

New agri marketing firm receives first lot of Omani produce

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Agricultural Production and Marketing Company (APMC), a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority, has started trial operations of its first outlet in the wilayat of Suwaiq.

Established with an aim to collect, store, process and market vegetables and fruits from farmers, and establish model farms across the sultanate to introduce best agricultural practices,

APMC received the first batch of products of Omani farmers on Monday.

The outlet received produce from farmers in the governorates of North and South Batinah.

Salim bin Saif al Abdali, chairman of the Board of Directors of APMC, informed that the company has an ambitious plan to promote and market agricultural products of all kinds in cooperation with associations and farmers, and establish a partnership with them.



“APMC seeks to establish model farms in several governorates to cultivate fruits and

vegetables suited to the local environment in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture,

Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources and the private sector. This is in addition to establishing shops to sell fresh Omani produce. The company will also co-operate with small and medium enterprises that produce food and agricultural products,” Abdali said.

The company aims to organise marketing of agricultural produce in cooperation with competent authorities in the country, assist farmers in marketing their products - and also help them pay at-

tention to quality and product safety - and export surplus produce.

“APMC invites all farmers and producers to cooperate with the company to achieve its goals,” Abdali said.

Last year, APMC signed an agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to plant crops and 500,000 trees in the desert over the next ten years. The memorandum of collaboration focuses on a 35sqkm tract of land in Rahab in the south of

PDO’s concession area.

Under the agreement, PDO will lease the site to APMC, which will provide and operate the necessary infrastructure, related facilities and services for tenants, buy and market their produce, as well as promote the area to farmers and investors. Half a million trees and a variety of edible and non-edible crops will be grown, creating jobs in the agricultural sector, supporting Omani SMEs and potentially supplying fresh produce in local markets.

ROP charges parents with leaving child unattended in public place

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following photographs circulating on social media of a lost child in a public place, Royal Oman Police (ROP) investigated the case. The parents, who are Arab nationals, have been identified.

‘The Royal Oman Police followed up on the photos circulating of a child being found in a public place in Muscat. The child’s parents, who are residents and of Arab nationality, were found,’ an ROP statement said on Monday.

Legal action is being taken against the parents who are charged with leaving a child in a public place without care.

ROP also arrested three people for theft and impersonating policemen on Monday. The Directorate General of Inquiries and Investigations arrested three people on charges of impersonating policemen and theft. The accused stopped a motorcyclist and stole his motorcycle. Legal procedures are being completed against the perpetrators,’ ROP stated.

No change in Omani passport: ROP

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following a misleading photograph of an Omani passport that circulated on social media, Royal Oman Police (ROP) has clarified that there will be no change in the shape or colour of the Omani passport.

‘Royal Oman Police clarifies that the photograph circulating on social media is of an identification book issued before the machine-read Omani passport currently in use. The photograph does not indicate how the new passport will look like,’ ROP stated. It reiterated that there is no change in the shape or colour of the passport as rumoured on social media.

WEATHER WATCH		
	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	37	22
Doha	31	21
Kuwait City	25	12
Manama	29	19
Muscat	34	22
Riyadh	35	16

PRAYER TIMINGS	
Fajr	5.01am
Sunrise	6.16am
Duhr	12.21pm
Asr	3.46pm
Maghrib	6.21pm
Isha	7.31pm



Rashad bin Mohammad
Al Zubair, Chairman

Dear shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to share with you the financial results of Oman Arab Bank (‘the Bank’) for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.

The macroeconomic indicators show a continued improvement in Oman’s economic and financial outlook for 2021. The economic recovery is supported by the expansion of the national immunization campaign against COVID-19, which entails administering a booster dose to target groups and a gradual return to normal conditions. The decisions taken by the Supreme Committee to address the ramifications of COVID-19, the fiscal control measures taken by the government, and the rise in oil prices have collectively contributed to the acceleration of the economic recovery pace in the Sultanate. This was manifested through a notable increase in the public revenues and a decrease in the budget deficit. The stability of the fixed exchange rate system helped to provide a sufficient import cover against the foreign reserves held at the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

The Banking sector played a key role in supporting the Omani economy during this critical period by increasing the volume of credit granted to meet the financing needs of the economy, and providing temporary relief for affected borrowers. In this context, the Bank focused on protecting shareholders’ interest, while ensuring the wellbeing of its employees, and supporting its customers and communities. The Bank has also continued to work on several fronts, including: implementing the strategic initiatives launched during 2020, prioritizing goals to ensure business continuity and progressing the implementation of projects aimed at improving the Bank’s services and products. This endeavor would not have been possible without the support extended to the Bank by the CBO.

Financial Performance

Consolidated Results

The comparable figures for the consolidated Profit & Loss statement reflect the results of the standalone parent company (including 6 months of its Islamic window) and 6 months of Alizz Islamic Bank (AIB) results.

Net interest income from Conventional Banking and net income from Islamic Financing amounted to OMR 89.5 million, up 10.5% compared to the same period last year. Non-interest income was OMR 32.1 million for the year compared to OMR 20.9 million for 2020, mainly reflecting the receipt of OMR 5.9 million from the insurance claim filed in relation to the fraud incident reported by the Bank in the Muscat Stock Exchange on 22 December 2020. Operating expenses increased by 20.0% to OMR 78.5 million (2020: OMR 65.4 million), mainly due to the consolidation of twelve months of AIB in 2021 versus six months in 2020. Net impairment for credit and other losses for the period ending 31 December 2021 was OMR 35.2 million against OMR 18.8 million for the same period in 2020. The increase is driven by the prudent approach taken by the management in light of the prevailing economic environment and the impact of the pandemic on the business activities. Reflecting this conservative and proactive approach, the Bank recorded a net profit of OMR 7.1 million for the year ended 31 December 2021 compared to a net profit of OMR 14.2 million in 2020.

Net loans and financing to customers increased by OMR 108 million (up 4.1%) to OMR 2,753 million as at 31 December 2021 compared to OMR 2,645 million as at 31 December 2020. Customer deposits stood at OMR 2,810 million as of 31 December 2021, compared to OMR 2,755 million as of 31 December 2020.

The Bank’s capital adequacy ratio stood at 17.75% for the year ended 31 December 2021, a healthy position against the 12.25% minimum ratio required by the CBO. During 2021, the Bank successfully issued USD 250 million AT1 Perpetual Bonds, which was over-subscribed by more than four times, reflecting the confidence of international investors in the strength of the Omani economy in general, and our Bank in particular. The bonds were listed on International Securities Market of the London Stock Exchange, and were the first international issuance of public AT1 bonds in the last 3 years by an Omani entity. While there has been an improvement in the overall economic indicators of the Sultanate, especially in light of the rising oil prices and rapid roll out of vaccinations, we will continue to monitor the situation during 2022, taking into consideration the recent concerns of new corona variants spreading across the world. Recognizing the prevailing economic conditions, the Board of Directors proposes that no dividend to be paid for the year.

Parent Company Performance

Net loans and advances to customers stood at OMR 1,961 million as of 31 December 2021, a growth of 1.2% compared to 31 December 2020 at OMR 1,937 million, while customer deposits stood at OMR 1,965 million as at the end of 2021, down 3.2% compared to the same period in 2020. During the year ended 31 December 2021, total operating income increased by 3.9% to OMR 95.0 million. Considering the challenging market conditions in the last two years, OAB has followed a prudent approach with higher provision for impairment losses reaching OMR 31.1 million for the year ended 31 December 2021. The capital adequacy ratio of the Parent was 18.68% as at 31 December 2021 compared to 15.26% as at the end of 2020.

Alizz Islamic Bank (AIB) Performance

2021 was a very successful year for our Islamic operations. AIB recorded a net profit for the first time since its inception amounting to OMR 4.4 million for the year ended 31 December 2021. The financing receivables grew 12.3% to OMR 793.5 million as of 31 December 2021 compared to OMR 706.6 million as of 2020. Customer deposits stood at OMR 845.2 million, up 16.7% compared to 2020. AIB has also enhanced its capital and liquidity position with strong support from the parent bank (OAB), while building the expected credit losses against credit exposures to maintain a healthy coverage.

Enhancing Customer Experience and Supporting Innovation

As part of its continuous endeavors to enhance the overall customer experience and harness the latest technology, OAB recently launched its new application for its corporate customers ‘OAB Digibase’. The application provides a secure way for customer to access the online platform through a one-time password ‘OTP’. OAB also launched its brand new digital service ‘Send’ for retail clients to instantly transfer funds to anywhere in the world at any time through the OAB’s mobile application, supported by MasterCard Send technology. Moreover, the instant lending solutions embedded in the mobile application allow clients to apply for instant loans over the phone in few simple steps.

OAB launched a new program under the brand ‘Advantage’ intended for clients looking for a unique customer experience with exclusive benefits. ‘Advantage’ offers 1%

guaranteed cashback on e-payments and point-of-sale (POS) transactions via debit card for a limited time, and attractive interest rates on saving accounts and commercial discounts. OAB has also continued to implement the digital transformation strategy and initiatives to develop banking services and products offered to its retail and corporate clients. In this context, OAB organized the second edition of the Innovation Challenge in Q2 2021, with more than 550 participants, including students, professionals as well as Bank employees, who created digital solutions.

AIB revamped its mobile banking application and is in the process of enhancing it further for a rich customer experience. During the year, AIB introduced new and innovative products which were well received by the market. AIB also continued its efforts to enhance awareness about Islamic banking, and started a series of workshops and events under the banner of Manar Alizz in Muscat, which intends to spread this initiative to other parts of the Sultanate.

Awards & Recognitions

During the year, the Bank has received several awards from numerous parties in recognition of its various achievements across different aspects of its business.

Among the awards that acknowledged the Bank’s leading position within the industry, were: Digital Transformation Excellence in the Middle East Recognition-Nintex, IFN Awards - Oman Deal of the Year 2020, Excellence in Compliance Strategy, Excellence in Branch Management, Excellence in Digital Banking and Digital Banking Services of the Year 2021.

On the employee empowerment front, the Bank received the Middle East Women Leadership Award and Excellence in Building National Talent 2021 award. The Bank was also recognized for its sponsorship initiatives through Thank You trophies from SGU for OAB’s Women’s Day and the Oman Chamber Club.

Furthermore, the Bank received the Corporate Social Responsibility Award, reinforcing its commitment and efforts towards ensuring a better future for the community. With regard to operations and innovation, the Bank received K2 Middle East Award for its continuous dedication towards enhancing overall customer experience and overcoming challenges within its business environment through deploying innovative platforms. Additionally, the Bank received the appreciation Certificate from CBO for achieving an error rate of 0.3% and the Innovation and Technology Woman of the year 2021 award.

AIB received various awards in recognition for its brand and products including the prestigious award from Oman Economic Review for ‘The Most Trusted Brand among the Financial Institutions in Oman’, Best Premium Female Banking Segment, Best Initiative Recognising & Empowering Women, Digital Initiative of the Year and Best Rated Mobile Banking App.

Omatisation and Talent Management

During 2021, OAB Human Resources Department succeeded in launching a new smart Human Resources platform, which uses advanced technology stored on an electronic cloud. This enables all employees to access their accounts, submit their requests, and follow up procedures from within or outside the Bank, through either computers or mobile phones. The new platform also allows heads of various divisions and departments to follow up on the professional development of their employees, suggest appropriate training programs for them, set interim goals, and follow up on their achievements. Line managers can also follow up on hiring plans and submit their suggestions in this regard. The platform also includes various references and training materials that the team can benefit from for career development within OAB, reference to combating fraud and money laundering, along with information on safeguarding private data.

Omatisation remains a key strategic goal for the management. OAB has achieved 96% Omatisation which is one of the highest in the sector and well above the minimum requirement of 90%, in addition to achieving 82% Omatisation in senior management positions. AIB also maintains a high Omatisation ratio of 92.6%.

OAB and AIB have also completed a comprehensive vaccination process for employees and their families with two doses of vaccines approved by the Ministry of Health covered by OAB.

Sustainability and Social Responsibility - “OAB CARES”

As part of OAB’s strategy to incorporate sustainability and social responsibility in all of its activities, the Bank continued its community efforts and activities over the year. OAB published its first sustainability report in the first quarter, which included detailed information on OAB’s performance in relation to environmental, social and governance indicators. During the year, OAB signed a partnership agreement with Inteltech to contribute towards providing schools across the Sultanate with 3D printers. The program, which is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, aims to introduce 3D printing to tenth grade students in all governmental schools. OAB will support this pilot project by covering the cost of printers for 22 schools across the country.

In line with the Bank’s strategy to support the community, specifically during exceptional circumstances such as ‘cyclone Shaheen’ that hit the Sultanate in October, the Bank donated an amount of OMR 300,000 to support those affected by the cyclone. A large number of Bank employees also volunteered to help in cleaning and rebuilding the affected homes and neighborhoods in the Wilayats of Al Khaboura and Al Suwaiq. On the other hand, the Bank launched an internal initiative to support employees affected by the cyclone, which included a number of effective measures.

The Bank also participated in the national initiative launched by the Environment Authority to plant 10 million trees, which is in line with Oman Vision 2040 to develop sustainable governorates and cities that balance environmental, economic, and social factors. The focus is on the optimal use and deployment of natural resources to ensure high returns for both society and the environment. The Bank aims at planting 2,800 additional trees throughout 2022.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank all shareholders for their continued trust and commitment to Oman Arab Bank Group. As our nation progresses through these unprecedented times, the Bank continues to support the measures taken by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman to preserve the economic situation of the country. I would like also to thank the executive management of the Bank and all its employees for their efforts during this exceptional year. We also extend our gratitude and appreciation to the management of the Central Bank of Oman, the Capital Market Authority, and all governmental entities, for their constant efforts to support the banking sector in the Sultanate and the wise measures taken to manage the current situation.

Lastly, we are delighted to extend our sincerest gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, May the Almighty protect and preserve him – for his wise leadership and sound vision of the future of this country.

Profit and Loss Account for the year ended 31 December, 2021				
Details	Consolidated		Parent	
	RO. 000's 2021	RO. 000's 2020	RO. 000's 2021	RO. 000's 2020
Gross interest income	108,166	109,981	108,166	109,981
Interest Expense	(50,731)	(47,963)	(50,731)	(47,952)
Net interest income	57,435	62,018	57,435	62,029
Other Operating Income	5,938	-	5,938	-
1. Dividend Income	149	71	149	71
2. Net Fee & Commission Income				
a) Fee and Commission Income	19,947	16,442	14,895	16,211
Less: b) Fee and Commission Expense	(1,457)	(899)	(1,438)	(896)
3. Net Foreign Exchange Income				
a) Income	4,315	5,508	3,912	5,173
Less: b) Expense	-	-	-	-
4. Net Income from dealing in securities				
a) Gain / (loss)	3,120	(134)	3,120	-
Less: b) Expense	-	-	-	-
5. Net Income from Investment Securities				
a) Income	10,892	8,886	10,892	8,886
Less: b) Expense	-	-	-	-
Gross Income	100,339	91,892	94,903	91,474
General Administrative Expenses	(67,804)	(58,528)	(51,352)	(49,163)
Depreciation	(10,667)	(6,880)	(8,475)	(6,136)
Total Operating Costs	(78,471)	(65,408)	(59,827)	(55,299)
Net Operating Profit (Profit on ordinary activities before provisions)	21,868	26,484	35,076	36,175
Income from Subsidiaries	-	-	-	-
a) Income from Islamic financing	21,217	10,103	-	-
ECL Allowance (net) charged for Loans & Advances	(34,079)	(20,846)	(29,941)	(20,673)
ECL Allowance (net) charged for Investments	188	(403)	(209)	-
ECL Allowance (net) charged for Placements	(34)	150	(33)	129
ECL Allowance charged (net) for Off-balance sheet items	(1,228)	2,532	(935)	2,533
ECL Allowance charged (net) for Others (if any)	-	-	-	-
Provision for diminution / Gain in value of investments	69	(71)	69	(71)
Profit for the year after loan loss provisions	8,001	17,949	4,027	18,093
Taxation	(920)	(3,778)	(983)	(3,778)
Net profit after tax	7,081	14,171	3,044	14,315
Other Comprehensive Income for the year				
- Movement in fair value of available for sale / FVOCI investment for the year	(374)	(133)	(41)	(134)
- Effect of currency translation for the year	-	-	-	-
- Any other comprehensive income for the year (please specify)	-	-	-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	6,707	14,038	3,003	14,181

Assets and Liabilities as of 31 December, 2021				
Assets (Net of total ECL)	Consolidated		Parent	
	RO. 000's 2021	RO. 000's 2020	RO. 000's 2021	RO. 000's 2020
1. Cash	32,735	39,892	25,900	31,165
2. Balances with CBO	155,144	180,058	79,554	141,987
3. Capital Deposit with CBO	1,025	1,025	500	500
4. Government & other Securities	264,405	221,738	217,975	171,975
5. Treasury Bills & Other Bills	-	-	-	-
6. Due from H.Q., branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad	23,157	3,560	23,157	3,560
7. Due from banks:				
i) Placements	27,815	69,278	31,323	67,491
ii) Loans & Advances	-	-	-	-
8. Other Money Market Placements	-	-	-	-
9. Investments	38,091	18,480	129,200	111,869
10. Loans and advances	2,753,434	2,645,359	1,961,011	1,936,806
11. Tangible Fixed Assets	43,303	46,605	40,337	42,479
12. Losses carried forward	-	-	-	-
13. Other Assets	96,550	76,393	59,358	49,228
Total Assets	3,435,659	3,302,388	2,568,315	2,557,060

Liabilities	Consolidated		Parent	
	RO. 000's 2021	RO. 000's 2020	RO. 000's 2021	RO. 000's 2020
a) Demand				
1. Deposits (incl. Govt.)				
a) Demand	970,868	958,585	698,334	745,291
b) Savings	565,407	540,442	354,326	358,471
c) Time	1,274,137	1,256,283	912,537	927,000
2. Certificate of Deposits	-	-	-	-
3. Due to H.Q., branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad	6,358	7,039	6,358	7,039
4. Due to Banks:				
i) Placements	7,001	7,382	7,001	3,532
ii) Borrowings	-	-	-	-
5. Other Money Market Deposits	-	-	-	-
6. Borrowings from CBO	-	-	-	-
7. Capital	166,941	166,941	166,941	166,941
8. Reserves	120,932	139,477	120,557	139,208
9. Retained Earnings	67,663	52,606	64,343	52,884
10. Capital Bonds	168,803	72,553	168,803	72,553
11. Other Liabilities	87,549	101,080	69,115	84,141
Total Liabilities	3,435,659	3,302,388	2,568,315	2,557,060

Exhibition showcases innovative solutions in construction, real estate

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Design and Build Week (ODBW) and Oman Real Estate Exhibition 2022 were inaugurated at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on Monday.

Over 250 companies from around the world, including Germany, Iran, India, Kuwait, Turkey and United Kingdom, are taking part in ODBW which was inaugurated by chief guest H E Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance.

The three-day exhibition will showcase products, services and emerging solutions for the construction and real estate industry. Some of the key highlights of the event are the Oman Real Estate Expo (OREX) as well as the Oman Real Estate Conference, both of which are being held within ODBW hosted in Hall 3 of OCEC.

Speaking during the inauguration, Ashley Roberts, general manager of CONNECT, said, "ODBW aims to boost the building, construction, and real estate industry in Oman by injecting international experiences into the local market, sharing of knowledge, and by encouraging innovative solutions."

"It is also geared at helping those in the sector to form meaningful alliances, showcase their brand strengths, and expand their presence. At the same time, owing to the diversity of ex-



(Supplied photo)

Oman Design and Build Week aims to boost the building, construction and real estate industry in Oman by injecting international experiences into the local market

ASHLEY ROBERTS

hibitors, ODBW is also proving to be an excellent platform to address the various interests of the public. We encourage everyone to visit the exhibition to familiarise themselves with new trends in the sector, witness cutting-edge innovation and benefit from insightful panel discussions."

Organised under the patronage of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, with the support of Oman Real Estate Association and Muscat Municipality, the opening ceremony witnessed presence of several key figures from different ministries and industry leaders. Asim Mohammad al Zadjali,

chairman of Oman Real Estate Association, said, "ODBW is held in line with Oman Vision 2040 to diversify the economy and drive revenue from non-oil sources. In 2021, we saw an increase in real estate by four per cent. As per our estimation, this figure will increase in coming years. For this we need a proper plan and strategy in the next few years."

"We need to discuss and plan strategies for the next few years. Besides residential and commercial real estates, we are also looking for opportunities to enhance the real estate in agriculture sector too."

Oman Sustainability Week Awards honours efforts of local companies

Muscat - The Oman Sustainability Week (OSW), which was hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals under the patronage of H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Monday, was preceded by an exclusive awards ceremony to honour the efforts of local companies who have made significant contributions in areas of sustainability.

The Oman Sustainability Week Awards, held on Sunday at W Hotel Muscat, was presided over by chief guest H H Sayyid Dr Fahad Bin al Julanda al Said, vice-chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University. Organised by be'ah and CONNECT in collaboration with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), and sustainability specialist Centre for Sustainability and Excellence, the event also witnessed the presence of key delegates from participating companies.

The awards marked the commencement of a week-long initiative that comprises an expansive exhibition, a thought leadership summit, a conference and various site visits. The awards were aimed at raising awareness on sustainability is-



(Supplied photo)

suces while supporting companies and organisations in integrating responsible, ethical and sustainable practices into their corporate strategy.

Commenting on the awards, Shaikh Mohammed Sulaiman al Harthy, executive vice president - strategic development, be'ah, said, "The Oman Sustainability Week Awards is an industry-first platform that recognises the organisations that have demonstrated their unfaltering commitment to sustainability and set themselves apart from competitors. Leading by example, these organisations have not only paved the way for others to follow but have also shown how

sustainable practices are essential for long-term growth."

Appreciating and applauding their continuous efforts towards sustainability, Asyad and PDO were awarded the Gold awards.

Bank Muscat and Nama Group won the Silver awards, whereas Bank Nizwa, Oman Broadband and Shell Development Oman received the Bronze awards.

In recognition of its exemplary effort in the field of sustainability, its innovative campaigns to advocate sustainable practices in the community and its strong dedication to contribute to Oman Vision 2040, OQ was honoured with the Platinum award.

'Reduced labour fee to stimulate economy'

Continued from Page 01

"His Majesty the Sultan's decision aims to provide a better environment for the private sector. Businessmen and private companies should take advantage of this directive to stimulate the economy and start diversified projects," Amna said.

Addressing specifically the decision's impact on the agriculture

sector, Ghosn al Rashidi, secretary of Omani Agriculture Association, said it will be "good because it will reduce cost of recruiting expats workers that the sector so desperately needs".

He informed that the decision will encourage farmers to increase cultivation and achieve self-sufficiency in several crops.

Businessman Nasser al Hosni attributed "an economic depres-

sion around the world, including Oman" to the COVID-19 pandemic and a drop in oil prices to "further worsening the situation".

Hosni believed His Majesty's directive will encourage owners of private companies to increase their Omanisation rate to benefit from the reduced visa fee, besides sending "a reassuring message to foreign investors to come to Oman and invest here".

ALBA

From 15th March to 31st April.

45% to 80%

on selected models.

www.alba-watch.com

Oman Marketing and Services Company L.L.C.

Showroom Oman Avenues Mall, Ground Floor # G18C
Omasco Watches Counters at Lulu Hypermarkets
(Boushar, Darsait and Barkha)
PH: 24117172 / GSM: 99879744

SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

رؤية عمان 2040
Oman Vision 2040

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of tender Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 08:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/HQ-35/2022	Supply & Installation of Medical Equipment for various Health Establishment		13/April/2022		
MOH/HQ-36/2022	Supply and Installation of Medical Equipment for Khoulah Hospital				
MOH/HQ-37/2022	Provision of Technical Support and Maintenance of Servers and Network Components at Ministry's Head Quarters				
MOH/HQ-38/2022	Supply of Surgical Items (Dental)	24/March/2022	20/April/2022	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25,000 Per set
MOH/HQ-39 /2022	Supply of Computer Equipment for Renal Dialysis, Emergency & Accident Units at Yanqul Hospital in Al Dhahirah Governorate				
MOH/HQ-40 /2022	Supply of Computer Equipment at Ministry's Head Quarter				
MOH/HQ-41 /2022	Providing Vecam Backup and Replication Licenses for Directorate General of Information Technology				

- Tenders should be submitted on line on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> enclose **Electronic Bank Guarantee** issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accept or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200 , Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

MSX falls 0.58%; volumes down

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) fell 0.58 per cent to close at 4,324.7 points on Monday. While turnover rose by 19.06 per cent to RO6.85mn, volumes fell 2.84 per cent to 21.28mn shares.

All the sectoral indices closed in red territory. Financial index fell 0.93 per cent, Industrial index declined 0.36 per cent and Services index inched down 0.02 per cent. The MSX Shariah Index closed down by 0.1 per cent at 492.41 points.

Top gainers were Phoenix



Power (2.13 per cent), Muscat Desalinate (1.79 per cent), Al Sharqia Investment (1.16 per cent) and National Gas (0.7 per cent).

Top losers were Ahli Bank (-3.85 per cent), Global Financial Investments (-2.78 per cent), Oman and Emirates Investment (-2.74 per cent), Shell Oman (-2.72 per cent).

Predictive maintenance crucial for oil and gas operations: Report

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Predictive maintenance tools will become more widespread across critical infrastructure in the oil and gas industry over the next decade, according to a report from GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company.

Predictive maintenance tools offer oil and gas companies operational and financial fluidity through the use of technology.

According to GlobalData's report, 'Predictive Maintenance in Oil and Gas Industry - Thematic Research', predictive maintenance includes condition monitoring technologies that collect,



store, and analyse structural and operational data of key equipment in the oil and gas industry. Through the analysis, actionable insights are derived concerning

the health of the equipment to estimate its lifespan. This helps to schedule maintenance and equipment replacement exercises in a way that will have a

minimum impact on oil and gas operations.

The most used predictive maintenance technologies in the oil and gas industry are vibration monitoring, thermography, lubricant oil analysis, and ultrasonic testing. Other techniques include visual inspection, motor current analysis, ferrography, spectrography, and wear particle analysis.

Ravindra Puranik, oil and gas analyst at GlobalData, said in a press statement, "Heavy machinery deployed at oil and gas facilities is expected to operate reliably and efficiently for several years. To ensure longevity, it is necessary to conduct maintenance tasks for keeping the

equipment in the best working condition. Timely maintenance also helps prevent expensive repair works and unplanned production outages."

Unplanned shutdowns due to equipment failure can incur immense cost penalties for oil and gas operators. The after-effects of equipment breaking down can be far-reaching, beyond just economic losses. For instance, the Norilsk diesel oil spill in Russia in May 2020 led to rivers in the vicinity being polluted with 17,500 tons of diesel oil. Such incidents highlight the need for predictive maintenance in the energy sector, the report emphasised.



شركة عمان والإمارات للاستثمار (ش.م.ع.)
OMAN & EMIRATES INVESTMENT HOLDING CO. SAOG

Board of Directors' Report - 2021

Honorable Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Oman & Emirates Investment Holding Company (O&E), I present the Annual Report for 2021 containing the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2021. An overview is provided below on the macroeconomic and business environment the Company faced during the year, the setbacks encountered, the mitigating actions taken, the overall financial performance.

Business Environment in Retrospect (Oman & UAE)

The year 2021, much like the previous one, was associated with the pandemic. However, oil exporting countries avoided the double-impact of a pandemic with a sharp decline in oil demand, as witnessed in 2020, and gained from gradual oil price increases during 2021. Several sectors continued experiencing declines in revenues, drop in profitability and leverage increase exposing these to liquidity and solvency risks. The business environment remained challenging and difficult particularly with the sudden surge and coverage of the Covid virus variants which created short-term trouble for investment activity. Liquidity remained tight in financial markets and banks continued tightening their credit policies while maintaining high interest rates. Inflation in the GCC countries peaked at 2.8% in 2021 and Brent crude price has averaged at USD 68 a barrel.

During 2021, all three-indexes showed growth: MSM Index recorded a growth of 13%, ADX a growth of 68% and DFM grew by 28% by end 2021. This was in strong contrast with 2020 when the MSM Index declined by (-) 8.10%, ADX and DFM by (-) 0.60% and (-) 9.87% respectively.

Financial Strategy during 2020 and 2021

When the Company first faced the pandemic uncertainties in 2020 and the potential business risk this implied, the Board reconsidered the Company's strategy and set financial targets by end 2021. Since then, reduction of total risk profile has been a top priority financial strategy as the Company became exposed to the combined effect of both higher business risk, resulting from the pandemic impact on markets, and higher financial risk, resulting from high interest rates. By end 2021, Management implemented this financial risk reduction strategy successfully and reduced bank borrowings massively as well as part of the government soft loan.

The banking outlook may change during 2022 with banks continuing their tight credit policies and interest rates. The Federal Reserve will raise its benchmark interest rate in 2022 which will affect prime interest rates of lenders. Moreover, at time of writing, the war in Europe and the potential ramifications of sanctions are yet to be assessed and will be causes of concern for the whole world. The opportune reduction of borrowings has mitigated exposure to financial risk and will protect the Company's financial health going forward into a business environment full of new uncertainties around income stability.

Financial Performance

The results of the Company's investments are outlined in greater detail in the body of this Annual Report. A snapshot of the Group's financial statements for 2021, consolidating the results of the Parent Company and its Subsidiaries and Associates, reflects the sustained efforts in handling business challenges under the prevailing economic environment. The performance highlights during 2021 are summarized herewith:

- The Group recorded a Net Profit of RO 1,521,782 during 2021 as against a Net Loss of RO (1,646,626) incurred during 2020. The Parent Company achieved a Net Profit of RO 1,663,715 during 2021 as against a Net Loss of RO (1,335,357) recorded during 2020.
- The Shareholders Equity increased to RO 21.073 Million as at 31.12.2021 from RO 19.551 Million as at 31.12.2020, against Share Capital of RO 12,187,500, registering an increase in equity by 7.8%.
- The aggregate value of the Group's investments decreased to RO 38.691 Million as at 31.12.2021 from RO 43.771 Million as at 31.12.2020.
- The Parent Company's total borrowings reduced from RO 25.45 Million as at 31.12.2020 to RO 17.463 Million as at 31.12.2021, consisting of RO 13.8 Million Government Soft Loan, bank loans for operations amounting to RO 1.922 Million and the Head Office Building Loan of RO 1.740 Million.
- Against the Net Equity of RO 21.943 Million of the Parent Company, the Debt Equity Ratio stood at 0.79, down from 1.26 in 2020.

Despite the massive impact of very challenging prevailing environment over the past years, the Company's overall financial structure is now better balanced to face future sustained income uncertainties.

Total Borrowings and Debt/ Equity Ratio

During 2021, in line with the financial strategy, bank borrowings were reduced massively. The Parent Company's total borrowings stood at RO 17.46 Million as at 31.12.2021 reduced from RO 25.45 Million as at 31.12.2020. This was necessary and came at a time of liquidity crunch in the markets where assets could not be sold without causing drastic change in assets' pricing. Against the Net Equity of RO 21.943 Million of the Parent Company, the Debt Equity Ratio stands at 0.79, down from 1.26 times in 2020. The positive impact on finance costs will be seen next year.

Results of the Group at a Glance

The following table provides the Company's financial development snapshot showing the highest Net Profit over the past five years, highest earning per share and lowest gearing ratio:

Particulars	2017	2018 (Restated)	2019 (Restated)	2020	2021
Equity Share Capital	12.187	12.187	12.187	12.187	12.187
Net Equity	19.585	20.905	21.197	19.551	21.073
Investments	49.919	49.807	46.842	43.771	38.690
Net Profit / (Loss) Before Tax	(1.746)	0.019	0.292	(1.931)	2.168
Book value per share - RO	0.161	0.172	0.174	0.160	0.173
Earnings per share - RO	(0.014)	0.0002	0.0024	(0.014)	0.013
Debt/ Equity Ratio	1.45	1.43	1.34	1.26	0.79

Dividend

The Company's finances are being restructured and massive commitments remain to be settled during the year under a business environment full of uncertainties and tight liquidity in the markets. With the Board's core focus of achieving sustained long-term benefits for Shareholders through investments already identified and others pursued, no dividend has been proposed for 2021.

Head Office building

Despite the continued downward pressure experienced in the real estate market in terms of both demand and achievable rental values, new tenants were attracted to the Head Office Building which is now occupied by reputed tenants on long-term tenancy agreements. Efforts continue to market the remaining vacant units and, despite the current rental price setbacks, this investment will eventually generate a sustained income stream.

Proposed Investment in a Hospital Project

The project is envisaged as a 70-bed high-end hospital promoted in partnership with a leading medical group in Spain. As Founder Promoters, the Company and its Spanish partners have been committed to hold 20% and 15% respectively in the project company and the balance share capital has been fully booked by other institutional investors in Oman. Its implementation phase was ready to be launched during the first quarter of 2020 but was suspended due to the pandemic. It can be initiated imminently; but no major investment has been budgeted during the year until resumption of normality in the business environment and reaffirmation of investment from the other investors.

Investment in an Assisted Reproduction Clinic

Investment in this first Assisted Reproduction and Genetic Unit has also been committed with Spanish partners ready to be launched during the first quarter of 2020. Similarly, the project was suspended but can be initiated imminently during the year.

Corporate Governance

Pursuant to an Administrative Decision by the Capital Market Authority, during an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 6th July 2020, the Company replaced its current Articles of Association with the new template form of Articles of Association for public companies set out in the Decision. Complying with a requirement in the Commercial Companies Law, the Company reduced its Board to five members who would be henceforth elected during the next Annual General Meeting. A new Board consisting of five members was elected during the Annual General Meeting held on 8th July 2021.

Management continues to uphold the sound corporate culture established in the Company as manifested by shared values and transparent governing policies. Our Company's governance system has been fully integrated with ethical business practices, which meet the high standards expected by the Authorities.

Internal Control Systems and their adequacy

The Company has a robust internal audit system and strict adherence is monitored to ensure compliance with the procedures and operating systems. There was no breach of internal controls during 2021.

Future Outlook

The International Monetary Fund recently downgraded its global growth forecast for this year as rising Covid variant cases, supply chain disruptions and higher inflation hamper economic recovery. The Federal Reserve expected interest rate hikes in 2022 and the global consequences of the war in Europe, which are yet to be fully assessed, will further weaken the momentum. Implications of sanctions and supply chain disruptions due to this war will remain key risks to the outlook and global world recovery after the pandemic shock. Any European strategy to reduce energy dependence on Russia is likely to focus attention on the Gulf Cooperation Council states and the prospects for a serious energy pivot in the Region may be on the horizon.

World and regional outlooks are described in the Management Discussion & Analysis chapter of this Annual Report. Going forward, Management will continue repaying the government soft loan tranches when due and pursue some further commercial debt reduction depending on continuing uncertainties in the business environment. Plans are in place for this. The business environment and the government's economic road map to recovery will be monitored closely for any opportunity to reshuffle the investment portfolio by investing any excess cash in regular income generating assets.

People

The past two years were defined by new working conditions and a different way of corporate life. The Company embraced working environments to ensure the health and safety of our employees. On behalf of the Board, I appreciate the dedication and the efforts made by the Executive Management and all employees of the Company during these difficult times of uncertainty.

Acknowledgment

On behalf of the Board, I express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq, Sultan of Oman, and His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, for their support. May God's grace be bestowed on them towards having a good health and long life to achieve greater success in all their endeavours.

I also take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Governments of the Sultanate of Oman and United Arab Emirates, to the Capital Market Authorities and banks for their support, and to shareholders for their continued involvement with the Company.

Mohamed Darwish Al Khoori
Chairman

10th March 2022

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CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021				
	2021 Group RO	2020 Group RO	2021 Parent RO	2020 Parent RO
ASSETS				
Cash and bank balances	1,919,812	2,452,454	113,040	104,763
Trade and other receivables	1,075,767	1,250,957	40,850	143,295
Inventories	434,392	463,472	-	-
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss (FVTPL)	20,481,259	22,748,973	16,651,253	19,811,465
Investment in equity accounted investees	16,100,249	18,901,821	14,110,383	17,133,033
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	3,873,243	3,497,936
Financial assets at amortised cost	2,109,961	2,120,652	2,109,961	2,120,652
Property, plant and equipment	2,531,702	2,821,981	515,016	615,985
Right-of-use asset	43,577	116,190	-	-
Investment properties	3,074,850	3,229,050	2,804,850	2,929,050
Deferred tax asset	78,496	401,105	-	-
Total assets	47,850,065	54,506,655	40,218,596	46,356,179
EQUITY				
Share capital	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500
Legal reserve	4,991,892	4,921,214	4,062,500	4,062,500
Retained earnings	3,893,219	2,442,115	5,692,817	4,029,102
Equity attributable to owners of the Parent Company	21,072,611	19,550,829	21,942,817	20,279,102
Non-controlling interest	3,485,638	3,161,543	-	-
Total equity	24,558,249	22,712,372	21,942,817	20,279,102
LIABILITIES				
Bank overdrafts	630,360	2,307,610	562,017	2,180,858
Trade and other payables	2,054,192	2,424,085	1,812,952	626,023
Lease liability	53,454	139,392	-	-
Term loans	3,100,810	8,270,196	3,100,810	8,270,196
Loans from Governments	16,136,924	16,976,692	12,483,924	13,323,692
Deferred Government grants	1,316,076	1,676,308	1,316,076	1,676,308
Total liabilities	23,291,816	31,794,283	18,275,779	26,077,077
Total equity and liabilities	47,850,065	54,506,655	40,218,596	46,356,179
Net assets per share	0.173	0.160	0.180	0.166

CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021				
	2021 Group RO	2020 Group RO	2021 Parent RO	2020 Parent RO
Income				
Interest income	-	15,281	-	15,281
Rental income	55,119	76,958	55,119	76,958
Brokerage/commission income	102,883	145,261	-	-
Dividends income	878,252	1,405,653	770,134	1,252,349
Net income/(loss) from financial assets at FVTPL	2,556,010	(905,463)	1,803,141	(804,412)
Gross profit on sale of food products	191,319	106,833	-	-
Asset management fees	244,494	133,235	-	-
Share of profit/(loss) from Associates and Subsidiaries - net	415,612	(215,341)	450,980	(218,244)
Other income	84,466	57,972	18,480	35,109
Total income	4,528,155	820,389	3,097,854	357,041
Expenses				
Staff costs	(835,523)	(960,544)	(373,005)	(426,810)
Administrative expenses	(741,922)	(831,482)	(383,789)	(491,587)
Investments related expenses	(10,690)	(10,719)	(20,847)	(13,055)
Directors' remuneration	(50,000)	-	(50,000)	-
Total expenses	(1,638,135)	(1,802,745)	(827,641)	(931,452)
Net income/(loss)	2,890,020	(982,356)	2,270,213	(574,411)
Finance costs	(691,534)	(826,055)	(606,498)	(642,360)
Impairment loss on non-financial assets:				
- Investment properties	(30,000)	-	-	-
Impairment loss on financial instruments - net	-	(122,555)	-	(118,586)
	(721,534)	(948,610)	(606,498)	(760,946)
Profit/(loss) before tax	2,168,486	(1,930,966)	1,663,715	(1,335,357)
Income tax	(322,609)	100,580	-	-
Profit/(loss) after tax for the year	1,845,877	(1,830,386)	1,663,715	(1,335,357)
Attributable to:				
Owners of the Parent Company	1,521,782	(1,646,626)	1,663,715	(1,335,357)
Non-controlling interest	324,095	(183,760)	-	-
	1,845,877	(1,830,386)	1,663,715	(1,335,357)
	0.0125	(0.0135)	0.0137	(0.0110)

CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021				
	2021 Group RO	2020 Group RO	2021 Parent RO	2020 Parent RO
Profit/(loss) for the year	1,521,782	(1,830,386)	1,663,715	(1,335,357)
Other comprehensive income	-	-	-	-
Other comprehensive income	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year	1,521,782	(1,830,386)	1,663,715	(1,335,357)
Total comprehensive income/(loss) attributable to:				
- Owners of the Parent Company	1,521,782	(1,646,626)	1,663,715	(1,335,357)
- Non controlling interest	324,095	(183,760)	-	-
	1,845,877	(1,830,386)	1,663,715	(1,335,357)

Note: The complete Financial Statements of the Company in Arabic or English will be made available to any shareholder on request.

Russia accuses West of seeking 'artificial default'

Moscow, Russia - Russia's Finance Ministry on Monday accused foreign countries of wanting to force Russia into an 'artificial default' through unprecedented sanctions over Ukraine and said it would meet its debt obligations.

As Russia is due to make an interest payment on its external debt later this week, Moscow warned that it will be doing so in rubles if sanctions prevent it from using the currency of issue.

"The freezing of foreign currency accounts of the Bank of Russia and of the Russian government can be regarded as the desire of a number of foreign countries to organise an artificial default that has no real economic grounds," Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said.

Ratings agency Fitch last week downgraded Russia's sovereign debt rating deeper into junk territory, warning that the decision reflects the view that a default is 'imminent'.

But Siluanov denied that Russia 'cannot fulfil the obligations' of its government debt.



A woman walks in front of Moscow's International Business Centre complex in Moscow on Friday (AFP)

He said Russia 'is ready to make payments in rubles' according to the exchange rate of Russia's central bank on the day of the payment, including its eurobond issued since 2018.

Russia is due to make a combined US\$117mn in interest payments on two dollar-denominated bonds on Wednesday, although it has an automatic 30-day grace period.

International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva said on Sunday that while Russia has money to pay its debt, it 'cannot access it'.

"I can say that no longer we think of Russian default as an improbable event," Georgieva said.

Sanctions on Moscow over its 'special military operation' in Ukraine delivered an unprecedented blow to Russia's banking

and financial system, with a large part of its foreign currency reserves frozen.

It has also raised the possibility of Russia defaulting on its external debt for the first time since the financial crisis of 1998.

Amid piling sanctions, a flurry of Western companies - from H&M to Ikea - have suspended their operations in Russia.

AFP

IMF in Sri Lanka to discuss economic crisis

Colombo, Sri Lanka - An International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation was in Sri Lanka on Monday for talks on the island's worsening economic crisis, with the public suffering through months of food, fuel and medicine shortages.

A lack of foreign currency has

left traders unable to pay for vital imports in what authorities concede is the South Asian nation's worst financial crisis since independence from Britain in 1948.

Long queues outside gas stations and rolling blackouts have become the norm, while record

inflation has caused serious hardship among the island's 22mn people by repeatedly pushing up the cost of groceries, transport and pharmaceuticals.

A senior staffer from the IMF 'will hold talks' with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother, Finance Minister Basil

Rajapaksa, a spokesman for the leader told AFP.

Sri Lanka's government is divided on seeking a bailout, but the international lender said it was 'ready to discuss options if requested' in a Monday statement.

AFP

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Sultan Qaboos University

RETENDER NOTICE

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

S/N	Type of Business	Shop Location	Duration of contract in years	Date of site visit	Class	Tender #
1	Coffee Shop	Female Student Accommodation Complex1	1	21/3/2022 09:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 4/22
2	Coffee Shop	Female Student Accommodation Complex4	1	21/3/2022 10:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 5/22

- * The priority will be for the Small and Medium Establishments (SME), which fulfils the quality requirements.
- * Tenderers who wish to participate in this Tender may collect Tender Documents from The Section of Revenue And Expenditures at the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University, during the working hours for an amount of OR.25 for each tender document (non-refundable). The last date for collecting the Document is 28/3/2022.
- * The Site Visit for the selected shop is necessary. It will be on the above mentioned date and time. The assembly point will be at the Investment & Revenue Department.
- * The last date for submission of the quotations: 6/4/2022 The quotations should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Director of the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University and deposited in the Tender Box kept in the Department, before 10:00 a.m.
- * The exterior of the envelope should be marked with the name and number of the Tender being presented and should bear no identification or mark of the Tenderer.
- * The Tenderer should submit (enclose) with his tender a Bank Guarantee Document for sum of 1% of the total Duration of contract rental value quoted by the Tenderer and valid for 120 (One hundred and Twenty) days from the date specified for submission of Tender. Tender documents submitted after the deadline or without a Bank Guarantee will be excluded.
- * The Tenderer should prepare the outlet in accordance with the health requirements of Muscat Municipality and the requirements of civil defense in cooperation with the concerned authorities.
- * Sultan Qaboos University reserves the right to reject any quotation not fulfilling the requirements and does not bid itself to accept the highest rent or any other quotations.

The Investment & Revenue Department
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Email: investment@squ.edu.om

النهضة للخدمات ش.م.ع.ع Renaissance Services SAOG

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Notice of the Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Renaissance Services SAOG (the 'Company') invites all shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting ("AGM"), which will be held on Wednesday, 30th March 2022 at 3:00 pm at the Sheraton Oman Hotel and also through MCD's online platform for general meetings (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum for holding the AGM is not met, a second AGM shall be held on Thursday, 31st March 2022 at 3:00 pm at the Sheraton Oman Hotel and also through MCD's online platform for general meetings (www.mcd.gov.om) to discuss the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the Report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
2. To consider and approve the Report on Corporate Governance for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
3. To consider the Auditors' Report and approve the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
4. To consider and approve the proposed cash dividend distribution at the rate of 20 Baisa per share.
5. To consider and approve the Board of Directors performance evaluation report for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
6. To approve the sitting fees being availed by the members of the Board of Directors and the members of the Board's sub-committees for the financial year ended 31st December 2021 and to specify the sitting fees for the next financial year.
7. To consider and approve the Directors' Remuneration of Rials 300,000/- for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
8. To apprise shareholders of the transactions entered into with related parties during the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
9. To apprise shareholders of the amounts paid for the Corporate Social Responsibility ("CSR") programs for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
10. To approve an amount of Rials 150,000/- for CSR programs for the financial year ending 31st December 2022.
11. To elect a board member to fill a vacant seat on the Board of Directors from amongst shareholders and non-shareholders. Any person wishing to nominate himself/herself to the Board of Directors may fill out the Nomination Form. The completed form should be delivered to the Company at least 5 working days prior to the Annual General Meeting, i.e. not later than Thursday, 24th March 2022. The candidate should meet the prescribed Board membership requirements.
12. To appoint auditors for the financial year ending 31st December 2022 and approve their fees.

In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company and the rules for convening general meetings using modern technology issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- a) A juristic person shall have the right to authorize exclusively a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on his behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD).
- b) Voting on any of the agenda items shall begin no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. Where a shareholder has exercised his/her vote in the three days prior to the AGM, and his/her share balance has changed (i.e. increased or decreased) after voting, the vote will be cancelled and the shareholder will be required to vote again.

For further information, please contact Mr. Hatim Hilal Mahfoudh Al Hilali - Company Secretary, on phone number (00968-93220564) or email address: hatim@tawoos.com

Samir J Fancy
Chairman

Ernst & Young (EY)
Auditors

Al Busaidy Mansoor Jamal & Co.
Legal Advisor



Alizz Islamic Bank opens 15th branch in Wilayat of Suwaiq

Alizz Islamic Bank celebrated the launch of its 15th branch in the Wilayat of Suwaiq in North Batinah under the patronage of H E Sheikh Saif bin Hamir al Shehhi, Governor of North Batinah and in the presence of Sulaiman bin Hamad al Harthi, CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank, and a number of senior management executives from the bank.

The new branch is part of the bank's plan to further strengthen its presence and customer reach throughout the country and is the third branch in the North Batinah Governorate, a press release said.

Located in 'Mansa Al Suwaiq' mall, the branch falls on the right of the street for those heading to Sohar and comes right before the roundabout of the Wilayat of Suwaiq. For those coming from the state of Sohar, the branch will be on the left side and after Suwaiq roundabout. It aims to



offer advanced technological facilities and the best services in line with the requirements of the modern era.

Despite the challenges that affected the overall economy and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alizz Is-

lamic Bank has been able to grow sustainably while enriching the bank's values through its multiple initiatives to add value to customers. It has remained committed to the objective of providing its customers with cutting-edge products, services and

new branches in order to make their banking needs more convenient.

Harthi said, "Alizz Islamic Bank continues to extend its top-quality services and products to all customers, and the bank has been able to reformulate its

banking services for institutions by reviewing its business strategy, which resulted in the growth of high quality banking facilities. During the past year, the bank introduced many new products including the Corporate Credit Card. It has also launched new wholesale banking services related to financial advisory, investment banking business services, corporate transaction banking and other initiatives."

He added, "We chose a prime location for the branch to provide convenient services to customers. The selection process focused on the objective of bringing the bank's services closer to the largest number of customers. Several factors were considered when choosing the location, including proximity, ease of access, population, and availability of services. The new branch is in an area which has many commercial services."

Nissan floats Ariya EV driving game



Offering audiences the opportunity to get behind the wheel of the all-electric Ariya and experience the ultimate expression of Nissan Intelligent Mobility, Nissan has introduced Ariya EV driving game as part of the brand's digital activations.

The EV driving game expands the boundaries of entertainment and allows players to 'play with the Future of Mobility', while learning about Ariya and its class-leading features in an innovative and captivating environment, a press release said.

Through a fascinating multi-level game, players have the opportunity to experience Nissan's Intelligent Mobility features, including ProPILOT 2.0 and e-4ORCE and better understand the benefits of these systems on varying road conditions. By putting drivers behind the wheel of the Ariya, the game also showcases Nissan's drive to create innovative customer experiences. A senior official of Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), said, "The Ariya is the epitome of Nissan Intelligent Mobility and through this digital activation we have been able to showcase its capabilities in building a safer and more connected world for all. This out-of-the-box activation, which combines our driving innovations with entertainment, is a testament to Nissan's philosophy of creating 'Innovation That Excites'; and by integrating a

competitive touch, this game is bound to be a hit with customers across the region."

The Ariya symbolises Nissan's forward-looking journey into the future of electrification and sustainable mobility. The new Ariya digital game allows players to experience the workings and benefits of Nissan Intelligent Mobility first-hand and on a variety of road conditions. ProPILOT 2.0, a highly integrated driver assistance system that uses sensory cameras, GPS, and road infrastructure data, allows players to experience hands-free single lane driving in a safe and controlled environment.

Progressing through the levels, players pass through various e-4ORCE power up zones that appear on the course when needed the most, making for a strong visual representation of the benefits of electric drive control, 4WD control, and chassis control for superior grip, torque, and efficiency. Adding to the competitive element, the game also includes multiple challenges for players to conquer, including merging around vehicles autonomously, and allows for a neat graphic to be downloaded upon completion of the game to share with friends and on social media.

The EV Driving Game is the latest addition to The Nissan NEXT website that showcases a variety of information, including content developed for the world fair.

شركة التغليف المحدودة (ش.م.ع.) Packaging Co Ltd. (SAOG)

INVITATION TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of the Packaging Company Ltd. (SAOG) is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the company's Annual General Meeting, which is will be held on Tuesday, March 29, 2022, at 07:00pm, in Al Sharqiah Meeting hall in the OCCI building, Ruwi (CBD), Also, through the electronic platform for holding the General Meeting, which you can access through the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company website (www.mcd.gov.om), In the event that a quorum is not complete for the convening of this assembly, the second meeting will be held at five o'clock (in the evening) on Thursday, March 31, 2022, in the same hall, and via the electronic platform, to discuss the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve Chairman's Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2021
2. To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2021
3. To consider and approve the Auditor's report, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss account for the financial year ended 31st December 2021
4. Inform shareholders of the related party transaction during the financial ended 31st December 2021 and their approval.
5. To appoint auditors for statutory and internal audit for financial year 2022 and to approve their remuneration.

Notes:
Pursuant to the Company's article of association, a shareholder may depute any other person in writing to attend and vote on his behalf. The proxy need not be a shareholder and such proxy may be revoked by the shareholder any time.

For any clarification please contact Mr. Jasim Al Ajmi on telephone Number +96826861421 / 26860272

Chairman Legal adviser External Auditor

Khimji Ramdas felicitates gold medalist Paralympian staff

Paralympian champion Talib al Balushi, an employee at Khimji Ramdas (KR) was recently felicitated by the group's directors at a formal ceremony held at their Head Office, to celebrate his star performance at the recently concluded 2022 West Asian Para Games in Bahrain.

Winner of two gold medals (shot-put and discus throw) and a silver medal (javelin throw), Talib's outstanding participation in the Para Games, which saw Oman Para Athletic Team winning a total of 20 medals - including 12 gold - is a reflection of his strong resolve to keep Oman's sporting pennants flying high, a press release said.

Congratulating him on his decisive victory, Nailesh Khimji, director, Khimji Ramdas stated, "Talib al Balushi has upheld the Paralympian motto of 'Spirit in Motion' and inspires each one of us to go beyond the expected and savour success that comes from grit and resilience. His success story motivates us to continue to play a crucial role in guiding our employees to achieve their full potentials, thereby doing our bit towards securing a stronger workforce for the nation."

He added, "As an organisation that is steadfastly committed to facilitating its people, particularly its youth realise their true capabilities, we have, and continue to



initiate and support ventures that foster inclusion and all-round national development. The Oman team and Talib's victory is testimony to the efforts put in identifying, nurturing, promoting, and celebrating talent at every level in the country. We believe that this is just the beginning of a glorious future for Oman sports, and will continue to strive to put the sultanate on the world sporting map."

Balushi has been a part of the

Khimji Ramdas Group for over a decade. He has played a significant role in Oman's Para Athletic Team, winning laurels at various local and regional sporting events. Expressing gratitude to the group directors and the staff who assembled to felicitate him, he said, "I attribute my success to the trust reposed on me by the KR Group and the people of Oman. It is their confidence that has helped me surge ahead and bring home laurels."

With the aim to see the sultanate enjoy a prime place in the global sporting arena, as well as inspire the nation's youth and next generation of athletes, the Khimji Ramdas Group continuously celebrates and supports national sporting talent. KR lauds Talib al Balushi's commitment and perseverance, as it also mirrors the group's own fortification of employees' skills in and outside the workplace.



Bank Muscat evaluates applicants for Green Sports

Bank Muscat has announced that it is currently screening and evaluating the applications to the 2022 edition of the bank's flag-ship Green Sports programme.

A large number of applications from different teams across Oman were earlier accepted on-line through the digital application process during a month-long registration process which concluded earlier last month. Green Sports, which is one of the bank's longest-running CSR programmes continues to benefit many sports teams across the sultanate even as the annual programme brings together different generations on a single

platform on the evergreen theme of sports.

The bank's efforts complement the government's efforts to develop modern sports infrastructure across the sultanate in the spirit of the Public-Private Partnership model, a press release said.

Once the evaluation process is over, the bank will announce the 20 successful teams whose football fields will be developed in 2022 as part of the Green Sports programme. The Green Sports initiative, which was launched by Bank Muscat in 2012, has supported 143 sports teams across Oman till date. It is

estimated that the total number of people who have so far benefited from this programme throughout the country is over 42,900.

The scope of Green Sports support for sports teams include greening of football fields with natural or synthetic turf, floodlights or water desalination equipment in areas facing problems of water salinity. Ensuring wider representation, the Green Sports programme extends to develop sustainable sports infrastructure across the sultanate. Also, the facilities developed as part of the programme are often used as a venue for other social

activities, leading to stronger community bonding and greater positive behaviour among young people leading to national solidarity and also proper development of talented Omani sports people.

Bank Muscat is proud of the success and achievements of its different CSR programmes, which draws from the values of leadership and partnership so as to create a positive impact on Omani society. Bank Muscat's CSR and sustainability programmes have been well appreciated and received a number of accolades in the past from both, local/international organisations.

Expert clarifies extent of social insurance schemes

Savings systems work on making partnerships and agreements between employers and the Social Insurance Fund which set out the bases, controls, and limitations for depositing amounts that the employer's contribution for employees towards their provident fund.

These funds, which the employer joins with social insurance funds, are incentive tools and carry career benefits for employees, besides being a tool for retaining the competencies of employers who have savings funds for their employees.

In an interview carried in a recent issues of 'Takaful', Zaher al Bahri, a legal executive, said the act of saving a part of current income for future use or the time needed while in social insurance and retirement, is a savings retirement system based on defined contributions. This means the benefit due from the Retirement and Social Insurance Fund is the accumulated amount of contributions deposited with returns.

"It is based on saving the contributor's savings when he wishes to retire for any reason, seeking his right to retire according to the compulsory insurance scheme in which he is a mandatory contributor," he said.

Regarding the importance of savings programmes for its contributors, Bahri illustrates that the importance of savings systems lies in its basis, as it is not a solidarity insurance system. So it does not cover the



Zaher al Bahri

decrease in the value of the wage he was receiving when he was a worker in the private sector. Additionally, through these savings, he can convert them into monthly pensions in addition to the retirement pension; so that he is entitled to a savings pension and a retirement pension according to the basic law.

As for the sources of funding for savings systems, Bahri indicates that each retirement project has funding because funding is the backbone of the persistence and consolidation of the system or the law in terms of entitlement to insurance benefits. Insurance benefits are only due by the existence of sources or revenues received for this fund.

Funding sources for savings systems come through deposits of transferred sums from contributors and their investment returns. Each contributor has a personal account in the Social Insurance Fund, and the contributor deposits mandatory or optional contributions according to the limits and controls of deposit, by finding a minimum deposit at a time and a not exceeding one year. However, these savings systems are a retirement savings tool rather than an investment tool.

With different international designations and experiences, it is certain that there are international practices and experiences that have benefited from savings programmes.



Omani business delegation concludes trip to Sri Lanka

The first-ever visit of 17 member high level Omani business delegation to Sri Lanka from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), organised by the Sri Lanka Embassy in Oman from March 5 - 9, has successfully concluded.

The high level business delegation was led by Eng Redha Bin Juma al Saleh, chairman of the OCCI which is the sole representative of the entire private sector of Oman.

H E Ameer Ajwad, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman, received the delegation at the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) in Sri Lanka and accompanied the delegation during the visit. Sheikh Juma Hamdan al Shehhi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Sri Lanka, also associated during the meetings.

The purpose of the visit was to explore opportunities available in trade and investment between Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman and to establish business links between the private sectors of the two

countries.

The delegation paid a courtesy call on Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and briefed him on the progress made during their visit and expressed their keen interest in closer economic engagement with Sri Lanka. Ajith Nivard Gabral, Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, and Anura Dissanayake, Secretary to the Prime Minister, were also present during the meeting.

The delegation also had productive meetings with Basil Rajapaksa, finance minister, Bandula Gunawardena, trade minister, Nimal Siripala de Silva, labour minister, together with Priyankara Jayaratne, state minister of Foreign Employment Promotion and Market Diversification, as well as Tharaka Balasuriya, state minister of Regional Cooperation, during the visit. A range of areas of mutual interest including promotion of trade, investment, tourism, employment opportunities were discussed.

Members of the Omani dele-

gation who represented Omani manpower recruitment agencies, met with the chairman of the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) and discussed issues related to Sri Lankan labour recruitment in Oman and agreed to increase employment opportunities under Government regulated arrangements.

One of the highlights of the visit was the Business Forum followed by B2B meetings held between the visiting Omani delegation and their Sri Lankan counterparts, organised by the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) at the Chamber Auditorium in Colombo.

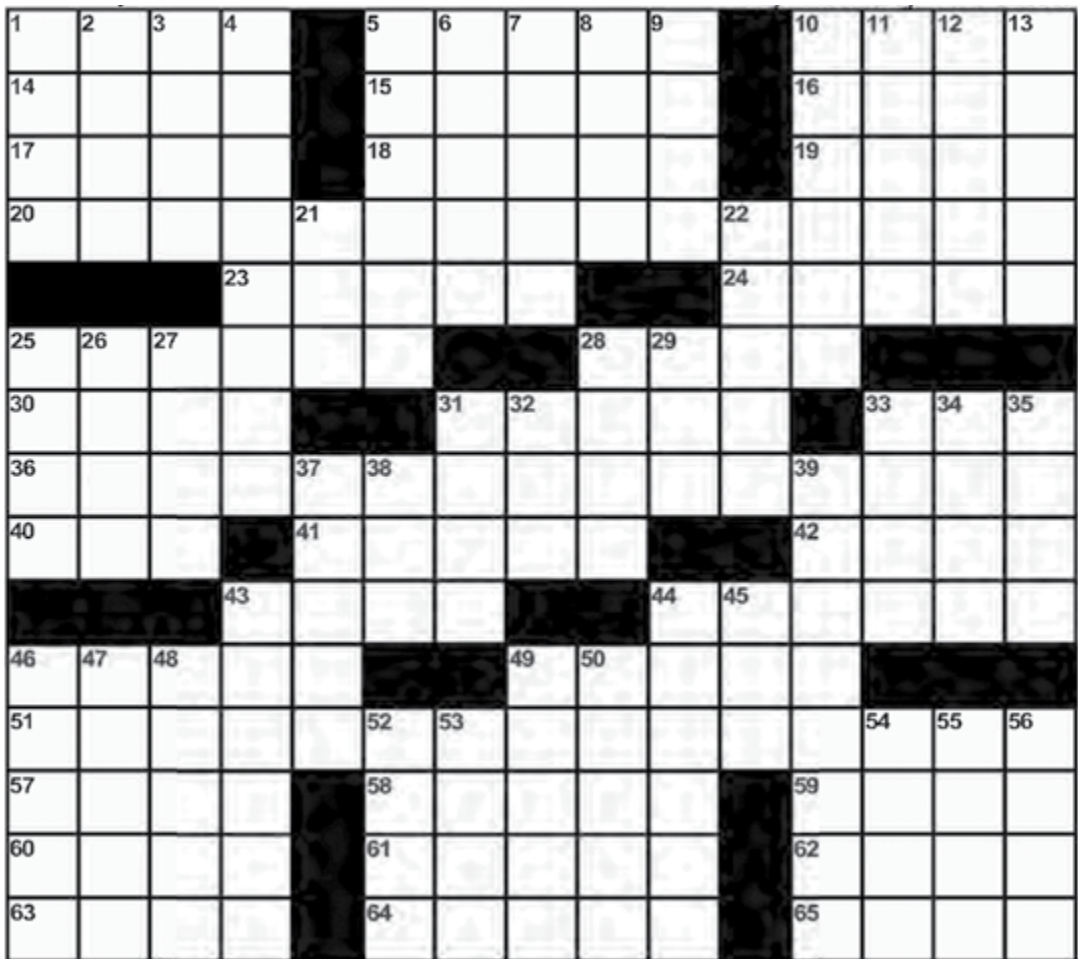
A large number of Sri Lankan companies participated during the B2B meetings. Ambassador Ameer Ajwad, Nandika Bhuddipala, president of the NCCSL, and Eng Redha al Salih, chairman of OCCI, addressed the Business Forum. Presentations by the Sri Lanka Board of Investment (BOI) as well as the Colombo Port City were also made.

CONDOLENCES

Saleh Zakwani
and members of
Apex Media
express their deepest
condolences to
Leninraj Francis
and his family members
on the sad demise of
his mother
Glory Raju Sharon

MAY HER SOUL REST IN
ETERNAL PEACE

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
1) Cannabis product
5) Type of beef
10) Golfer's rental
14) Assert confidently
15) Brown in a pan
16) Ubiquitous cosmetics ingredient
17) What souffles do
18) Kind of panel
19) Unexplainable picked-up feeling
20) Stress
23) Large-eyed lemur
24) Showing signs of wear and tear
25) Total
28) Cause for opening a window
30) What a good pilot knows
31) Den drug of old
33) "7 Faces of Dr..."
36) Project for home-builders
40) The avant-garde's Yoko
41) Judicial orders
42) _ spumante
43) Bit of perspiration
44) Larry Bird was one
46) Salesperson's pitch
49) Harmful bacteria
51) Bad OPS revelation
57) Goddess symbolized by a cow
58) Extra
59) Delight or jubilation
60) Convene
61) Sailor buddy
62) Long fishes
63) Blows it
64) Pulled vehicles
65) Becomes compost
- DOWN**
1) Instrument with 47 strings
2) Good's opposite
3) Large butte
4) Prevent from happening
5) Declare firmly
6) Watts of Hollywood
7) Takes huge drinks
8) Four Corners state
9) "Buona ..." (Italian)
"Good evening"
10) Fancy cracker topper
11) Choice invitees
12) Automaton
13) Itsy-bitsy
21) Long, long, long time
22) Pound the ground
25) "But wait, there's more"
26) Bounding site?
27) Not deceived by
28) Lubricates
29) Double header?
31) "Ars Amatoria" poet
32) Family member who may eat off the floor
33) "... we forget"
34) Naysayer
35) Applying to ears
37) Took up residence
38) Historic time
39) Avoid work
43) Wild creatures
44) Some New York-style hotdogs
45) Big game
46) Gunk
47) Tough puzzle
48) Less cordial
49) Related maternally
50) Like many hams

- 52) Doctrines
53) Australian gemstone
54) Fake butter
55) Lash mark
56) Eliot of the Untouchables

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

**ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19
It's going to be one of those days, the kind when anything can happen. Of course, you're always game for the unexpected, especially if it involves some excitement, and you'll smell the excitement in the air when you wake up this morning. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to try to keep things under control for anyone in your family who's not quite so fond of last-minute changes and sudden occurrences.

**LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Your deepest feelings, including and especially anger, will be easy for others to see at the moment, so if you want to keep them under wraps you have only one option: make yourself scarce. If you can't do that, at least warn anyone you'll be spending time with that you won't take no for an answer, regardless of the subject, and trying to push you in a direction you don't want to go will be an exercise in futility.

**SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
If anyone is known for doing absolutely everything they can for the ones they love, it's you. So now, when a loved one comes to you for help, there's no reason to believe that you'll act any differently. This, however, may be a situation that's trickier than the last few you've dealt with, especially since it will be quite unexpected. If you can help without injuring yourself or your reputation, do it. If not, find someone less involved who can.

**TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20
A family situation that's been on simmer for a while now stands every chance of boiling over today. Your job is to use every bit of your famous patience and reserve to keep that from happening. It might not be easy, especially if you're emotionally attached to one or both parties, and even more so if you can see both sides of the issue. Still, someone has to be the grown-up here, and as usual that job falls to you.

**VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You're not easy to surprise. You've heard it all, memorised most of it, and read up on the rest. At the moment, however, the universe has arranged a surprise for you, yes, an actual surprise, and not only will you be unable to see it coming, you'll also be caught totally off guard when it arrives. The good news is that many, if not most, surprises are wonderful. Just be sure you're prepared for anything.

**CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Although it's not easy to surprise you, today will prove the exception to that rule. There's at least one major surprise en route in the department of communications. Routine conversations and encounters won't be quite so routine right about now. That goes for any conversation, whether it's in person or via phone. If you expect it to turn out one way, it could quite possibly end up in an entirely different direction.

**GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21
If you've got public appearances to make, regardless of whether they're business or personal in nature, better arrange to have a bodyguard handy. You're going to be a loose cannon, emotionally speaking, and you absolutely won't care who's there to see it. The good news is that if anything of a truly urgent nature comes up, you'll probably be the only party on hand who's qualified to handle it.

**LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
A new supervisor, co-worker, or rule could turn your daily schedule upside down and quite possibly leave you wondering what to do next. But if you stay flexible and keep in mind that the only constant is change, you may not only adapt, but you'll also learn to love your new circumstances. In the meantime, expect the unexpected, and don't get comfortable. Your job is to make the end result positive for all parties concerned.

**AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Impulsivity and impetuosity are right at the very top of your sign's list of qualities. At the moment, you'll be dealing with the ups and downs of those traits in the department of finances. Your mission is to rein in your own tendencies toward impulsive overspending, take back the charge cards or joint checking accounts, if necessary, and refuse to be parted from your money by anyone who's a little too good at talking you out of it.

**CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22
You've never been called stingy. That goes double when it comes to giving what you can to help children, animals, or anyone else who's legitimately in need. That's a lovely quality, and it's something that won't leave you any time soon. At the moment, however, you need to be on your guard against someone who sees you coming, someone who has a plan in mind about how to quickly separate you from your hard-earned cash.

**SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
If there's anything you appreciate in your loved ones, it's consistency. So when someone you're close to says or does something that's entirely out of character, it may throw you, temporarily, at least. Of course, knowing you and your propensity for adapting to just about anything that's tossed your way, you'll do just fine. You may even discover a whole new side to their personality.

**PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
If anyone is famous for being able to withstand anything and everything with compassion, understanding, and sensitivity, it's you. You're usually quite able to keep your temper under wraps too. At the moment, however, it won't be easy for you to hide anything you feel, for better or worse. You'll also surprise everyone around you with your reactions. If you're accused of overreacting, hang in there.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. *Rawhide* was played to a bar full of hostile country music fans in which film?
A. The Good the Bad and the Ugly
B. Easy Rider
C. The Blues Brothers
D. The Gangs of New York

2. What was badly damaged when the ship *Shen Neng I* got into difficulties on April 3, 2010?
A. Canary Wharf, London
B. The beaches on the Côte d'Azur
C. The gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers, New Zealand
D. The Great Barrier Reef, Australia

3. Where are transoms found?
A. Only in the transmission system of a car or truck
B. In structures such as buildings and boats
C. In fungi
D. At the centre of an arch

Answers: 1. C 2. D 3. B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

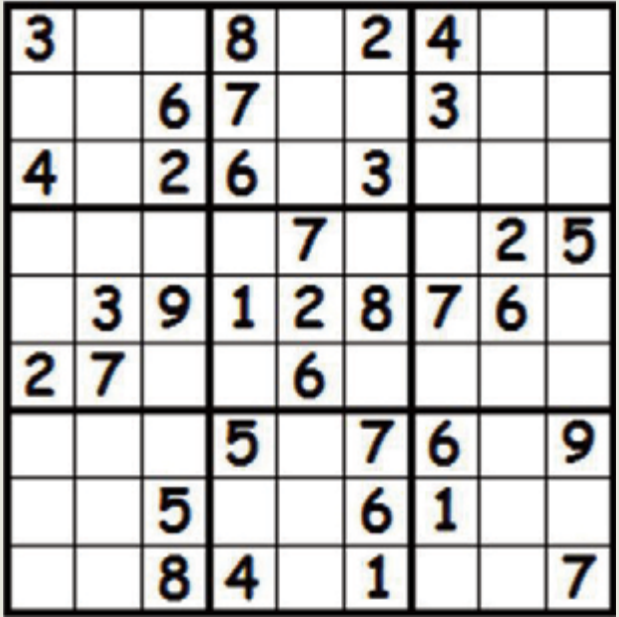


Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number



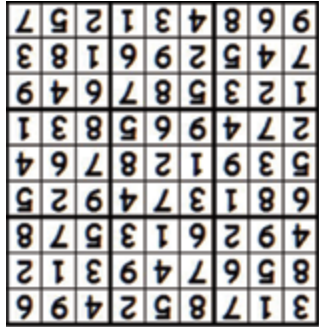
WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



Russia-Ukraine talks resume despite strikes

Ukraine said it would demand peace, an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of Russian troops

Kyiv, Ukraine - Russia and Ukraine launched a fresh round of talks on Monday in an effort to end Moscow's devastating war, despite deadly air strikes in the capital Kyiv and an eastern pro-Moscow separatist region.

As the fourth round of talks to end more than two weeks of fighting began, Russian-backed separatists said fragments from a shot-down Ukrainian Tochka missile landed in the centre of Donetsk, killing 17 civilians, including children.

Ukraine said it would demand 'peace, an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of Russian troops' during the talks.

"Only after this can we talk about regional relations and about political differences," Kyiv's lead negotiator Mikhailo Podolyak said in a video statement posted to Twitter.

A Russian air strike on a residential building in the Ukrainian capital earlier killed at least one person and injured a dozen, the country's emergency service said.

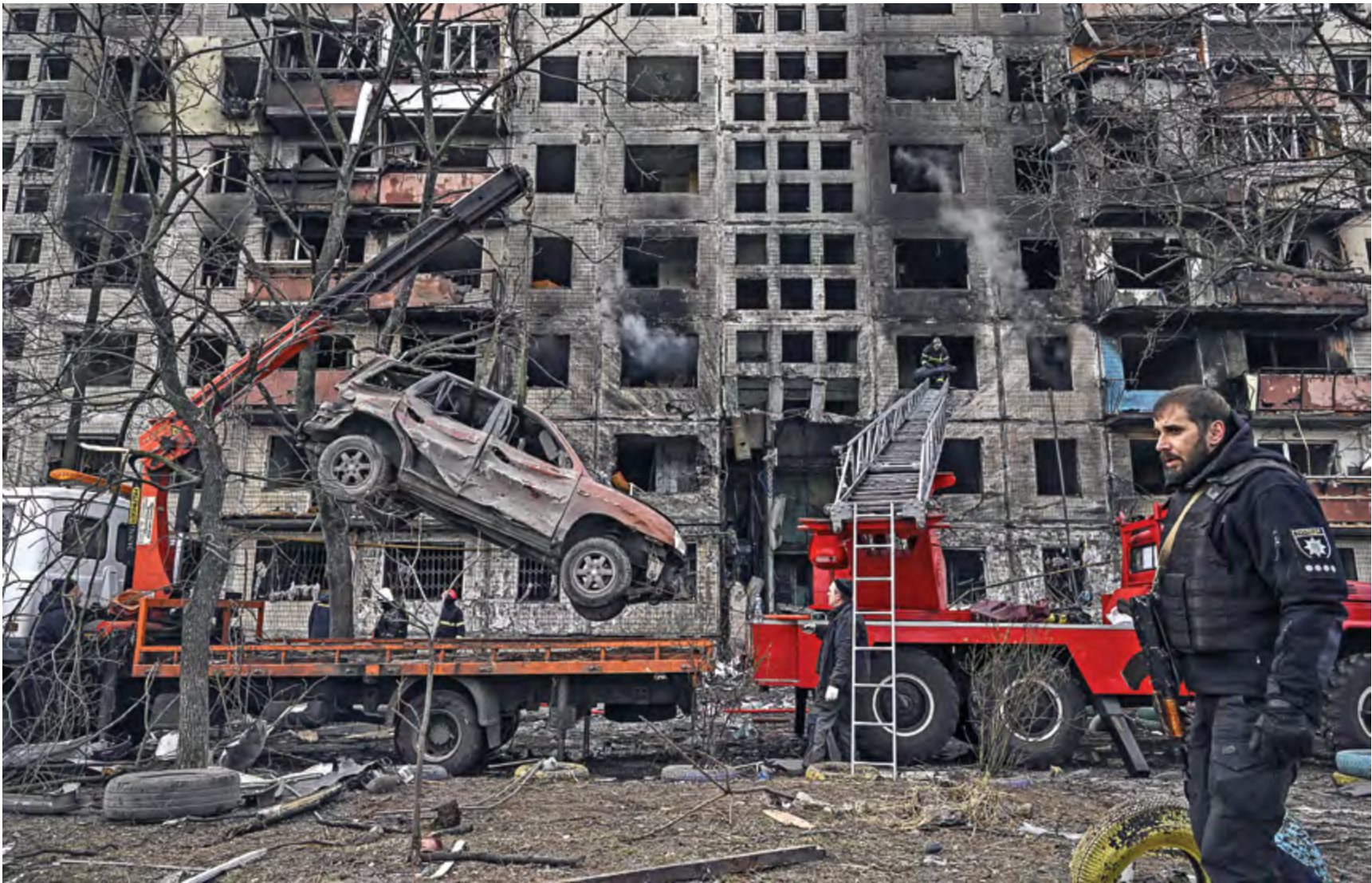
Another person was killed when an Antonov aircraft factory in Kyiv and a nearby residential building were targeted by Russian shelling, city officials said.

Russian troops, which invaded Ukraine on February 24, edged closer to the city and kept up their siege of the southern port city of Mariupol, where officials said nearly 2,200 people have been killed.

The United Nations estimates almost 2.7mn people have fled Ukraine since the invasion, most of them to Poland as neighbouring countries struggle to provide for the arrivals.

"Nowhere is safe anymore," said Yilena, 38, displaced to the Ukrainian city of Dnipro, considered a safe haven for people fleeing heavy fighting in cities like Kharkiv.

In Dnipro, the whirring of air raid sirens that lasted for five hours - the longest since the war



A crane removes a ruined car in front of a destroyed apartment building after it was shelled in the northwestern Obolon district of Kyiv on Monday (AFP)

Our goal is that in this difficult negotiating work, Ukraine will get the necessary result... for peace and security. The aim is to ensure a meeting of presidents

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

began - leaving many in the city fearful for what could lie ahead.

'World War II'

Ukrainian and Russian represen-



An elderly woman hugs a fireman after being evacuated from an apartment building hit by shelling in Kyiv on Monday (AFP)

tatives were meeting via video-conference on Monday, a Ukrainian presidential adviser and a Kremlin spokesman both said before the latest strike.

"Our goal is that in this struggle, in this difficult negotiating work, Ukraine will get the necessary result... for peace and for security," President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

Talks between Kyiv and Moscow have yet to yield a ceasefire and Russian forces have shown no sign of easing their onslaught.

The aim was 'to do everything to ensure a meeting of presidents. A meeting that I am sure people are waiting for,' said Zelensky.

Zelensky has urged NATO to impose a no-fly zone, but the United States has ruled out any direct intervention, with President Joe Biden warning that NATO fighting Russia 'is World War III'.

"If you do not close our sky, it is only a matter of time before Russian missiles fall on your territory, on NATO territory, on the homes of NATO citizens," Zelensky repeated on Monday.

Washington and its EU allies have sent funds and military aid to Ukraine and imposed unprecedented economic sanctions on Russia.

As Moscow felt the bite of international sanctions, Russia's finance ministry accused foreign

Over 160 cars exit Ukraine's Mariupol via safe corridor

Kyiv, Ukraine - More than 160 civilian cars have been able to drive out of the besieged southeastern Ukrainian city of Mariupol along a humanitarian evacuation route, the city authorities said on Monday.

"As of 1pm (1100 GMT), more than 160 private cars have managed to leave Mariupol on the road to Berdyansk," the city council said on Telegram.

It added that 'currently the ceasefire regime is being maintained along the humanitarian corridor' and the cars had passed Berdyansk, another coastal town to the west, and were heading towards the city of Zaporizhzhia to the north-west. The successful evacuation comes after several failed attempts early this month.

AFP

countries of wanting to force Russia into an 'artificial default' and said it would meet its debt obligations.

The latest fighting in Kyiv's suburbs left a US journalist dead - the first foreign reporter killed in Ukraine since Russia's invasion began on February 24.

In an intelligence update on Sunday, Britain's defence ministry said Russia had established a naval blockade on the Black Sea coast, 'effectively isolating Ukraine from international maritime trade'.

Russian naval forces are also conducting missile strikes against targets throughout Ukraine, it said.

AFP

20 people dead in Donetsk after Ukraine attack: Moscow

Moscow, Russia - Russia said on Monday that an attack by Kyiv's forces on the separatist stronghold of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine had left 20 people dead, accusing Kyiv of committing a 'war crime'.

Moscow accused Ukraine's army of firing a Tochka-U missile at a residential area in Donetsk, in one of the most serious attacks on the city since Russia sent troops into Ukraine over two weeks ago. Rebels, who have controlled the city since 2014, had earlier said fragments from a rocket they shot down had left 16 civilians dead.

"Twenty peaceful residents have died," Russian defence ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said in a statement. "Another 28 people including children were seriously injured and hospitalised."

"The use of such weapons in a city where there are no firing positions of the armed forces," Konashenkov added, "is a war crime."

Earlier on Monday separatist officials said more than a dozen people had been killed after they shot down a projectile and remnants landed in Donetsk's centre.

Separatist health officials later released updated figures matching those announced by the Russian defence ministry.

Official separatist Telegram channels distributed photos and video of the aftermath, showing



A Ukrainian soldier stands next to a self made memorial to late soldier-mates in Svetlodarsk, outside Donetsk, on Saturday (AFP)

burnt out cars and bodies strewn in the street.

In an interview with Russian state-run television, the head of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, Denis Pushilin, said the shot-down rocket had inflicted damage to residential areas.

"People were waiting in line

near an ATM and were standing at a bus stop," he said in remarks broadcast on Russian television.

"There are children among the dead," Pushilin added, adding that the casualty count would have been higher had the rocket not been downed.

AFP

Russia asks China for military aid for war in Ukraine, US officials tell media

Washington, US - Russia has asked China for military and economic aid for its war in Ukraine, US media reported on Sunday, hours after the White House warned Beijing would face severe 'consequences' if it helps Moscow evade sanctions.

Beijing refused to directly address the reports, instead accusing Washington of maliciously spreading 'disinformation' over China's role in the Ukraine war.

US officials told media that Russia had requested military equipment and support from its key ally. Moscow also asked Beijing for economic assistance against the crippling sanctions imposed against it by most of the Western world, the New York Times said, citing officials.

The officials declined to explain exactly what Russia had requested, or whether China had responded, according to the reports. A spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington told multiple outlets 'I've never heard of that' when asked about the alleged requests.

And without directly handling the US reports, foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told journalists on Monday that the US has 'been spreading disinformation targeting China on the Ukraine issue, with malicious intentions'. Beijing has declined to directly condemn Moscow for launching its invasion, and has repeatedly blamed NATO's



Members of the Chinese diplomatic delegation leave the Cavalieri Waldorf Astoria hotel in Rome, where US security adviser Jake Sullivan met with senior Chinese Communist Party diplomat Yang Jiechi, on Monday (AFP)

'eastward expansion' for worsening tensions between Russia and Ukraine, echoing the Kremlin's prime security grievance.

Zhao said that China had 'played a constructive role in urging peace and calling for negotiations'. His comments came ahead of a meeting between a high-level US delegation and a top Chinese official in Rome.

National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Yang Jiechi, the Chinese Communist Party's chief diplomat, met on Monday morning behind closed doors at a large hotel in the Italian capital. They

were not expected to address the media afterward.

The pair would 'discuss ongoing efforts to manage the competition between our two countries and discuss the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine on regional and global security', National Security Council spokesperson Emily Horne said on Sunday in a statement.

Sullivan made a round of Sunday talk shows to say the White House was 'watching closely' to see whether China provides material or economic support to Russia to help it evade the pun-

ishing impact of sanctions.

"It is a concern of ours, and we have communicated to Beijing that we will not stand by and allow any country to compensate Russia for its losses from the economic sanctions," he said on CNN's *State of the Union* show.

Sullivan said that while he did not wish to 'brandish threats' against major economic rival China, 'we are communicating directly, privately to Beijing that there will absolutely be consequences for large-scale sanctions-evasion efforts'.

AFP

Iran's FM to hold talks on nuclear deal in Moscow

Tehran, Iran - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian will head to Moscow on Tuesday, the ministry said, days after negotiations on an Iran nuclear deal stalled amid new Russian demands.

"Russia has made its official demands loud and clear, and this needs to be discussed among all parties to the 2015 agreement, like all the demands that have been presented by other parties," foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters on Monday.

"The foreign ministers of the parties (to the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal) are in constant contact", and Amir-Abdollahian "will go to Moscow on Tuesday to continue the discussions," Khatibzadeh added.

More than 10 months of talks in Vienna have brought major powers close to renewing the landmark 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on regulating Iran's nuclear programme. But the negotiations were halted after Russia on March 5 demanded guarantees that Western sanctions imposed following its invasion of Ukraine would not damage its trade with Iran.

Iran waiting on Washington
On March 11, the European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell tweeted that the pause was 'due to external factors', despite the fact that 'a final text is essentially ready and on the table'.



Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh speaks during a press conference in Tehran, on Monday (AFP)

Russia has made its official demands loud and clear, and this needs to be discussed among all parties to the 2015 agreement, like all the demands that have been presented by other parties

SAEED KHATIBZADEH

The United States then put the ball in Iran and Russia's courts after the EU announcement. "We are confident that we can achieve mutual return to compliance... (if) those decisions are made in places like Tehran and Moscow," State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has dismissed as 'irrelevant' the Russian demands for

guarantees, saying that they 'just are not in any way linked together'. But on Monday, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman repeated Tehran's position that the move had to come from the US.

"The remaining issues and points between us and the United States need political decisions in Washington," Khatibzadeh said.

'If they (the US) announce

that they have made a decision, then all the delegations can return to Vienna' to finalise an agreement, he said.

"We are not at the point of announcing the agreement," he added.

Russia and Iran have seen relations improve in recent years, and Moscow plays a central role in enforcing the 2015 pact, in particular by receiving excess enriched uranium from Tehran.

The JCPOA aimed to ensure Iran would not be able to develop a nuclear weapon, which it has always denied seeking.

On Saturday, Britain, France and Germany warned against moves to 'exploit' the JCPOA, seen as a tacit warning to Russia.

AFP

Germany to buy dozens of US fighter jets in spending spree

Berlin, Germany - Germany plans to buy up to 35 US-made F-35 fighter jets and 15 Eurofighter jets, a parliamentary source said on Monday, as part of a major push to modernise the armed forces in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The F-35 jets made by Lockheed Martin would replace Germany's decades-old Tornado fleet, according to media reports confirmed by the source.

Tornados are the only Luftwaffe planes capable of carrying US nuclear bombs stationed in Germany that are a key part of NATO deterrence.

Lockheed's F-35 stealth jets are considered the most modern combat aircraft in the world, and their unique shape and coating make them harder to detect by enemy radar.

The additional Eurofighter jets Germany plans to purchase, made by a consortium that includes Airbus, would reportedly be used for other operations, including escort missions and electronic warfare like jamming enemy air defence systems.

In a landmark speech late last month, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz pledged to invest an extra €100bn (US\$112bn) in the nation's chronically underfunded Bundeswehr armed forces.

The spending boost marks a major reversal for Germany, Europe's top economy, upending its policy of keeping a low military profile in part out of guilt over World War II.

After years of criticism that the country wasn't shouldering enough of the financial burden in the NATO military alliance, Scholz also vowed to spend



This file photo shows a US Air Force F-35 Lightning II aircraft being refuelled by a KC-10 Extender aircraft over Poland on February 24 (AFP)

'more than two per cent' of Germany's gross domestic product annually on defence, surpassing NATO's own two-per cent target.

The shift was prompted by the return of war to the European continent following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, shaking Germany's sense of security and shining a harsh spotlight on the state of its armed forces.

A draft budget for 2022 unveiled on Monday confirmed Germany's spending ambitions.

If approved by parliament, the budget will see Berlin spending more than €50bn this year on defence, a government source said, calling it a 'record high'.

The amount comes on top of Scholz's promised 'special fund' of €100bn to upgrade the armed forces over the coming years.

Setback

The F-35 purchase however raises questions about the future of a common European fighter jet being developed with Spain and France.

Known as the Future Combat

Air System (FCAS), the plane is slated to replace French-made Rafale jets and German and Spanish Eurofighter planes by 2040.

Scholz sought to allay fears that the project might become unnecessary in February's speech, by saying the joint European project was an 'absolute priority'.

But the Bundeswehr has to replace its 40-year-old Tornado fleet in the short term because it has become 'obsolete', Scholz added.

Germany's planned jet deal is also bad news for US aviation giant Boeing, whose F-18 fighters were considered a frontrunner to replace the Tornados.

While cheaper than F-35s, the F-18 would have had to have been recertified to be able to transport atomic warheads.

There was no immediate indication of the price tag on Germany's new combat jet plans.

But Finland ordered 64 F-35A jets in December, in a deal worth €8.4bn.

AFP

Afghan diplomats under pressure from Taliban regime to stay afloat

Islamabad, Pakistan - Afghan embassies around the world that have refused to recognise the new Taliban regime are struggling to stay afloat and facing increasing pressure from Kabul to accept loyalist replacements.

None of the country's 60 or so ambassadors, consuls or heads of diplomatic missions who were appointed by Western-backed former president Ashraf Ghani have agreed to serve the hardline Islamist group since it seized power in August last year.

The Taliban government has yet to be formally recognised by any nation, and the international community is grappling with how to deal with the country's new rulers while also helping Afghans face an economic and humanitarian crisis.

"We are in a very unfortunate ... situation, but we still have to continue to operate in these difficult circumstances," said Yousuf Ghafoorzai, the ambassador to Norway.

"The embassies still have a very important role to play in terms of trying to increase whatever humanitarian support is possible. But also (to help) discussions on the political track... to stabilise the situation."

Aid and cash reserves, frozen by the United States and the international community after the Taliban seized control, are trickling back into the country, which has long depended almost entirely on donors.

But Ghafoorzai and his colleagues have had no contact with the new regime, and staff have not been paid for months.

The Afghan embassy and its consulates in the United States are being shut in the coming week.

"The Afghan Embassy and



This photo shows the emblem of Afghanistan outside the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington, DC on Sunday (AFP)

consulates are under severe financial pressure. Their bank accounts are not available to them," a US State Department official told AFP.

The embassy and Washington have made arrangements for an 'orderly shutdown of operations in a way that would protect and preserve all diplomatic mission property in the United States until operations are able to resume', the official said.

Across the world, Afghan ambassadors have been forced to dramatically scale down their activities, reduce energy bills and food costs, and even move into smaller premises.

They have also increased consular fees to generate revenue.

"The embassy is not receiving any funding or financial assistance from Kabul," Farid Mamundzai, the ambassador in New Delhi, told AFP.

"In the absence of the required

pushed out by the Taliban, who have inserted their own representatives - but even the replacements face hardship.

In Pakistan, salaries have not been paid since September. Employees live on income from visa and passport renewal fees and marriage certificates, said a source at the consulate in Peshawar, near the Afghan border.

The new consul general appointed by the Taliban receives just 50,000 rupees (US\$280) a month compared with the nearly US\$5,000 his predecessor made, the source added.

The Taliban made Pakistan, long accused of aiding their cause, the first country to which they sent a new representative.

In Beijing, the ambassador resigned when a senior diplomat loyal to the Taliban was appointed to the embassy, which he is now unofficially leading.

The Taliban has also managed to impose their men in Uzbekistan and Iran.

Russia, meanwhile, said it was ready to accept 'two or three' new diplomats, but that they would not take the place of the current ambassador.

The Taliban did not respond to AFP's requests for comment, but they have previously claimed to largely have control over Afghan embassies. However, they have failed to have one of their top spokesmen, Suhail Shaheen, accredited as ambassador to the United Nations, with the General Assembly indefinitely postponing a vote on the matter.

In Rome, Italian police had to intervene after a scuffle between the Afghan ambassador and a recently dismissed pro-Taliban diplomat who claimed he had been given the top job.

AFP



Residents stand next to a house destroyed by Cyclone Gombé in the El Triangulo neighborhood, Nampula district, Nampula province on Sunday (AFP)

17 die as cyclone lashes Mozambique, Malawi

Nampula, Mozambique - The death toll from a cyclone that struck Mozambique this week climbed to 12 on Sunday as it moved towards Malawi killing five more after devastating wind and rain lashed the southern African countries.

Cyclone Gombé has affected more than 30,000 people, injuring 40, and destroyed more than 3,000 homes since making landfall on Friday.

Powerful winds reaching 170km per hour and torrential rainfall hit the northern Nampula province by the Indian Ocean and neighbouring Zambezia province particularly hard.

In the port city of Nacala, houses were teetering on the edge of cliffs facing the ocean and walls had collapsed, an AFP photographer saw.

Most thatched roofs were damaged and another made of sheet metal lay on the ground

Gombé arrived with more intensity than Idai, but luckily it did not have the same impact, in terms of destruction and the fact that it lost strength right at the beginning

CESAR TEMBE

after the wind swept away the bricks, while uprooted trees also littered the ground.

Eight shelters have opened in Nampula, Mozambique's most populous province which suffered death and destruction when Tropical Storm Ana struck in January.

Mozambique was devas-

tated by Cyclone Idai in 2019, the most violent storm to ever hit the country.

"Gombé arrived with more intensity than Idai, but luckily it didn't have the same impact, in terms of destruction and the fact that it lost strength right at the beginning," said Cesar Tembe from Mozambique's national institute for risk management. Gombé moved towards Malawi, according to Meteo-France, where five deaths were reported later on Sunday, authorities said in a statement.

In some southern areas of the country, the rain had not stopped for two days.

Around 80 tropical storms or cyclones form above tropical waters around the world each year. The cyclone season in southern Africa lasts from November to April.

AFP

Chinese cities and factories lock down as coronavirus infections rise rapidly

Beijing, China - All 17mn people in the Chinese tech hub of Shenzhen began their first full day under lockdown on Monday, as restrictions spread across Shanghai and other major cities to combat an outbreak challenging the nation's zero-tolerance COVID strategy.

The southern city of Shenzhen imposed the measure on Sunday to counter an Omicron flare-up in factories and neighbourhoods linked to nearby Hong Kong, which is recording scores of daily deaths as the virus runs rampant.

Major Apple supplier Foxconn suspended its operations in Shenzhen, the company said on Monday, as the lockdown bit hard into economic activity across the factory hub.

Shenzhen is one of ten cities nationwide to have locked down all residents, though the measure was taken on Monday in some parts of other major hubs including Dalian, Nanjing and Tianjin, which neighbours the capital.

Health officials have warned tighter restrictions could be on their way, as concerns mount over the resilience of China's 'zero-COVID' approach in the face of the highly-transmissible Omicron variant.

Authorities reported 2,300 new virus cases nationwide on Monday and almost 3,400 a day earlier, the highest daily figure in two years. "There have been many small-scale clusters in urban villages and factories," Shenzhen city official Huang Qiang said at a Monday briefing.

"This suggests a high risk of community spread, and further precautions are still needed."

Photos shared with AFP by a



Police and workers are seen wearing protective clothes next to some lockdown areas after the detection of new cases of COVID-19 in Shanghai on Monday (AFP)

Shenzhen resident showed housing compound entrances blocked by large plastic barriers, as residents swapped jokes on social media about their rush to grab laptops from offices before the lockdown. Tech stocks plummeted on the Hong Kong exchange on Monday, as concerns

over the impact of the virus spread in Shenzhen - home to hubs for Foxconn, as well as Huawei and Tencent - spooked investors.

Toughing it out

In Shanghai, residential areas and offices in some neighbourhoods

remained sealed on Monday as authorities try to avoid a full lockdown. Police tape, metal gates and rows of community workers in hazmat suits surrounded shuttered shops and homes in closed-off parts of the city.

Streets were noticeably quieter across the megacity, which

reported around 170 new virus cases on Monday - enough to seed anxiety among businesses over the economic pain ahead.

A restaurateur with four outlets in different parts of Shanghai said he has to wade through a morass of hyper-local restrictions, giving an indication of how

ordinary life in China is still spun on its head by a pandemic that the rest of the world has learned to cope with. "Different districts adopt different policies," he told AFP, requesting anonymity.

"I want to close one and keep the rest open, and see how it goes later. What else can I do except tough it out?"

Other outbreak epicentres have been less lucky.

Jilin province in the northeast recorded over 1,000 new cases and authorities banned residents leaving their cities without police permission.

AFP



Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen (centre) checks a rifle while inspecting reservists training at a military base in Taoyuan on Saturday (AFP)

Taiwanese military reservists train as war tensions mount

New Taipei City, Taiwan - Hundreds of Taiwanese military reservists carried out training exercises on Monday after the island's president called for 'unity' as the Ukraine war rattles nerves over the threat of invasion from China.

Taiwan last year stepped up its training regime for reservists as tensions rise with Beijing, which sees the self-ruled island as part of its territory to be seized one day, by force if necessary.

About 400 personnel took part in target practice Monday in a programme designed to boost their combat readiness. Their training kicked off earlier this month and simulates defending a beach near the capital Taipei.

It comes as Taipei keeps a close watch on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with President Tsai Ing-wen appearing in front of the reservists on Saturday stressing the need for unity in defending the island.

"The recent situation in Ukraine once again proves that the protection of the country, in

addition to international solidarity and assistance, depends on the unity of the people," she said in a speech dressed in military fatigues and body armour.

Major General Chen Chung-chi, director of Taiwan's 6th Army Command, stressed the importance of reservists in addition to full-time troops.

"The security of the whole country does not just depend on the soldiers," he told AFP on Monday.

"In Ukraine, we see soldiers in the battlefield, and some men... who go to battle after sending their wives and children to safety.

"Military power is limited but the power of the people is unlimited," he said.

Reservist Shi Hui-bin said the immersion training kept him prepared and up to date with current military tactics.

"When the time comes, I will know what to do," he told reporters after a round of shooting practice.

AFP

Yangon residents deprived of power, water

Yangon, Myanmar - Clutching pails, tubs and buckets, residents of Myanmar's bustling commercial capital Yangon queued for water on Monday, as rolling power outages aggravate the economic misery sparked by last year's military coup.

Last week the junta announced the country's already patchy power supply would be further reduced for seven days, blaming rising gas prices and attacks by anti-coup fighters on infrastructure. The increasing outages see homes and businesses in Yangon, home to some seven million people, plunge regularly into darkness and leaving many unable to draw water to their homes.

"We can use charcoal for cooking but we can't live without water," said Ko Aung as he queued with around 30 others next to a water bowser visiting his northeastern neighbourhood



People line up to fill containers with water in Yangon on Monday (AFP)

in the city. "Even if there is electricity, without water from the system, we can't cook anything,"

said the 40-year-old.

Power outages are common in Myanmar thanks to a creaky

and outdated electricity grid, with demand regularly outstripping supply during the sweltering

summer months.

"Since the beginning of March we have been receiving 150-200 calls each day from people asking us to supply water," said Htun Htun, heading a team of volunteers delivering the vital fluid.

"Today we are giving water to about 3000 households," he told AFP. "Shortages of water and electricity usually happen in summer but it's worse this year."

Last July Yangon's power supplier warned customers their electricity supplies could be disrupted if they continued refusing to pay their bills as part of a boycott that has hit junta coffers.

Thousands of civil servants have walked out in protest against the regime, leaving schools, universities and hospitals empty and the State Administration Council - as the junta calls itself - struggling to issue bills or collect taxes.

AFP

Ex-guerrilla front runner in Colombia presidential primaries

Bogota, Colombia - Colombians voted for senator and former guerrilla Gustavo Petro as the left's presidential nominee by a wide margin on Sunday, making him the front runner in an election that could yield the country's first-ever leftist leader in May.

As predicted, the 61-year-old came out on top in the primaries - called inter-party 'consultations' - which took place alongside elections for the Senate and House of Representatives, currently in the hands of right-wing parties.

But leftist candidates were



Gustavo Petro (centre), delivers a speech after winning the coalition during parliamentary elections in Bogota on Sunday (AFP)

projected to tie with the Conservatives for the most seats in Colombia's Senate and contend

for second place in the lower house, partial results showed.

With the votes counted at 98

per cent of polling stations, the left's Historical Pact coalition is set to win 16 of the 102 seats in the upper house - the same number as the Conservatives - ahead of the Liberals on 15, according to electoral authority figures.

In the lower house, it looks set to take 25 of the 165 seats in a tie with the Conservatives and behind the Liberals on 32.

Nearly 39mn of Colombia's 50mn inhabitants were eligible to vote in a complex but critical election in a country plagued by violence and growing poverty levels.

"Colombia saw an election day with transparency and respect for rights," election authority head Alexander Vega said, referring to a largely incident-free vote.

Outgoing President Ivan Duque - who called on Colombians to vote in a 'rejection of violence' and 'triumph of democracy' - had promised safety 'guarantees' for the non-compulsory vote.

The polls came with the president and legislature both at rock-bottom levels of public support.

AFP

BOOK LAUNCH

Note worthy

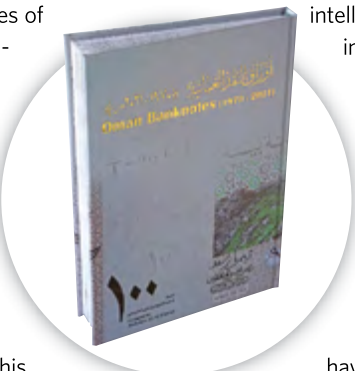


Omani youth to launch a new book – Oman Banknotes (1970 - 2021) which includes images of three different Sultans on Omani currency

Photo: Syed Fasiuddin

Hubert Vaz

Abdulaziz al Kharusi, a young flight engineer, has let his creative pursuit of currencies take flight with an ambitious attempt to launch a chronicle of Omani banknotes. The hardbound book – Oman Banknotes (1970 - 2021), published with exclusive images of banknotes and cultural symbols, accompanied by relevant text in Arabic and English, provides interesting insights into the design and relevance of various bank notes that had been floated during the past five decades. The book, to be launched on March 17, also serves as a guide into the history and evolution of the Omani currency in a simple, yet effective, manner. What began as an act of curiosity in his childhood, when he found an abandoned 'quarter anna' (an erstwhile coin minted in India) which sparked his interest into learning about coins and currencies, soon blossomed into a fulfilling hobby for



Kharusi. Over the past two decades or so, he has been collecting and procuring Omani banknotes and coins as well as those belonging to other countries in all earnestness, often paying huge sums to procure rare coins and notes from people in other countries. The book, he admits, is an extension of his intellectual pursuit for learning and collecting Omani banknotes, and though it will be available for a price of RO12, earning a fortune from this collector's edition is not his goal. Rather, making it see the light of day was a dream come true for Kharusi who has a few more ideas on the same theme up his sleeve. "Collecting currencies – banknotes and coins – is my hobby and I have done around 62 exhibitions of these in Oman and different countries in the region in the past few years," says Kharusi who has also received a couple of awards for his collection – the result of painstaking efforts, visiting museums and collectors

as well as conducting relevant research. Currently, Kharusi has between 6000-7000 banknotes and coins, as well as certain old property documents indicating sale deeds involving old currency. The book features only Omani banknotes and Kharusi conducted extensive research as well as procured permissions from the relevant ministries as well as the Central Bank of Oman to authenticate its contents. The images of the various denominations of banknotes used in Oman over the past 50 years bears varied symbols of Oman cultural heritage as well as portraits of three Sultans of Oman – late Sultan Said bin Taimur, late Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the current ruler of Oman, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The various sections in the book include chapters on the features of Oman banknotes, Sultans of Oman who issued banknotes, financial institutions where currencies get issued, signatures, symbols and their significance – forts and castles, handicrafts, crafts, Islamic architecture, places in Oman, wildlife, modern renaissance symbols, and national symbols, besides a chapter on various issues of banknotes.

Designing this book on the history of Omani banknotes and the various symbols in them was a beautiful experience and I gained a lot of knowledge from it. The design task took six months – it contained rare inscriptions taken from Omani history. In the design, we relied on the symbols taken from six issues of Omani banknotes

AHLAM SAIF AL HASANI
(Designer of the book)

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BIRTHDAY WISHES

APARNA RAJEEV
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"We wish you a very happy birthday dear APARNA RAJEEV. May Almighty bless you abundantly and let all your dreams come true.
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CHINESE
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ALIVE



QIPAO

ICONIC ATTIRE



It's a highly skilled craft. Some of our tailors spend a lifetime learning to make qipao

ZHOU ZHUGUANG

Zhou Zhuguang surveys his Shanghai workshop and rows of workers meticulously stitching high-collared Chinese dresses known as qipao, some of which sell for nearly US\$5,000.

"It's a highly skilled craft," said Zhou, co-founder of Hanart, one of China's most well-known qipao makers. "Some of our tailors spend a lifetime learning to make qipao."

The price tag also reflects enduring demand for the qipao, known as a 'cheongsam' in Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities.

Drawing on traditional design elements, the dress was popularised in 1920s Shanghai, its form-fitting cut capturing the glamour of that free-wheeling pre-communist era and the desire of Chinese women to liberate themselves from traditionally subservient roles.

The qipao disappeared after the Communist Party - which considered it decadent and bourgeois - took power in 1949. And, the dress' comeback is due in part to producers like Zhou.

A mass-produced qipao, sometimes seen at weddings or other formal occasions, can be bought today for as little as 100yuan (US\$16). But Zhou, 59, has found a market for higher-end designs among well-heeled Chinese fashionistas.

Zhou previously dealt in lower-priced qipao before founding Hanart in 1998 in partnership with Chu Hongsheng, a legendary qipao designer who fitted Chinese film actresses and the wives and daughters of Shanghai mafia bosses. Chu died in 2017 at the age of 99.

Cultural value

"Low price isn't the true essence of the qipao," said Zhou, who feels that such an

iconic Chinese fashion staple requires more luxurious materials, bolder designs and hand-crafted precision, which inevitably push prices up.

Zhou displayed these at a Shanghai show late last year which featured 'modern, altered qipao' designs combining the classic Mandarin collar and body-hugging fit with less traditional elements such as lace, fringes, velvet, sequins and rich embroidery.

"We want more young people to wear qipao," Zhou said of his design re-boot.

To Yang Zhenzhen, who owns a Shanghai qipao shop and is an online influencer of the dress style, cracking the youth market is essential to keeping the tradition alive. Her shop targets buyers aged 25-45 with qipao starting at around US\$600.

"Young people bring new life and energy to the qipao," said Yang, 28, who has been smitten with the dress since childhood and began collecting them five years ago. "If young people don't wear them, then by the time they grow old there won't be anyone wearing them," she said.

Yang admitted that youth acceptance suffers from a stereotype that qipao are for elderly women, or the belief that pop culture uses the dress to objectify Chinese women.

"These are deep misconceptions... So, I want to popularise it as best I can and let people know the real meaning of qipao," she said. That includes the dress's role in breaking down gender norms for women during the 1920s. The sense of freedom associated with that will never go out of style, she adds.

For Zhou, selling qipao is about perpetuating an element of China's intangible cultural heritage. "We are small, but we are carrying on a piece of culture," he said. "That's where our biggest value is."

AFF



WHAT'S A QIPAO?

Qipao, also known as 'cheongsam' in Cantonese, is a one-piece Chinese dress that has its origins in Manchu-ruled China, back in the 17th century. The style of the qipao has evolved over the decades and is still worn today, though mostly by tradition-bound ladies. Some also wear them for more formal occasions, like weddings.

The traditional dress became less popular when Communist rule began in 1949 when many traditional ideas, including fashion, weren't propagated to make way for modernism.

The qipao features a high neck and straight skirt, covering all of a woman's body, except for her head, hands, and toes. It was traditionally made of silk and featured intricate embroidery. Shorter versions are also worn today.

The modern qipao is a one-piece, form-fitting dress that has a high slit on one or both sides. Modern variations may have bell sleeves or are sleeveless and made out of a variety of different fabrics. It is also used as a uniform at restaurants and hotels and on airplanes in Asia.

CRICKET ROUND-UP



India's players pose with the trophy after winning the series at the end of the second Test cricket match between India and Sri Lanka at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on March 14 (AFP)

India thrash Sri Lanka in pink ball Test to sweep series 2-0

Bangalore, India - A bowling attack led by Jasprit Bumrah helped India thrash Sri Lanka by 238 runs inside three days at Bangalore's pink ball Test to sweep the series 2-0 on Monday.

Chasing 447 for victory, Sri Lanka were bowled out for 208 in the second session after skipper Dimuth Karunaratne's valiant 107, on a pitch that turned from day one.

Fast bowler Bumrah ended Karunaratne's spell and got one more to take his match tally to eight wickets while spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took four over the day.

Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh

Pant, respectively named man of the match and man of the series, scored 67 and 50 in India's 303-9 declared on day two.

Their key roles brought an emphatic victory that left the hosts unbeaten in all three of their home day-night Tests and extended their streak at home to 15 series wins in the five-day format.

India also won the opening Test in three days and this win gives new all-format captain Rohit Sharma a winning start to his Test leadership.

"It was a big thing to lead in Tests," Rohit told reporters after the win.

"I had the support of my teammates. They were telling me what to do and what not to do. There are a few senior members in the team who understand the game well and (I) had their inputs as well."

Left-handed Karunaratne made a second wicket stand of 97 before Ashwin broke through for the stumping of the captain's overnight partner Kusal Mendis, who recorded his 12th Test half-century. Karunaratne went on to wage a lone battle and raised his century - the sole hundred for a Sri Lankan batsman in this Test series - with a boundary off Bumrah.

"I would have been more happy if we had won," Karunaratne said afterwards.

"We batted under lights and it was tough," he added. "We have a good team, (but) the batting didn't capitalise on these conditions."

Lakmal farewell

India, who gained crucial Test championship points in the whitewash, remained dominant from day one after Iyer hit 92 and lifted the team from a precarious 86-4 to 252 all out.

Iyer was named man of the match while the left-handed Pant was crowned player of the series

for his 185 runs in the series and wicketkeeping duties.

Bumrah then returned figures of 5-24 for his maiden five-wicket haul at home to dismiss Sri Lanka for 109.

"Bumrah's performance was magnificent without a doubt," Rohit said of his deputy.

"To come out and bowl like that in these kinds of conditions shows how much skill and ability he has."

The series will be remembered as marking Virat Kohli's 100th Test in the opening game in Mohali, though the star batsman scored just 45, 23 and 13 in the three Indian innings.

The former captain twice fell lbw in this Test to take his average down to below 50 for the first time since 2017, but the crowd at M. Chinnaswamy Stadium gave him a rousing reception.

Sri Lankan quick Suranga Lakmal took one wicket in his last Test and finished his career with 171 scalps in 70 five-day matches since his 2010 debut.

Lakmal scored one before being bowled by Bumrah, who rushed to bid farewell to the 35-year-old veteran with an arm around him and the Indian team joined in.

AFP

SCOREBOARD		
India 1 st Innings 252		
Sri Lanka 1 st Innings 109		
India 2 nd Innings 303/9d		
SRI LANKA 2 nd INNINGS		
L Thirimanne	lbw b Bumrah	0
D Karunaratne	b Bumrah	107
Kusal Mendis	st Pant b Ashwin	54
A Mathews	b Jadeja	1
D de Silva	c Vihari b Ashwin	4
N Dickwella	st Pant b Patel	12
C Asalanka	c Sharma b Patel	5
L Embuldeniya	lbw b Ashwin	2
S Lakmal	b Bumrah	1
V Fernando	c M Shami b Ashwin	2
P Jayawickrama	not out	0
Extras:	(b 16, lb 3, nb 1)	20
TOTAL:	(59.3 Ov, RR: 3.49)	208
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-97, 3-98, 4-105, 5-160, 6-180, 7-204, 8-206, 9-208, 10-208		
Bowling: J Bumrah 9-4-23-3, M Shami 6-0-26-0, R Ashwin 19-3-3-55-4, R Jadeja 14-2-48-1, A Patel 11-1-37-2		

Australia in command of second Test after Starc wrecks Pakistan

Karachi, Pakistan - Mitchell Starc led the Australian pace attack with three wickets Monday to put the visitors in the driving seat on day three of the second Test against Pakistan in Karachi.

The lanky left-armed took 3-29 as Pakistan were bundled out for a paltry 148 in reply to Australia's mammoth first innings of 556-9 declared.

Despite a big 408-run lead, Australia did not enforce the follow-on and at the close on the third day were 81-1 in their second innings, leading by 489 with nine wickets intact.

Opener Usman Khawaja was unbeaten on 35 and Marnus Labuschagne 37 after David Warner fell to Hasan Ali for seven.

"It's a much more abrasive wicket, few more cracks, and the square is so much drier and bare which played a factor in achieving the reverse swing. Over the last couple of days we knew the pitch would deteriorate to some degree, but we were not sure it would happen so quickly," said Starc.

Australia have two full days to enforce a big win and take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, their first tour of Pakistan in 24 years.

Pakistan's collapse in 53 overs was in complete contrast to Australia, who stayed out for 189 overs, plundering runs at ease.

Starc, who was wicketless in the drawn first Test in Rawalpindi last week, had Azhar Ali (14), Fawad Alam (nought) and Sajid Khan (five) out as Pakistan lost six wickets in the space of 62 runs after being 38-1 at lunch. Debutant leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson finished with 2-32 including the wicket of Azam, who miscued a drive and

ing the reverse swing. Over the last couple of days we knew the pitch would deteriorate to some degree, but we were not sure it would happen so quickly," said Starc.

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Australia's Mitchell Starc delivers a ball during the third day of the second Test match against Pakistan in Karachi (AFP)

SCOREBOARD		
Australia 1 st Innings 556/9d		
PAKISTAN 1 st INNINGS		
A Shafique	run out (Swepson)	13
Imam-ul-Haq	c Cummins b Lyon	20
Azhar Ali	c Green b Starc	14
Babar Azam	c Khawaja b Swepson	36
Fawad Alam	lbw b Starc	0
M Rizwan	c Carey b Cummins	6
F Ashraf	lbw b Green	4
Sajid Khan	c Carey b Starc	5
Hasan Ali	run out (Labuschagne)	0
Nauman Ali	not out	20
S S Afridi	lbw b Swepson	19
Extras:	(b 6, lb 2, nb 3)	11
TOTAL:	(53 Ov, RR: 2.79)	148
Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-45, 3-60, 4-60, 5-76, 6-81, 7-97, 8-102, 9-118, 10-148		
Bowling: M Starc 13-5-29-3, Pat Cummins 13-2-39-1, N Lyon 9-5-13-1, Mitchell Swepson 9-1-32-2, C Green 8-1-23-1, M Labuschagne 1-0-4-0		
AUSTRALIA 2 nd INNINGS		
Usman Khawaja	not out	35
David Warner	c F Alam b H Ali	7
M Labuschagne	not out	37
Extras:	(lb 2)	2
TOTAL:	(17 Ov, RR: 4.76)	81/1
Fall of wickets: 1-20		
Bowling: S Shah Afridi 4-0-14-0, H Ali 4-0-14-1, S Khan 5-0-31-0, F Ashraf 3-0-13-0, N Ali 1-0-7-0		

was caught at long-off.

It all went wrong in the first over after lunch when Haq - who scored twin centuries in the opening Test - fell to a rash shot, lofting spinner Nathan Lyon to skipper Pat Cummins at mid-on.

Starc then had Azhar caught in the slips and next ball trapped Alam with a in-dipping yorker. He almost had a hat-trick when Mohammad Rizwan was beaten neck and crop, but didn't edge.

Rizwan didn't last long, however, as he edged Cummins for wicketkeeper Alex Carey to take a simple catch on six, and next over Cameron Green trapped Faheem Ashraf leg before for four.

Starc then had Sajid caught behind, taking 3-24 in 10 incisive overs as wickets fell in a cluster, in contrast to Australia's run-spree on a low bounce National Cricket Stadium pitch.

Earlier, opener Abdullah

Shafique was run out for 13 as Pakistan faltered at the start.

Shafique, who hit a brilliant unbeaten century in Rawalpindi, had made 13 of Pakistan's 26-run opening stand when he failed to beat Swepson's direct throw from point after being called for a sharp single.

Pakistan's batting coach Mohammad Yousuf admitted two run outs in the innings didn't help. "They got good momentum and after 20-25 overs they got reverse swing and their experienced bowlers made good use of that," said Yousuf.

Australia had resumed the third day on 505-8 as Cummins opted to bat on. Pakistan struck with the second ball of the day when fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi had Starc caught at cover by Azhar without adding to his overnight 28.

AFP

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Zverev crashes out at Indian Wells as Rublev advances

Indian Wells, United States - World number three Alexander Zverev crashed out of the ATP Indian Wells Masters on Sunday, stunned in his opening match 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (7/2) by 39th-ranked American Tommy Paul.

After dropping a first set in which Paul mercilessly punished his second serve, Germany's Zverev leveled the match with the only break of the second set in the 10th game.

After holding his serve to love three times and breaking Paul in the sixth game of the third Zverev appeared to be heading for victory.

But the German immediately served four double faults to hand the break back and Paul dominated the tiebreak with the same aggression he showed in the opening set.

"I played a really high level today," said Paul, who notched the biggest win of his career. "I knew how I wanted to play him, so I came out and executed it well. It got kind of crazy there in the second set, and I got lucky a little bit in the end, but I played well when it came down to the breaker, so I'm pretty happy with my performance."

Zverev was playing his first tournament since he was disqualified from the Mexico Open in Acapulco after losing his temper and repeatedly smashing his racket into the umpire's chair.

The 24-year-old Tokyo Olympic gold medalist was fined \$40,000 for verbal abuse and unsportsmanlike conduct. A further \$25,000 fine and an eight-week ban were suspended provided he does not incur a further code violation for 12 months.



Tommy Paul of the United States reacts to a tie breaker point in his win over Alexander Zverev of Germany

In other men's second-round action, seventh-seeded Andrey Rublev pushed his ATP winning streak to 10 matches, shaking off a slow start to beat Dominik Koepfer 7-5, 6-4.

Rublev, on the rise after titles in Marseille and Dubai this year, was 4-2 down before breaking 51st-ranked Koepfer twice to pocket the first set.

He finished with 32 winners against the German and won 11 of 15 points at the net to put the match away.

Sixth-seeded Italian Matteo Berrettini also advanced, holding on for a 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 victory over Danish qualifier Holger Rune.

But ninth-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime bowed out, falling 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (4/7),



Iga Swiatek of Poland celebrates her victory over Clara Tauson of Denmark during the ATP Indian Wells Masters (AFP)

6-3 to Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands.

Alexander Bublik, the 31st

seed, sent former world number one Andy Murray packing with a 7-6 (11/9), 6-3 win over the

three-time Grand Slam champion.

Bublik, coming off his first career ATP title at Montpellier in February, beat Murray for the first time in three career meetings.

Raducanu ousted

There was more disappointment for Murray's British compatriot Emma Raducanu, who was beaten in the third round by Croatian Petra Martić 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 7-5.

The 19-year-old Briton, who stormed to an unlikely US Open title as a qualifier last year, served for the match at 5-4 in the third.

But the 13th seed couldn't muster a match point and lost the next three games, a string of forehand errors spelling the end of her challenge in a final loss of serve.

It was the latest setback for Raducanu, who was ousted in the second round of the Australian Open in January and suffered a hip injury at Guadalajara last month.

Martić, ranked 79th in the world, notched her first win over a top-20 player in more than two years.

"I really wanted it so bad," Martić said. "I'm just happy I stayed calm when I was not playing so good. Because I think it was up and down for both sides."

Third-seeded Iga Swiatek of Poland, the highest-ranked player left in the women's field, struggled early but dominated late in a 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 6-1 victory over Denmark's Clara Tauson.

AFP



Mercedes' British F1 Driver Lewis Hamilton speaks at Expo Dubai 2020 in the Gulf emirate on March 14, 2022 (AFP)

F1 star Hamilton to change name to honour mother

Dubai, United Arab Emirates - Seven-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton will change his name to honour his mother Carmen Larbalestier, he revealed on Monday as he prepares to challenge for a record eighth world title.

The 37-year-old said he would add his mother's surname to his - most likely racing as Lewis Hamilton-Larbalestier - in a move that would take place "soon".

"My mum's name is Larbalestier and I'm just about to put that in my name," the Mercedes driver said in an on-stage interview at the Expo world fair in Dubai.

"Because I don't really fully understand the whole idea when people get married then the woman loses her name."

"And my mum, I really want her name to continue on with the Hamilton name."

Hamilton said he was "working on" the name-change but that it would not take place before this week's season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix. Larbalestier di-

vorced Lewis's father, Anthony Hamilton, when their son was young but he lived with his mother until 12.

The Briton, who was pipped to his eighth world title in controversial circumstances at last year's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, was non-committal about

My mum's name is Larbalestier and I'm just about to put that in my name

LEWIS HAMILTON

his future, saying he was taking it "one day at a time".

But Hamilton, who took a two-month break from social media before reappearing in February, added: "I've come back to fight for that eighth (title), that's what I'm here for."

AFP

Giants, Rangers, Thunders and Royals register D10 wins

Muscat - In the first match of Day 2 of the D10 League held at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground on Sunday, Ghubrah Giants clinched a comfortable victory. They beat Khuwair Warriors by 8 wickets.

Put to bat first after losing the toss, the Warriors managed to put a first innings score of 80/5 on the board. Danish Mohammad was their top scorer with 32 runs. Kashif Ali and Moshin Qureshi were both excellent with the ball for the Giants and picked up 2 wickets apiece.

But unfortunately for the side from Al Khuwair, their total proved nowhere near enough, thanks to Kashif Ali's swash-buckling knock. His 20-ball 44 effectively settled the contest and alongside double figure contributions from Pranav Mehta and Dean Foxcroft, took the Giants home with 17 balls to spare.

Ruwi Rangers vs Bousher Busters

In the second game of the day, D20 Champions Ruwi Rangers got off to a winning start. They beat Bousher Busters by 26 runs.



(L to R) Man of the Match awardees - Akshay Patel of Amerat, Kashif Ali of Ghubrah and Sanuth Ebrahim of Ruwi

The Busters elected to field first after winning the toss but were met with in form Rangers' top order. Sanuth Ebrahim looked brilliant for his 29-ball 44. On the other end, Khalid Kail made his way to the first half-century of the D10 league. He finished on 51 and the Rangers finished on 107/2 after 10 overs.

In response, the Busters lost wickets at regular intervals and fell well short in the end. Asif Khan and Mahmood Sufyan

were the only batters to cross 20 runs. Sanuth Ebrahim continued his memorable day on the field with a hat-trick in the second innings. Jitenkumar Ramanandi was also superb with the ball for the Rangers and ended the day with figures of 2/19.

Qurum Thunders vs Darsait Titans

Qurum Thunders beat Darsait Titans by 7 runs in the day's thrilling third tie. Electing to bat

first after winning the toss, the Thunders finished on a symmetric 88/8 after 10 overs. There were valuable contributions around the 18-run mark from multiple batsmen. Pranav Athawale top scored with a 15-ball 20. For the Titans, Mohammed Ayoob was phenomenal with the ball. He picked up 3 wickets in his 2 overs while giving away just 7 runs.

Chasing, the D20 finalists could only muster 81/4 in the sec-

ond innings. Although the Titans had wickets in hand throughout the run chase, the high asking rate proved decisive. Khurram Khan led the scoring with 26-ball 36. Ubaid Ullah was the other batter to reach double figures.

Amerat Royals vs Azaiba XI

Amerat Royals ended the day's proceedings with a comprehensive 58-run victory over Azaiba XI. Batting first after winning the toss, the Royals posted a colossal first innings total of 139/3. Akshaykumar Patel led the charge with a destructive 26-ball 57. His opening partner Pratik Athavale also looked in fine form for his 30 runs, as did Rafi Ullah for his unbeaten 28.

In response, the Azaiba XI could only accumulate 81 runs in their 10 overs. Arsalan Bashir played a magnificent hand with an unbeaten 62 - D10's highest individual score so far. But ultimately, the game was decided in the first innings. Hemalkumar Tandel and Vinay Khandelwal picked up 2 wickets each for the Royals.

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World Sailing organises Paralympic development programme in Mussanah

The programme has launched careers of several top para sailors around the world

Muscat: World Sailing kicked off its 2022 Paralympic Development Programme with its first event ever to be held in Oman. Para sailors and coaches have come together at the Mussanah Barceló resort, home of Oman Sail, for an extensive schedule on and off the water.

Sessions are ranging from boat handling and racing skills, to rules and regatta management, with specific opportunities for coaches to develop their high performance para sailing expertise.

"We're excited to be in Oman for the very first time since launching our Paralympic Development Programme in 2017," said Catherine Duncan, Training & Development Executive at World Sailing.

"We've seen over 210 sailors and coaches from 39 countries spanning six continents come through our programme - now we're breaking brand new ground in Oman."

World Sailing's Paralympic Development Programme has launched the careers of several top para sailors now competing at World Championship level



Workshops on boat handling and racing skills, to rules and regatta management, are being held during the programme in Mussanah

and has been fundamental to launching and enhancing performance para sailing programmes around the world.

Oman in spotlight

"Oman Sail has always prioritised inclusion, diversity and equality within the sport and the launch of Oman Sail's para sailing programme SailFree in 2019 - the first of its kind in the region - is a major step forward in the expansion of the sport, allowing

us to create new opportunities within para sailing," said Khamis al Anbouri, Oman Sail Commercial Director and Head of SailFree.

"Now, thanks to World Sailing's Paralympic Development Programme, we have a valuable platform to further our ambitions to be a leader in para sailing and compete at the highest level by empowering athletes, teams and coaches, and enhancing our own capability to host regattas.



Thanks to the programme, we have a valuable platform to further our ambitions to be a leader in para sailing and compete at the highest level

KHAMIS AL ANBOURI

World Sailing's Paralympic Development Programme in Oman. "When I began sailing, it was a completely new thing to do, but what I liked most about it is that it gives me motivation and self-challenge as well as unlocking opportunities to reach new horizons. I have learned a lot from the current sessions in Mussanah, especially that they are designed to give us enriching doses to develop and excel," he said.

2022 crucial year for Paralympic sailing

Oman is the launchpad for a busy 2022 of World Sailing Paralympic Development Programmes. Next stop USA in June, Singapore in July, followed by Italy and South Africa - then to Japan ahead of the Para World Sailing Championships in Hiroshima on October 20-23 and back to Oman before the RS Venture SCS Para Sailing World Championship November 23-27.

"We have clear evidence that our Paralympic Development Programmes are playing a central role in the growth of para sailing around the world," explained David Graham, CEO of World Sailing.

"Over the past five years, the number of nations with para sailors participating in international competitions has increased by 30% - this is exciting in this crucial year for the reinstatement of para sailing in the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games."

"Oman's Vision 2040 has made these values a core objective throughout our society, so we are proud to be focusing on developing a team capable of representing the nation around the world.

"We are hopeful that para sailing will be reinstated to the Paralympics to give our athletes the chance to shine on the grandest stage of all."

Hassan al Lawati, who started his first sailing experience last year with the SailFree programme, is now taking part in

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