of Oman', was designed to inculcate a culture of social protection and its importance among children and students studying in various educational and academic institu-

tions, job seekers and parents.

The fourth project, titled 'PASI's experience in implementing a system of business continuity management', dealt with managing comprehensive operations that determine the potential threats staged at PASI and their impact on basic operations pertaining to assets and human resources.

A fifth titled 'Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of Performance and Risks of PASI's Investment Portfolio', was aimed at measuring the level of risks quantitatively and qualitatively. — ONA

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Optimism coming back

It is telling that academic institutions have transitioned towards blended learning and are on the cusp of returning to in-person classes, if they have not already done so.

On 21 February, Oman took another major step towards normalcy when the national Civil Aviation Authority decided to end compulsory pre-registration of passengers, having already previously scrapped quarantine rules for arrivals for those who are fully vaccinated.

"Passengers travelling to the Sultanate of Oman are not required to register anymore at <http://travel.moh.gov.om>," said CAA in an announcement.

"Going forward, people in Oman can resume their travel plans which had been postponed or cancelled due to the pandemic," said Faiyaz Khan, general manager for Travel Point, a travel agency in the country. "People can once again look forward to planning their holidays."

The above decision comes just weeks after the Supreme Committee announced the easing of

some rules that had been initially brought in to curb the spread of the pandemic, and then once again clamped during the Omicron wave of infections in the country.

The Supreme Committee had suspended Friday prayers in mosques on 21 January, before giving them the green light to resume at 50 percent capacity on 9 February. At that time, the committee took the decision to once again allow conferences and other large scale events, at 70 percent of the venue capacity. Oman News Agency reported that all attendees to such events need to be vaccinated, and should adhere to all preventive measures and requirements.

The seedlings of optimism have been sown inside many a citizen and expatriate in Oman, many of whom are eagerly looking forward to the coming months and what they bring.

"My children were so used to playing with their friends in parks and on the beaches...for about two years, we were scared of what would happen to them if

they went outside, so we would prevent them from leaving the home," said Alisha, an expatriate in the country. "For the last few weeks, however, our children have been playing outdoors with their friends once again"

She added: "It is so good to see all of them mingling together and laughing with joy as they play with vigour to make up for lost time. Their laughter is truly the biggest representation of the optimism we are feeling. Of course, let us not still forget to mask up when required and take the necessary precautions."

Ahmed, an Omani restaurant owner, said, "There is a little bit of optimism seeping back into the market. Our volumes of sales and customers have been steadily increasing now for the last few weeks. There is still quite a bit of reluctance to spend among people, but the optimism we are seeing now had been missing for so long. All of us have endured so much during these last two years. Let us hope that the coming months add to the positive developments we are seeing."

Tender Announcement

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning invites the following tender:

Tender No.	14/2022
Tender Description	Supply and installation of furniture for the parts (A and B) of the second floor of the Ministry's Office
Last date for obtaining tender specifications	02/03/2022
Last date for bid submission	29/03/2022
Bid opening date	29/03/2022
Grade	Excellent & First Grades
Document Fee	RO 25/-

Interested companies specialized in the above-mentioned works and registered with the Tender Board may obtain the technical specifications and terms of the tender from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Bids must be submitted online on the given website. Bidders have to enclose with their bids a scanned copy of a bank guarantee for the value of 1% of the bid value valid for (90) days from the date of bid submission, and addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee. The bank guarantee must be submitted online.

For technical support, please call (24402200)

From 8 am to 4 pm, from Sunday to Thursday.
The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid.

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Putin signs decree to recognise independence of Donetsk, Luhansk

Putin made this announcement during a televised address to Russians on Monday

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday signed a decree recognizing the independence of breakaway regions Donetsk and Luhansk.

Putin made this announcement during a televised address to Russians on Monday.

Earlier in the day, Putin held a phone call with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron and German chancellor Olaf Scholz and stated that he will be signing a decree recognizing the independence of Donetsk and Luhansk.

According to the statement released by Kremlin, both the Western leaders voiced their dissatisfaction on hearing Putin's decision.

"Russian President Vladimir Putin had phone conversations with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Vladimir Putin briefed them on the results of the extended meeting of the Russian Security Council, which considered the current situation around Donbas in the context of the State Duma's decision on the recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics," the statement says.

Russia claims the surge of forces has always been for military exercises and that it poses no threat to



UKRAINE INVASION: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivered an address on Tuesday after urgent consultations with world leaders. He said he demanded "clear support" from the West

Ukraine or any other nation, but has refused to offer any other explanation for the biggest build-up of military might in Europe since the Cold War.

On Saturday, Russia's Rostov Region had opened 15 border crossings for refugees from the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas. Later on the same day, Denis Pushilin, the head of pro-Russian separatist DPR announced that he had signed a decree on general mobilisation.

Zelenskyy: Ukraine is 'not afraid'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivered an address on Tuesday after urgent consultations with world leaders. He said he demanded "clear support" from the West. Zelenskyy said that Ukraine is "not afraid of anything or anyone," after Russia's recogni-

tion of the two separatist regions.

He said that Ukraine's borders will remain as they are and that Russia's actions are "a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian leader accused Russia of legalizing its own troops, which he said have been in the Donbas since 2014.

He added that Ukraine supports a political and diplomatic settlement. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said he would head to Washington to meet with US Secretary of State Blinken after they spoke about the developments. "I underscored the need to impose tough sanctions on Russia in response to its illegal actions," he added.

Biden condemns Russia's independence recognition
US President Joe Biden spoke

with France President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Monday about the ongoing escalation along the borders of Ukraine and condemned Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to recognize the independence of Ukraine's breakaway regions.

All the leaders further discussed how they will continue to coordinate their response on the next steps. Biden, in a separate call, also spoke with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and reaffirmed US commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty.

In his phone call with Zelenskyy, Biden reiterated that the United States would respond swiftly and decisively, in lock-step with its Allies and partners, to further Russian aggression against Ukraine.

-ANI/DW

Times OF OMAN

Printed and published by: Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770, Postal Code: 112

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zedjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
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ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

UKRAINE CRISIS

'Russia recognising Donetsk, Luhansk violates Ukraine's territorial integrity'

NEW YORK: UN chief Antonio Guterres said that Russia's decision to recognise Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine as independent is a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.



This comes after Russian President Vladimir Putin formally recognised separatist regions in Ukraine's east as independent states. In a statement issued by Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric, the UN chief calls for "the peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, in accordance with the Minsk Agreements, as endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2202 (2015)".

Moreover, Guterres considers Russia's decision to be "a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations". Amid an intense spike in shelling in eastern Ukraine by opposing sides, the concentration of Russian troops reportedly continues to increase at the country's borders.

The Secretary-General is urg-

ing all relevant actors to focus their efforts on "ensuring an immediate cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, preventing any actions and statements that may further escalate the dangerous situation in and around Ukraine and prioritising diplomacy to address all issues peacefully".

Dujarric assured that in line with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, the UN remains fully supportive of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognised borders.

The UN chief was planning to make an official visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but in light of the deteriorating situation regarding Ukraine, he has cancelled the visit. ANI

COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

Trudeau says 'emergency not over' after blockades

OTTAWA: Canadian lawmakers voted on Monday night to extend emergency powers allowing police to break up blockades by protesters against COVID-19 restrictions.

The country's House of Commons voted 185 to 151 in favor of extending the powers.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said earlier on Monday that he would continue to use emergency powers to stop the "dangerous and unlawful" protests that choked the streets of Ottawa for weeks and created havoc for one of the country's major trade arteries.

"Right now... people [are] out there indicating that they are ready to blockade, to continue their illegal occupations to disrupt Canadians' lives. We feel that this measure needs to remain in place," he said. Trudeau was speaking to reporters for the first time since authorities broke up the long-standing blockade after he invoked



the country's Emergencies Act for the first time since it became law in 1988. The Canadian capital was thrust into the spotlight after convoys of long-haul truckers and their supporters descended on the city on January 29 to protest a COVID vaccine mandate for their profession.

Although 90% of Canada's truckers are vaccinated, and both major trucking unions disavowed the protest, the movement man-

aged to keep Ottawa at a standstill for much of February and clog trade routes, blocking a bridge for days between the Canadian city of Windsor and the US city of Detroit.

The protest was also criticized for providing a platform for conspiracy theorists and far-right ideologies. Trudeau had stressed his government did not want to use the measure but felt it had been boxed into a corner. DW

ERUPTION

Tonga reconnects to internet after volcano eruption

NUKU'ALOFA: Full internet access has been restored in Tonga five weeks after the eruption of the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai undersea volcano, local media reports said on Tuesday.

Residents were able to connect with the digital world on the main island of Tongatapu and the island of Eua.

"People on the main island will have access almost immediately," Tonga Cable chief executive James Panuve told Reuters. The tiny South Pacific kingdom's undersea fiber-optic cable, which is used to transmit almost all digital information and was damaged in the seaquake, has been repaired.

Tongans had to use makeshift satellite services as the repairs to the cable were made.

Repair ship Reliance took 20 days to replace the 92-kilometer (57-mile) section of the 827 km cable that connects the island nation to Fiji and other



international networks.

"Thanks, optic fiber internet. We can now see the world," news portal Kaniva Tonga quoted resident Paulo Lātu's post on Facebook.

The eruption that took place late in January, triggered a tsunami that reached as far as Alaska, Japan and South America.

The Tongan government had

said that 84% of its population of nearly 105,000 people was affected by what experts have deemed one of the world's worst volcanic eruptions in decades.

The next task is to repair the domestic cable connecting Tongatapu with the outer islands

that bore the brunt of the tsunami, Panuve said, adding that it could take six to nine months. DW

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SPORTS



Canada beat Germany by 6 wickets, Bahrain defeat the Philippines

Canada were pushed till the end by a determined Germany as they chased down the victory target of 132

MUSCAT: Canada defeated Germany by six wickets while Bahrain beat the Philippines by 91 runs in the classification round of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier A, supported by Dream 11, at Al Amerat on Tuesday. Canada were pushed till the end by a determined Germany as they chased down the victory target of 132 with three balls to spare.

In the other match of the morning session, Bahrain continued their winning momentum, notching up their second win in a row. They defeated Philippines by a huge margin after beating UAE in the Group B league match on Monday. Victory for Canada and Bahrain set them up for a fifth-place playoff game while Germany will take on Philippines for the seventh-place playoff spot on Thursday.

Canada thrived on a valuable partnership between skipper Navneet Dhaliwal and Matthew Spoons.

They had lost their opener Rayyan Pathan off the second ball of the match. Dieter Klein was the pick of German bowlers with his three-



T20 WORLD CUP: Victory for Canada and Bahrain set them up for a fifth-place playoff game while Germany will take on the Philippines for the seventh-place playoff spot.

wicket haul. He first got rid of Pathan when the opener was caught behind by Michael Richardson.

Dhaliwal and player of the match, Spoons, then forged an 85-run stand to revive the team's fortunes.

Dhaliwal's exit in the 14th over was a result of a brilliant catch in the deep by Fayaz Khan off Dylan Blygnaut. The skipper contributed 37 off 40.

Spoons stayed unbeaten on 73 off 55 and ensured that Canada complete a tense victory. Dilon Heyliger (17) and Ravinderpal Singh left in a space of 10 balls, both falling to Klein.

The German pacer bowled three dot balls in his 19th and had Singh caught behind on the fourth. Canada needed 12 off eight but Spoons

hit a four and a six to ease the nerves and steer the side to win in the final over. Put to bat first, Germany lost their momentum at the halfway stage to finish at 131-6. Opener Justin Broad and Michael Richardson shared a valuable 49-run second-wicket partnership.

Broad's opening partner Vijaya Shankar fell in the fourth over with the total at 16. Richardson displayed lot of positive intent in his strokes as he cut behind square and exhibited the drives and pull shots during his 26-ball 35. His innings were laced with five boundaries.

Left-arm spinner Salman Nazar broke the partnership when he had Broad trapped leg before for 28.

Two overs later came the turning point that tilted the scales in Canada's favour.

Skipper Dhaliwal introduced Matthew Spoons into the attack. The 22-year-old leg-spinner met with success straightaway as he cleaned up Richardson off his second ball. New batter Dylan Blygnaut was run out two balls later and the double blow left Germany at 80-4.

Faisal Mubashir, who was the top-scorer against Ireland on Monday with 40-ball 45, then attempted to get quick runs on board. His innings was cut short by Salman Nazar, as he was stumped by Shreyas Movva off a wide ball.

Canada bowlers kept their line and length hard and Nazar got his third victim when he trapped Dieter Klein to end his spell with 3-27.

A couple of big hits from Fayaz Khan in the 19th pushed the score

after skipper Venkat Ganesan had retired hurt for twelve in the previous over.

Navneet Dhaliwal, Captain Canada said: "It was very tough to come back into this match after the loss against the UAE yesterday. The energy level was certainly missing but I am happy that we could get over the line today. We deserve to win more games at this level. We will try to end the campaign on Thursday on a victorious note against Bahrain."

Venkat Ganesan, Captain Germany said: "It was a close game, and we did sense win at one stage. After a below-par score, we showed character in our fightback. We do learn from such games, and we will take this defeat as part of our learning curve."

Kurup shines for Bahrain

Electing to bat first after winning the toss, Bahrain's skipper Sarfaraz Ali started the Powerplay in a whirlwind fashion and blitzed his way to a 17-ball 32.

The fourth over saw a slight momentum shift in the Philippines' favour, as an astounding catch from Daniel Smith ended Umer Imtiaz's innings abruptly. Sarfaraz Ali was dismissed in the very next ball.

However, with a 90-run fourth wicket stand between Shahbaz Badar and Prashant Kurup, Bahrain regained total control. Shahbaz looked good for his 44, but was undoubtedly the support act as Prashant's effortless brilliance took centre stage.

His 74 runs alongside late cameos from Sikder Billah and Veerapathiran Sathaiya meant that the Philippines entered the dressing

room at half-time, faced with the daunting task of chasing 191.

Henry Tyler had been their best bowler, recording figures of 3/40.

Philippines responded by posting their highest ever total in T20 Internationals. Yet, they fell well short after finishing on 100/9 in 20 overs. Machanda Biddappa top scored with a spirited 26-run knock, negotiating some top-class Bahrain bowling admirably. Gurbhupinder Chohan, Grant Russ and Jordan Alegre all chipped in, making 17, 15 and 13 respectively.

Ultimately the asking rate proved far too high, the fall of wickets proved far too frequent, and Bahrain strolled to a comfortable and well-deserved victory. Junaid Aziz and Haider Butt picked up three wickets apiece.

Sarfaraz Ali, Captain Bahrain said: "We have enjoyed the whole tournament. All the days we have been here, we have put in some good performances and today was one too. I'm very happy for the team. Hopefully we win our next game too. We will look to execute our plans and play well."

Jonathan Hull, Captain Philippines said: "I think our bowling performance markedly improved from the 200s we conceded earlier. Over the series, we have played together, understood each other - each one's strengths and weaknesses. That will be great for the future so that is definitely a positive. We want to improve our batting. We are not able to score too many runs so we will talk about that tonight before the next game. But this is our first tournament in three years. We are growing together as a team and I'm looking forward to the future." ANI

FOOTBALL

PSG star Neymar would 'love' to play in Major League Soccer



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain superstar Neymar has admitted that he would "love" to play in the USA's Major League Soccer at some stage.

The 30-year-old is currently contracted to remain at Parc des Princes until 2025. Ligue 1 heavyweights PSG signed Neymar from FC Barcelona for a world record EUR222 million (£189m/\$259m) fee in 2017. Neymar was asked about whether he plans to re-

turn to his native Brazil before he retires. To which, the former Barcelona talisman, who began his career at Santos, said on the Fenomenos podcast, as per goal.com: "I don't know. I have some doubts about that. I don't know if I'll play in Brazil again."

"I'd love to play in the U.S., actually. I'd love to play there at least for a season." Asked on what attracts him to the American game, Neymar replied: "First of all, their

season is shorter, so I'd get three months' vacation."

Neymar said he had not decided when he would hang up his boots. "I joke with my friends that I will retire when I'm 32. But it's just a joke. I don't know," Neymar said. "Honestly, I will play until I'm mentally tired. If my mental health is ok and my body as well... Physically, I think I'll still last a few years. But my mental health is the most important thing." ANI

FIRST INTERNATIONAL MATCH



Pele congratulates Saudi Arabia women's team for its victory

MALE: Football legend Pele congratulated Saudi Arabia's women's national team as they marked their international debut with a 2-0 win over Seychelles on Sunday.

On a historic day, Al Bandari Mubarak scored Saudi Arabia's first-ever international goal in the 14th minute with Maryam Al Tamimi then converting from the penalty spot four minutes into the second half to clinch the win at the National Football Stadium in Male, Maldives. In a match that was widely awaited, legendary Brazilian footballer Pele was among those who hailed Saudi Arabia's international debut.

"I want to congratulate the [Saudi Arabian Football Federa-

tion] and their Women's National Football Team for their first ever official [FIFA] match," wrote three-time FIFA World Cup winner Pele on Twitter.

"Today is a historic day not only for you, but for everyone who loves football," he added.

The formation of the Saudi Arabia women's national team followed the conclusion of the first edition of the Saudi Women's League in 2021 which saw the participation of eight clubs who qualified to the spotlight after competing in the regional league. Saudi Arabia will face hosts Maldives on Thursday in the next step of their exciting journey. ANI

IPL

Cricket Australia grants NoC to Warner to play in IPL

NEW DELHI: Cricket Australia has granted a No-Objection Certificate to its centrally-contracted players to participate in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2022 season from April 6.

The likes of David Warner, Pat Cummins and Glenn Maxwell will miss the white-ball series against Pakistan, but Cricket Australia will not release its contracted stars to join IPL immediately. Sources in Cricket Australia confirmed that the players would only be available for their franchises once the tour of Pakistan concludes.

"Yes, we have granted NoCs to our players to be available for their franchises from April 6 in the IPL. The players can be available only after the Pakistan tour concludes," the sourced told ANI.

Australia will tour Pakistan for the first time since 1998 for three Test matches, three ODIs, and one T20I. The last match will be played on April 5.

The Test-playing contingent and staff are due to depart for Pakistan later this week while white ball players and staff will join mid-tour. ANI

DUBAI TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Djokovic wins first match of 2022, Murray battles through

DUBAI: The world number one Novak Djokovic and former champion Andy Murray reached the second round of the Dubai Tennis Championships in contrasting styles on Monday.

Djokovic, playing his first match of the 2022 season, always looked comfortable against tournament wild card Lorenzo Musetti and won 6-3, 6-3. But Murray, who will be seeking his 700th career win in the second round, needed just nine minutes under three hours to squeeze past qualifier Christopher O'Connell 6-7, 6-3, 7-5. Although Musetti will not turn 20 until next month, he claimed one of the biggest wins of his career in his last tournament against world number 11 Hubert Hurkacz. But although he showed plenty of ag-

gression and skill against Djokovic, it was not enough to unsettle an opponent seeking his sixth title in Dubai.

"I think Dubai is a perfect place for me to start a season because of the support and the fans that showed up tonight and really cheered me on the way they did," said Djokovic.

"Big Serbian community as well. Very nice to see Serbian flags around. I felt there was an international crowd supporting me as well, which was very nice. They exceeded my best expectations, so to say, in terms of the atmosphere," he added.

O'Connell broke Murray to lead the first set 5-4, and although Murray immediately broke back to level at 5-5 it was O'Connell who went

on to claim the tiebreak. Murray was rarely threatened in the second set, breaking in the first and last games to take the match to a decider.

That was a tense affair during which each player produced some magnificent tennis. Both struggled on serve at times, with O'Connell saving a breakpoint to hold for 2-2 but then holding four break points to take a 5-4 lead and serve for the match. Murray dug deep to overcome that challenge and then finally earned the only break of the set at 6-5 to end the battle. Earlier, Filip Krajinovic struggled to overcome a gallant Malek Jaziri in another thrilling first-round battle, edging his way to a 6-7 6-2 6-4 victory in a highly entertaining two hours 18 minutes. ANI





AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE

In my capacity of Ambassador of Japan, I would like to extend my warm greetings to the people of the Sultanate of Oman. It is my honour to celebrate together with you the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan today on February 23rd.

I arrived at Muscat on January 11th, thus I started my duties in Oman by joining the people celebrating the second anniversary of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the throne. I would herewith like to renew my heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty the Sultan of Oman.

Today's world has constantly confronted challenges and changes. Existing values and past experience may sometimes lose their direction, whilst the long-standing person-to-person friendship has enhanced its importance all the more. Indeed, Japan has long enjoyed the privilege, as many friends, as represented by Oman Japan Friendship Association (OJFA) and others, have always extended to us courage, support and solidarity. The people of Japan will never forget the heartwarming Omani support after the great earthquake in Japan in 2011. Japanese communities here in Oman highly appreciate the considerate treatment as elaborated under the current pandemic.

His Majesty the Emperor of Japan ascended the throne in 2019, and initiated his Era "REIWA", meant to be a beautiful harmony. This year marks the 4th year of this Era of beautiful harmony, and this 23rd day of February 2022, His Majesty becomes 62 years old.

As we recall with friends of Japan, Their Majesties the Em-



JOTA YAMAMOTO



peror and Empress visited Oman in 1994 as the then Crown Prince and Crown Princess. Seven years later in 2001, His Majesty recited his recollection of Oman, which reads: "Across the waters came this Arabian horse".

Twenty eight years later this year, Japan and Oman celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. I see it a precious opportunity to look back to the history of our collaboration.

By now, a large number of Japanese companies and investors have inspired and involved in a series of projects, and sustained the social infrastructures and life-lines for the people in Oman. Powers, energies, water, transport, logistics... these are just a few examples.

This 50th anniversary will also amplify chances to look forward to new avenues towards future collaboration. Advanced technologies, management skills, capacity building, as well as strategic perspectives and networking... these would be some relevant concepts. Yet, whatsoever should be done, pursuit for new avenues shall be made and based only upon our long-standing, heart-

warming human connections.

I am quite optimistic about the value of person-to-person collaboration, and even more encouraged when I conveyed many congratulations to women's hockey team "Sakura Japan" for winning Asian Cup last month, whilst at the same time I extended many congratulations and thanks to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Oman Hockey Association and all the people who successfully organised the Asian Cup 2022 in Muscat. During the tournament weeks, the spirit of collaboration and mutual appreciation was really working, and made possible its admirable success.

I would herewith like to renew my wishes for the continued prosperity and happiness of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and of the people of the Sultanate of Oman, and to congratulate the two countries for their 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations, and hereby would like to most cordially celebrate the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor.

JOTA YAMAMOTO
Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman

Warm and Heartfelt Greetings to His Majesty, Emperor Naruhito of Japan on the Occasion of his 62nd Birthday

Warm and Heartfelt Greetings to His Majesty, Emperor Naruhito of Japan on the Occasion of his 62nd Birthday.

On behalf of all the Members of the Board of the Oman Japan Friendship Association (OJFA), I convey heartfelt greetings to His Majesty, Emperor Naruhito of Japan, on the auspicious occasion of his 62nd birthday.

It gives us pleasure to share that, this year, Oman is celebrating the second Anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik's, Accession day. Under his wise and visionary leadership, Oman will continue to move ahead on the path of progress, backed by peace and stability. We pray to the Almighty to bless His Majesty with good health and long life.

Oman and Japan, two great nations with inspiring culture and heritage share a deep-rooted relationship that goes back to hundreds of years. Over the years, these strong bonds have continued to grow from strength to strength. Bringing people of both nations, closer and offering numerous cultural, and economic opportunities to benefit from.

Apart from cultural aspects, Oman and Japan continue to take big strides on the economic front backed by the strengths of both the nations. Japan has gained very high reputation for its expertise and precision in manufacturing a range of products that include Machinery, Iron, Steel, Electronics, Automotive and more. Due to high demands for such products from Japan, Oman witnesses continued imports from Japan. Similarly, as major producer of oil and gas, aluminium and fishery



Mohammed Saud Bahwan,
Chairman of the Board
Oman Japan Friendship
Association

products, Oman has remained a preferred nation to cater to the demands of the people of Japan, through exports. It is also very encouraging to note that a number of Japanese companies, have invested in Oman and operate their businesses through joint ventures in various sectors, including the energy sector.

Today, on such a beautiful occasion, the Oman-Japan Friendship Association reaffirms its commitment to further strengthen the bonds of friendship that bind Oman and Japan.

The Oman Japan Friendship Association, plays a responsible role in promoting this remarkable friendship between the two countries to even greater levels. Over the years, in association with the Embassy of Japan, the Oman Japan Friendship Association has conducted several cultural exchange programmes and paved the way for improving people-to-people contacts. Such initiatives have cultivated a sense of curiosity, encouraging people of both nations to learn more about the absorbing culture and heritage of both nations. These

initiatives ranged from musical concerts to fashion shows, book fair, art exhibitions, cultural dances and much more.

The last two years had been challenging, due to which many cultural initiatives had to be either put on hold or rescheduled. However, the digital world, opened the doors to a whole new realm of staying connected wherever people were, yet staying apart. Even though people were encouraged to limit people-to-people contacts, they were invited to participate in a few online events and programmes.

In September 2021, to mark the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relationship between Japan and Oman, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, invited the general public to submit designs for a 50th anniversary logo to be used to promote the events.

Each year, through events and activities like these, the Oman Japan Friendship Association uses every opportunity to encourage people of both nations to participate and benefit from the strengths of each nation. Going forward, the Association will continue to plan and initiate several such events and activities that will bring people of Oman and Japan closer. On the special occasion, 62nd Birthday of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito, once again, on behalf of all the Board members of the Oman Japan Friendship Association, I convey sincere greetings. May God Almighty grant him good health and long life. And may the inspiring relationship between Oman and Japan, continue to grow stronger.



OMAN JAPAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

Congratulations and Warm wishes to the people of Japan on the occasion of the Japanese National Day and the 62nd Birthday of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito

Taking Lasting Friendship to Greater Heights

Oman and Japan, two great nations, with rich culture and heritage, have a strong and inspiring relationship. For generations, the people of both the nations, have remained rooted in traditional values like loyalty and generosity.

The Oman Japan Friendship Association, plays a passionate role in enhancing and promoting the ties between Oman and Japan. Through specially planned cultural programmes and several other initiatives, the Association aims to bring people of both the nations closer. Enabling them to benefit from each other's rich heritage and culture.

Today, on this special occasion, the Oman Japan Friendship Association reaffirms its commitment to the spirit of everlasting bonds between Oman and Japan.



DIAMOND CONFERENCE

Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, DMCC, announced that the UAE reached the top spot globally as a rough diamond hub, trading over \$22.8 billion worth of rough diamonds in 2021.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,058.07 points, down by 0.64 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.18 per cent at 495.32 points. Oman Fisheries, up 6.15 per cent, was the top gainer while, United Finance, down 3.61 per cent, was the top loser.

Oil prices jump, shares sink as Russia edges towards Ukraine

Russia is a major energy producer and the tensions over Ukraine have brought wide swings in volatile energy prices



TRADING: US trading was closed on Monday for Presidents Day, but markets in Europe and Asia shuddered as Putin moved to secure Russia's hold on Ukraine's rebel regions, adding to fears of a full-scale invasion. - ONA

BANGKOK: Oil prices surged nearly 5 per cent and stock prices dropped after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered forces into separatist regions of eastern Ukraine, bringing a long-feared invasion a step closer.

Russia is a major energy producer and the tensions over Ukraine have brought wide swings in volatile energy prices, on top of the inevitable risks of a broader conflict.

Oil prices already had surged recently to their highest level since 2014. By early yesterday, the advance of US benchmark crude oil had abated slightly. It was up \$3.66, or 4.1 per cent, at \$93.87 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Ex-

change. The price of Brent crude, the standard for international oils, gained \$2.71, or 2.9 per cent, to \$98.10 per barrel.

US trading was closed Monday for Presidents Day, but markets in Europe and Asia shuddered as Putin moved to secure Russia's hold on Ukraine's rebel regions, adding to fears of a full-scale invasion.

Those actions have undermined hopes for averting a conflict that could cause massive casualties, en-

ergy shortages on the continent and economic chaos around the globe.

Germany's DAX slipped 0.1 per cent to 14,719.16 and the CAC 40 in Paris was flat at 6,788.13. Britain's FTSE 100 gave up 0.4 per cent to 7,452.18. US futures were lower, with the contract for the S&P 500 down 0.1 per cent and the future for the Dow industrials 0.2 per cent lower.

So far, the biggest losses have been in Russia, where the MOEX index

was down 3.5 per cent after losing nearly 11 per cent on Monday. The ruble was 2.5 per cent lower.

In Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index dropped 1.7 per cent to 26,449.61 while the Hang Seng in Hong Kong regained some lost ground to close 2.7 per cent lower at 23,520.00. South Korea's Kospi lost 1.4 per cent to 2,706.79 and the Shanghai Composite index fell 1 per cent to 3,457.15. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 1 per cent to 7,161.30.

OIL

Oman oil hits \$96.51

MUSCAT: The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by April 2022 reaching \$96.51, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME).

The DME statement said that the price of Oman

oil rose by \$4.27 from the price of Monday, which was \$92.24. The average price of Oman oil (February delivery 2022) has stabilised at \$73.14, thus \$7.12 per barrel lower than January delivery 2022. -ONA

The turmoil in Ukraine has upped uncertainty at a time when investors already are jittery over how the world's central banks, especially the US Federal Reserve, will act to counter surging inflation while coronavirus outbreaks are fuelled by the highly contagious omicron variant cloud the outlook for many countries.

Higher oil prices complicate that situation.

Many Asian economies depend on oil and gas imports, and even if those don't come from Russia, the spillover effects on world markets will raise energy costs at a time when countries are still barely recovering from the pandemic.

On other fronts, Treasury yields have been falling as investors shift

money into the safety of US bonds. The yield on the 10-year Treasury, which affects rates on mortgages and other consumer loans, was at 1.90 per cent by early today, down from 1.93 per cent on Monday.

In currency trading, the US dollar rose to 114.80 Japanese yen from 114.74 yen late Monday. The euro climbed to \$1.1317 from \$1.1312. US stocks capped a week of volatile trading with a broad sell-off on Friday.

The S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average both slipped 0.7 per cent. The Nasdaq composite bore the brunt of the selling, skidding 1.2 per cent. Small company stocks also fell, with the Russell 2000 index down 0.9 per cent, the Associated Press news reported. -ONA

ELECTRIC VEHICLE

Shell launches its first EV charging hub in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Shell Oman Marketing Company has launched its first electric vehicle (EV) charging hub in Oman, located at Al Bandar Service Station in Seeb.

It has supplemented the existing fuel station with a fast electric charging point, catering to the EV owners in the capital.

The new ShellRecharge service will enable customers to charge their EVs speedily and to enjoy seamless drives within and around the city. Already featuring an environmentally sustainable design with built-in solar panels on the Shell Select store, the service station is now also equipped with a 50kW electric charging point.

Along with a comfortable waiting area and the Shell Select convenience store, the site also includes the newest Shell Café, Shell's in-house coffee brand, which is being launched in a growing number of countries around the world.

István Kapitány, Global Executive Vice President of Shell Mobil-



ity said, "Shell has a proud tradition of supporting Oman's drivers and making their journeys better with products like our premium Shell V-Power fuels and great convenience offers. I'm pleased to be opening the next chapter of Shell's history in Oman with the introduction of ShellRecharge to our forecourts. We've designed the Al Bandar hub to offer an EV charging experience that is as convenient and comfortable as possible. By integrating a Shell Café, we're also offering drivers the opportunity to recharge themselves as well as their EVs."

Dr Mohammed Al Balushi, CEO,

Shell Oman, said, "The ShellRecharge at Al Bandar service station marks a first in our EV roadmap and it will redefine EV charging in Oman. As a leading player in our sector, Shell Oman will contribute expertise in the energy transition to support Oman's Carbon Control Target Plan which is rooted in the Oman Vision 2040. It remains our endeavour to collaborate with the relevant authorities and stakeholders to realise the goals of the National Energy Strategy and accelerate the gradual transition to a lower-carbon economy and an energy matrix with lower carbon emissions."

AGREEMENT

Al Mouj Muscat signs new financing partnership with United Finance

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's premium lifestyle destination, Al Mouj Muscat, has entered into a new partnership with United Finance giving residents the option of preferred financing rates to help them reach their lifestyle goals.

United Finance is one of the leading finance and leasing services providers in the Sultanate and thanks to the new agreement, as well as attractive rates, residents benefit from having a premium and personalised service through a fast and convenient process for securing finance.

Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, says: "Al Mouj Muscat is a community designed to give all of our residents' access to a truly unique oceanfront lifestyle, where life can be enjoyed at its best. Partnerships like this one are a perfect example of the opportunities we create, and an easy, tailored and entirely exclusive and extremely attractive financing offer.

"A true reflection of our ongoing commitment to providing



services and experiences with our residents' value."

United Finance's CEO Nasser bin Salim Al Rashdi says, "It is an honour to provide this bespoke service for the residents of Al Mouj Muscat. As a non-banking financier, we are always looking for ways to reimagine our customer service experience and by

make financing and loans readily available to consumers."

The preferred rates United Finance have introduced to Al Mouj Muscat require only a 20 per cent down payment for up to three years credit which applies to owners as well as tenants at Al Mouj Muscat who meet the eligibility criteria.

SOUQMADAYN

Digital platform for buying and selling Omani products launched

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates - Madayn launched the first integrated Omani digital platform (SouqMadayn) for displaying, buying and selling Omani products under the patronage of Dr Said bin Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy, in the presence of a number of their excellencies at the Knowledge Oasis Muscat.

SouqMadayn platform aims at displaying, buying and selling Omani products between companies (B2B) as well as offering government procurement (B2G). The platform shall enhance the presence of national industries in local and foreign markets by utilising cutting-edge technologies and software and taking the utmost advantage of e-commerce technologies.

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MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Oman Fisheries, up 6.15 per cent, was the top gainer while, United Finance, down 3.61 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,058.07 points, down by 0.64 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.18 per cent at 495.32 points. Oman Fisheries, up 6.15 per cent, was the top gainer while, United Finance, down 3.61 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Bank Muscat was the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 653 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR4.85 million, with more than 27.48 million shares changing hands. Out of 50 traded securities, 10 advanced, 20 declined and 20 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net sellers for OMR336,000 while foreign

investors were net buyers for OMR204,000 followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR132,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 6437.81 points, down by 0.38 per cent. Prices of Al Omaniya Financial Services, Oman United Insurance, National Finance, Bank Muscat, and Vision Insurance were up by 2.94 per cent, 1.59 per cent, 0.85 per cent, 0.77 per cent, and 0 per cent respectively. Prices of United Finance, Sohar International Bank, National Bank Oman, Muscat Finance, and Global Financial Investments were down by 3.61 per cent, 2.78 per cent, 2.63 per cent, 1.59 per cent, and 1.37 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5754.71 points, down by 0.15 per cent. Services Index was down by 0.31 per cent before closing at 1633.33 points. - **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,089.85	4,058.07	4,058.07	4,084.28	-26.21	-0.64
FINANCIAL INDEX	6,475.61	6,437.81	6,437.81	6,462.35	-24.54	-0.38
Industry Index	5,765.85	5,751.93	5,754.71	5,763.60	-8.89	-0.15
Services Index	1,638.24	1,629.22	1,633.33	1,638.33	-5.00	-0.31
MSX Shariah Index	495.89	495.32	495.32	496.20	-0.88	-0.18
MSX TR INDEX	4,923.15	4,884.89	4,884.89	4,916.44	-31.55	-0.64

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
20,059,082	3,389,233	653	22,012,401,610	10	20	20	50

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22

SEC	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (MU)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM000002077	AL OMANIYA FIN	855,200	119,301	20	0.138	0.140	0.138	0.140	0.136	0.004	2.941	0.138	0.138	0.145	0.100	40,870,924
OM000001097	OMAN UNITED INSUR	474,000	181,980	17	0.384	0.384	0.380	0.384	0.378	0.006	1.587	0.384	0.378	0.384	0.100	38,400,000
OM000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,270,461	663,610	81	0.522	0.524	0.520	0.522	0.518	0.004	0.772	0.522	0.520	0.522	0.100	1,865,875,841
OM000001160	NATIONAL GAS	10,000	1,270	2	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.000	0.000	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.130	0.100	10,795,000
OM000001418	RAJST CEMENT	1,000	188	1	0.188	0.189	0.189	0.189	0.190	0.001	0.847	0.188	0.188	0.190	0.100	38,400,424
OM000001533	OMINVEST	52,600	15,517	4	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.000	0.000	0.295	0.295	0.300	0.100	1,971,678,001
OM000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	98,126	41,529	6	0.422	0.428	0.422	0.424	0.424	0.000	0.000	0.428	0.422	0.432	0.100	93,280,000
OM000002440	AL SHARJIA INV	40,785	3,669	2	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.088	0.094	0.100	8,100,000
OM000003000	AI MAHA MARKTING	3,831	2,620	4	0.684	0.684	0.684	0.688	0.688	0.000	0.000	0.684	0.684	0.684	0.100	47,472,000
OM000008920	VISION INSURANCE	1,304,755	136,968	29	0.103	0.106	0.103	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.100	10,500,000
OM000003224	RENAISSANCE SER	150,000	67,200	3	0.448	0.448	0.448	0.450	0.450	-0.002	-0.444	0.448	0.442	0.450	0.100	105,911,680
OM000002226	ALAZEEHA SERVICES	100,350	31,778	12	0.316	0.320	0.316	0.316	0.318	-0.002	-0.629	0.320	0.318	0.320	0.100	19,340,550
OM000002200	AHLI BANK	729,777	96,983	12	0.119	0.120	0.119	0.119	0.120	-0.001	-0.833	0.119	0.117	0.120	0.100	232,008,238
OM000001749	OMAN CEMENT	101,080	23,552	6	0.233	0.233	0.233	0.233	0.235	-0.002	-0.851	0.233	0.233	0.233	0.100	77,093,341
OM000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD	172,414	65,911	31	0.384	0.386	0.380	0.382	0.386	-0.004	-1.038	0.382	0.382	0.384	0.100	47,711,021
OM000003968	OOBDOO	603,322	211,163	14	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.354	-0.004	-1.130	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.100	227,830,481
OM000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	100,700	89,292	5	0.688	0.688	0.688	0.688	0.686	0.002	-1.149	0.688	0.684	0.688	0.100	108,360,000
OM000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	505,500	39,993	31	0.080	0.080	0.079	0.080	0.080	-0.001	-1.250	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.100	15,800,000
OM000003026	OMAN TELECOM	49,000	39,568	11	0.812	0.812	0.804	0.808	0.820	-0.012	-1.463	0.804	0.804	0.808	0.100	906,000,000
OM000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	1,636,405	101,457	53	0.082	0.082	0.082	0.082	0.083	-0.001	-1.587	0.082	0.081	0.082	0.100	18,943,072
OM000003358	SOHAR INT BANK	3,489,000	397,795	19	0.105	0.106	0.105	0.105	0.108	-0.003	-2.778	0.106	0.105	0.106	0.100	313,956,540
OM000001525	OMAN INVST & FIN	187,000	28,150	12	0.152	0.152	0.150	0.151	0.156	-0.005	-3.205	0.150	0.145	0.150	0.100	35,787,000
Total		11,945,286	2,289,364	375												
Parallel Market																
OM000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	358,178	24,713	28	0.065	0.070	0.065	0.069	0.065	0.004	6.154	0.069	0.068	0.069	0.100	8,625,000
OM000004735	SEMBOORP SALAH	301,960	23,145	14	0.074	0.081	0.074	0.077	0.074	0.003	4.054	0.081	0.080	0.081	0.100	73,502,000
OM000001152	OMAN NAT ENG	1,109,615	131,978	70	0.123	0.123	0.117	0.119	0.116	0.003	2.586	0.117	0.116	0.117	0.100	15,470,000
OM000003963	PHOENIX POWER	56,000	2,688	2	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.047	0.001	2.128	0.048	0.048	0.050	0.100	70,204,870
OM000003948	NATIONAL FINANCE	1,311,000	150,085	7	0.119	0.120	0.119	0.119	0.118	0.001	0.847	0.119	0.119	0.120	0.100	84,400,424
OM000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD	1,300	115	2	0.080	0.080	0.088	0.091	0.091	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.082	0.091	0.100	3,055,070
OM000001317	HSEC BANK OMAN	400,000	39,200	7	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.100	196,030,623
OM000001981	OMAN EMIRATES HO	140,806	9,856	4	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070	0.071	0.100	8,531,250
OM000001982	AL MADINA INV	10,000	480	1	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.048	0.000	0.048	0.100	3,360,000
OM000002549	BANK DHOFAR	240,000	27,840	6	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.100	347,576,767
OM000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	703	61	2	0.087	0.088	0.087	0.089	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.097	0.100	7,244,845
OM000003711	SOHAR POWER	269	11	1	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.000	0.000	0.042	0.042	0.043	0.100	2,822,420
OM000004420	BANK NIZWA	905,000	87,785	14	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.000	0.000	0.097	0.096	0.097	0.100	216,884,444
OM000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	13,000	1,254	1	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.100	16,800,000
OM000004925	ALBATHNAH POWER	30,000	1,435	3	0.048	0.048	0.047	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.047	0.047	0.050	0.100	32,394,597
OM000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	25,000	1,350	5	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.000	0.000	0.054	0.054	0.055	0.100	12,000,960
OM000004689	SHARQIYAH DESALIN	40,100	5,587	10	0.137	0.140	0.137	0.139	0.140	-0.001	-0.714	0.140	0.140	0.141	0.100	13,594,500
OM000007084	MCT DESALINATE	112,843	13,905	13	0.123	0.123	0.120	0.122	0.123	-0.001	-0.813	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.100	18,977,149
OM000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	150,481	12,490	6	0.084	0.084	0.083	0.083	0.084	-0.001	-1.190	0.083	0.081	0.083	0.100	21,047,970
OM000003125	GLOBAL INV. H	399,550	28,813	21	0.073	0.073	0.072	0.072	0.073	-0.001	-1.370	0.072	0.070	0.072	0.100	14,400,000
OM000004893	AL SUWADI POWER	50,288	2,463	3	0.049	0.050	0.049	0.049	0.050	-0.001	-2.008	0.049	0.050	0.050	0.100	38,005,911
OM000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	24,000	1,920	4	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.082	-0.002	-2.439	0.080	0.075	0.080	0.100	37,694,911
OM000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	348,000	64,380	7	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.190	-0.005	-2.632	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.100	300,800,076
OM000002374	UNITED FINANCE	1,715,500	142,077	41	0.081	0.081	0.079	0.080	0.083	-0.003	-3.614	0.080	0.077	0.080	0.100	27,931,533
Total		7,799,464	779,513	273												

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DOES EATING VEGETABLES PROTECT AGAINST CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES? NO, SAYS STUDY



Since childhood, we have been told that a sufficient intake of vegetables is essential for maintaining a balanced diet and avoiding a wide range of diseases. But does a diet rich in vegetables also lower the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD)? Unfortunately, researchers from the Nuffield Department of Population Health at the University of Oxford, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the University of Bristol found no evidence for this.

The large-scale new study was published in 'Frontiers in Nutrition'.

That the consumption of vegetables might lower the risk of CVD might, at first sight, seem plausible, as their ingredients such as carotenoids and alpha-tocopherol have properties that could protect against CVD. But so far, the evidence from previous studies for an overall effect of vegetable consumption on CVD has been inconsistent.

The results from the powerful, large-scale study showed that higher consumption of cooked or uncooked vegetables is unlikely to affect the risk of CVD. They also explained how confounding factors might have explained previous spurious, positive findings.

"The UK Biobank is a large-scale prospective study on how genetics and environment contribute to the development of the most common and life-threatening diseases. Here we make use of the UK Biobank's large sample size, long-term follow-up, and detailed information on social and lifestyle factors, to assess reliably the association of vegetable intake with the risk of subsequent CVD," said Prof Naomi Allen, UK Biobank's chief scientist and co-author on the study.

The UK Biobank followed the health of half a million adults in the UK by linking to their healthcare records. Upon their enrollment in 2006-2010, these volunteers were interviewed about their diet, lifestyle, medical and reproductive history, and other factors.

The researchers used the responses at enrollment of 399,586 participants (of whom 4.5 per cent went on to develop CVD) to questions about their daily average consumption of uncooked versus cooked vegetables. They analyzed the association with the risk of hospitalization or death from myocardial infarction, stroke, or major CVD. They controlled for a wide range of possible

confounding factors, including socioeconomic status, physical activity, and other dietary factors.

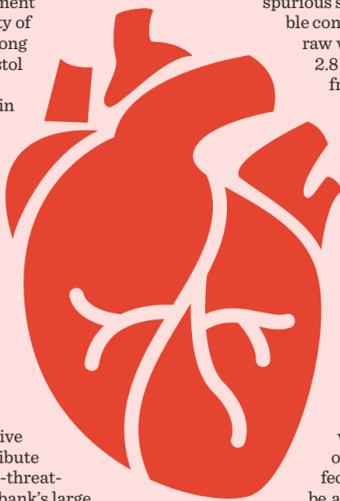
Crucially, the researchers also assessed the potential role of 'residual confounding', that is, whether unknown additional factors or inaccurate measurement of known factors might lead to a spurious statistical association between CVD risk and vegetable consumption. The mean daily intake of total vegetables, raw vegetables, and cooked vegetables were 5.0, 2.3, and 2.8 heaped tablespoons per person. The risk of dying from CVD was about 15 per cent lower for those with the highest intake compared to the lowest vegetable intake.

However, this apparent effect was substantially weakened when possible socioeconomic, nutritional, and health- and medicine-related confounding factors were taken into account. Controlling for these factors reduced the predictive statistical power of vegetable intake on CVD by over 80 per cent, suggesting that more precise measures of these confounders would have completely explained any residual effect of vegetable intake.

Dr Qi Feng, a researcher at the Nuffield Department of Population Health at the University of Oxford, and the study's lead author said, "Our large study did not find evidence for a protective effect of vegetable intake on the occurrence of CVD. Instead, our analyses show that the seemingly protective effect of vegetable intake against CVD risk is very likely to be accounted for by bias from residual confounding factors, related to differences in socioeconomic situation and lifestyle."

Feng et al. suggested that future studies should further assess whether particular types of vegetables or their method of preparation might affect the risk of CVD.

The last author Dr Ben Lacey, Associate Professor in the department at the University of Oxford, concluded: "This is an important study with implications for understanding the dietary causes of CVD and the burden of CVD normally attributed to low vegetable intake. However, eating a balanced diet and maintaining a healthy weight remains an important part of maintaining good health and reducing risk of major diseases, including some cancers. It is widely recommended that at least five portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables should be eaten every day." - ANI





FEATURE



Is it bad luck to get married on a double number date?

Dates like 22.02.2022 are popular for weddings. There is a long history of attaching significance to numbers, and meanings vary around the world.



IT TAKES two people to make a covenant of love. No wonder, then, that in primarily Christian parts of the world, the number two is regarded as the "number of Christian love and mutual affection, of marriages and social life." At least this is how the German polymath Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim put it in his 16th-century seminal work, "Three Books of Occult Philosophy," which dealt with magic and its relationship with religion.

These days, couples who would like to have their bond reflected in their wedding date can celebrate with the number two on 22.02.2022. In Germany, a doubled number is referred to as a "Schnapszahl" or "liquor number" for the fact that there's the tendency to see things double when drunk.

A "Schnapszahl" date is symbolic of strength, says Berlin psychotherapist and author Wolfgang Krüger. "People attribute a certain lucky effect to it," he told the German news agency dpa. This, he said, corresponds to the attitude toward marriage, which is symbolically charged.

Lucky numbers and auspicious dates

Choosing to have weddings on a date with numbers considered lucky is done around the world. In China, there were numerous mass weddings on auspicious dates, especially in 2008 and 2009, since the numbers eight and nine have great significance in some parts of the world. In China, for example, the number eight is connected to wealth and health.

On August 8, 2008, 314,224 couples said "I do" to one another — more than 15,000 in Beijing alone. Getting married on 09.09.2009 was expected to lead to a long and happy future, because when pronounced, the number nine sounds similar to the word "jiu," which means "long-lasting."

Doubled numbers — especially eights and nines — are considered lucky in China, where it is said that "good things come in pairs." Two is not a bad number either, as even numbers are considered stable and balanced.



Numbers of misfortune

However, specific numbers that are assigned possible positive and negative effects vary from culture to culture.

In India, for instance, eight is the number of misfortune. In China, meanwhile, the unlucky number is four due to its phonetic similarity to the word "death." Even outside of China, many Asians now avoid the number due to its negative connotations. In buildings, for example, the third floor is occasionally followed by the fifth, and in skyscrapers, the floors 40 to 49 are



sometimes skipped.

In China, as well as in Thailand and Vietnam, seven is also an unlucky number. The seventh month is regarded as a month of ghosts. In contrast, seven is often a lucky number in Christian, Muslim and Jewish cultures. In the respective holy scriptures, there are numerous examples in which the number seven promises good things. In the Bible, for example, the world was created in seven days.

In many cultures, 13 is the number of misfortune. The superstitious fear of the number 13 even has its own term, "triskaidekaphobia." Some airlines therefore do without a thirteenth row in their fleet of aircraft.



Friday the 13th is not only unpopular among brides and grooms: it has also been ingrained in pop culture, most famously via the 1980 horror film of the same name directed by Sean Cunningham. The fear of this date can turn into a phobia: Those who avoid appointments on Friday the 13th or can't get out of bed on this day may suffer from "paraskavedekatriphobia," which comes from the Greek words for Friday, "paraskevi" and thirteen "dekatria."

The origins of number symbolism

Author Udo Becker says in his work "Lexicon of Symbols," that numbers "in most cultures and religions are symbol carriers with meanings that are rich, often complicated and not always transparent today." The connection between numbers and meaning has existed for millennia, at least since 2900 BC in Mesopotamia.

The meaning of numbers was also prevalent in Pythagorean culture. The Kabbalah teachings — an orally transmitted mystical tradition within Judaism — and medieval magical speculations are known for having connections between numbers and meaning. However, today number symbolism lives on, mostly in esoteric numerology, which according to Becker consists of "mostly completely baseless speculations."

How a number arrives at its mean-



ing can vary greatly. In Kabbalah, for example, this happens through the interchangeability of numbers and letters. Another possibility is reflected by the example of the number four in China, where phonetic similarity with the word "death" was the origin of the association. Religious traditions and traditional fairy tales are other sources.

In Germany, February is a rather unpopular wedding month, statistically speaking. Between 2011 and 2020, only an average of 3.5% of all weddings took place in this winter month. However the dates become more popular when calendar palindromes — sequences of numbers like those on February 22, 2022, which read the same forwards and backwards — come into play. Two years ago, the dates 02.02.2020 and 20.02.2020 were linked to marriage peaks in February.

However, researchers at the University of Melbourne in 2016 discovered number symbolism often doesn't work in a couple's favor. Their study of a Dutch marriage and divorce registry found that marriages contracted on double number dates had an 18% increased risk of failure.

Psychotherapist Wolfgang Krüger sees the reason for this phenomenon to be the fact that couples who chose such dates were more often concerned with outward appearances and occasionally lacked the staying power and the inner connection to get through times of crisis.

Symbolism or not, dates with fewer different digits are easier to remember. Some people choose a date like February 22, 2022, purely for pragmatic reasons — perhaps even in the hope that they won't easily forget their wedding anniversary. -nw



PHOTO-FEATURE



BRITISH PM ANNOUNCES END OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS
British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Monday the end of all domestic COVID-19 restrictions in England in a process starting later this week.



2022 VANCOUVER FAN EXPO HELD IN CANADA
Cosplayers pose for photos during the 2022 Vancouver Fan Expo in Vancouver, Canada. The annual pop-culture convention runs from February 19 to February 21.



KUWAIT HOLDS FIRST HERITAGE LIVE SHOW
A man performs during the first heritage live show in Kuwait City. The first heritage live show was held to introduce the city's cultural and artistic image.

The World in Pictures



PEOPLE VISIT CHINA TOWN'S WEEKEND MARKET
Tourists pose for a photo with actors who dressed as gods of happiness, wealth and longevity respectively during the China town's weekend market in San Francisco, the United States.



RIPLEY'S AQUARIUM OF CANADA
Visitors look at fishes in a water tank at Ripley's Aquarium of Canada in Toronto. The Ripley's Aquarium of Canada drew many families to celebrate Family Day on Monday.



THE NETHERLANDS HONOURS MEDAL WINNERS
The medal winners of the Dutch Winter Olympics team were honoured at the Hilton Hotel at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, the Netherlands. In total, Dutch athletes won 17 medals — eight gold, five silver and four bronze. — Xinhua

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER ✦

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ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat supports 26th Muscat Book Fair

The bank's support for the Muscat International Book Fair, which will continue till March 5, is part of its strategy of supporting activities that help in the further development of the country

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to provide strong support for local events and activities in Oman and contribute to national developmental goals, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has announced its strong support for the 26th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair.

The book fair will commence on February 24 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the auspices of His Highness

Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth. The bank's support for the event, which will continue till March 5, is part of its strategy of supporting activities that help in the further development of the country. The bank aims to promote Oman's potential in a manner that complements and supports the government's efforts to create new economic, commercial and social opportunities that strengthens Oman's economy and its society.



The Muscat International Book Fair aims to contribute to enriching the Omani, Arab and international culture by organising a number of events, lectures, literary and poetry evenings.

It will host an elite selection of literati, publishers, exhibitors and media personnel through as many as 114 events as per the information from the organisers. As many as 23 new publishing houses are participating in the event in 2022, which will see a total of 715 participants from the Arab region and

elsewhere. The highest participation is from Egypt, which has as many as 33 publishing houses taking part in the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Talib Saif Al Makhmari, Manager, Community & Media Relations, said: "Bank Muscat is delighted to partner with Muscat International Book Fair and contribute to its great success, thereby highlighting the Sultanate's cultural achievements and role. The book fair plays an important role in introducing some of the most important Omani and Arab works and publications across various fields to a much wider audience. I would like to wish the book fair and all the planned events and activities within it all success."

He added that Bank Muscat would always be happy to cooperate and partner with the organisers to maximise the achievements of the exhibition and showcase the noble achievements of Oman's cultural heritage to an ever-growing and diverse audience.

100TH ANNIVERSARY

Lincoln celebrates century of luxury and elegance

MUSCAT: Lincoln Motor Company was purchased from distinguished inventor and automotive engineer Henry Leland on 4th February 1922 by Henry Ford. An \$8 million deal that had the support of Henry Ford's wife Clara and his son Edsel Ford. The transaction set in motion the creation of an iconic American luxury automotive brand.

"We are at a defining moment in our history. We look back at Lincoln's past and find inspiration for the future and, to reflect on what we have accomplished – maintaining a balance between the brand's core values and redefining our vehicle and experiences for the next generation of luxury clients," says Joy Falotico, president, Lincoln. "The timing of our 100th anniversary couldn't be more ideal as we shift to an electrified future, and I look forward to shepherding the brand into the next 100 years."

And as the brand celebrates its 100th anniversary and storied past, it is equally focused on an exciting future. Lincoln is committed to the future delivering a unique line-up of electrified vehicles and connected services that create effortless experiences for its clients.

"With classic style, form and function that became the hallmark of the brand, there's something very special about Lincoln," said Jim Farley, president and CEO, Ford. "And as we move toward an electric future with connected technologies and always-on experiences, I am so excited to see where the brand will go as it begins its second century."

A century of innovation Much of the success the company experienced early on is credited to the influence of Edsel Ford, who served as president of Lincoln from shortly after acquisition to his death in 1943. His ambition is summed up best in his own famous words – "Father made the most popular cars in the world; I want to make the best."

Edsel prioritized design and styling, while also making customization affordable, allowing him to offer precision and performance in a beautifully executed package, at a price within reach. The belief that a car could be more than just transportation was foundational to the rise of Lincoln.

In 1936 the company introduced the Lincoln Zephyr, the

brand's first mid-priced vehicle that featured a streamlined design and an "alligator"-type hood. In 1939 the Lincoln Continental debuted as a personal-use vehicle, becoming an instant design classic and quickly establishing the personal luxury car segment in America.

In 1952 Edsel's son, William Clay Ford was appointed manager of special product operations, in charge of engineers and designers planning the Continental's successor, the Continental Mark II, considered by many ones of the greatest cars ever built.

Through the years, Lincoln has pioneered multiple new features and innovations and continues to introduce advancements today.

Redefining Lincoln brand

For a century, Lincoln has focused on forward-looking innovations, while maintaining its core values that keep the brand's products fresh and desirable.

The introduction of the fourth-generation Navigator in 2018 was instrumental to an upturn in the direction of the brand. A combination of modern luxury and innovative technology, including the debut of 30-Way Perfect Position Seats in the all-new flagship SUV, elevated first-class travel for families, kicking off a resurgence that Lincoln continues to advance today. The momentum continues with the introduction of new products and services.

The core tenets that made Lincoln an American luxury brand are evident in today's vehicles, services and client experiences, driving the spirit of Lincoln for more than 10 decades now and counting. As the brand looks ahead, Lincoln is laser-focused on advancing its Quiet Flight DNA into an electrified and connected future. By 2030 it will have a full portfolio of connected and electrified vehicles globally.

To mark the occasion, Lincoln is kicking off a yearlong series of global events connecting the past and the present to an exciting future in the years to come. Lincoln retailers are working to honour this milestone as well, with 100 stores hosting events with their clients and local communities throughout the year.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Feast on refined fare of two Michelin Star chefs at Anantara Al Baleed Resort in Salalah

MUSCAT: Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara welcomes you to join two highly anticipated visitors this March. Chef SotaAtsumi will host three special events at the beginning of the month, while Chef Rik Jansma follows with his culinary showcase near the end.

For guests seeking some French gastronomy, Chef SotaAtsumi brings his talent from his restaurant, Maison in Paris. The acclaimed chef was named the "Most Influential Parisien Chef" by The New York Times in 2019.

Michelin Star Chef Rik Jansma heads up his kitchen at Basiliek in the Netherlands. The chef who honed his craft under luminaries such as Gerry Brokken and Jan de Wit is celebrated for his creativity and attention to detail.

Diners can delight in gourmet pleasures during the chef's visits, as each will host three exclusive events, which are sure to be booked quickly.

Chef SotaAtsumi
March 2- March 4, Signature 6-course menu at the Mekong.



Chef SotaAtsumi will present a decadent 6-course set menu at Mekong. Guests can relax in the elegance of our Asian restaurant while enjoying flavourful dishes carefully prepared by the celebrated chef. Vivant Table winner, Chef Atsumi presents a refreshing take on Asian-infused French cuisine with local ingredients. Date: March 2, Time: 6.30 pm – 10.30 pm

Live workshop: Budding chefs or those who love to entertain will enjoy this exclusive event at Sakalan. Only limited seats are avail-



able. Chef Atsumi will present a step-by-step demonstration of one of his signature dishes from preparation to plate. Guests can then enjoy the dish. Date: March 3, Time: 1.00 pm.

Signature 4-course menu at Al Mina Beach

Diners can enjoy a carefully prepared menu by the esteemed Chef at Al Mina Beach. The gentle Salalah breeze will ripple across the water as guests savour each exquisite morsel from amuse-bouche to dessert. Date: March 4, Time: 6.30 pm – 10.30 pm.

Chef Rik Jansma
March 23 - March 25, Signature 6-course Menu at Al Mina. Bite into dishes bursting with freshness and flair by Michelin-starred Chef Rik Jansma. He will showcase the culinary masterpieces that have put his Dutch restaurant on the global culinary map. Admire the art of gastronomy in our airy restaurant. Date: March 23, Time: 6.30 pm – 10.30 pm

Those looking to know the secrets behind ChefJansma's success can watch as he prepares one dish from beginning to serving. Only 15 people can witness the Michelin-starred Chef at work, mesmerised by his finesse and dexterity. Date: March 24, Time: 1.00 pm. Signature 4-course menu at Al Mina Beach

Chef Rik Jansma creates a special menu for guests to enjoy by the Arabian Sea. Focusing on fresh ingredients and his craft, a medley of deliciousness will delight each diner. Savour the moment as this Michelin-starred chef is the star of Salalah. Date: March 25, Time: 6.30 pm – 10.30 pm

ACADEMICS

Middle East College to hold graduation of batch 2020

MUSCAT: Middle East College (MEC) will celebrate the graduation of its students from the 2020 batch on Saturday, February 26, at the Student Hub on its campus located in Knowledge Oasis Muscat. This year, a total of 1219 students will be graduating from the college's undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) programmes in Engineering, Science and Technology, and Business & Management.

There will be four different graduation sessions for the various awards and degrees that the graduands will be receiving, namely diplomas, advanced diplomas, bachelor's degrees, and postgraduate degrees. The ceremony will be conducted with 70% capacity following guidelines issued by the Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

POWERED BY HARMONYOS 2

Huawei MatePad: A new-generation smart office mid-range educational tablet

MUSCAT: Huawei Consumer Business Group (BG) announced the launch of the new Huawei MatePad, a new-generation smart office mid-range educational tablet powered by HarmonyOS 2.

Featuring a 10.4-inch 2k FullView Display and 4 speakers that are tuned by Harman Kardon for an immersive sound experience. The tablet is also compatible with the Huawei M-Pencil Package (2nd generation) and offers consumers multiple smart features to get tasks done in addition to a wide range of notetaking apps. The new and improved Huawei MatePad supports a rich ecosystem, positioning itself as an all-rounded mid-range tablet that boasts solid and unmatched features for an accessible price point.

The Huawei MatePad brings advancements in all aspects. Be-



ing slim and portable, it embodies the beauty of minimalism while merging ergonomics and technological aesthetics, resulting in a perfect balance between looks and user experience. Equipped with a 10.4-inch, 2K resolution Huawei FullView Display, the Huawei MatePad is set up to deliver better image quality over a wide range of content. As a smart office and educational tablet, the

Huawei MatePad enable users to better harness smart productivity and creativity, yielding an elevated learning experience.

Simplify the complexity - Huawei MatePad is a product that combines technology and aesthetics to continue the minimalist design language of the series. It boasts a 10.4-inch 2k Huawei FullView Display with an 84% screen-to-body ratio, featuring no antenna breakpoints exposed on the bezels or across the back cover. It naturally directs the user's attention to the screen content.

In an era where experience is of utmost importance, the Huawei MatePad is equipped with a 2K QHD (Ultra High-Resolution) screen to deliver an overwhelming visual experience that renders the graphics in finer details with better quality.

BRANCH IN BUKHA



NBO opens new branch

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) recently celebrated the opening of its new branch in Bukha in the Governorate of Musandam. Having relocated its existing branch to bigger premises, the new facility is fully modernised and equipped with a Full Function Machine (FFM), enabling customers to access a comprehensive range of services including account management, card issuance, and inquiries. Opened under the auspices of Sheikh Abdullah Ahmed Al Malik Al Shehhi, Shura Council Member for the Wilayat of Bukha, the branch marks the latest in NBO's

efforts to make the banking experience as convenient and as enjoyable as possible for its growing customer base.

Tariq Atiq, Chief Retail and Digital Banking Officer at NBO-said, "In our quest to make banking accessible to people across the Sultanate of Oman, we continue to place our branches in strategic and convenient locations. Our new branch in Bukha is an extension of our efforts to meet the needs of our customers in Musandam while offering them excellence through a tailored range of innovative products and services."

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