

P10

EL SHAARAWY
LATE STRIKE
DENTS NAPOLI
TITLE HOPES

P15

YELLEN TO CALL
FOR INCREASED
ECONOMIC PRESSURE
ON RUSSIA

P19

WHERE
PARIS HIDES
SOME OF ITS
BEST ART

MUSCAT

TWO STUDENTS
DIE IN NIZWA

Two college students died at their accommodation in the Wilayat of Nizwa on Tuesday evening, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has announced. The initial investigation by the police indicates that they were messing up with an object that seemed like an old projectile they came across in a mountainous area before it exploded. The ROP has cautioned against messing up with unknown objects, calling on the public to report any such objects to the nearest police station or call the Police Operations Centre.

ADEN

NEW LEADERS TAKE
OFFICE IN YEMEN

Yemen's new leaders took a ceremonial oath of office under tight security on Tuesday, completing a major shake-up aimed at ending seven years of war. The newly formed, eight-man leadership council performed a largely symbolic swearing-in in Aden witnessed by members of a parliament elected in 2003, as hundreds of soldiers patrolled the southern city, a government official said.

DETAILS ON P6

18

RAMADHAN
1443 AH

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr
04:23 AM

Dhuhr
12:11 PM

Asr
03:38 PM

Maghrib
06:35 PM

Isha
07:48 PM

INSIDE

SIX KILLED IN BLASTS
AT SCHOOL IN KABUL

P6

IRAQ 'GREEN BELT' NEGLECTED
IN FALTERING CLIMATE FIGHT

P9

AN ARCHITECTURAL MARVEL



The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is one of the largest mosque in the Sultanate of Oman, and it is an architectural and artistic marvel which reflects the beauty of Islamic, Oriental and Omani art. – ONA

New 'phase' of war as
Russia turns to east

KRAMATORSK: Moscow launched dozens of air strikes across eastern Ukraine overnight, its defence ministry said on Tuesday, with Russia's top diplomat acknowledging "another phase" of the conflict was beginning as fighting raged in the Donbas region.

Russia's defence ministry said that "high-precision air-based missiles" had hit 13 Ukrainian positions in parts of the Donbas while other air strikes "hit 60 military assets", including in towns close to the eastern frontline.

Ukraine's armed forces also confirmed that fighting had increased throughout the east, just hours after President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia had kicked off the widely anticipated offensive in Ukraine's industrial heartland.

"The Russian forces intensified offensive operations



Ukrainian soldiers stand next to their armoured personnel carrier in Izyum district, Kharkiv region. – AFP

along the entire line of contact", the general staff of Ukraine's armed forces said in a report published early on Tuesday.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov appeared to acknowledge the new offensive during an interview with a leading Indian media outlet.

SEE ALSO P7

Economy set to grow by
3.5% in next two years

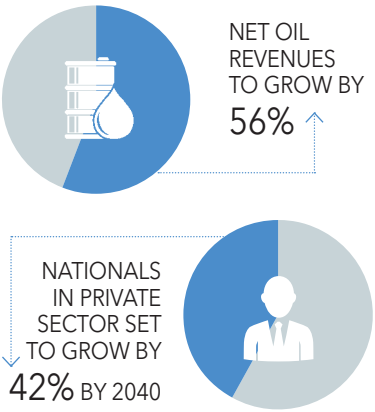
RAHMA AL KALBANIYAH

MUSCAT: The Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) has revised its expectations about the growth of the Sultanate of Oman's economy to at least 3.5 per cent over the next two years.

In a recent report, the AMF said that the positive outlook of Oman's economy is the result of the expected rise in the government revenues, the adoption of a set of packages by the government to support economic recovery and the Oman Vision 2040, which targets to enhance economic diversification, improve the business environment and encourage the private sector.

The report said that Oman's net oil revenues are expected to grow by 56 per cent this year compared to the estimated prices of the 2022 budget.

GROWTH



Economic growth, according to the AMF's expectations, will be supported by the government's ongoing efforts to leverage output levels of five key economic sectors that are focused on the economic diversification strategy within the framework of the Oman Vision 2040.

Take benefit of
free trade pacts

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman is an ideal place to live, invest and work, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said as it unveiled an investor guide.

The guide also urges investors to take benefit of the Sultanate of Oman's Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with various countries, including the United States, the European Union and Singapore.

The FTAs with the European Union exempts industrial goods exported from GCC countries from custom duties and the remaining percentage of goods will be subjected to original customs duty for only five years, following which they will be allowed to enter without any customs duty.

TURN TO P5

Priority to protect desert biodiversity in Oman

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 19

An environmental activist in the Sultanate of Oman is trying to preserve Omani deserts as worthy of protection because they are full of biodiversity.

The activist Erica Cuellar Soto, a conservationist, said: "The arid regions of the Sultanate of Oman need just as much attention as any other natural space."

The activist teaches students in the country how to assess biodiversity in the Middle East. The Sultanate of Oman is one of the



most biodiversity-rich countries in Western Asia, with mountain ranges, valleys, plains, deserts, rocky hills and coastal areas.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION
The Sultanate of Oman enjoys a geographical location which makes it an ideal home to various unique flora and fauna. Oman attracts millions of tourists every year and the government is fully involved in raising awareness of its natural wonders and ensuring the protection of its rich biodiversity. It must strive to ensure that people who visit the country

understand the importance of the environment and preserve its natural diversity.

"I think this area deserves attention", Soto said. "It is a very rich area, and we should not ignore it."

Protecting wildlife and their natural habitats and preserving biodiversity in the Sultanate of Oman is critical. The government has included them in its priority development plan, as the erosion and depletion of natural resources will lead to great losses and will endanger the diversity of the country.

TURN TO P5



ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER RECEIVES HUNGARIAN ENVOY



MUSCAT: Gen Sultan Mohammed al Numanj, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Tuesday Tibor Szatmari, Ambassador of Hungary to the Sultanate of Oman. The two sides reviewed areas of cooperation and means of enhancing them to serve the joint interests. They also discussed several matters of common interest. – ONA

RAFO personnel feted for distinguished service



KHASAB/MUSANNAH: Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), on Tuesday honoured a number of personnel affiliated to the Khasab Air Base with certificates of excellence in recognition of their distinguished service.

RAFO commander

congratulated the personnel on their well-deserved honour urging them to keep up their excellent performance and wishing them more success in the future.

On the sidelines of the honouring ceremony, the commander of RAFO gave away medals of long service and good conduct to a number of officers,

commissioned officers and personnel of Khasab Air Base in recognition of their sincere efforts and perseverance in carrying out their sacred duties.

Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri also honoured a number of personnel affiliated to Al Musannah Air Base with certificates of excellence in recognition of their distinguished

service, at Al Musannah Air Base.

The commander of RAFO conferred medals of long service and good conduct on a number of officers, commissioned officers and personnel of Al Musannah Air Base.

This comes within the context of a programme organised by the command of RAFO to honour its affiliates. — ONA

Tender

مدائن
madayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
4/2022/PEIE/HQ-4	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR TECHNO-ECONOMIC STUDY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF WATER DESALINATION PLANT, HEALTHCARE CENTER & HOTEL AT SUR INDUSTRIAL CITY	01-05-2022	26-05-2022	CONSULTANCY OFFICES	SECOND AND ABOVE	25

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@ita.gov.om and +968 24402200.

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening.

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

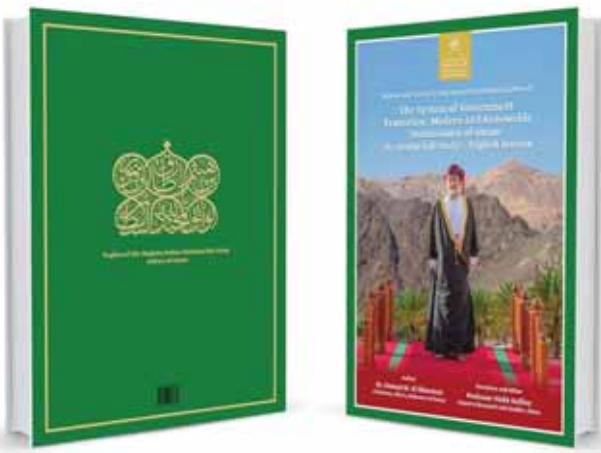
madayn.om
@madaynoman
in f y t v

NRAA publishes English version of
The System of Government Transition

MUSCAT: The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) has issued the English version of the book titled ‘The System of Government Transition: Modern and Renewable Renaissance of Oman (An Analytical Study)’. The issue comes as part of the 26th volume of the Research and Survey in National and International Archives series.

The book with 614 pages includes 16 chapters divided into two main themes. The first theme is on the organisation of mechanisms for the transfer of power throughout history. The second theme highlights the organisation of the state’s administration and its structure, the establishment of a methodology of operation, as well as documents that support research from the NRAA archives.

The book sheds light on



The book with 614 pages includes 16 chapters divided into two main themes. The first theme is on the organisation of mechanisms for the transfer of power throughout history

mechanism for the transfer of power in the Sultanate of Oman. It also touches on the Basic Law of the State of 2021, ways of modernising legal legislation and organising the State’s Administrative Apparatus, restructuring the

government, the decision-making process, power transfer stability regulations and mandates for the Crown Prince in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the legal organisation of the Council of Oman and the Shura Council

for 2021.

The book also spotlights Oman Vision 2040 and its economic and social outcomes, which covers citizenship and the rights of women and children.

This publication comes within the framework of the NRAA’s vision in preserving the ancient Omani history and in line with its strategic objectives of encouraging scientific research in various fields of civilisation.

The book caps an analytical study which is supported by scientific evidence, as well as various local and international media resources in multiple forms, particularly newspapers and journals.

The NRAA highlights the upcoming accomplishments by documenting them so they live on in the memory of current and future generations coupled with optimism for a bright future.

OCO distributes
27,900 iftar
kits in Yemen

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

As many as 27,900 iftar kits were distributed in Al Mahra Governorate of Yemen and its adjacent areas by the Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO), which included 1,500 parcels for Yemeni residents residing in the Wilayat of Al Mazyouna, Dhofar Governorate, a gesture of the Sultanate of Oman’s compassion and bonhomie in the holy month.

Nearly 100 trucks and trailers carried the food to the needy people in these areas. These kits contain rice, dates, sugar, flour, cooking oil, pasta and tea, sufficient for a family for the whole month, according to the OCO representatives.

“We distributed 27,900 food parcels in Al Mahra Governorate of Yemen and Al Mazyouna of Oman to the needy Yemeni families, and we are still continuing to distribute in other countries as well,” said Ahmed al Hattali, Representative of OCO involved in various missions abroad.

In terms of charity at home, the OCO teams distributed 35,000 coupons out of 45,000 meant for domestic distribution since the beginning of the holy month.

“We distributed 35,000 food coupons to needy families in Oman. Each coupon allows the families to procure food items and other essentials for the whole family for a month,” adds al Hattali.

“Due to the government’s support and donations from the people of the Sultanate of Oman, the charities happened smoothly. The OCO started receiving

These kits contain rice, dates, sugar, flour, cooking oil, pasta and tea, sufficient for a family for the whole month

donations for the Ramadhan Iftar programme for 2022 early this month,” he said.

There is a provision to channelise all donations through the official portal of the OCO that oversees all local and international fundraising as well as Zakat contributions through the OCO website www.donate.om.

OCO supports a wide range of causes worldwide including Covid-19 aid, Iftar, buying Ramadhan provisions, Zakat Al Fitr, Eid clothing, orphan care, support to families, donation to any mosque, medical, social welfare, student support, international relief in Syria and Yemen and environmental support etc.

“OCO website provides options for donating in a more secure, transparent and easy-to-use way. We urge all, including companies, to extend a helping hand to needy people in our community,” he

added.

The website serves nearly 50 charitable organisations, including Dar al Atta’a, Oman Association for the Disabled, Environment Society, the Association of the Welfare of the Handicapped, Al Noor Association for the Blind, the International Islamic Charitable Trust, Awqaf, the Association of Early Intervention for Children with Special Needs, National Cancer Association, Oman Hereditary Blood Disorder Association, Al Rahma Charity, House of Funds and Zakah, Omani Association for Elderly Friends, Oman Diabetes Association, Omani Bahjah Orphan Society and Oman Charity Organisation and the like.



MINISTRY MARKS WORLD HERITAGE DAY

THERE ARE 29,860 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND 3,404 CASTLES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism marked World Heritage Day on Monday, underlining the importance of protecting human civilisation.

According to the ministry, there are 29,860 archaeological sites, 3,404 castles, forts and historical monuments in the Sultanate of Oman, and five sites registered in the World Heritage List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

The decision to mark the World Heritage Day was based on the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) proposal, which the General Assembly officially approved of UNESCO in 1983.

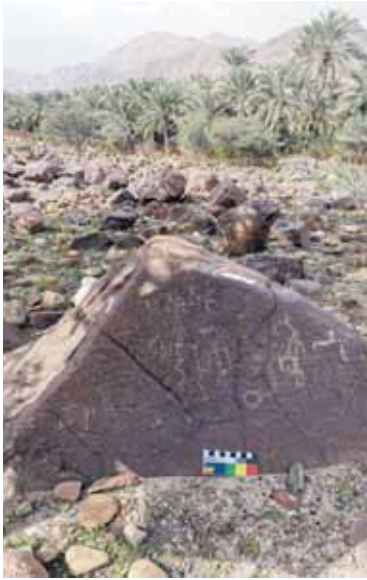
This year's celebration was under the theme 'Heritage and Climate' in recognition of the role of climate change in the world and its impact on cultural and natural heritage, and it is an invitation to countries around the world to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to preserve this global heritage.

On the occasion, the ministry highlighted the most important discoveries of recent times – the old health quarantine chambers that are found in several governorates of the country.

"Omanis were aware of the importance of sanitary isolation for patients infected with contagious diseases so that it does not spread among the population. Nearly 81 quarantine chambers have been documented until the end of 2021, in cooperation with the offices of the walis," the ministry said.

These quarantine chambers are found in caves or specially constructed buildings - the most prominent landmark is in the Wilayat of Ibra in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate. It is a rectangular building with three rooms, built of plaster and gravel, over 100 square metres.

In cooperation with a joint mission from Sultan Qaboos University and the University of Pisa, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has discovered a



sophisticated settlement that dates back more than 4,000 years and includes several buildings and cemeteries.

The results of the archaeological excavation showed that the site was inhabited for the first time during the Early Bronze Age.

The Salut Fort in Bisya, Bahla, is one of the most important archaeological sites in Oman, and it is situated on the ancient copper trade linked to its contemporary sites in Bat, Al Khashbah, Ras al Hadd and other locations.

The Salut Fort was built likely in 1300 BC and consists of rooms, buildings made of mud bricks, and other landmarks.

The Musandam Governorate is characterised by a unique landscape, mountains and coastline. Studies have documented rock art sites in the Musandam Governorate.

Based on different settlement patterns, rocks have been found with paintings that demonstrate the use of rock art to preserve property by the mountain people.

These rock art paintings showed that the local population used them as a guide while taking animals to grazing grounds.

Another heritage site is that of the shipwreck in the waters of Mirbat in the Dhofar Governorate.

The people of the Wilayat of Mirbat rescued the passengers of the ship and took them to the coast. Most of the passengers were brought safely to the shores before the fire broke out in most parts of the ship, which was in flames all that night before it sank 300 yards from the beach.



Preparations for Muscat Marathon under way

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 19

The Al Mouj Muscat Marathon 2022, pioneers of marathon running in Oman, are all set for the biggest participative sporting event this year.

Slated to be flagged off at the leading lifestyle destination, Al Mouj Muscat on November 11 and 12, 2022, the event has been a symbol of pride and prestige for the country. The health and fitness impact that this event will have on the city is unrivaled.

The participants of Al Mouj Muscat Marathon will make their race more meaningful by dedicating it to a cause greater than themselves, as part of the proceeds from the 5km Run category will be going towards non-profit organisations. The race is associated with two charities; Environment Society of Oman (ESO) and Oman



Diabetes Association (ODA). The aim is to make a positive impact on the community by raising awareness of the

need to care for the natural environment and community health. Al Mouj Muscat has been encouraging a healthier and more active lifestyle by providing ample space to exercise within its borders as well as hosting events such as the Al Mouj Muscat Marathon, which is an important step towards helping people's health and well-being of the nation, similar to the ethos of ODA. Al Mouj Muscat continually seeks to deliver significant sustainable, social, environmental and economic impact for the Sultanate of Oman. It is continually working towards finding viable ways to decrease resource use, emissions and pollution, as well as measures to protect coastal and maritime biodiversity. Practical measures are deployed to protect and conserve the environment throughout the design, construction and

operational phases of the destination, in line with ESO's objectives.

"Sport has the power to unite the community towards a collective goal. We are incredibly proud to support just some of the very good causes in operation within the nation and use Oman's most iconic sporting event to raise awareness of the important programmes underway to maintain Oman's natural heritage and make a long-term positive contribution to creating opportunities for the well-being of the communities across the country," says Sayyid Aymen al Busaidi, Vice-Chairman of Sabco Group.

Registration is still open for the 5km and 10km runs, as well as the half marathon and full marathon.

For more information and to register, one can visit www.muscatmarathon.om.

CAMPAIGN VEHICLES
BENTLEY

فايرเทรด أوتو
Fairtrade Auto

Date of the Campaign : 20/04/2022.
Campaign type : Safety.
Campaign section : Software problem.

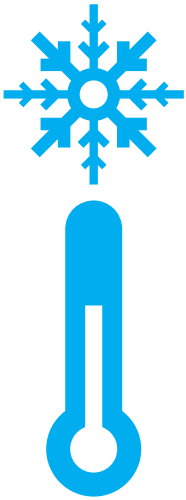
The number of affected vehicle	VIN Number	The year of production	Vehicle model
47 Vehicle	From SCBCA1ZG9JC069224 To: CBCF1ZG8MC088207	2018 – 2021	Continental GT & Continental Convertible

Description : In all affected vehicles, there is a glitch in the programming of the front seat system.

Actions : An update must be made in the programming of the front seat system, in all affected vehicles.

Contact Dealer : Service Center - Phone - 22579822 during the office working hours.

COLD OR HOT WATER AFTER FASTING?



SOME HAVE THE FALSE NOTION THAT DRINKING COLD WATER IMMEDIATELY AFTER FASTING WOULD HELP THEIR BODY GET REHYDRATED



IT IS BETTER TO DRINK LUKEWARM WATER DURING IFTAR SO THAT WE CAN AVOID DIGESTIVE PROBLEMS AND HEALTH COMPLICATIONS

AFRAH
AL BALUSHI

MANY FASTING

people drink large amounts of cold water to quench their thirst in Ramadhan when they hear the call of prayer, especially during summer when the temperature is high. Unfortunately, they have a false notion that drinking cold water immediately after fasting would help their body get rehydrated.

Drinking cold water after long hours of fasting has its side effects. A human body contains 60 to 70 per cent of water. When it is deficient in water, it negatively affects cells and tissues, so it is necessary to fill the gap after iftar until the time of Suhoor.

Lack of water in the body also causes many health problems, such as constipation, headache, dizziness, fatigue and dry and cracked skin. The risk may reach the level of complications such as problems in the kidney and convulsion.

We need to understand how drinking cold water damages the digestive process and causes many health problems. Among the harms of drinking cold water is exposing the digestion process to difficulty due to the contraction of the stomach muscles, which leads to the constriction of the capillaries, thus not benefiting from the nutrients, vitamins and minerals that are found in foods, which makes the digestion process more difficult and slow, and the digestive system becomes unable to digest food properly.

Therefore, it is better to start drinking lukewarm water during iftar so that we do not face these problems and complications.

BEST FOR DIGESTION

Some people who follow the diet regime drink cold water, thinking that it is the most effective way for weight loss, as it helps burn fat and calories. It is okay to drink water to break the fast but not cold water immediately after the fast. Generally, warm water is the best for digestion and for getting rid of toxins in the body.

A tweet from the official account of the Ministry of Health indicated that drinking cold water directly during iftar reduces the movement of blood to the stomach and intestines, which leads the body to suffer from digestive problems.

It causes colic issues, contractions, indigestion,

obesity and frequent acidity after iftar. Therefore, it is recommended to start with lukewarm water kept at room temperature and then drink moderately cold water to quench thirst.

Scientific website 'Science ABC' suggests no fixed harm in drinking cold water, except that it exposes the digestion process to difficulty due to the contraction of the stomach muscles.

Medical studies also agree that drinking a lot of water, whether cold or warm, helps detox the body, facilitates digestion and prevents constipation.

'Science ABC' published facts and results of studies done on some people to investigate the effects of thirst that afflicted them and the impact of cold water they drank.

Studies showed that while drinking 16 degrees Celsius normal water, which is the temperature of tap water in normal conditions, stopped sweating in a few minutes. (It should be noted that this does not apply to the temperature of tap water in hot countries, where it often reaches 40 degrees).

From this simple experiment, the researchers concluded that drinking water at a temperature of 16 degrees Celsius is best suited for those who exerted a great deal of effort and sweated heavily, and the body temperature rose due to the effort or heat.

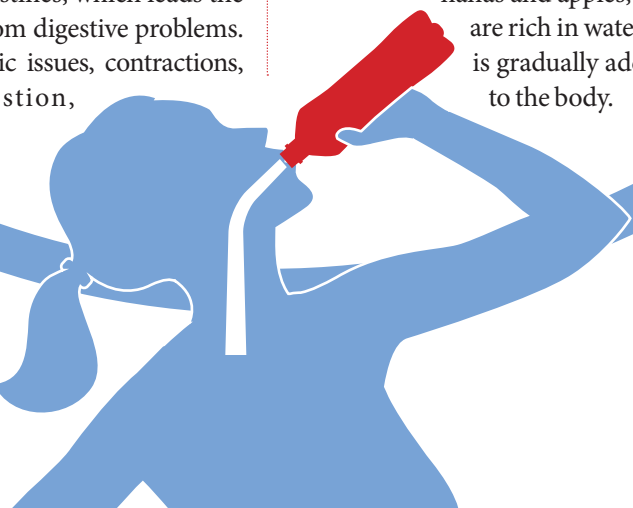
The body's water needs during fasting hours can be compensated at a rate of 10 to 12 cups per day to enhance immunity and prevent dehydration. Also, to avoid feeling thirsty, try to delay Suhoor, as you will allow your body to prepare for fasting again, so let go of the habit of eating Suhoor before bed because you will not be hungry, and therefore, you will eat extra calories.

What is more, do not drink water only because drinking water suddenly turns the body automatically into urine. Therefore, the body does not benefit much from this hasty process of drinking many cups of water at one time. As a result, you will get thirsty quickly and lose your morning sleep. So the best way to avoid this is to eat food rich in water, such as vegetables and fruits, especially tomatoes, bananas and apples, all of which are rich in water, which is gradually added to the body.

Drinking cold water after long hours of fasting has its side effects. A human body contains

60 to 70% of water.

When it is deficient in water, it negatively affects cells and tissues, so it is necessary to fill the gap after iftar until the time of Suhoor





Need to protect Oman’s desert biodiversity

FROM P1
The local people believe that the beauty of nature must be preserved because it is a source of income for the country, and gives tourists an opportunity to discover and enjoy the unique charming nature. However, biodiversity in the desert environment in the Sultanate of Oman is under tremendous pressure due to the investment in oil fields, industry and to some extent, tourism.

The Sultanate of Oman is the first Arab country to establish the Ministry of Environment (now Environment Authority), which led to the development of a comprehensive law to protect the environment. It is also the first country to set up an international award in the field of environment, the Sultan Qaboos Award for Environmental Preservation.

In 2017, French newspaper ‘Le Monde’ ranked the Sultanate of Oman as the best tourist destination, and the World Economic Forum ranked it as the fourth-best tourist destination in the world. UN Environment agency works closely with the country’s Environment Authority to strengthen environmental, social and economic links and meet the challenge of integrated sustainable development.

The UN Environment agency also seeks to strengthen strategic partnerships with local authorities, civil society, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders to conserve unique biodiversity.

The Sultanate of Oman is responsible for managing natural resources and linking the environmental, social and economic dimensions to achieve sustainable development goals.



Shura panel discusses investment legislation

MUSCAT: The Economic and Financial Committee of Majlis Ash-Shura held its 8th regular meeting of the third annual session (2021-2022), on Tuesday. The committee discussed a number of expressed desires including amending the legislations and revising the procedures related to investment. The expressed desire derives

its importance from the fact that the business environment in Oman is facing many challenges pertaining to legislation, funding and procedures. The committee also discussed an expressed desire for setting a limit for expatriates’ remittances and conducting a study to measure the negative impact of remittances on the national economy.

Take advantage of free trade pacts

FROM P1
The agreement with the United States provides opportunities for investors from both countries to invest because of the liberalised sectors, which allow 100 per cent ownership except for that mentioned in the negative list. It allows foreign investors to establish projects in the Sultanate of Oman to benefit from the advantages of the agreement regarding exemption from customs duties on products exported to the United States. Among other benefits, under the Foreign Capital Investment Law an investor can obtain 100 per cent ownership, as the Investment Services Centre (ISC) develops the business environment and facilitates the establishment of various

investment projects. Through the Public-Private Partnership Law, the government seeks to encourage investment and the initiatives of the private sector in improving the framework of public-private partnerships in the Sultanate of Oman, which are found more commonly in the form of projects for independent energy and water as well as independent energy projects. Public-Private Partnership Law gives investors an opportunity to submit the Idea of a partnership proton to the relevant authorities in the form of an initial feasibility study consistent with the Sultanate of Oman’s strategy and development plan so that it has an economic or social return.

Omani research attracts critical acclaim

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

An Omani research on management strategies for supply risk dependencies has gained critical acclaim from the scholars as well as research analysts alike. The extensive research study titled ‘Management Strategies for Supply Risk Dependencies: Empirical Evidence from the Gulf Region’ by principal investigator Dr Zainab al Balushi, Head of Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation Unit, SQU, aims at creating a conceptual model for managing supply risk dependencies in regional supply networks. Dr Zainab’s work is one of the research studies that was recognised with ‘National Research Award’ at the 8th National Research Award organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation which awarded 13 research projects in various innovative fields of national interest and won the Cultural, Social and Basic Sciences field in the PhD category. “Awards do not only acknowledge success, as a researcher, winning the National Research Award boost my morale and motivation to conduct more of high quality research studies that are related to addresses



Dr. Zainab Al Balushi

contemporary issues related to our society and economy,” Dr Zainab, who is also an Assistant Professor of Logistics and Supply Chain Management at SQU, said. “The award acknowledges my contribution which inspires me to be more productive with pride and confidence. It has broadened my connections with other scholars, and increased research visibility and impact,” adds Dr Zainab. Grounded on resource dependency theory (RDT), the research conceptualised the management of supply risk as buffering and bridging strategies that enable organisations to redefine their supply network to cope with supply risk and as a three-stage transformation mechanism. She stated that four supply failure case studies from the aluminium and the oil and gas industries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region inductively provided empirical insights for a

revised conceptual framing. This research was published in International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management. It was conducted by Dr Zainab al Balushi and Dr Christopher M Durugbo. She said coronavirus outbreaks in 2003, 2012 and 2020, Cyclone Gonu in 2007 and Phet in 2010, the war against terrorism in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, and ‘tit for tat’ incidents due to political tensions with Iran, are major incidents that have drawn attention to the importance of risk management in supply networks. These incidents are characterised by supply risk with consequences that tend to ripple, propagate or cascade through supply chains. As a sector, logistics plays a vital role in Oman’s contemporary economy and considered as a critical pillar for attaining Oman Vision 2040. It is critical to increasing inward investment, non-oil exports and the nation’s competitiveness. She added that Oman’s strategic objectives over the past few years focused on easing congestion and enhancing capacity by investing in infrastructure and technology. Yet, managing logistics and the chain of supplies creates mutual dependence between organisations that might go beyond a single country boundary.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDERS



The Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C (invites following tenders:

Tender No	Description	Tender Price (R.O)	Grade	Last Date of Buying	Last Date of Submission
Tanweer - 07/2022	Shifting the Feeders from the Existing 11 KV Switchgear at Old Power Station & RO Plant to Ras Hilf Primary Substation at Ras Hilf in Wilayat Masirah - AL-Sharqiah Government	50/=	“C” and above	01/05/2022	17/05/2022
Tanweer - 08/2022	Supply & Delivery of Spare Parts for Caterpillar Engines for Tanweer Power Stations	50/=	Specialist Companies	24/04/2022	09/05/2022
Tanweer - 09/2022	Reinforcement work by installing a New 1000 KVA GMT S/S in feeder No.3 at Wilayat Haima- Al Wusta Governorate	50/=	“C” and above	01/05/2022	17/05/2022

The Conditions:

- 1- Collection of Tender:** Interested and Specialized Companies and Establishments registered with Tender Board (valid certificate), Tanweer and (Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) except for tender no. (Tanweer-08/2022)) may obtain the Tender documents from Procurement & Contracts Department, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. The fees for the tenders shall be deposited on Tanweer account 0423010783090041 – Bank Muscat and for more information please contact via email address i.e. tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om, or call us on phone number: 24250824.
- 2- Bank Guarantee:** The Tenderer should enclose original bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC (Tanweer).
- 3- Offers Submission:**
 - A-** Original bids along Cover letter shall be placed by bidders inside the red waxed Tender’s envelopes as communicated to bidders by Tanweer. Such documents must be serialized according to the numbers of the tender items.
 - B-** Tender bids shall be provided separately on a CD Rooms, along with original cover letters in each envelop. Bids and cover letters shall bear the bidder’s official seal and must be signed in either blue or red ink, but not black. A true soft copy of the bids shall be provided on a CD in an inner envelope marked “Copy”. Bids who do not comply with these requirements will be overlooked.
 - C-** Bidders shall write the following details on the cover of CD:
 - Tender name and number.
 - Tenders to be Addressed to the **Chairman of Minor Tender Committee**, Tanweer.
 - Prequalification / Technical Proposal / Commercial Proposal / Bid Bond.
- 4- Submission Location:** The Completed bids in CD should be deposited in the Tender Box at Tanweer Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 12:00 PM on the last date of submission.
- 5- Tender Price (R.O):** 5% VAT is inclusive.
- 6- Tanweer without mentioning the reason is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender and not bond to refund tender purchase fees if you are not qualified to participate the tender.**

For more information please call: 80077787



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One arrested for murder: ROP



MUSCAT: Within the framework of joint cooperation between the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), the Directorate General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigation has arrested a person of Arab nationality, wanted in his country, on charges of murder and attempted murder. Legal procedures have been initiated against him.

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDERS NOTICE

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
197/2022/MAFWR/HQ-20	Supply & installation of pumps and pipeline for supporting AL-Abtary Falaj's in Wilayat Nakhal at South AL-Batinah Governorate.	25/-	Fourth	Monday 9/5/2022	Monday 30/5/2022
198/2022/MAFWR/HQ-21	Drilling (2) bore wells, supply & installation of pumps and pipeline for supporting AL-Khatom Falaj's in Wilayat Nakhal at South AL-Batinah Governorate.	25/-	Fourth	Monday 9/5/2022	Monday 30/5/2022
199/2022/MAFWR/HQ-22	Supply of Veterinary Vaccines for the year 2022	25/-	Specialized	Monday 9/5/2022	Monday 30/5/2022

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources. And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.
- Note:** Bid Submission will be online only. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



6 killed in school blasts in Afghan capital

KABUL: At least six people were killed and 24 wounded on Tuesday by two bomb blasts that struck a boys' school in Hazara neighbourhood of the Afghan capital, police and hospital staff said.

The number of attacks in the country has significantly declined since the Taliban ousted the US-backed Afghan government in August, but the IS group has claimed several attacks since then.

Several bodies were strewn outside the gate of a school in the densely populated Dasht-e-Barchi neighbourhood in Kabul, alongside patches of blood, burnt books and school bags, according to images posted on social media.

"We were leaving school and had just stepped out from the rear gate when the explosion occurred," Ali Jan, a student who was wounded in the first blast, said at a hospital in the area where the blasts occurred.

The second blast took place as rescuers arrived to ferry victims from the first explosion to hospitals.

"Some of our friends have lost hands, while some were covered in blood," said Saeed Rahmatullah Haidari, a student at the school. "There were pieces of broken glass and pools of blood... my whole body was shaking."

Outside a hospital treating the wounded, Taliban fighters beat back the families of students who had gathered searching for



Relatives of victims arrive to search for their loved ones outside a hospital in Kabul after two bomb blasts rocked a boys' school in a Hazara neighbourhood killing at least 6 people. — AFP

information.

Women cried out as they scanned through pictures of victims posted on nearby walls by

medics.

Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadran said that the attack outside the Abdul Rahim Shahid school

was caused by two improvised explosive devices, killing six people.

A grenade was also thrown at

a nearby English language centre in the same area, wounding one person, he later said.

Two hospitals said they were

IS has claimed some of the deadliest attacks in Afghanistan in recent years

treating 24 wounded patients.

The Dasht-e-Barchi neighbourhood is mainly home to the Hazara community and has been previously targeted by the IS group.

The Hazara community, which makes up between 10 and 20 per cent of the country's 38 million people, has long been the target of mass-casualty attacks, some blamed on the Taliban during their 20-year insurgency.

Since seizing power, the Taliban have regularly carried out raids on suspected IS hideouts, mainly in the eastern Nangarhar province.

Taliban officials insist their forces have defeated IS, but analysts say the group is a key security challenge.

IS has claimed some of the deadliest attacks in Afghanistan in recent years.

In May last year at least 85 people — mainly girl students — were killed and about 300 wounded when three bombs exploded near their school in Dasht-e-Barchi.

— AFP

Hamas target fired in Gaza after rocket attack

GAZA CITY/TEL AVIV: Israel fired on a target in the Gaza Strip, in response to a rocket attack, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said early on Tuesday. The foreign minister of Israel, Yair Lapid, is cutting his holiday in Spain short due to the rising tensions, and will be back in Israel by the evening, the Foreign Ministry reported on Tuesday

"In response to the launch from Gaza into Israel, we just targeted a Hamas weapons manufacturing site in Gaza," the IDF said in a tweet. "The activist organisation Hamas is responsible for all terror activity emanating from the Gaza Strip."

Israel sees Hamas as responsible for any firing from the Gaza Strip.

On Monday, Israel's Iron Dome defence system intercepted a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip towards Israel, the first such attack in 2022.

In recent days, Palestinians have clashed with Israeli security forces on the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary site in Jerusalem. There were numerous injuries. The clashes further intensified tensions after violence in recent weeks.



Flames and smoke rise during Israeli air strikes in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

The Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary is under an administration, while Israel is responsible for security. According to an agreement with the authorities, Jews are allowed to visit the site, but not to pray there. Palestinians accuse Israel of trying to expand the rights of observant Jews at the holy site.

A Hamas spokesperson said Israel's air strike in Gaza had "failed." The facility was empty and no one was injured, he said. He spoke of a "failed attempt to stop the Palestinian people from resisting the occupation and defending Jerusalem and the Al Aqsa Mosque." — dpa

New leaders take office in Yemen

ADEN: Yemen's new leaders took a ceremonial oath of office under tight security on Tuesday, completing a major shake-up aimed at ending seven years of war with Ansar Allah fighters.

The newly formed, eight-man leadership council performed a largely symbolic swearing-in in Aden in front of members of a parliament elected in 2003, as hundreds of soldiers patrolled the southern city, a government official said.

Ex-president Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who fled to Saudi Arabia when the war started in 2015, handed over his "full powers" to the new council in a televised address on April 7.

The ceremony was not announced in advance and was held at an undisclosed location for security reasons. In December 2020, about 20 people died in an attack on Aden airport as government officials arrived. Ansar Allah fighters took over the capital Sanaa in 2014, prompting a military intervention the following year and a war that has caused the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations.



Fighters loyal to Ansar Allah visit the grave of slain political leader Saleh al Sammad at Al Sabeen square in Sanaa on the fourth anniversary of his death in 2018. — AFP

A fragile, UN-brokered truce has been holding since April 2, the start of Ramadhan, providing a rare respite from fighting.

UN special envoy Hans Grundberg attended the swearing-in, along with ambassadors from European and Arab countries, the government official and parliament members said.

Meanwhile, Ansar Allah fighters have agreed to stop using child soldiers, the United Nations said, after thousands of under-age fighters were recruited for the seven-year civil war.

The Ansar Allah will release all child soldiers within six months under a new action plan, the UN said, adding that the warring parties have all now committed to ending "grave violations" against children. There was no immediate comment from the Ansar Allah about the agreement, which was signed after a fragile, UN-brokered truce started on April 2.

Nearly 3,500 child soldiers have been identified and more than 10,200 children have been "killed or maimed" since the war started, the UN said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

MANILA

Ressa accuses aide of 'malicious' online posts

The Philippines' Nobel Peace Prize-winning journalist Maria Ressa filed a complaint on against a top member of President Rodrigo Duterte's media team over alleged 'malicious and defamatory' posts on Facebook.

Ressa has been a vocal critic of Duterte and the deadly drug war he launched in 2016, triggering what media advocates say is a grinding series of criminal charges, probes and online attacks against her and Rappler — the news site she co-



founded. In the complaint filed to the office of the country's ombudsman, Ressa alleged Lorraine Badoy had called her a "sociopath" and "rotten soul".

— AFP

JAKARTA

Indonesia mini-market collapse kills 5

Rescue workers in Indonesia were searching for survivors after a mini-market collapse killed five people and injured nine, in a country where lax construction standards have raised concerns about building safety.

The three-floor building in Borneo island's Banjar district suddenly crumpled on Monday afternoon while it was filled with customers and employees before breaking their daily fast for Ramadhan.

Emergency services were



dispatched to the scene to dig overnight, pulling five bodies from the rubble and freeing nine people, South Kalimantan Police spokesman Mochammad Rifai said. — AFP

COLOMBO

First killing by police in Sri Lanka protests

Sri Lanka police shot dead one man and wounded 10 others on Tuesday in the first fatal clash with demonstrators protesting the island nation's crippling economic crisis. The island nation is in the grip of its most painful economic downturn since independence in 1948, with severe shortages of essential goods such as fuel and regular blackouts causing widespread misery.

Huge protests have called for the resignation of the government,



which is preparing to negotiate an urgently needed bailout with the IMF. Police fired live rounds at a crowd that had blockaded a highway in the central town of Rambukkana. — AFP



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In brief

NEW YORK



NEW YORK TIMES NAMES NEXT EDITOR TO LEAD US PAPER

The New York Times announced the appointment of veteran journalist Joe Kahn as its next executive editor, the top newsroom position at the powerful US paper. Kahn — currently the Times's number two-ranked editor — will succeed Dean Baquet, whose eight-year reign is due to end in June, the daily said.

The 57-year-old will be tasked with shaping the digital future of the Times, a leading liberal voice in world journalism, as it vies for audiences around the globe. Kahn said securing readers' trust "in a time of polarisation and partisanship" was one of his top priorities. "We don't know where the political zeitgeist will move over time," the Times quoted Kahn as saying.

BRUSSELS



TRIAL STARTS FOR ALLEGED PARIS ATTACK ACCOMPLICES

Belgium opened a trial of 14 people alleged to have assisted militants who carried out deadly bomb and gun attacks in Paris in 2015.

Proceedings began under high security in Nato's former headquarters and are expected to last until May 20, with a verdict likely to take several more weeks. The hearings were happening in parallel with a trial in Paris of 20 suspects charged in France in connection with the same killing spree.

That trial opened in September and is expected to run until the end of June. The November 2015 Paris attacks saw 130 people killed, with the IS group claiming responsibility.

ISLAMABAD



PAKISTAN'S NEW PM NAMES CABINET

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sprang no big surprises in naming his new cabinet doling out key portfolios to officials from the two parties that combined to oust Imran Khan after weeks of political crisis.

The cabinet is drawn mostly from Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-N (PMLN) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), two usually-feuding dynastic groups who combined to force a no-confidence vote that ousted Khan on April 10.

Mariyum Aurangzeb (pictured), will be the new ruling coalition partners minister for information.

UN CHIEF CALLS FOR 4-DAY TRUCE

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday denounced Russia's fresh offensive in eastern Ukraine and called for a four-day truce to mark Orthodox Holy Week.

Russia launched dozens of air strikes across eastern Ukraine overnight, as a new phase of the bloody conflict opened with fighting raging in the Donbas region.

"Instead of a celebration of new life, this Easter coincides with a Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine," Guterres told reporters.

"The intense concentration of forces and firepower makes this battle inevitably more violent, bloody and destructive," he said, calling for a "humanitarian pause" from Holy Thursday until Easter Sunday on April 24.

"Easter is a season for renewal, resurrection and hope.... But this year, Holy Week is being observed under the cloud of a war.

"Hundreds of thousands of lives hang in the balance," the United Nations chief said.

Ukraine's armed forces confirmed fighting had increased throughout the east, after President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia had kicked off the widely anticipated offensive in the Donbas, Ukraine's industrial heartland.

Russia's military campaign refocused on Donbas, which pro-Moscow separatists have partly controlled since 2014, after its efforts to capture the capital Kyiv were thwarted.

Guterres said a truce would



A man walks past destroyed and burned cars in Irpin during the Russian attack of Ukraine. — AFP

allow safe passage for civilians to flee the eastern war zone, and for humanitarian aid to be delivered to the hardest-hit areas.

Meanwhile, fighting between Ukrainian and Russian forces is "ongoing" in the strategic port of Mariupol, the local governor told CNN on Tuesday.

"There is fighting ongoing in Mariupol. This is street fighting," Pavlo Kyrylenko governor of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region said.

Ukrainian forces there are "under heavy bombardment" but

"continue to defend Mariupol."

"There are certain districts where street fighting is continuing. I can't say the Russians are controlling them," Kyrylenko said, adding that the fighting was "not just small arms fighting, but also tank fighting."

It is not possible to verify information given by either side given the scale of the fighting and lack of communications.

Russian forces are believed to have gradually pushed their way into the city, pinning Ukrainian troops down to giant factories

near the port, which are equipped with vast underground tunnels.

Russia on Tuesday called on Ukrainian forces in Mariupol to "immediately" lay down their arms in a new ultimatum.

Its defence ministry said Ukrainian forces still holed up inside the devastated city's main metallurgical plant Azovstal were facing a "catastrophic situation." "Everyone who lays down their arms will be guaranteed survival," it said.

Mariupol's city council said on Monday that hundreds of



Holy Week is being observed under the cloud of a war. Hundreds of thousands of lives hang in the balance

ANTONIO GUTERRES

UN Secretary-General

civilians are also taking shelter in the factory.

"There are at least 1,000 civilians in the underground shelters of the metallurgical plant. Mostly women with children and the elderly," it said on Telegram.

Russia last week claimed that more than a thousand Ukrainian soldiers had surrendered in Mariupol from a separate factory. According to pro-Russian Ukrainian separatists, several hundred others are still fighting from within the huge Azovstal factory.

Thousands of civilians are believed to have been killed in the city, with those escaping speaking of harrowing conditions. — AFP

Migrant irregular crossings into EU highest in 6 years



African migrants gather outside the UN office in Tunis on the third day of a sit-in to demand to be evacuated to another country. — AFP

BRUSSELS: Irregular crossings by migrants into the EU in the early part of this year spiked to their highest level since 2016, the bloc's border protection agency Frontex said on Tuesday.

And the number of attempted crossings across the Channel, from the EU to Britain, nearly tripled since the same period last year, it said.

"The first quarter of this year was the busiest in terms of illegal border crossings at the EU's external borders since the migratory crisis" of 2015-2016, when 1.3 million Syrians fleeing civil war sought refuge in Europe, Frontex said in a statement.

The agency said there were 40,300 irregular crossings by migrants into the EU between January and end-March this year.

That was the highest figure for that period since 2016, when nearly 285,000 irregular entries were recorded, at the tail-end of the 2015-2016 inflow that was

largely halted by a March 2016 deal between the EU and Turkey.

Irregular crossings after that deal dropped dramatically, and decreased further in 2020 and 2021 because of border restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The agency said this year's January-February-March tally was 57 per cent higher than for the same period in 2021.

While the war in Ukraine that started in February this year has provoked Europe's biggest migratory flow since World War II, Ukrainians with biometric passports can enter the EU without a visa.

The majority of the nearly four million Ukrainians who have entered the EU since the war therefore were not irregular entries. But Frontex said there were hundreds of Ukrainians who did "cross the border illegally between border crossing points". — AFP

US judge strikes down mask mandate for public transport

WASHINGTON: A US federal judge on Monday struck down the Covid-19 mask mandate for public transportation imposed by the administration of President Joe Biden, prompting major airlines to quickly drop the requirement.

US District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle of the Middle District of Florida said the mask mandate exceeds the statutory authority of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The mandate requiring face masks on airplanes, subways, trains, buses, taxis and other forms of public transportation was recently extended by the CDC until May 3 amid a rise in coronavirus cases.

US airlines and a number of Republican lawmakers have called for an end to the mask mandate, which was issued by the CDC on February 3, 2021, shortly after Biden took office.

In light of the decision, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), which runs security at airports, will not enforce directives "requiring mask use on public transportation and transportation hubs at this time," an administration official said.

After the ruling was announced, United Airlines dropped its mask mandate on domestic flights and some international flights, depending on the rules in the country of arrival.

"While this means that our employees are no longer required



The mandate requiring face masks on airplanes, subways, trains, buses, taxis and other forms of public transportation was recently extended by the CDC

to wear a mask — and no longer have to enforce a mask requirement for most of the flying public — they will be able to wear masks if they choose to do so, as the CDC continues to strongly recommend wearing a mask on public transit," the airline said in a statement.

It was soon followed by American Airlines, Delta Airlines and Alaska Airlines, who all made masks optional for crew members and customers on domestic and most international flights.

Like United, they cautioned that travellers would still be subject to local mask regulations at their destinations. Alaska also noted that the mask rule reversal, however, did not undo some decisions made while the measure was still in place.

Certain customers who were banned for not following the mask directive will remain barred, the airline said in a statement.

"We will have some guests whose behaviour was particularly egregious who will remain banned, even after the mask policy is rescinded," it said.

Mizelle, a nominee of former Republican president Donald Trump, issued her ruling in a lawsuit filed in July 2021 by a conservative non-profit organisation called the Health Freedom Defense Fund and two individual plaintiffs. — AFP

The perils of continuing to work from home



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Associate Professor, Dept of English Language and Literature Sultan Qaboos University

As offices are gradually opening up, either partially or fully, many employees are returning to their workspaces rather reluctantly, either out of nervousness or habit. Many countries worldwide have even begun to offer ‘workation’ destinations – places to unwind while staying connected.

What started as an emergency solution to the lockdowns following the global pandemic, working from home, or WFH, transformed from being a novelty, a distraction and, finally, a way of life for many.

As we perfected our Zoom background and invested in gadgets and clothing to work online, we began to forget what the regular office looked like.

Not many of us miss the long

commute, the pungent coffee rooms or the forced small talk that is the bane of offices. But in many cases, the return may not even be happening at all. In fact, according to CNBC, less than half of the traditional offices are going back to work in the way that they had two years ago. In fact, “the formal end to the full office return is coming – if not yet already here,” according to BBC Worklife.

But is this new reality ideal? For all its focus on flexible work hours and saving time and money on travel and other incidental expenses of a typical work day, working from home may actually reduce and even erase some of the skills we develop while being physically engaged in a traditional office.

WORKING FROM HOME MAY ACTUALLY REDUCE AND EVEN ERASE SOME OF THE SKILLS WE DEVELOP WHILE BEING PHYSICALLY ENGAGED IN A TRADITIONAL OFFICE

Humans learn by watching and doing. We learn to navigate the culture of a workplace by reading faces, body language and silences. We also make friends while passing by in the corridor, or at the water cooler. These are not opportunities that we can take advantage of when

sitting in front of a digital screen.

Collaboration of ideas also happen when people sit together – not at a pre-defined time and place but spontaneously, often when brainstorming a range of talking points. This creates a sense of common purpose that is possible when colleagues feel connected to a common institutional mission.

Without it, a company is just a few random people going in several directions, even directionless.

Perhaps most of all, the workplace gives one a sense of belonging. It is difficult to prod yourself back to being a designer, a teacher, or whatever else your professional role may be, huddled in the confines of a home while simultaneously being a parent, a

cook and every other role integral to us.

Defining the office as a space for professional work also creates mentally creative, uncluttered spaces.

With both employers and workers differing in their attitudes to workspaces, a growing hybrid model may soon become the norm. According to NPR, “there is a danger of being hardline” and insisting on coming to the office everyday may result in mass resignations, as seen in the United States in early 2021. The growing preference seems to be for some sort of hybrid attendance, with a compulsory ‘full’ day when everybody signs in and possibly two other days when employees could choose to come to work.

Iran fights to recover stolen antiquities

AHMAD PARHIZI AND SAMMY KETZ

Decorated glazed bricks almost 3,000 years old are on display at Iran’s National Museum after a four-decade search disrupted by war and an international legal battle.

Lions and winged cows with human heads, horses and bulls with a goat’s horn, kneeling men and women and other mythological figures decorate the work, created by the Mannaeans who lived in northwestern Iran in the first millennium BC. The 51 square bricks are painted with a glazed coating on a black, brown, light blue, yellow or white background.

Their discovery and repatriation “is a series of incredible adventures,” Youssef Hassanzadeh, an archaeologist with the museum, said.

It is also the latest example of Middle Eastern and African countries recovering stolen antiquities which have ended up in Western countries.

According to Hassanzadeh, the story began after the 1979 revolution when a farmer, Mirza Ali, discovered painted ceramic bricks while cultivating his field. They had been used to decorate a temple near his village in West Azerbaijan province.

“People were looting and selling glazed bricks, taking advantage of the absence of government control,” said Hassanzadeh, who organised the exhibition at the museum, where visitors peer at the bricks through glass cabinets.

A few years later in 1985, during war with Iraq, Iranian authorities sent a group of archaeologists, protected by soldiers, to the village. They started to dig and seized some bricks but it was too late for the others.

Smugglers had already shipped some of them overseas, where a number entered private collections and museums, the archaeologist said.

The story took a new turn when the British Museum learned that an Iranian family had offered to sell a set of glazed bricks in Chiasso, on the Italian-Swiss border. In 1991, the museum sent its curator John Curtis to purchase the collection.

But Curtis realised the bricks came from the West Azerbaijan site “and advised the British Museum and other European museums not to buy it, because it is a unique collection which must not be divided and must be returned to its country of origin,” Hassanzadeh said.

The Iranian owner of the collection had a different view. He was not prepared to return the artefacts from Switzerland.

“In 2008, the Swiss police seized the objects. The case went to court. French archaeologist Remy Boucharlat, who led excavations in Iran, confirmed the collection’s “identity”, the Tehran-based museum said in a statement.

Legal proceedings dragged on for more than a decade, with a lawsuit filed by the National Museum in 2015, and pressure from diplomats. — AFP

France faces deep paralysis as voters are choosing between fear and anger



Dominique Moisi

The writer is a French political scientist and writer

The future of democracy in Europe is being decided simultaneously on the battlefields of Ukraine and in the ballot boxes of France.

From afar, France’s presidential elections this month might look like merely a repeat of our last elections in 2017, with the centrist leader Emmanuel Macron once again facing Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Rally party.

But there are major differences that are revealing about France and about Western pluralism, having to do with the return of war in Europe; the uncertainty created by the two candidates running so closely in Sunday’s first-round election; and the widespread disaffection for both candidates.

Indeed, the April 24 runoff election may be France’s most consequential turning point in the past 40 years. It could usher in an entirely new political and social era, in which illiberal democracy, personified in Le Pen, could gain the upper hand in one of the founding members of the European Union. And regardless of the winner, the country faces a deep paralysis because it’s unclear whether either candidate will gain a majority in legislative elections later this spring.

That means neither Le Pen’s nativist hopes will be met, but nor will Mr Macron’s efforts to further liberalise the French economy materialise, a result that could further alienate citizens from politics.

Where the 2017 election was about the hope of reforming France and remaining a liberal democracy, 2022 is a tight contest between two emotions: anger against Macron, who is perceived as a technocrat out of touch with the people, and fear of Le Pen, who is still seen by many as a dangerous far-right candidate. In both cases most voters will vote against, rather than for, a candidate. The question of the day remains: Do you hate Macron more than you fear Le Pen, or vice versa?

What is yet to be seen is whether Le Pen will fully capitalise on voters’ anger toward Macron for his perceived aloofness and closeness to the richest segment of French society, as well as



Leafflets and ballots of French President and liberal party candidate for re-election Emmanuel Macron and French far-right party presidential candidate Marine Le Pen ahead of the second round of the French presidential election. — AFP

for the contours of his policy.

His emphasis on pushing back the retirement age from 62 to 65, even if he has started to retreat on that promise, speaking of 64 as a reasonable compromise, has rankled voters.

In her effort to pick up centrist

THE FRENCH WILL NOT BE VOTING FOR UKRAINE, AND A MAJORITY OF THEM MAY NOT CARE THAT MUCH ABOUT THE FUTURE OF EUROPE EITHER

votes, Le Pen appeared at times almost moderate, particularly compared with her more radical rival Éric Zemmour. In the run-up to Sunday’s first-round election, Le Pen benefited from Zemmour’s penchant for furiously railing about defending French identity and the need to create a ministry charged with expelling foreigners.

Meanwhile, she was appearing on social media, speaking of her love for

her cats. That worked for Le Pen in round one. But to gain enough votes to become president of France, she will most likely have to rally the extreme edges of her party, in part by returning to espousing hard-line views. It may not be that difficult. Behind her reassuring rhetoric, her more extreme policies remain intact. She has promised to ban the hijab in all public places, a nod toward her long-standing public antipathy to Islam; she has long spoken of curbing immigration and has said she will prioritise the native-born French for welfare benefits over immigrants.

To be sure, by appealing to the extreme right, Le Pen also runs the risk of failing to win over middle-of-the-road French voters who are more likely to vote for Macron or abstain rather than vote for her.

The dilemma of Macron is just the reverse. He needs the support of the far left, which now largely means supporters of Jean-Luc Mélenchon — who came in a very close third in round one — to win. It will be difficult for Macron to do so without diluting his economic programme, which might lose him significant votes on the right. — New York Times

Despite Covid-19 setback, I feel life is normal



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

A question that made rounds till recently as to whether we were transitioning into a world where we would live with the coronavirus pandemic seems to have faded as life started returning to normal in most parts of the world. People are now able to move on with the horrendous virus being kept in the minimum transmission. There is a significant degree of normality from the terrible burden that all of us had

been through over the last two years. And what we find today, as many researchers, describe is an incredible optimism and hope on the faces of people as they started moving freely on being comforted by the low number of hospitalisations and deaths from this virus. Definitely, the storylines became more positive with rapid roll-out of vaccines, Most countries with exceptionally high vaccination rates have already lifted restrictions. The Sultanate of Oman is no exception with the seedlings of sanguinity sown inside both citizens and residents with all of them collectively thinking, “Oh, this is what life is supposed to be”! Like many others, I too believe that we’re closer to normalcy although we’ve got a lot more work left to be done. I believe in optimism, for being hopeful about the future albeit the fact that I am one of the victims of the dreaded infection.

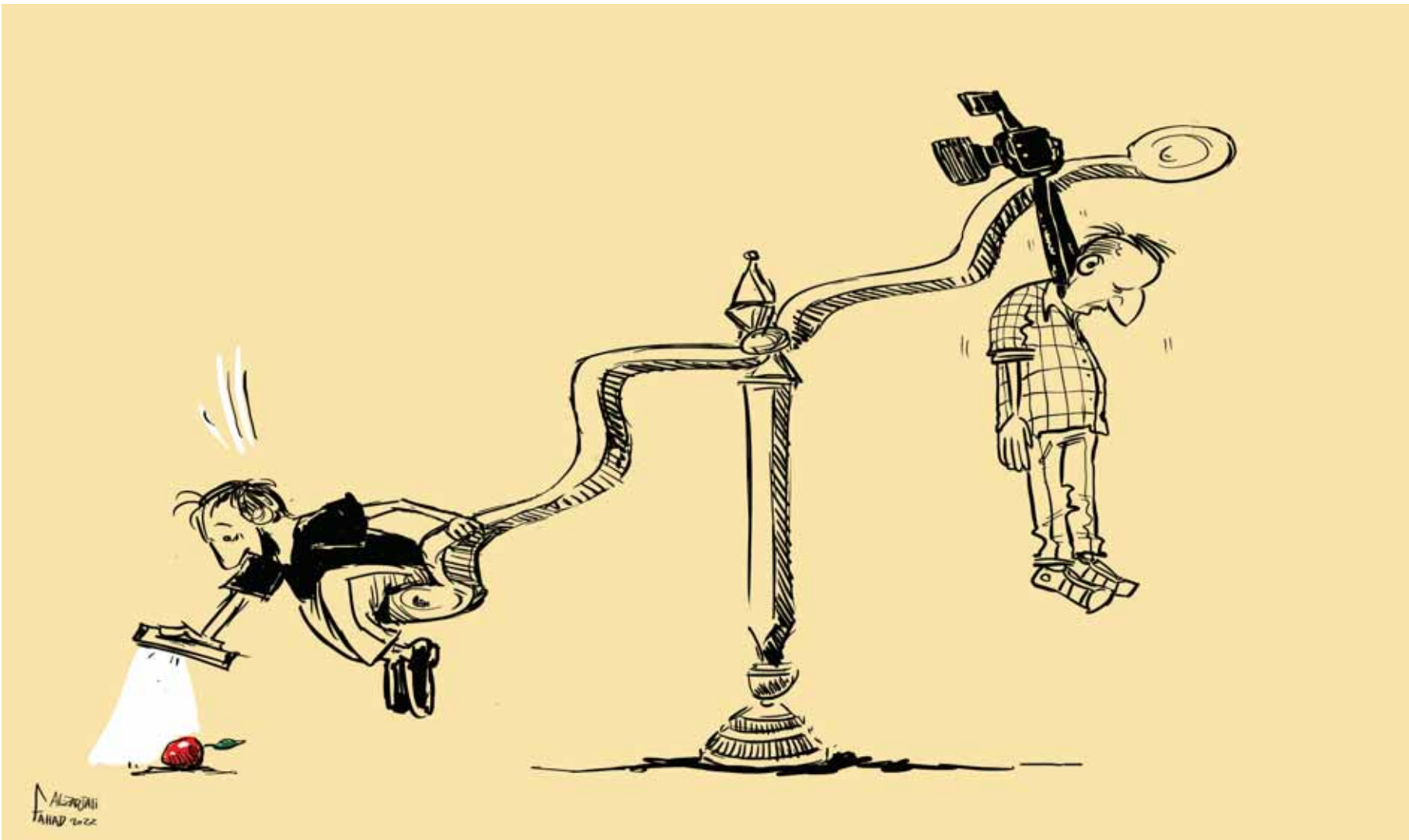
PEOPLE ARE NOW ABLE TO MOVE ON WITH THE HORRENDOUS VIRUS BEING KEPT IN THE MINIMUM TRANSMISSION. THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF NORMALITY FROM THE TERRIBLE BURDEN THAT ALL OF US HAD BEEN THROUGH OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS

Because I’m trying to look at the bright side of a terrible situation that I had undergone this time last year when I fought for life in a hospital’s intensive care unit as my case of Covid-19 was so severe that I had been placed in a medically induced coma for several days. My life came close to dying several times while in the intensive care unit as I suffered multiple organ failure. I struggled to breathe as my lungs filled with fluid due to acute pneumonia caused by the virus. The ordeal left me gaunt and weak. I lost 26 kilograms during my 46-day stay in the

hospital. The muscles in my legs had diminished so much that I struggled to walk two paces. And yet it was the mental impact that troubled me most. The petrifying dreams that I had experienced under sedation continued to haunt him. The delirium was terrifying. I had very disturbing dreams and as far as I was aware they were real. Adding fuel to my agony and nightmares was the weeks-long isolation!

Finally, I survived the scare and I emerged from the “dark room” in what medical professionals at the hospitals called a “miraculous” recovery. The soothing and positive words from my family members, the medics who treated me, colleagues and friends made my return to life possible. They all still say I am a good fighter as my recovery was rough. But one thing that I can say is that our spiritual health is just as important as our physical and mental health. When we practice positivity and thanks-giving through prayer, we are taking steps to become more healthy — both physically and mentally. Now, after two years into the pandemic, things have gotten better. Vaccines, boosters and prior exposures have dramatically reduced the risk of serious illness and death. Treatments have improved. But even now, with much of the remaining pandemic restrictions lifted and transmission rates way down, it’s hard to say life feels normal. Although vaccine-elicited protection and people who’ve recovered from Covid-19 stand as a big wall of population immunity and act as a buffer against likely new waves, there are still vulnerable groups in the society, on whom the Covid-19 still hangs as a domicile’s sword.

With many people now abandoning masks and other precautions as the fears from the virus ebbed and healthy vaccinated people started returning to pre-Covid-19 level activities, they should make and allow the pandemic of ‘the immunocompromised’ and jeopardise their lives. As an epidemiologist put it, the worst is behind us and “in this pandemic, you’re always waiting for the other shoe to drop”!



Iraq ‘green belt’ neglected in faltering climate fight

SALMAN AMIN

Envisioned as a lush fortress against worsening desertification and sand storms, the “green belt” of Iraq’s Karbala stands as a wilted failure. Sixteen years after its inception, only a fraction of the 76 km crescent-shaped strip of greenery has materialised, though the years proved a deep need for protection against mounting environmental challenges. Eucalyptus, olive groves and date palms first took root in 2006 as part of a plan for tens of thousands of the trees to form a green protective shield around the city in central Iraq. “We were very happy because the green belt would be an effective bulwark against dust”, said Hatif Sabhan al Khazali, a native of Karbala — one of Iraq’s holy cities that attracts millions of pilgrims every year.

Iraq’s host of environmental problems, including drought and desertification, threaten access to water and livelihoods across the country. But nowadays, the southern axis of Karbala’s green belt is only about 26 km long while the northern axis of the 100 metre wide strip is even shorter, at 22 km. Irrigation is sparse. No one pulls out the weeds anymore. Branches of the stunted olive trees sway between date palms — symbolic of Iraq — that struggle to grow. “The construction was stopped”, said Nasser al Khazali, a former member of the Karbala provincial council. He blamed “lack of interest from the central government and local authorities”, saying: “The funding didn’t follow.”

According to him, only nine billion dinars (\$6 million) was spent on the northern axis, out of the originally planned 16 billion dinars. “Negligence” is how Hatif Sabhan al Khazali explains the fate of the green belt project. It’s a frequent refrain — along with “financial mismanagement” — on the lips of many Iraqis and was a driving factor behind near-nationwide protests against graft, crumbling public services and unemployment that shook the country in 2019. Iraq has consistently been a low scorer on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, ranking 157th out of 180 countries for perceived corruption levels in state institutions last year.

What was meant to be a buffer against frequent dust storms that envelop the country does little to lessen their impact. Earlier in April, two such storms blanketed Iraq in less than one week,

grounding flights and leaving dozens hospitalised due to respiratory problems. According to the Director of Iraq’s Meteorological Office, Amer al Jabri, sand and dust storms are expected to become even more frequent. He attributed this increase to “drought, desertification and declining rainfall”, as well as the absence of green spaces. SIXTEEN YEARS AFTER ITS INCEPTION, ONLY A FRACTION OF THE 76 KM CRESCENT-SHAPED STRIP OF GREENERY HAS MATERIALISED, THOUGH THE YEARS PROVED A DEEP NEED FOR PROTECTION AGAINST MOUNTING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Iraq is particularly vulnerable to climate change, having already witnessed record low rainfall and high temperatures in recent years. In November, the World Bank warned that Iraq could suffer a 20 per cent drop in water resources by 2050 due to climate change. Water shortages

have been exacerbated by the building of upstream dams in neighbouring Turkey and Iran. These water shortages and the attendant soil degradation have led to a drastic decline in arable land. Iraq “loses around 100,000 dunams (about 250 square km) of agricultural land every year”, said Nadhir al Ansari, a specialist in water resources at Sweden’s Lulea University of Technology. “This land is then transformed into desert areas”, he said, warning that Iraq should “expect more dust storms” — which would have dire consequences on agriculture and public health. Ansari blamed this on the Iraqi government and the “absence of water planning”. During the country’s last dust storm, the agriculture ministry assured that it was working on “restoring vegetation cover” in Iraq. Last year an official with the Ministry of Water Resources referred to “several initiatives” to plant green belts but he said that “unfortunately these belts were not maintained”, the state INA news agency reported. As an example the official cited Karbala, where Hatif Sabhan al Khazali despairs at seeing the city’s green belt left to “criminal gangs and stray dogs.” — AFP



A local farmer speaks in a palm and olive grove in the “green belt” area of Iraq’s central city of Karbala. — AFP

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EL SHAARAWY LATE STRIKE DENTS NAPOLI TITLE HOPES



Roma's Italian forward Stephan El Shaarawy (centre) celebrates after scoring during the Italian Serie A match between SSC Napoli and Roma at the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium in Naples. – AFP

MILAN: Napoli's bid for a first Serie A title in 32 years suffered a massive setback on Monday as Stephan El Shaarawy's injury-time equaliser snatched a 1-1 draw for Roma.

Lorenzo Insigne's early penalty looked to have put third-placed Napoli on track to move within two points of league leaders AC Milan with five matches remaining, but El Shaarawy's late intervention left them four points behind.

Reigning champions Inter Milan are two points behind their city rivals in second place, but with a game in hand. Luciano Spalletti's Napoli are hoping to lift a first Scudetto since the second Diego Maradona-inspired triumph in 1990, but this bad-tempered draw could prove decisive come the end of the campaign.

"There is a bit of disappointment", Spalletti told DAZN. "We did not manage to keep the ball as I had hoped at the end of the match and we conceded a largely avoidable goal."

The point was not much help to the top-four hopes of Jose Mourinho's Roma, who missed the chance to cut the gap to fourth-placed Juventus to three points.

It has been a potentially ruinous spell for Napoli, following a 3-2 home loss to Fiorentina last time out.

Napoli took the lead in the 11th minute at the Estadio Diego Armando Maradona after Hirving Lozano ran onto a ball into the box and was challenged from behind by Roma defender Roger Ibanez.

The referee initially did not award a penalty, but after a VAR review, he pointed to the spot and Insigne picked out the bottom corner to score his ninth league goal of the season. The home side could have doubled their advantage in the 20th minute, but Victor Osimhen's shot was blocked by Chris Smalling and visiting goalkeeper Rui Patricio pushed away Lozano's follow-up effort.

ITALIAN SERIE A RESULTS ON MONDAY:
Napoli 1 (Insigne 11-pen) Roma 1 (El Shaarawy 90+1)
Atalanta 1 Verona 2
On Saturday
Cagliari 1 (Deiola 42) Sassuolo 0
Fiorentina 1 (Torreira 30) Venezia 0
Juventus 1 (Vlahovic 90+5) Bologna 1 (Arnautovic 52)
Lazio 1 (Immobile 90+2) Torino 1 (Pellegrini 56)
Sampdoria 1 (Caputo 32) Salernitana 2 (Fazio 4, Ederson 6)
Udinese 4 (Ismajli 6-og, Deulofeu 52, Pussetto 79, Samardzic 87) Empoli 1 (Pinamonti 70-pen)
On Friday
AC Milan 2 (Leao 11, Messias 87) Genoa 0
Spezia 1 (Maggiore 88) Inter Milan 3 (Brozovic 31, Martinez 73, Sanchez 90+4)

Roma almost equalised against the run of play before half-time as Osimhen flicked Lorenzo Pellegrini's free-kick against his own crossbar.

England striker Tammy Abraham had a chance to level on the hour mark, but he mistimed a close-range header.

A tense match threatened to boil over with four players booked in less than 20 second-half minutes.

Roma started to look dangerous going forwards and were furious that they were not given a penalty when Nicolo Zaniolo was tackled by Napoli 'keeper Alex Meret. The referee showed a red card to substitute goalkeeper Daniel Fuzato on the bench in the aftermath. Mourinho was angry with the officials after the match, saying: "We need more respect, today it seems we didn't have the right to play to win." — AFP



Napoli's Italian forward Lorenzo Insigne celebrates after scoring. – AFP

Oman remain in contention for WC Qualifiers berth

DUBAI: Oman, Scotland and Papua New Guinea contested the tri-series held at the United Arab Emirates between April 9 and April 16.

Oman won 2 games in the tournament and both of them were convincing victories over PNG. In the first encounter, Oman restricted them to 224-9 and chased the target down with 7 wickets and 35 balls to spare.

In the other, Oman erected a massive score of 277-8 and bowled PNG out for 192 in 44.3 overs.

Further, the games that slipped away were matters of fine margins. In their first game of the series, Oman cleaned Scotland out for 215. However, an untimely run-out coupled with an inspired effort on the field from their opponents meant that they fell 4 runs short at the end of a thrilling run chase.

In the other match, Oman fought hard until the very end to defend a first-innings total of 225, but a brilliant 37-run knock from Mark Watt sealed the game in his side's favour with just 1 ball to go.

Jatinder Singh had a fantastic tour with the bat for Oman. He scored 259 runs over the 4-game stretch, including 2 half-centuries and 1 magnificent century. Jatinder's 118-run knock against PNG on April 12, 2022 is the highest ever individual tally for Oman in ODIs. He showcased his expansive repertoire of strokes throughout the campaign, forcing the bowlers to constantly tinker with their line and length and also ran hard between the wickets to accumulate runs with relatively risk-free shots.

With the ball, Bilal Khan continued his hot streak and picked up 13 wickets in the tour - the highest individual tally of the tri-series. He claimed his third five-wicket haul in the space of 9 games in the final match of the tournament. The last time he went



Jatinder Singh

TEAM	PLAYED	WON	LOST	TIE	N/R	POINTS	NRR
OMAN	32	19	11	1	1	40	0.156
SCOTLAND	16	11	3	0	2	24	0.574
UAE	18	10	6	1	1	22	0.220
NAMIBIA	14	7	7	0	0	14	0.096
USA	16	7	9	0	0	14	-0.229
NEPAL	12	6	6	0	0	12	0.113
PNG	20	1	19	0	0	2	-0.856



Kaleemullah

wicketless in an ODI for Oman was on September 28, 2021.

Kaleemullah complemented Bilal superbly in all the games



Bilal Khan

and went on to pick up 7 wickets himself. Both of them were equally effective with the new ball and the old, be it at the start of the

innings, in the middle or at the death.

There were other positives too. Khawar Ali and skipper Zeeshan Maqsood played the supporting act in Oman's games against PNG expertly, allowing Jatinder to truly dominate the bowling attack. Ayaan Khan collected a total of 155 runs, with his 68 in the first match very nearly proving enough to take Oman over the finish line. Kashyap Prajapati and Mohammad Nadeem were excellent in the third game, as was Fayyaz Butt in the first two.

Overall, Oman continued right where they left off in their last trip to the UAE and played an impressive brand of aggressive cricket in the Emirates, one that was high on quality and competitive spirit. With 4 games to go, they lead the ICC Men's CWC League 2 table by 16 points, having played 16 matches more than second-placed Scotland and look a great bet to qualify for the ODI World Cup Qualifiers in India next year.



Ayan XI, Ravi XI post wins in PSM tourney

MUSCAT: Ayan XI and Ravi XI scored impressive wins in the Pakistan School Muscat (PSM) Ramadhan tape ball cricket tournament at the PSM ground on Monday night.

In the first match played between Muscat Club and Ayan XI, Muscat won the toss and elected to bat first. Muscat could manage only 44 runs in the stipulated eight overs due to some fine bowling from Ayan XI's man of the match Waqas who took two wickets for 5 runs in his 2 overs.

The modest total was chased by Ayan XI in just 4.1 overs with Abubaker scoring 17 runs in 6 balls while Ijaz scored 13 runs.

For Muscat, Shoaib got 3

wickets in an over but failed to win the match for his team.

In the second match, Total XI opted to bowl first against Ravi XI.

Ravi XI had a great start with Fayyaz and Navid hammering the Total bowlers to all corners of the ground. Fayyaz hit a blistering 54 (6x6, 4x3) and Navid scored 27 runs in 12 balls as Ravi XI posted a huge total of 148 for 3 wickets in 8 overs. Total's Abdullah took all three wickets for 31 runs.

In reply, the Total team scored 73 runs in 8 overs. Russel scored 27 runs and Mudasar scored 32 runs. Bilal got 2 wickets for 8 runs.

Fayyaz was declared as the man of the match.



Buttler ton, Chahal hat-trick give Royals edge over KKR

MUMBAI: Jos Buttler's 103 and a hat-trick by Yuzvendra Chahal helped Rajasthan Royals edge out Kolkata Knight Riders by seven runs in a nail-biting IPL contest on Monday.

The England batter smashed his second IPL century this season to power Royals to 217 for five — the highest total of this edition.

Umesh Yadav nearly got Kolkata through with his nine-ball 21 but West Indies left-arm quick Obed McCoy held his nerve on his IPL debut to defend 11 in the final over and bowl out the opposition for 210 in 19.4 overs.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer drove the chase with his valiant 51-ball 85 but Chahal, a leg-spinner who returned IPL best figures of 5-40, took him down at the start of the hat-trick that ended with a four-wicket over.

"I respect KKR as a unit. We never thought we were in the game," said Royals skipper Sanju Samson. "I think I don't need to talk much about individuals. We are lucky to have great players."



Rajasthan's Jos Butler celebrates his century.

Royals, who won the inaugural edition under Australia great Shane Warne, recorded their fourth win in six matches to climb to second behind table-toppers Gujarat Titans on the 15th birthday of the Indian Premier League.

The money-spinning Twenty20 tournament began on April 18 in 2008 when the current Kolkata



Rajasthan's Yuzvendra Chahal celebrates his hat-trick with the team-mates.

coach Brendon McCullum hit a match-winning 158 not out to set the league ablaze.

Come 2022 and the heat was on Kolkata after they invited Royals to bat and Buttler, who made match-winning 100 against Mumbai Indians earlier this month, quickly changed gears after a cautious start

in the first two overs.

Buttler put on a 97-run opening stand with Devdutt Padikkal, who hit a brisk 24, and then got going with Samson, who smashed 38 off 19 balls.

The Englishman took on the bowling and hit Pat Cummins for a four to bring up his fifty

and smacked the Australian pace bowler for six to reach his 100 in 59 deliveries as he raised his bat and got a hug from Shimron Hetmyer.

Buttler fell to Cummins three balls later and walked back to standing ovation from the limited crowd at the Brabourne Stadium. His innings laced with nine fours

and five sixes.

Kolkata bowlers attempted to check the scoring but the left-handed Hetmyer finished with a flourish with two sixes and a four off the 20th over from Andre Russell. He made 26 off 13.

In reply, Kolkata lost Sunil Narine run out for nought off the first ball but Aaron Finch, who made 58, put on 107 runs with Shreyas who kept up the fight after his partners' departure.

Shreyas fell lbw to Chahal and Kolkata fell short despite Umesh's cameo in a tense finish.

McCullum said it was Chahal's hat-trick that proved to be the turning point of their loss.

"Forty off four (needed to win) and we had six wickets in hand and we were very much in charge of the game, but credit to Chahal, he is just a brilliant bowler," McCullum told reporters. — **AFP**

Brief scores: Rajasthan Royals 217/5 (Jos Buttler 103, Sanju Samson 38; Sunil Narine 2-21) beat Kolkata Knight Riders 210 all out (Shreyas Iyer 85, Aaron Finch 58; Yuzvendra Chahal 5-40) by 7 runs.

Oman set for West Asian beach soccer in Saudi Arabia

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 19

Oman beach soccer team will return to action after an absence of eight months since their last appearance at the 2021 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup Russia in August. The team is undergoing an internal camp as apart of the preparations to take part in the West Asian Federation Championship which will be held in Saudi Arabia from May 15 to 21.

During the domestic camp, the Oman team will take on Bahrain team in a friendly game by end of April as the latter is underway in an external camp in Muscat.

The warm-up camp of the national beach soccer team began on Sunday under watchful eyes of national experienced coach Talib Hilal who opted 16 top players including the potential faces from the last beach soccer league. The underway 15-day camp features three friendly games against Bahrain on next Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

The national beach soccer team will have a break during Eid Al Fitr holidays and will have another short internal camp



ahead of travelling later to Saudi Arabia. In the following part of the internal camp, the Oman team will have more preparatory games against Kuwait and Egypt.

Head coach Talib Hilal selected 16 players in the squad including many experienced players and some new youth faces.

The Oman Football Association concluded last March the first edition of the 2021-22 beach soccer league in Muscat. Al Musannah club were crowned champions of the league as



they defeated Saham 3-2 in the final match. The squad featured participation of three players from Al Musannah and the same from Saham.

OMAN SQUAD: Mundher al Orami, Mashal al Orami, Salim al Orami, Khalid al Mukhaini, Amjad al Hamdani, Nauh al Zadjali, Ahmed al Owaisi, Younis al Owaisi, Sami al Balushi, Abdullah al Buraiki, Yahya al Buraiki, AbdulRahman al Fazari, Sameer Jameel, Mohammed al Mawali, Nauh al Battashi and Abdullah al Souti.

Oman to take part in 10 events in GCC Games

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, APRIL 19

The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) has approved participation of the Sultanate of Oman athletes in 10 disciplines in the third GCC Games to be held in Kuwait from May 13 to 31.

The Oman contingent will include 156 athletes in 10 events.

The GCC Games will include 16 individual and group events, namely handball, volleyball, basketball, futsal, swimming, athletics, karate, judo, fencing, archery, tennis, cycling, ice hockey, table tennis, elec-

tronic games and padel sports.

The OOC has decided to participate in athletics for men, athletics for women, swimming, shooting, karate, volleyball, triathlon

for women, electronic games, futsal and padel for women.

The Oman Olympic Committee has formed a working team to prepare and organise all aspects related to the Games in Kuwait.

The Oman Olympic Committee had issued a booklet that includes all the data related to the Oman participation.



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Oman crude attracts premium in DME auction

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) announced on Tuesday that its DME Auction platform was utilised by the Omani Ministry of Energy and Minerals to auction a cargo of one million barrels of Oman crude.

The barrel cargo of June-loading Oman crude was awarded at a premium of \$3.69 per barrel over the June official selling price (OSP). “The DME Auction platform saw 17 participants with 31 active bids placed during the 2-minute period.

The Oman OSP is calculated on a volume-weighted average of daily DME Oman Crude Oil (OQD) Marker Prices over the



(Image for illustration only)

month,” the energy-focused commodities exchange stated.

The DME Auctions aims to provide commodity market participants with the flexibility to buy and sell physical commodities via an electronic auction system. This offers customers the advantage of a transparent platform to trade commodities for immediate delivery.

As many as 43.6 million barrels have been auctioned via the DME Auctions platform, generating \$21.69 million in premiums, it stated.

Meanwhile, the price of Oman crude (for June 2022 delivery) rose 49 cents a barrel to settle at \$108.57 per barrel in trading on the DME on Tuesday. The average price of Oman crude oil (April 2022 delivery) has stabilised at \$91.96 per barrel, which is \$8.34 per barrel higher than the previous month’s average.

On global markets, however, oil prices declined in volatile trading as investors weighed demand concerns against tight global supplies, said Reuters. It follows reports that Libya had paused some exports, while factories in distant Shanghai prepared to reopen following a Covid-19 shutdown.

Brent crude was down \$1.41, or 1.2 per cent, to \$111.99 a barrel at 10:28 GMT, after rising more than \$1 to \$114.21 earlier in the session. US West Texas Intermediate crude fell \$1.64, or 1.5 per cent, to \$106.29 a barrel, after rising to \$108.92 earlier.

APSR unveils strategy to localise electrical contracting services jobs

Strategic objectives: Goal to open up contracting opportunities for Riyadh-registered Omani SMEs

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu



localising jobs in the network extension and reinforcement category of electrical contracting services.

Included in this category are contracts covering the installation of overhead lines and underground cables, underground cable extensions, and distribution substations – contracts that could open up potentially hundreds of jobs for Omanis when the strategy is fully implemented.

An award for the formulation of the strategy will be announced soon, with the project due to commence in May 2022, the Authority stated. Significantly, the Electricity and Water sectors in the Sultanate of Oman are being primed for high levels of Omanisation.

Early last year, Nama Group – the umbrella organisation of state-owned power generation, transmission, distribution and related businesses – said it had plans to train as many as 800 Omanis for jobs in the electricity sector.

An Omanisation strategy drawn up by the Group in this regard mandated sector subcontractors and service providers to gradually Omanise positions held by expatriates in different parts of the Sultanate of Oman.

The goal is to raise Omanisation from the current rate of about 47 per cent to nearly 90 per cent upon its conclusion.

Taageer Finance Co. S.A.O.G.

Board of Directors’ Report for the year ended 31 March 2022

Dear Shareholders,
On behalf of the Board of Directors of Taageer Finance Company SAOG, I am pleased to present the un-audited financial statements for the period ended 31 March 2022.

Performance Summary
As per the financial results for the period ended 31 March 2022 the revenue for the period ended March 2022 is RO 5.413 million (March 2021-RO 4.834million) an increase of 11.98% YOY. The Interest Expenses for the period stood at RO 2.119 million (March 2021 – RO 2.110 million)

The Company registered Profit of RO 1.863 million before Expected Credit Losses (ECL) charge and taxation for the period (March 2021 - RO 1.553 million) an increase of 19.96%. The Net Profit after ECL charge of RO 0.909 million and RO 0.143 million Taxation stood at RO 0.811 million for the period ended 31 March 2022 vis-à-vis RO 0.648 million as on 31 March 2021 an increase of 25.15%.

Gross portfolio registered a growth of 2.50% YOY and stood at RO 270.885 million as on 31st March 2022 (March 2021 RO 247.665 million). Cumulative provisions as at March 2022 is RO 21.130 million (March 2021 – RO 17.909 million) as per IFRS 9 requirements. Allocation to ECL has increased by 17.99% YOY basis reflecting prudence judgement on ECL. The borrowings including unsecured non-convertible bonds stood at RO 138.546 million (March 2021 – RO 133.617 million).

Market Outlook
Year 2022 has started with a positive note wherein the Country’s rating has improved to stable and will impact positively the overall financial and investment sector The positive rating is the result of Oman’s improvement in the state’s public financial indicators and the decrease in the risks of public debt arising out of prudent financial planning. The Higher oil prices will boost GDP growth in 2022 and will lead to a fiscal surplus in 2022. The overall fiscal improvement translates to an overall improvement in the economic activity. Timely support from the Banking sector to the industry can see improved business executions and overall business growth. The Central Bank of Oman is continuously reviewing the market to issue further guidelines to support the sector.

The Company is continuously working to support the SME sector and improve the overall growth parameters. With strong leadership and management team and Company is committed to maintaining high standards of business operations and profitability.

Acknowledgement
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to express sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimour for his vision and wise leadership.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and acknowledgement for the guidance and support from the Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority and Muscat Securities Market. We are also grateful to our shareholders, bankers, dealers and customers for their continued trust, confidence and support. Finally, the Board would like to appreciate and thank the management and the staff for all their hard work and efforts.

On Behalf of the Board of Directors

Rashid bin Saif Al Saadi
Chairman

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them in Arabic or English as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.

UN-AUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 MARCH 2022

	Mar-22 RO'000	Mar-21 RO'000	Dec-2021 RO'000
ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	13,218	6,080	16,655
Net investment in finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	173,302	172,339	165,064
Other receivables and prepayments	1,078	459	582
Deferred tax asset – net	89	88	89
Vehicles, equipment and right-of-use assets	383	670	440
Statutory deposit	250	250	250
Total assets	188,320	179,886	183,080
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
LIABILITIES			
Creditors, accruals and other liabilities	4,763	3,475	2,216
Bank overdrafts and short-term loans	63,498	61,728	60,603
Unsecured non-convertible bonds	13,580	-	13,351
Tax payable	614	492	471
Corporate and security deposits	10,914	9,438	9,820
Long-term loans	50,554	62,451	52,272
Total liabilities	143,923	137,584	138,733
EQUITY			
Share capital	25,866	25,359	25,359
Legal reserve	5,395	5,141	5,395
IFRS 9 impairment reserve	2,222	2,222	2,222
Fair value reserve	(441)	(441)	(441)
Retained earnings	11,355	10,021	11,812
Total equity	44,397	42,302	44,347
Total equity and liabilities	188,320	179,886	183,080
Net assets per share (baizas)	172	167	175

UN-AUDITED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	Mar-22 RO'000	Mar-21 RO'000
Income		
Finance income	4,875	4,541
Interest expense	(2,119)	(2,110)
Net finance income	2,756	2,431
Other operating income	538	293
	3,294	2,724
Expenses		
Operating expenses	(1,330)	(1,056)
Depreciation	(101)	(115)
Impairment in net investment in finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	(909)	(790)
	(2,340)	(1,961)
Profit before taxation	954	763
Taxation	(143)	(115)
Profit for the period	811	648
Basic and diluted earnings per share (baizas)	12.78	10.22

Bank Nizwa launches ‘Nibras’ initiative

MUSCAT: Intending to be the go-to bank for Sharia-compliant products, services and financial advisory, Bank Nizwa, Oman’s leading and most trusted Islamic bank, recently launched a series of events under the name of ‘Nibras’. The initiative is held under the headship of Shaikh Khalid al Khalili, Chairman of Bank Nizwa to engage with the bank’s key stakeholders and position Bank Nizwa as a leader in Islamic banking.

Aligning with its objective and commitment to make Islamic Banking acquainted with the masses in Oman, The first session of ‘Nibras’ introduced panelist Tahir al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman and was moderated by Shaikh Khalid al Khalili himself. The session highlighted various topics including the progressive career journey of



Tahir al Amri as well as the rapid digital revolution in the financial sector and how Islamic banking has stayed abreast with this progressive change. During the panel discussion, Al Amri emphasised the application of digitalisation in an institutions day to day operations and creating a positive impact on the business. The panel also

reflected on how innovation has affected the development of the banking industry and the outlook of Oman’s banking sector in the next five to ten years. Moreover, the panelist also shed light on digital transformation’s opportunities, challenges and regulations. “Over the years, the Islamic financial system has significantly

evolved. It is one of the most dynamic systems to emerge in recent years, and it has managed to pique the curiosity of millions of people all around the world,” said Shaikh Khalid al Khalili. “With more Omanis joining the national workforce everyday and are required to make financial decisions, it is crucial to educate them about Islamic banking. Islamic banking seeks to promote the ideals of a prosperous society and stable economy. It offers commercially viable finance based on the values of fairness, ethics and compassion. In fact, Islamic banking was created to benefit, directly and indirectly, all members of the communities that it serves, under Shari’a law.” Bank Nizwa regularly conducts such knowledge sessions to increase awareness

and clarity about Islamic banking services and products, intending to enable attendees to make informed financial decisions. It hosts annual events with varying themes and targets diverse audiences, such as Bank Nizwa wholesales clients gathering, wealth management events, Islamic Finance Knowledge Programme and many more to expand its professional network and maintain relationships. “That being said, Bank Nizwa has always strived to be the financial partner of choice for the people and enterprises of Oman. Ever since its inception, the bank has been committed to providing Sharia-compliant innovative financial solutions, with an aim to offer customers a unique banking experience in line with their evolving needs,” he added.

Get a chance to win gold coins from Best Cars



MUSCAT: Best Cars, Oman’s popular pre-owned cars brand is offering buyers some of the most rewarding experiences with the latest ‘Winning Drive’ campaign. As part of the campaign customers owning their favourite pre-owned car models from Best Cars, get a chance to win one 22-karat gold coin out of total five raffle gifts. The campaign is valid until 1st June 2022. (Conditions apply. Please visit the best card showroom at Wattayah and Seeb Al Mawaleh for details).

According to a spokesperson from Saud Bahwan Automotive, “Customers looking to own their favourite pre-owned car model, have a good chance to begin a winning drive with Best Cars. At Best Cars, we do our best in offering customers some of the finest ownership experiences by encouraging customers to own some of the finest models their money can buy.

Moreover at Best Cars, customers can find an impressive range of multi-brand automobiles, at prices they will be happy to pay. If you have been waiting for the right time to own a vehicle, the time is now. Visit Best Cars showroom in Wattayah, today.”

Best Cars (main showroom) is located at the most convenient place in the heart of the automobile market in Wattayah, Muscat and also at Seeb Al Mawaleh. Best Cars is the ideal choice in Oman since it is a professional set-up with a proven system for evaluating, buying & selling vehicles. Customers obtains satisfactory price for their trade-in vehicles. Many customers have expressed their delight with not just finding their dream car, but also with the hassle-free documentation, personalised care and overall professionalism of the staff.

No surprise then that many customers heartily recommend Best Cars to their friends and family calling it the ‘Best Bet’ to procure a vehicle of their choosing.

Best Cars also offer customer the advantage of convenience at their fingertips, through its user-friendly website ‘www.bestcars.om’. Customers can login and view complete details, along with the vehicle’s photograph.

They can also register their requirement and be informed as soon as their desired vehicle is available. Best Cars also provides financing facilities for customers who want to purchase pre-owned vehicles on instalments.

Best Cars has set new standards in buying & selling quality pre-owned vehicles. Value-conscious customers appreciate this auto hypermarket as a trusted source for quality pre-owned vehicles from the renowned Saud Bahwan Group.

KR Eshraqa Stemazone holds Qaranqasho event



MUSCAT: As part of its continued effort towards helping the Sultanate of Oman build a knowledge economy, Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa Stemazone recently organised a Qaranqasho-themed edutainment event for children at the Al Araiimi Boulevard. Held over a three-day period, Stemazone representatives welcomed children, as well as their parents and teachers, to the event, which was abuzz with various STEAM activities and workshops. The event was organised with the aim to reach more children and introduce them to the spectacular world of Stemazone, especially its online

learning management system (LMS) platform “e-stemazone”. Stemazone’s representatives conducted several interactive workshops for groups of 15 children, every 15 minutes at three learning stations during the course of the event. This included various STEAM-related experiments: Lava Lamp (Science and Technology), Electronics - Buzzer sensors (Coding), Green screen (Technology and Art), and Ice-cream (Science and Engineering). Giveaways and information leaflets were also distributed to the participating children, as well as parents and teachers.

Ford Taurus now with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Own a Ford Taurus and benefit with service 3 years / 60,000 kms and registration 1 year. (Conditions apply. For details visit a Ford showroom.) The offer is valid until May 18, 2022.

The Ford Taurus has been redesigned with a focus on safety and practicality. The exterior of the Taurus has a shield-like, clipped trapezoidal five-bar grille is positioned prominently and flanked by slender, modern headlamps with signature daytime running lights and LED projector lamp technology. Chrome rings house supplemental LED driving lights.

In silhouette, a powerful hood profile and planted architecture give the Taurus a sense of solidity, sportiness and harmony. Designers elevated the exterior with fine details on the sides, including upswept chrome highlight trim on the doors.

Polished 19-inch 10-spoke alloy wheels help to give a bold and premium stance. At the rear of the vehicle, multi-piece LED tail lights incorporate a distinctive signature appearance. A bright chrome bar connecting the tail lights highlights the vehicle’s



width for a sense of understated athleticism. Integrated chrome exhaust tips complete the rear and offer another discreet hint at performance. The Taurus has the effortless power to match its sporty appearance. The Taurus is powered by a 2.0-litre EcoBoost inline four-cylinder petrol engine that produces 240 horsepower and an impressive 390Nm torque. That represents a 10 per cent increase in torque over the previous Taurus, all while using less fuel. The engine is mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission – a first for Ford sedans in the Middle East – which is operated by a contemporary rotary gear shifter

on the centre console. The sense of balance and harmony continues inside with a clean, modern cabin that makes use of smart design and strong horizontal elements for an airy, spacious feel. Above the passengers, a full panoramic sunroof allows more natural light to enter the cabin and adds to a sense of elegance and openness. In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC. Please log on to www.fordoman.com, or www.facebook.com/FordOman or www.youtube.com/FordOmanChannel or www.instagram.com/ford_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

SMEs Development Authority and Bank Muscat join hands to host Souq Al Wathbah

MUSCAT: The SMEs Development Authority and Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, have joined hands to organise the annual Ramadhan Souq Al Wathbah at Muscat Street at the Bank’s Head Office from April 21 to April 23, 2022. Souq Al Wathbah, which comes as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of Bank Muscat, aims at promoting small enterprises and will feature attractive products and services from more than 120 entrepreneurs and SMEs. The 3-day exhibition, which is being held as part of the bank’s commitment to deliver long-

term benefits to the nation, will showcase a number of Omani products encompassing fashion, beauty, health and food as well as services at competitive prices. The Souq will be open from 8:00 pm to 12 midnight and offer a unique shopping experience to visitors and promote Omani small enterprises. In particular, the Ramadhan Souq creates an avenue to successfully market these small business’ products in a market that is characterised by intense competition. Hence, identifying and seizing opportunities are all the more important for Omani SMEs to survive and grow to the next stage in their evolution. Bank Muscat



has been organising the Ramadhan Souq in association with the SMEs Development Authority since 2017 to strengthen the SME sector in Oman. The Al Wathbah Souq has

become an important platform that educates the community about the importance of MSMEs being the backbone of the country’s economy and also gives Omani MSMEs an opportunity

to network with successful entrepreneurs and exchange experiences. On this occasion, the organising committee would like to extend its appreciation to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for their cooperation in making this annual event a success. The Souq is expected to witness excellent participation from the public and the media, especially as it is one of the well-known souqs held during the month of Ramadhan. The event is part of the strategies of both SMEs Development Authority and Bank Muscat to support Omani entrepreneurs and SMEs.

Major Libyan oil sites closed amid shutdown ‘wave’

TRIPOLI: Libya’s National Oil Corporation announced the closure of operations in major sites after staff in the key export terminal of Zueitina and the Al-Sharara oil field were blocked from working.

“The National Oil Corporation is obliged to declare a state of force majeure on the oil port of Zueitina, including all fields and producing stations associated with this port and shipping facilities until further notice,” NOC chief Mustafa Sanalla said in a statement.

Declaring force majeure is a legal move allowing parties to free themselves from contractual obligations when factors such as fighting or natural disasters make meeting them impossible. Libya is seeking to extricate itself from a decade of chaos and conflict that followed the toppling of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in a 2011 Nato-backed uprising.

“These interruptions were caused by the entry of a group of individuals into the port of Zueitina,” the firm said in a statement, adding that the



Workers are seen at an oil port in Tripoli, Libya. — AFP

group “prevented workers” from continuing exports.

Zueitina is one of the four oil terminals in the so-called “Oil Crescent” region, and its closure will prevent Libya from exporting almost a quarter of its 1.2 million barrels per day of production. Sanalla added that it was the “start of a painful wave of closures” in the North African nation at a time of an “oil and gas price boom”.

Hours later, the NOC declared force majeure in another major oil

field, Al-Sharara, which provides a quarter of Libya’s daily output. “A group of individuals put pressure on workers in the Al-Sharara oil field, which forced them to gradually shut down production,” it said.

“Accordingly, the NOC is obliged to declare the state of force majeure on the Al-Sharara oil field until further notice.” The Al-Sharara field, in the desert 900 kilometres (560 miles) south of Tripoli, is operated by a joint

venture between the NOC and four European companies.

The NOC is one of the few institutions in the troubled country to have stayed in one piece. Oil revenues are vital to the economy, with Libya sitting on Africa’s largest known reserves.

Libya has recently once again found itself with two rival governments after the eastern-based parliament in February appointed a new prime minister in a direct challenge to the UN-brokered government in the capital Tripoli, in the west.

The latest in a long line of standoffs pits Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah’s interim government in Tripoli against that of former interior minister Fathi Bashagha, who was chosen by parliament.

The groups blocking the oil terminal are seen as favouring the eastern camp, and are demanding “a fair distribution” of income and the transfer of power to Bashagha. Sanalla repeated calls for the “neutrality” of the oil sector to be protected, “avoiding the political conflicts in the country”. — AFP

Yellen to call for increased economic pressure on Russia

WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (pictured) will call on her counterparts to ramp up the economic pain on Moscow over its attack on Ukraine, a senior Treasury official said.

Yellen will participate in the spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank, as well as gatherings of finance officials from the G7 and G20 nations, where the fallout from the war will be a key topic of discussion.

“The secretary believes the Russian attack on Ukraine has demonstrated the need for the world’s largest economies to stand together to defend international order and protect peace and prosperity,” the official told reporters. “She will use this week’s meetings to work with allies to continue our united efforts to increase economic pressure on Russia while mitigating spillover effects.”



The IMF and World Bank have warned of the devastating costs the war is imposing on the global economy, especially through rising prices for energy and food at a time of high inflation.

Western sanctions on Moscow have contributed to inflation pressures, hitting the poorest countries the hardest. While Yellen is “deeply concerned” about the impacts, “We are firm in our resolve to hold Russia and its leadership accountable and have imposed crippling sanctions,” the official said. — AFP

FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE



ANNE-LAURE MALAUZAT

We all know what it feels like to belong somewhere — to be included — and naturally, we want all team members in our organisations to feel that way.

Besides being the right thing to do and stimulating better individual and team performance, building inclusive teams pays off for companies by helping them attract and retain the most diverse and talented employees.

Despite the clear benefits, however, most companies struggle to foster feelings of inclusion for the majority of their people. It is hardly surprising that organisations find it difficult to determine which specific changes they must make to promote greater inclusion for their diverse employee bases.

So we at Bain & Company surveyed 10,000 individuals — across diverse industries and demographic backgrounds at all levels of seniority and organisational size — to learn what actually makes employees feel the most included.

When asked what inclusion feels like, employees across all demographics say it is being treated with dignity, able to bring their authentic selves to work, able to contribute and feeling connected to others — which is our definition of inclusion.

How an organisation helps all its people feel included in these ways, however, gets complicated. Rigorous analysis of our data has also shown us that the specific paths to that universal sense of inclusion are unique to an

individual’s identity.

Our research has also found that the enablers of inclusion are highly textured and varied across every population, but that this heterogeneity can be addressed by combining systemic change with more inclusive behaviours.

Why inclusion matters?

Many companies today pursue diversity by itself as a priceless asset. But our research shows that they cannot realise and sustain the full value of that diversity—enabling diverse talent to thrive, fully contribute, progress, and want to stay—without a truly inclusive culture.

Organisations understand that having a diverse workforce pays off — or should pay off — by stimulating innovation and challenges to the status quo from different points of view.

But the only way to realise these and other benefits of diversity is to continuously progress toward a more inclusive environment for all team members.

Inclusive organisations have an easier time attracting talent across demographics: Approximately 65 per cent of people across identity groups view an inclusive environment as “very important” when considering new roles.

But recruiting a diverse group of employees is only the beginning. A truly inclusive environment is critical for retention and provides a variety of other tangible, measurable benefits.

To truly maximise retention, performance, innovation and comfort in challenging conventional thinking, organisations should aim for both diversity and inclusion. But while diversifying a workforce can take time, there are tangible benefits to working on inclusion immediately, even if an organisation isn’t currently as diverse as it could be.

Fostering inclusion is deceptively difficult

Although everyone wants to build inclusive organisations, few



(if any) companies have “cracked the code” for consistently fostering inclusion for employees.

Leaders who are members of majority groups may also gravitate to narrow, behaviour-focused solutions such as “acting nicer” or giving employees more opportunities to socialise, or they may rely heavily on team members belonging to under-represented groups to tell them what they should do.

Every demographic population has a unique “texture” when it comes to enablers of inclusion. Even though the feeling of inclusion is fundamentally the same across groups, our research shows that the lived experience of inclusion is driven for various groups by a diverse variety of factors.

In our research, we tried to determine which of a wide range of organisational enablers of inclusion — which we broadly classify as “behavioural” and “systemic”— were most effective in making people feel included.

To do this, we ran thousands of regressions across populations to understand what really increases feelings and experiences of inclusion across many distinct populations.

Every employee’s sense and experience of inclusion benefited from both behavioural and systemic enablers, but the mix of effective enablers — what we might call the texture of inclusion — varied across groups with respect to identity, geography, and level within their companies.

Cutting through the complexity

Because every demographic group has its own unique texture with respect to what enables members to experience inclusion, and because people do not always understand what precise actions will make them feel included, it can be complicated to sort out what makes inclusion real for a particular group.

One piece of good news, however, is that there is a common denominator that boosts inclusion for virtually everyone: opportunities for professional development and growth. This still leaves a great deal of complexity for organisations to navigate.

Because no single demographic variable cleanly predicts lower levels of inclusion in companies, targeting broad categories of people with reference to single factors is much too blunt a

strategy for increasing feelings of inclusion. But there is a method for cutting through the complexity: looking at employees through an intersectional lens that incorporates geography, demographics, and seniority.

Properly applied, this intersectional approach can show an organisation where, and with what groups, it can take specific actions that will actually advance the goal of greater inclusion for all.

In identifying such actions, it is essential to note that employees’ feelings of inclusion are grounded in everyday experiences, which consist of their encounters with both the mindsets and behaviours of others and a company’s systems, structures, and processes — what we have classified as behavioural and systemic enablers, respectively.

Our analysis, moreover, reveals a bedrock “hierarchy of needs” according to which almost everyone requires underlying systemic support to feel fully included, with people’s focus shifting to behaviours once systems more fully support them.

Weaving the fabric

Making inclusion a reality Our findings tell us that creating genuinely more inclusive

organisations, while challenging, is something companies can actually do.

Moreover, organisations that want all their people to feel included need not—and indeed cannot—rely on some combination of lofty aspirations, sincere intentions and the right messaging.

Real, sustainable change comes from doing. Making a more inclusive organisation is about employees — and leaders — throughout the organisation adopting new mindsets, changing behaviours and learning to operate in and adapt to new and different systems. People are looking to see if their organisation understands and cares about their unique needs for inclusion and is prepared to make a real commitment to addressing them.

Meaningful analysis, authentic listening, visible action and feedback are all key to demonstrating deep commitment.

In practice, this means starting out by understanding the organisation’s current state, establishing its ambitions and goals and developing an inclusion game plan that prioritises target populations for specific initiatives and sets up a leadership team with clear roles and responsibilities for execution.

Weaving the fabric of belonging is work for both the heart and the head.

Done successfully, it makes both people and organisations better by making inclusion not just something we talk about but something we live—thus bringing us all closer to realising our potential as both diverse individuals and members of teams.

[Jointly authored by Julie Coffman, Global Chief Diversity Officer, and Anne-Laure Malauzat, Middle East Chief Diversity Officer, Bain & Company]

Germany eyes Russian gas import ban nervously

Any sanctions that cut off the westward flow of Russian gas need to be well-thought-through, otherwise those laying the sanctions might suffer more than those sanctioned, according to multiple German business and labour leaders.

The question of whether to lay an embargo on Russian fuel is tying Europe up into knots. On the one hand, few want to buy Russian oil and gas and funnel payments to a country that has attacked its neighbour, Ukraine.

But, on the other hand, most of Europe is unsure how it will heat its homes and power its economy without Russian fuel, which makes up a significant portion of the continent's fuel imports.

Germany is particularly reliant on Russian gas to keep the lights on, with 50 per cent of its gas originally from Russia.

In a joint statement, umbrella groups representing German employers and unions said they are worried that not enough care is being put into making sure that any sanctions are targeted, apply pressure properly and prevent harm to the economies implementing the sanctions.

"We don't see that in the current gas embargo debate," said Rainer Dulger, head of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) and Reiner Hoffmann, head of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB).

The two said current proposals would harm the German economy and employment levels more than it would those same factors in Russia, arguing that no gas means production stops, industrial slowdowns and loss of jobs.

The way to help Ukraine, they argued, is to make sure Germany has a stable economy and labour market.

But the gravity of the situation — the Russian attack on Ukraine is nearing the two-month mark, with fears of intensified attacks soon in the east — has some saying all options and approaches have to be considered.

Variables like how quickly Germany can up its percentage of renewable energy or whether consumption can be slowed down and how quickly mean no one is really sure how the situation will play out. — dpa

Germany is particularly reliant on Russian gas to keep the lights on, with 50 per cent of its gas originally from Russia.



SEAT BAGS

A man sits on bags of rice at a market in Freetown, prices for basic commodities has hiked in Sierra Leone since Covid-19 pandemic and the attack on Ukraine by Russia. Life is a struggle for many in the Kroo Bay slum. But war in faraway Ukraine has made life harder still. Fuel prices, as well as the prices of basics such as cooking oil and rice, have increased sharply in the West African nation recently. — AFP

Overcharging claim on Mastercard/Visa



ANDY JALIL
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The author is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

THE CARD COMPANIES COMMITTED IN 2019 TO CAP INTERREGIONAL INTERCHANGE FEE FOR CREDIT CARDS AT 0.3 PER CENT IN THE EU.

Following the UK's formal exit from the European Union at the end of 2020, Mastercard and Visa hiked interregional interchange fees payable by UK businesses to around 1.7 per cent of the transaction value. The card giants are set to be hit with a multi-billion pound legal claim alleging they used a loophole to overcharge UK businesses after Brexit, according to Marcus Parker, the law firm, bringing the claim.

The card companies committed in 2019 to cap interregional interchange fee for credit cards at 0.3 per cent in the EU.

Interchange fees are levied by banks on businesses when customers pay by cards. The card giants are now facing a class action lawsuit on behalf of UK businesses affected by those "unfair and unlawful charges", the law firm said.

"It is British businesses that now bear the brunt of that loophole being exploited and extended and our job is to get compensation back for that," Marcus Parker partner Jeremy Robinson said. Mastercard and Visa were contacted for comment.

The claim is part of a wider class action against Mastercard and Visa which is about to be launched in the Competition Appeal Tribunal in London by Marcus Parker with

the backing of litigation funder Bench Walk Advisors.

Marcus Parker said the value of the class action claim could reach £3.5 billion, but at a minimum it will be set at £1.5 billion.

The first arm of the claim will focus on smaller British firms with sales of less than £100 million and will be run on an opt-out basis, meaning all affected companies will be automatically included in the class action. That claim is expected to be valued at £1.5 billion.

The second arm of the claim will operate on an opt-in basis, meaning companies will have to choose to be included in the claim. It will focus on larger businesses with basis in the European Economic Area (EEA) that have been affected by the fees charged by the card companies.

The claim is focused on Mastercard and Visa's imposition of interchange fees on card payments by customers using UK corporate credit cards, and consumer credit and debit cards used between regions, the law firm said.

"All the larger businesses within the EEA are being charged interregional fees and commercial card fees, which we say they shouldn't be. So, we're encouraging businesses from across the whole of the

EEA to join this class action," Marcus Parker partner Tom Ross said.

He also said travel and leisure companies such as hotels and airlines were particularly likely to be affected by the fees. The EEA includes the 27 EU member states plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

Although the UK has left the EU, it is still possible to bring claims for breaches of EU competition law in the UK for losses incurred by businesses up to the date of Brexit. Visa and Mastercard have faced a raft of litigation in recent years over transaction fees. The UK Supreme Court ruled in December 2020 that a £14 billion lawsuit against Mastercard on behalf of more than 46 million UK consumers could proceed to the next stage.

Mastercard's executive vice-chair Ann Cairns slammed the claim, which she said was brought by "US-based lawyers and litigation funders primarily focused on making money for themselves, wasting both the court's time and taxpayers' money".

Marcus Parker said it expects the claim filed with the Competition Appeal Tribunal will get a first hearing later in 2022. "There is real financial harm here and our job is to get that money back from the card scheme," said Robinson of Marcus Parker.

Shanghai deflates the Chinese Dream



PETE SWEENEY

The author is Asia Economics Editor of Reuters Breakingviews in Hong Kong. Previously he served as Reuters' chief correspondent for China Economy and Markets.s

In China, the Shanghaiese are known for three things: their sweet cuisine, their love of shopping, and their sense of superiority over fellow countrymen.

So some Chinese people might be quietly enjoying the sight of the city's populace howling out windows in frustration after being forcibly locked in their flats up for nearly three weeks. But the mess in Shanghai ultimately offers nothing for anyone to cheer about.

During the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, local officials contained the virus without resorting to locking down swathes of the city. Success appears to have fed complacency.

The highly contagious Omicron variant was barely slowed by initial attempts to contain it early this year.

But the tougher approach mandated by Beijing, including forcible confinement of most of the city's 26 million residents, separating infected children from

parents plus massive censorship of online complaints, hasn't gone down well. Expecting the lockdown to be brief, few residents stocked up on adequate necessities, nor was the local government prepared to feed a population spread over 6,000 square kilometres. Social media is full of small acts of defiance.

While the city has reported only ten deaths caused by Covid so far, the "dynamic zero" policy of stamping out transmission at all costs has seen hospitals put off treating more severe conditions. In the end this might cause more deaths than save lives. "I'd be better off in jail," said one elderly man filmed ranting at health workers in hazmat suits. "At least in jail they'd give me medicine."

Economically it is a nationwide catastrophe. Shanghai's \$700 billion economy contributes roughly 5 per cent of national output. It hosts China's largest stock market, the world's most active port by container throughput, a bevy of multinational headquarters and

Tesla's Gigafactory.

Plenty of other cities are under similar restrictions, but Shanghai's crisis is uncomfortably symbolic.

The Chinese Communist Party was founded there in 1921, and it was a refuge for starving peasants during the massive famine Mao Zedong set off in 1958. Its cosmopolitan, wealthy residents were among the biggest beneficiaries of economic reform and thus some of the regime's staunchest supporters.

More broadly, the failures highlight how the powerful are starting to experience the downsides of President Xi Jinping's rule. When a central policy goal fails, state media typically shunts blame onto individual local officials for moral or intellectual failings — as with those who fumbled the response to the early Covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan. But Shanghai was supposed to be the best-run city in the country.

Financial markets are reeling and unfavourable views of

China are at historic highs overseas, yet nobody gets publicly punished for going too far. The harsh measures deployed in Shanghai could put the whole country into recession and cause a rise in the overall death rate if replicated nationally. They also might not work: In Xian, for example, the virus snuck back into the population three months after a citywide lockdown appeared to quash it. Nor can an aspiring global superpower keep its borders closed indefinitely.

Signs of discontent include increasing interest in emigration among wealthy individuals. For the rest of the educated middle class, though, passivity and risk aversion are more likely responses.

Recent college graduates' revived enthusiasm for low-paying but safe government jobs over technology companies or startups is a worrying trend; the country needs entrepreneurs, innovators and a vibrant private sector if it wants to reduce dependence on US

technology and universities.

But the efficiency gains the People's Republic won by joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 have been used up; an analysis by economist Harry Wu suggested total factor productivity growth turned negative after the financial crisis. State enterprise reform has stalled. China cannot afford Japanese-style malaise when its gross national income per capita is only 40 per cent of Japan's.

Xi's trademark "Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation" was supposed to be about improving ordinary people's lives. But the government is demanding more sacrifices with diminishing economic returns. Covid-zero might not be attainable, yet it remains a useful propaganda tool to highlight Western democracies' failure to contain the virus, so the government is stubbornly sticking with it despite rising costs. Unfortunately, in the battle against Covid, Chinese people are getting sick of winning. — Reuters

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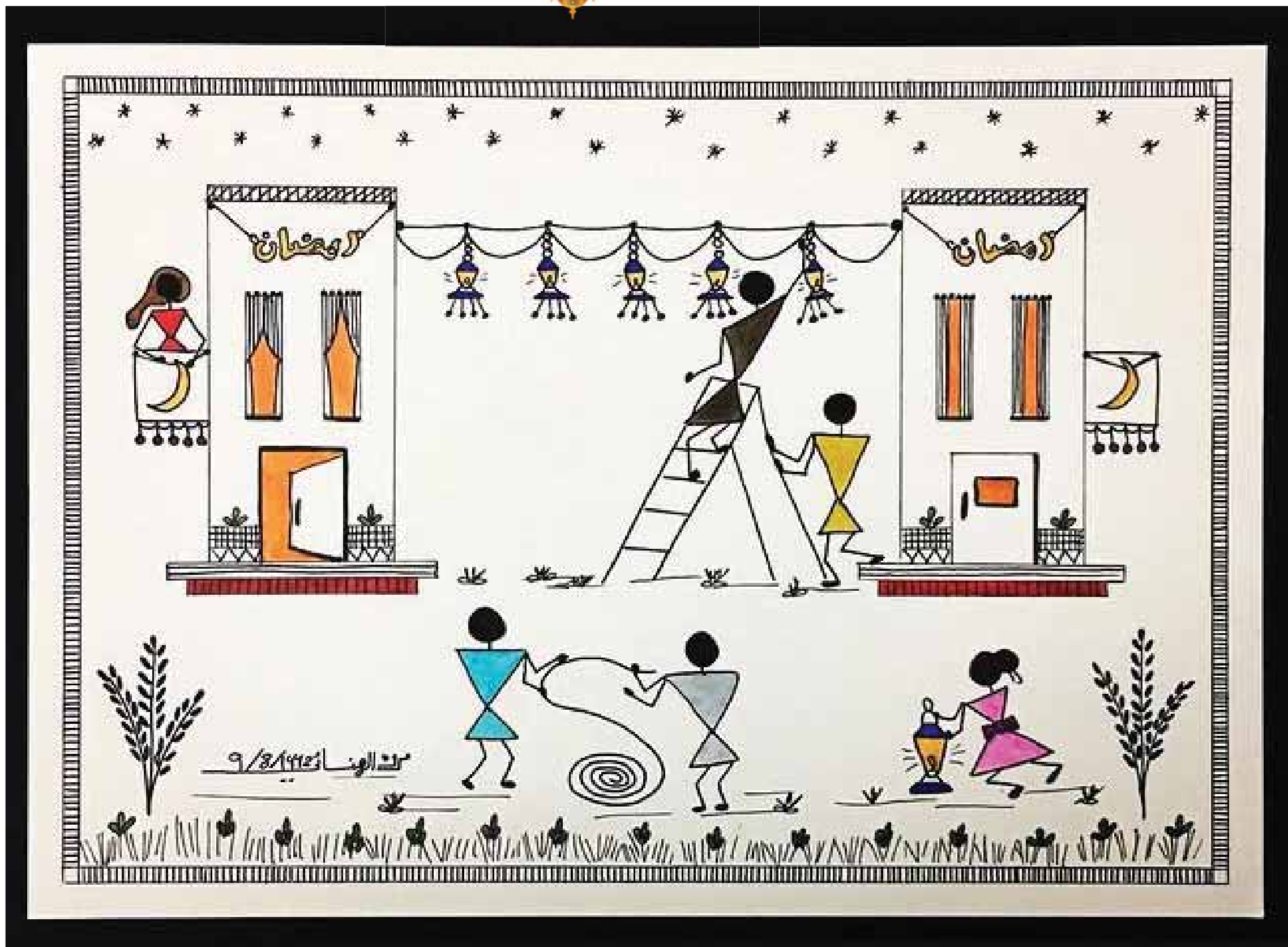
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Preserving Ramadhan rituals through the art of Warli

By Ruqaya al Kindi

Ramadhan is a highly anticipated month among Muslims that some prepare for its arrival two months in advance as if waiting for a valued guest they haven't seen in a long time. Rightly so, the holy month is the month of repentance and forgiveness from Allah, when souls are purified and the promise of reward for good deeds is multiplied.

Ramadhan rituals for Omanis are sacred matters. Having inherited many of these practices from their ancestors, they are keen on keeping them alive.

These rituals can be seen not only in how the Omanis behave but how they conduct themselves.

Continuing her initiative from last year, Omani artist Marwa al Hinai celebrated her holy month by religiously practising their family's tradition and in the same manner, she also documented their Ramadhan rituals through the popular Indian art of "warli."

This year, one of the traditions Marwa focused on is the lighting of the lantern that is practised not just in Oman but across the Muslim world.

"Some traced the origin of this tradi-

tion in Egypt, in the time of Al-Muizz li-Din Allah (A person with many religious contributions) in 362 AH [AH means in the year of the Hegira of the Muslim era. It is used in the Muslim calendar for reckoning years from Muhammad's departure from Mecca in AD 622, who is the messenger of Allah] when he entered the city of Cairo at night," she mentioned.

"As the story goes, people came out to welcome him carrying lanterns in order to light his path. The welcoming event took a festive atmosphere and since it coincided with the advent of the month of Ramadhan, the "lantern" became associated with the festive atmosphere of the holy month, transcending its functional nature of just lighting the street," Marwa said.

Practising this tradition signals to the non-Muslims that the holy month has arrived and as for the believers, it sanctifies that arrival. This also gives meaning to the season to children who are just beginning to practise fasting.

"Children have something to look forward to. Children are usually trained gradually in fasting until they reach the obligatory age to fast. What this means is that they only fast a small part of the day of Ramadhan, like about three or four hours and then they can break their fast," she said.

Marwa shared that there are other commendable traditions practised during Ramadhan that she felt were worthy of preserving through her art.

She shared that some Ramadhan customs are basically acts of worship and



ing that can be done in Ramadhan. "Donating blood during Ramadhan can only be done in times of emergencies, for instance, there are accidents, crises such as traffic accidents, because the fasting person by his donation is forced to break his fast in order to preserve his healthy balance," she shared.

Marwa shared that she is proud of these practices and to best preserve them, she uses her art Warli art which is a folk-art painting used by the Warli tribe of Maharashtra in India to convey their daily and social events to a populace who are not acquainted with the written word.

The technique of drawing this kind of art, she explained, is very basic using simple graphic vocabulary that usually includes triangle, rectangle, circle, line... etc. The artist positions them and controls their movement. "This art is very minimal with colours mostly using a lot of white space. The contemporary artists, nevertheless, were able to transcend the boundaries and utilise this art in the proportion of their artistic needs," Marwa noted.

[Part 1 of 2]

QURAN VERSE OF THE DAY

We have warned you of a near punishment — the Day when a person will observe what his hands have produced, and the faithless will say, "O, I wish I were dust".

Al Naba'



HIS EMINENCE
SHAIKH AHMED
BIN HAMAD AL KHALILI
GRAND MUFTI OF OMAN

FATWA

QUESTION:

A traveller gets sick while on his way, the doctor advised him to stop his Ramadhan fasting as it may affect his health? What is he supposed to do?

ANSWER:

Better to break. However, he should make up for the missed days.

HADITH A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger as saying:

If anyone forgets that he is fasting and eats or drinks he should complete his fast, for it is only Allah Who has fed him and given him drink.

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AROUND THE WORLD

CINEMA

Zombies will once again kick off Cannes Film Festival



THE CANNES FILM Festival will open on its 75th anniversary next month with the screening of a film about zombies, *Z (Comme Z)* by Michel Hazanavicius, Director of award-winning film *The Artist*.

"It's a zombie comedy that evokes passion for cinema", festival director Thierry Fremaux told a news conference on Thursday, recalling that the 2019 event had kicked off with a film from Jim Jarmusch on the same theme.

The festival runs from May 17-28 and will feature heavy-hitters including Tom Cruise's *Top Gun* sequel and an Elvis biopic by Baz Luhrmann starring Austin Butler and Tom Hanks.

Organisers have said the competition will include James Gray's *'Armageddon Time'*, a drama with Anne Hathaway, Jeremy Strong and Anthony Hopkins and a screening of *Three Thousand Years of Longing* by George Miller, with a cast including Idris Elba and Tilda Swinton.

The festival, which announced in March it would ban official Russian delegations from the event unless the war in Ukraine ends, will feature *'Tchaikovsky's Wife'* by exiled Russian Director Kirill Serebrennikov, who has been outspoken about the war.

In the category of first time projects, the festival will feature a debut film from Maksim Nakonechnyi, shot recently in Ukraine. Entitled *'Butterfly Vision'*, it traces the story of a young Ukrainian woman who returns to her country after being captured then released in a prisoner swap.

Fremaux signalled an openness to platforms like Netflix, while acknowledging he still had to try to convince those who disagreed with him.

"It's clear we have to acknowledge the existence of these new types of distribution and production, I think we need to maintain a dialogue with them", he said.

Fremaux drew criticism from the French movie theatre industry in 2017 by allowing Netflix films — seen as a threat to the industry because they are streamed to subscribers rather than shown in cinemas — into the Cannes competition.

Meanwhile, movie theatres around the world continue to face the challenge of bringing back audiences.

"I hope the Cannes Film Festival will serve as a spark for the return of audiences to the movies, but for the moment there is not a big return and some countries are suffering from a loss of interest", he said. — Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

Where Paris hides some of its best art



THROUGH THE GALLERY window, just off the swanky Rue Faubourg Saint-Honore in Paris, a tree is growing out of the ceiling.

On closer inspection, it turns out the branches, leaves and flowers are made from bronze and rock-crystal, and it is one of dozens of beautiful and bizarre chandeliers in the Regis Mathieu Gallery.

Few tourists would think to visit — often too intimidated to enter the fancy showrooms of private galleries.

But with Paris having emerged from a half-century slumber to once again become a major global art hub, there is renewed focus on the treasures to be seen in the city's galleries.

"It's really not the case that they only want people who are buying", said Zara Sajid, co-founder of Art Heart Tours, which aims to bring more tourists into this cloistered world.

"They open these galleries because they are passionate about art and want to share that passion with as many people as possible."

IT'S GOT ITS MOJO BACK

The Paris contemporary art scene has partly got its mojo back thanks to a slew of new museums, including the Louis Vuitton Foundation and Bourse de Commerce, built by two rival uber-rich fashion tycoons.

Private galleries are also booming, helped by Brexit which encouraged big names to decamp from London.

"Paris is back at the forefront of the art scene", said Justine Durrett of Zwirner Gallery, one of a dozen international dealers to open a Paris outpost in recent years.

She credits a "unique dialogue between history and contemporary art" in the city, going beyond fine art to include food, fashion and "the general life-style".

France sells more art than any country apart from the United States — 91,692 works

last year, according to Artprice, an analysis firm.

It still turns over less cash than China and Britain, though it is closing the gap with its northern neighbour and surpassed \$1 billion in auction sales for the first time in 2021.

The boom has not been without controversy. Many locals were shocked to see

their long-running FIAC fair ousted recently from its autumn slot at the Grand Palais in favour of a new Parisian edition of Art Basel, the world's biggest fair organiser.

Some galleries feared this could see them squeezed out by global competitors, though Art Basel has insisted its new fair will be a thoroughly French affair with a local management team.

In any case, Marion Papillon, who heads a union of the city's gallerists, is bullish: "Brexit accelerated things but there has been real dynamism: French galleries are exporting more, and becoming more visible internationally", she told AFP.

'DEMYSTIFYING GALLERIES'

This makes for a good time to be guiding people around Parisian galleries.

Art Heart Tours say they have tapped into a big demand, especially among returning tourists who have already ticked the obvious sites off their lists.

"We want to demystify galleries", co-founder Eric Remmen told AFP.

"We have all these palatial museums in Paris but some of

the best art and design is inside these galleries."

Among the treasures they have seen since starting last May are a large collection of Picasso drawings at the Helene Bailey Gallery, George Baselitz paintings at the Perrotin Secondary Market and designs by late fashion icon Virgil Abloh at Galerie Kreo.

After the chandeliers, Remmen leads AFP to the Kamel Mennour Gallery where a mind-bending \$75,000-euro curved mirror by Anish Kapoor can be found alongside a sculpture by French artist Bertrand Lavier.

"I understand why people are nervous to come in, but my job is to help people discover new things", said gallery assistant Sidonie Sakhoun, 24.

"Art tells our history and it belongs to all of us, not just collectors." — AFP

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Is passion missing in the workplace?

DURING THE second year of the Coronavirus pandemic, I gave a virtual talk and asked the attendees to share in a chatbox how they were feeling that day. The answers were positively diverse with people sharing: Exhilarated! Energetic! Happy to be here!

These are great feelings, but what are the chances that these answers were an accurate representation of the emotional life of the entire attendee?

From a psychological point of view, it seemed real to me, as if those present were overwhelmed by positivity? More than two years after the pandemic has revealed the painful side of reality and that many employees are still frustrated with sharing true feelings and difficult experiences at work, creating a culture of emotional repression that hurts employees and even managers alike!

We all hear many stories of pain and sadness at work, especially in the past two years and what happened in some companies, for instance, panic attacks, injured relationships and feelings of devaluation. Didn't we notice that those employees for example were worried but said they were angry and they were sad but said they were frustrated?

Did they actually and psychologically feel that they were not allowed to admit that they were suffering, whether from the lack of their salary, for example or from losing their job? Doesn't that mean — if I am say — in their own words: We bear more than we should and we can, because we underestimate the importance of what is actually done to us!

Don't some realise that when feelings are pushed aside or ignored, they get stronger? Like the yummy cake in the fridge, the more you try to ignore it.. the more it grabs you! Thus, as long as officials at work, for example, respect personal and professional boundaries, they can acknowledge that grief is inevitable, allow employees to express it and even instill the value of responding to each other with compassion, especially since the established values of our society encourage this. As such sharing problems and grief are very good not only for mental health but also for the work environment itself.

In the end, everyone realises that sadness is an essential part of human life, however, it is usually ignored at work, to the detriment of employees and officials alike. I really hope, with this idea and suggestion, that employees are encouraged to broadcast their hard feelings so that it will not drain employees of their ability to get things done and make offices frustrating — if I could say! This will ultimately show the importance of value to both productivity and employee happiness in a workplace where employees are free to name their emotions, both sad and happy. And while organisations, whatever they are, still have a long way to go on this subject, managers or administrators may one day be able to start meetings with an invitation to share how everyone feels... and in fact expect honest answers!

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and a writer

Ramadhan

Local Scene

f t i w l p y @omanobserver

WEDNESDAY | APRIL 20 | 2022

Include fruits and fruit shakes in your diet during Ramadhan

Jishy Seby
jishyseby@gmail.com

Figs are the summer beauties that are widely consumed during Ramadhan. They are known to lower blood pressure, improve digestion During Ramadhan because of fasting minerals and vitamins decrease in the body. This can cause dehydration in the body, to avoid this we can include fruits and fruit shakes in the diet. The recommended amount of drinking water is 8-10 glasses per day. During Ramadhan, it will be a digestive challenge to drink vast amounts in short periods, particularly after breaking the fast.

This water shortage can be avoided by eating 2-4 juicy fruit per meal and by drinking fruit shakes. Fruits like watermelon are 92 per cent water and it is packed with rehydration salts like magnesium, calcium, sodium and potassium so it can hydrate more effectively than water. Cantaloupes are also an exceptionally good fruit for supporting energy production and the ability to keep blood sugar stable.

Oranges are sweet and packed with 100 per cent daily recommended value for vitamin C with 87 per cent water. Grapefruits contain only 30 calories and the detoxifying limuloids, in them are found to inhibit cancer tumours.

Strawberries are 92 per cent water and ranked as the fourth-strongest antioxidant fruit.

Berries like raspberries and blueberries peak during summer and they clear the arteries and regulate blood sugar.

Figs are the summer beauties that are widely consumed during Ramadhan. They are known to lower blood pressure, improve digestion; help with weight loss

because of bromelin and it has lots of anti-inflammatory compounds. Mangoes are the king of fruits, they provide 135 calories, and are rich sources of vitamins A, B6 and C, plus fibre.

During Ramadhan fruit shakes fulfil the nutrition requirement of your body and save you from



and reduce blood sugar. As one of the world's healthiest foods, they provide the fibre and energy to keep moving.

Grapes are filled with water and are known for the extremely high content of Resveratrol, a substance that acts as an antioxidant and is heart-friendly.

Coconut water is an excellent drink during Ramadhan. It has relatively low sodium and carbohydrates content and tastes dry but refreshing.

Eating pineapple after the meal will improve digestion

dehydration as well as several types of diseases. Fruit shakes help in the growth of body muscles and bone development. Fruit shakes help the fasting body regain the strength and energy which they need to remain active during Ramadan. Fruits are very beneficial for health and if they are used with milk they become more beneficial.

The writer is a clinical dietitian, KIMS Health Hospital, Muscat

Muscat resident set to perform at Meydenbauer Center in the US

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

It's nothing short of an 'Alice in Wonderland' feeling for Bhavya Asha Renchi Mathew, a Muscat resident who migrated to the US with her husband to pursue her passion for dance and music.

Her troupe at 'Mohini Dance School' will be performing at the historic Meydenbauer Center in Bellevue WA which is a theatre in high demand that hosts 250 events with nearly 150,000 guests each year, on April 30.

"Honestly, I'm on top of the world' kind of feeling for the entire troupe members and I'm thankful to my parents, my friends and relatives in Oman, India and the US. Really excited to be performing at Meydenbauer", an overwhelmed Bhavya told the 'Observer' on phone from Washington.

A danseuse by passion, Bhavya has always found pleasure in experimenting and fusing different dance forms and merging a variety of music, and incorporating odd rhythms and steps each other to derive a musical wonder all anew.

"NIRVANA, revisioning the mythical Medusa" is a new journey into an ancient story of the formidable snakes-haired Gorgon, Medusa. The troupe is attempting to reveal the lost truth behind antiquity's most infamous monster for the first time in the Pacific Northwest through the medium of Indian Classical Dance.

"This powerful retelling is an attempt to

shed a unique light on how the cursed monster is instrumental in leading the eternal Goddess of Wisdom and War, Athena, on a path of self-realisation. It echoes the truth that beauty is a reflection of our inner purity and greatness lies not in perfection but the strength to rise from a fall."

According to her, it will be a perfect treat to all senses when Indian classical dancers juxtaposed with magnificent sets, dazzling costumes and originally composed music breathes life into this ancient story on April 30.

A JOURNEY PAR EXCELLENCE IN DANCE

Bhavya completed her schooling in Indian School Muscat before she did her B.Tech in Electronics and Communication from Rajagiri School of Engineering and Technology and her MS in Electrical Engineering from the University of Southern California.

She grew up watching her mother, Asha Renchi Mathew, an accomplished dancer perform. She has trained under stalwarts like kalamandalam Sugandhi, Kalamandalam Mohana Thulasi, Kalamandalam Saraswathi and also at Regatta Natya Sangeetha Kendra.

She took her baby steps in dance when she was just four under the tutelage of Dr Neena Prasad, a renowned Mohiniyattam dancer after which she was formally trained in Bharatnatyam, Mohiniyattam and Kuchippudi by Kalamandalam Mohana Thulasi. She received training from Rajesh Master, an instructor at RDI Performing Arts who moulded her in cinematic classes.

It was after she settled in Seattle in 2017 that she joined Mohini Dance School, founded

by Smitha Krishnan, who is a disciple of Guru Kala Vijayan, daughter of Guru Kalyanikuttyamma, who is considered the mother of Mohiniyattam.

"Although I have trained in Bharatnatyam, Mohiniyattam and Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam so far remains my favourite and what excites me about dancing is the ability to creatively collaborate with so many other artists and bring stories to life. Drama, comedy and romance are just some of the facets of those stories and I find all equally enthralling", she turned verbal.

She has had the unique opportunity to perform as part of the crew for the prestigious Soorya Festival, an acclaimed dance and music fest, and the second being the opportunity to perform at the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM).

MEDUSA ON STAGE

Guru Smitha Krishnan conceived the idea of performing Medusa and her origin story as a classical dance ballet in Seattle. The production, titled "NIRVANA, revisioning the mythical Medusa", is significant since this is the first time in the Pacific Northwest that the troupe is portraying this story through the medium of Indian Classical Dance.

The work on this production began in 2020, with several dancers and musicians working round the clock to make it happen.

Meydenbauer Hall is the premier convention center in Bellevue which has hosted over 5,000,000 guests in its lifetime and three hydroplanes in the Center Hall.

The Meydenbauer Center Theatre whose unofficial mascot is the rubber duck can see 212 performers on its stage.

