

Annual horse race in Salalah on Saturday

Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Hamad bin Thuwaini al Said will patronise over the annual horse race of the Royal Cavalry (RC) on Saturday. The race, organised by the Royal Court Affairs (RCA), represented by the RC, will be held this year in the Wilayat of Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar. The race includes five rounds. The prominent round of the annual race will be competing for HM The Sultan's Cup. Equestrian sports, as well as Omani and global musical pieces will be held between the rounds.



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CHELSEA
SNATCH LATE
WINNER AGAINST
NEWCASTLE



P15

NEW WAVE OF
INFLATION HITS
US FACTORY
FLOORS



P20

TRANSFORMING
HIS PHOBIA
INTO A
BUSINESS



MUSCAT

HM CONDOLENCES
TO SAUDI, ZAMBIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the death of Princess Nourah Faisal Abdulaziz al Saud. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and sympathy, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the departed's soul in peace in paradise and grant her family patience. His Majesty has also sent a cable of condolences to President Hakainde Hichilema of the Republic of Zambia on the death of former Zambian president Rupiah Banda. — ONA

HM GREETINGS
TO HUNGARY

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Katalin Novak of the Republic of Hungary on the occasion of her winning the presidential elections. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Novak to achieve progress for the friendly people of Hungary. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations between the two countries development and growth. — ONA

HM THANKED BY
EMIR OF KUWAIT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable to him on the death of Shaikha Shuaa Salim Al Hamoud al Sabah. In his cable, Shaikh Nawaf expressed his sincere thanks for His Majesty the Sultan's heartfelt sentiments and sympathy.

INSIDE



IRAN MINISTER TO DISCUSS
NUCLEAR DEAL IN MOSCOW

P6



GERMANY AWAKENS
WITH UKRAINE WAR!

P9

OMAN, QATAR REVIEW BILATERAL TIES



HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received on Monday Dr Ali Said Samikh al Marri, Minister of Labour in the State of Qatar. During the meeting, the Qatari Minister conveyed greetings and best wishes of Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The meeting reviewed the distinguished relations between the two countries. **DETAILS ON P2**
PHOTO BY MOHAMED AL RASHDI

National urban strategy
to spur realty growth

REAL ESTATE TRADING VALUE AT RO 2.5 BILLION

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The National Urban Development Strategy is an urban guide for development in the Sultanate of Oman for the next 20 years, with objectives based on development and sustainability. The strategy takes into account the geographical, natural and societal diversity of the various governorates in the country.

TRADING VALUE
Speaking at the Oman Design and Build Week (ODBW) and Oman Real Estate Exhibition, Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, said: "Considering the diversity of the various governorates of the Sultanate

Considering the diversity of the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, the value of real estate trading recorded an increase of 4 per cent to reach RO 2.5 billion in in 2021

DR KHALFAN BIN SAID AL SHUEILI
Minister of Housing and Urban Planning

of Oman, the value of real estate trading recorded an increase of 4 per cent to reach RO 2.5 billion in in 2021."

He added that the Sultanate of Oman attaches great importance to real estate development, as it comes among the five most influential sectors of the global economy. The minister pointed out that real estate development as an industry provides nearly 120 other industries such as contracting, marketing, facility maintenance and management, and other areas. The value of real estate trading in the Sultanate of Oman grew by 4 per cent in 2021 to reach RO 2.5 billion compared to the year 2020, pointed out Dr Khalfan, who explained that efforts being exerted to make this sector more influential in achieving economic development and urban development alike.

OMAN SUSTAINABILITY WEEK



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, inaugurated the "Oman Sustainability Week" at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, which highlights the importance of adopting sustainable practices for the further development of the Sultanate of Oman. The "Oman Sustainability Week", hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and organised by Petroleum Development Oman in cooperation with the "Connect" company, is attended by more than 100 major local and international companies in the field of sustainability through a dedicated exhibition displaying the latest sustainability technologies, solutions and global initiatives. — ONA

Refugee exodus reaches
2.8 million as Russian
strikes hit west Ukraine

KRAKOW: People fleeing what had been the relative safety of western Ukraine joined thousands crossing into eastern Europe on Monday after Russia attacked a Ukrainian base near the border with Nato-member Poland. Ukraine said 35 people were killed at the base on Sunday. Moscow said up to 180 "foreign mercenaries" died and a large number of foreign weapons were destroyed. Ukraine also reported renewed air strikes on an airport in the west of the country. The number of refugees fleeing Ukraine since Russia invaded on February 24 climbed to more than 2.8 million,

United Nations data showed on Monday, in what has become Europe's fastest growing refugee crisis since World War Two. European Union officials have said 5 million may end up fleeing while others have put the figure higher. Millions of people have also been displaced inside Ukraine, with many evacuated only as far as the quieter western regions, including to cities like Lviv. Myroslava, 52, fled her home in the Ternopil region, in western Ukraine, and was waiting in a terminal of Krakow station in Poland to be picked up by acquaintances. She did not know where she would stay. **SEE P7**



A baby looks out of a bus going to Poland, as people queue outside the main train station in Lviv, Ukraine, on Monday. — Reuters

UN launches biodiversity talks

PARIS: UN biodiversity negotiations began in Geneva on Monday to hammer out a global deal to better protect nature that is due for approval later this year. Almost 200 countries are due to adopt a global framework this year to safeguard nature by mid-century from the destruction wrought by humanity, with a key milestone of 30 per cent protected by 2030. "The world is clearly eager for urgent action to protect nature", said Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in a press release.

"And we have no time to spare. Together we must ultimately deliver a truly historic agreement that puts us firmly on the path to living in harmony with nature." Talks, which run from March 14 to 29, will set the stage for a crucial United Nations COP 15 biodiversity summit, initially due to be held in Kunming, China in 2020 and postponed several times because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Geneva meeting will announce new dates for COP 15, which is currently slated for April to May but is expected to be delayed again.

According to several sources, the new dates envisaged are from the end of August to the beginning of September. The CBD said the Geneva talks will play a crucial role in finalising an "ambitious transformative post-2020 framework" to be approved at COP15. A draft of the document outlines some 20 targets for 2030, including the high-profile ambition to protect at least 30 per cent of the Earth's land and water habitats. It also includes objectives on reducing the amount of fertilisers and pesticides discharged into the environment. — AFP



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Oman and Kenya hold political consultations session



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held a session of political consultations and talks with Raychelle Omamo, Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Kenya, on Monday.

The meeting discussed relations of cooperation between the two countries in various fields and means of enhancing them. The two sides also exchanged views on issues of common interest. The meeting was

attended by Khalid bin Hashel al Musalhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, Mohamed Dori Mohamed Yakub, Ambassador of Kenya to the Sultanate of Oman and officials from both sides. — ONA

Over 300,000 hours of part-time work available in Govt units

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Monday announced 308,200 hours of part-time employment opportunities for specific tasks at various government units.

These tasks have to be carried out by holders of Master's degree (6 vacancies), Bachelor's degree (129 vacancies), diploma (71 vacancies) and General Education Diploma (61 vacancies), as well as Basic Education Certificates (40 vacancies).

The registration for the announced vacancies is open for three weeks. — ONA

Smart device to track harmful and toxic gases launched

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT, MARCH 14

The National Energy Centre (NEC) launched a smart environment device project to track harmful and toxic gases.

The device was launched under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, as part of the Oman Sustainability Week.

The device tracks harmful, toxic gases that create an unhealthy environment, through instantaneous readings detected by the device's sensors and measuring wind speed and direction.

It also provides an overview of the air quality index in real time by giving daily information about the extent of the cleanliness or pollution of the air and the potential causes of negative health effects that a person may suffer during the few hours or days after inhaling polluted air.

The calculations are based on measurements of the five main pollutants namely nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, ground ozone, sulfur dioxide and particulates with a diameter of less than 10 microns and 2.5 microns.

The device also helps to maintain the cleanliness of the surrounding air within the required standards, which may be highly polluted as a result



of human activities, and emissions resulting from the combustion of fuels to get energy and water, as well as transportation and industrial activities.

The project was launched within the context of the memorandum of cooperation between the NEC and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. It aims to develop smart city technologies by adopting and applying modern technologies and Internet of Things (IoT) solutions, as well as benefiting from the technical expertise of the NEC in the field of IoT, initiatives and consultations related to smart city projects.

The launch, installation and operation of this project aims to provide a technical platform for monitoring the surrounding atmosphere in the Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM), the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and Madinat Al Irfan in Muscat.



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E-mail: info@nationalfinance.co.om, Website: www.nationalfinance.co.om

Invitation to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of National Finance Co. SAOG (the "Company") are pleased to invite the shareholders for the Company's Annual Ordinary General Meeting ("AGM") to be held at 5 PM, on Wednesday the 30th of March 2022, at the Company's Head Office, Ominvest Business Centre, Madinat Al Irfan, A'Seeb, Muscat - Sultanate of Oman and through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository Company ("MCD") website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum for the first AGM is not met, the date of the second AGM will be on Tuesday, the 5th of April 2022, at 5 PM, at the same location and through the aforesaid electronic platform to consider the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors' on Company's activity and its financial position for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
2. To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors' on corporate governance for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
3. To consider the statutory auditors' report and to approve the financial statements and the profit and loss account for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
4. To consider and approve distribution of cash dividend to the shareholders as on the date of the meeting at the rate of 8 baizas per share.
5. To approve the sitting fees paid to Directors' for attending meetings of the Board and sub-committees for the previous financial year and to determine the Directors' sitting fees for the upcoming financial year, as per (Annexure 'A').
6. To consider and approve the proposed Directors Remuneration of RO 150,000 for the financial year ended on 31st December 2021.
7. To ratify the transactions carried out with related parties during the financial year ended 31st December 2021 (Annexure 'B').
8. To ratify the amounts paid towards social responsibility activities during the year ended 31st December 2021, as per (Annexure 'C').
9. To consider and approve the allocation of an amount of RO 150,000 for Corporate Social Responsibility for the financial year ending 31st December 2022.
10. To consider and approve the framework for evaluation of the performance of the Board of Directors (Annexure 'D').
11. To appoint an independent entity to measure the performance of the members of the Board of Directors and determine their fees.
12. To appoint statutory auditors for the financial year ending 31st December 2022 and determine their fees.

Pursuant to the Company's articles of association and general meeting regulations, through modern technology means issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- (a) A juristic person, exclusively, has the right to authorize a natural person to attend the general meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCD.
- (b) Voting on any of the items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date set for the Meeting until the end of the voting process on the day of the meeting, and in the event that the shareholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be invalid, and he must re-vote again on the day of the Meeting.

Any questions relating to this notice should be addressed to Mr. R. Panneerselvam (Telephone no. +968 24470000/24470102 or email: r.panneerselvam@nationalfinance.co.om)

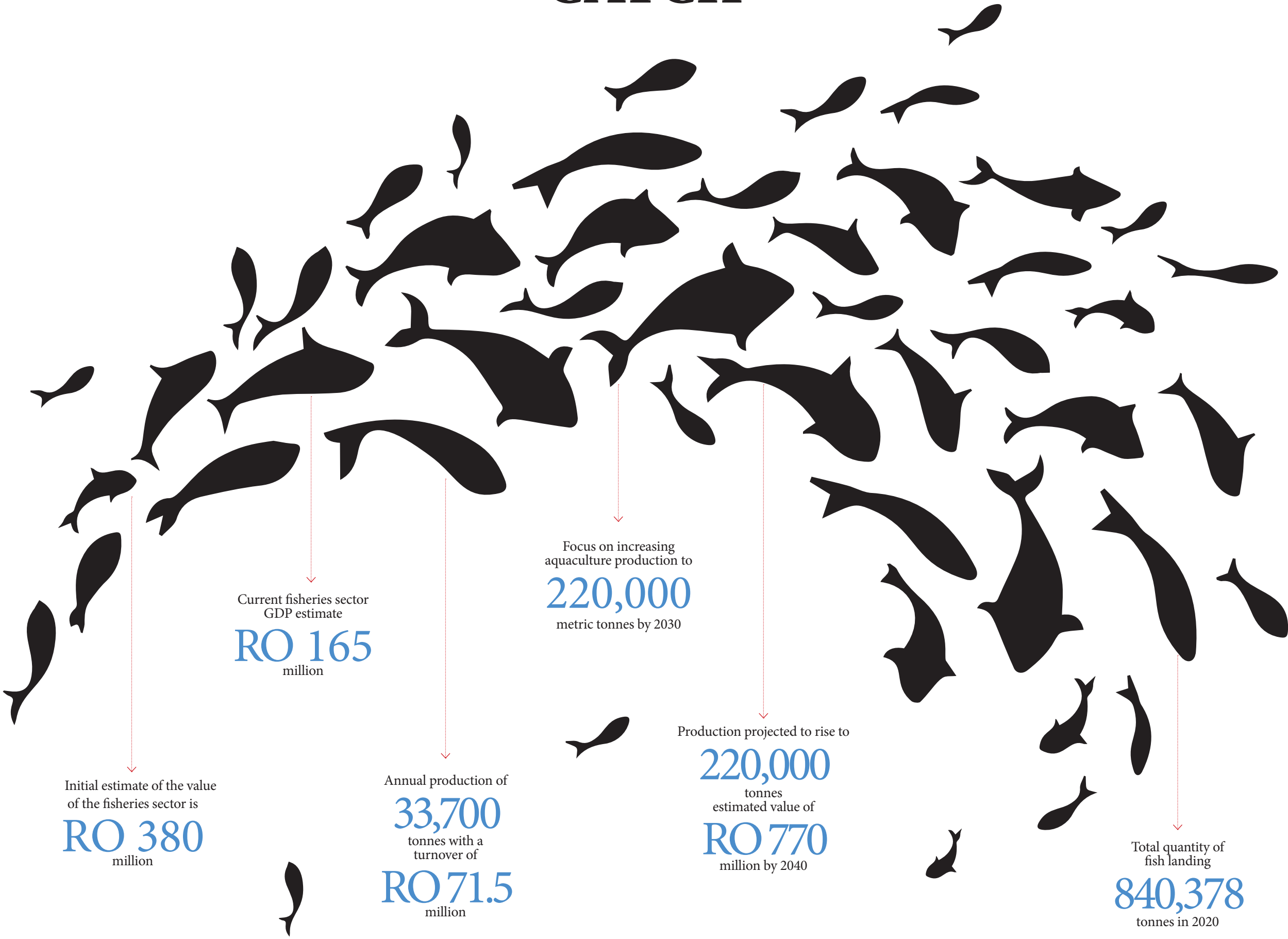
Chairman

Auditors

Legal Advisors



FOR A BIGGER CATCH



SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttivy

The Sultanate of Oman is one of the largest fish producers in the Gulf region and a net exporter of fish and their products.

Set on the profitable axis of the Arabian Gulf and Indian Ocean, the country's warm climate allows year round fishing of more than 1,000 species along its 3,165 km long pristine coastline.

The Fisheries and Aquaculture Vision 2040 envisages creation of a profitable world-class fisheries sector that is ecologically sustainable and a net contributor to the economy of the Sultanate of Oman, and to stimulate a growth led by the private sector in fisheries sector capital and employment.

The strong commitment from the government to develop aquaculture sector in a competitive and sustainable manner augurs well for the social, economic, cultural and historic values of the country.

The Ministry for Agriculture and

Fisheries and Water Resources is focusing on increasing aquaculture production to 220,000 metric tonnes, with a value of \$ 883 million by 2030.

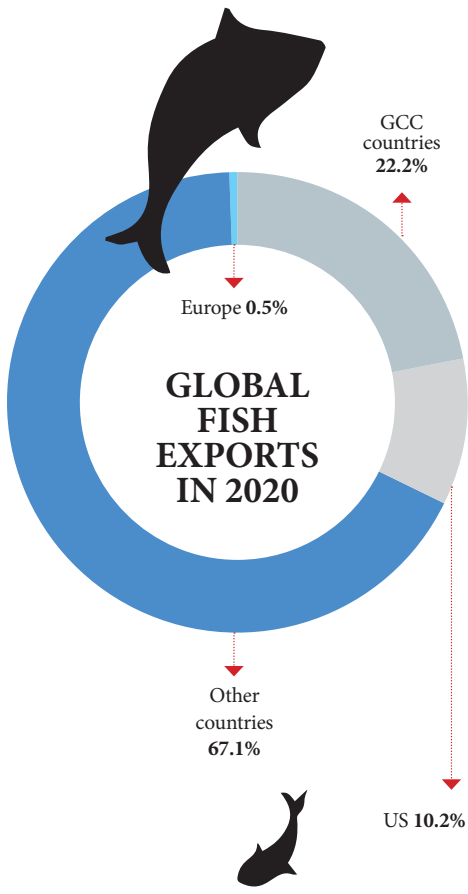
The ambitious Vision 2040 document outlines various plans to achieve a "profitable world-class fisheries sector that is ecologically sustainable and a net contributor to the economy of Oman".

This vision is a shorthand description of a future fishery and aquaculture sector that is developed and mature.

"By 2040, the fisheries sector will be making a net contribution to increasing the wealth of Oman, rather than being dependent upon that wealth, mainly through subsidies, for its development as is presently the case", asserts the document.

The current fisheries sector GDP estimate of RO 165 million understates the value of the sector because it does not attribute processing marketing and logistical activity in fisheries value chains to the fisheries sector.

An initial estimate of the value of



the fisheries sector is RO 380 million. Work is required to properly characterise and monitor the economic scale and importance of the sector.

The Fisheries and Aquaculture Vision 2040 will generate improved net economic value from better governance of the country's domestic fisheries that reduces the risk of existing investment by ensuring environmental sustainability, providing new opportunities for private investment, stimulating innovations to make Omani value chains more efficient and to add value to fish products.

"The private sector will be both bigger and more internationally competitive than at present, and will provide an attractive source of employment for future generations of educated Omanis who aspire to comfortable living standards", states the document.

Aquaculture and international development opportunities (i.e. development of large tuna interests) also exist and are the main potential sources of growth in fisheries product volumes.

The potential for the Omani aquaculture sector in the next ten years has been estimated as being capable of annual production of 33,700 tonnes with an associated turnover of RO 71.5 million, with this total rising to 220,000 tonnes estimated value of RO 770 million by 2040.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the total quantity of fish landed in the Sultanate of Oman reached 840,378 tonnes in 2020, an increase of 44.8 per cent comparing to 2019.

The aquaculture production grew by 24 per cent compared to 2019. As for marine and freshwater aquaculture, the amount of fish production reached 1,307 tonnes in 2020, including marine aquaculture for the bream fish production using floating cages.

GCC countries accounted 22.2 per cent of the fish exports in 2020 followed by 10.2 per cent to the US, 67.1 per cent to other countries and 0.5 per cent to European countries.



National Competitiveness Committee holds meeting

MUSCAT: The National Competitiveness Committee (NCC) on Monday held its first periodic meeting for 2022. The meeting, chaired by Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Chairman of the committee, discussed the media plan of the National Competitiveness Office (NCO), which will enable the office to reach the targeted segments of surveys issued by international organisations and raise overall public awareness.

The meeting also reviewed Oman's positions in international reports and indices listed in the Oman Vision 2040 that NCO monitors. It also discussed ways to advance Oman's position. NCO coordinates with local and international parties to raise Oman's rankings in international reports and indices.



Muscat Municipal Council reviews flood prevention measures

MUSCAT: The Municipal Council in the Governorate of Muscat held a meeting on Monday under the chairmanship of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, Chairman of the council.

The meeting discussed the impact of exceptional climatic conditions and the efforts made by the competent authorities to reduce negative effects on the infrastructure and facilities.

The meeting further reviewed the projects of constructing dykes to prevent floods risks by hosting experts from the Ministry of Agriculture,



Fisheries and Water Resources and Muscat Municipality.

The council also discussed a number of

issues related to the municipal work and took appropriate recommendations on their regard. — ONA

Oman, Bahrain review cooperation in archive, document fields

MUSCAT: Hamad bin Mohammed al Dhawyani, Chairman of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), held a session of talks with Shaikh Dr Khalid bin Khalifa al Khalifa, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Executive Director of Isa Cultural Centre in the Kingdom of Bahrain, at the NRAA's HQs on Monday.

The session discussed aspects of cooperation in the fields of documents, archives and historical studies between the two countries and means of enhancing them to serve the joint interests.

During the session, the two sides stressed the importance of promoting bilateral coordination in the fields of historical, civilisational, intellectual and scientific conferences.



NRAA Chairman gave a briefing on the role of the NRAA in preserving the nation's memory and adopting modern systems for managing documents and archives in accordance with the latest international standards, besides its role in familiarising

the local and international community with its contributions to the historical and civilisational aspects in the Sultanate of Oman through organising conferences, seminars and documentary exhibitions at the local and international levels. — ONA

GLOBINVEST
The Global Omani Investment Company SAOC
ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

The Board of Directors of The Global Omani Investment company SAOC is pleased to invite the Company's shareholders to attend the company's ordinary Annual General Meetings, to be held at **4:00 pm** on Tuesday, **29/03/2022**, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om) if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held on Sunday 03/04/2022 at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' report for the financial year ended December 31, 2021.
- To consider the Auditors' Report and to approve the Financial Statements, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account, for the financial year ended December 31, 2021.
- To consider and approve the proposed cash dividend (7%) to the shareholders, for the financial year ended December 31, 2021.
- To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended December 31, 2021.
- To consider and approve the transactions the company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending on December 31, 2022.
- To approve the sitting fees of the Board meetings paid to the Board members for the financial year ended on 31/12/2021, and to determine the sitting fees for the next financial year ending on 31/12/2022.
- To appoint the Auditors for the Company for the financial year ending December 31, 2022, and to determine their fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls of holding General Meetings using electronic platform, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Juristic persons only, have the right to appoint a natural person as a proxy to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information, please contact Mr. Jamal Ahmed Al-Shanfari on phone: 24489009 GSM: 92839933

Chairman **Auditors** **Legal Consultante**

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Defence
ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors/consultant specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
004/2022	Building Works - Musandam - Umm Alghanam	Excellent	24 March 2022	25 April 2022	400/- R.O
005/2022	Maintenance Works (Gas Turbine) - MAM	Specialists in Electromechanical (Gas Turbine)	24 March 2022	25 April 2022	1,200/- R.O
007/2022	Electrical Works Haima	Grate (B) and Above	24 March 2022	2 May 2022	750/- R.O
008/2022	Consulting Services (Supervision)	First and Above	24 March 2022	11 April 2022	250/- R.O
009/2022	Quantity Surveying Consulting Services (Supervision)	Specialists/ registered in field of Quantity Surveying	24 March 2022	11 April 2022	250/- R.O

***For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)**

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Musaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Musaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer.
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Manpower (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope and drawings.
 - Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as soft copy (USB) in two separate files:
 - financial (bill 1&2 separated from bill3)
 - Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

Real Estate to be the engine of growth

FROM PAGE 1

He said that the ministry through the real estate development law seeks to open new areas for investment areas, which include allowing expatriates to own property, in addition to allowing investments in Sorouh Integrated Residential Neighbourhood Project. The plans to allow plots for integrated fuel stations on highways and expressways also offer investment opportunities for real estate developers, apart from benefiting the users.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has also launched the soft run of its digital services platform. Speaking on the occasion, Asim bin Mohammed al Zadjali of Oman Real Estate Association, said that fee collected from real estate trading increased by 18 per cent to RO 84 million.

Al Zadjali said fee collected from real estate trading increased by 18 per cent from RO 71 million in 2020 to RO 84 million in 2021, and the number of legal transactions in 2021 increased by 29 per cent from 125,000 in 2020 to 161,000 in 2021. On Average, 600 legal transactions are conducted daily.

Oman Design and Building Week is expected to receive 9,000 visitors daily, with the participation of 13 countries displaying over 2,500 products.

As many as 9,000 visitors are expected to attend this event, with the participation of (13) countries.

vodafone

NOTICE TO ATTEND
THE ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Future Telecommunications SAOC (the "Company") invites shareholders to attend the ordinary general meeting, which is to be held on Wednesday, 30th of March 2022 at 2:00 pm, in Intercontinental Muscat- Bahla Nizwa Hall, Qurum, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. If quorum is not met, the second meeting is to be held on Thursday, 31 of March 2022, to discuss the following agenda:

- Consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ending December 31, 2021
- Consider and approve the Company's Corporate Governance report and approve it
- Consider the auditor's report and approve the balance sheet and profit and loss account for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2021 and approve it
- Approve the sitting fees of the Board Members and committees under it for the year ending 31/12/2021 and set the fees of the same for the year ending 31/12/2022
- Approve allocating part of 2022 budget from the company's financial year ending 31/12/2022 to be part of the company's corporate social responsibility for the same year
- Election of a member of the Board of Directors to fill the vacant seat
- Appoint an external auditor to the company for the financial year ending 31/12/2022, set his fees and approve his appointment.

Those wishing to run for membership in the Board of Directors must fill out the nomination form prepared for that and deliver it to the company before the meeting of the General Assembly at least (5) five days, no later than the end of work on Thursday 23/3/2022, and the candidate must take into account the fulfillment of the requirements for membership of the Company's Board of Directors

All invitees are requested to attend the meeting at least half an hour before the stated time.

The shareholders are free to appoint an agent to attend on their behalf by filling-in the proxy and submitting

For any queries relating to the above agenda and the proxy form, please contact Mr. Mohammed Abdul Malik Abdullah Al Khalili on +968 9532 7777



Iran FM to hold talks on N-deal

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

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

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

More than 10 months of talks in Vienna have brought major powers close to renewing the landmark 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on regulating Iran’s



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian

nuclear programme.

But the negotiations were halted after Russia on March 5 demanded guarantees that Western sanctions imposed following its invasion of Ukraine would not damage its trade with Iran.

On March 11, the European Union’s foreign policy chief Josep Borrell tweeted that the pause

Over 10 months of talks in Vienna have brought major powers close to renewing the landmark 2015 deal

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has dismissed as “irrelevant” the Russian demands for guarantees, saying that they “just are not in any way linked together”.

But on Monday, Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman repeated Tehran’s position that the move had to come from the US.

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

“If they (the US) announce that they have made a decision, then all the delegations can return to Vienna” to finalise a deal, he said, adding that for now “we are not at the point of announcing the agreement”. — **AFP**

Iraqi PM visits Erbil

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al Kadhimi visited on Monday the site of a missile attack, which hit near the US consulate in the northern city of Erbil.

Earlier, Al Kadhimi arrived in Erbil, the capital of Iraq’s northern autonomous region of Kurdistan and held a meeting with the region’s prime minister Masrour Barzani.

“We’re in absolute agreement that the repeated attacks on Iraq’s sovereignty must stop,” Barzani wrote on Twitter, describing the attack as “despicable.”

Afterwards, Al Kadhimi and other officials inspected the site of the attack, according to Al Kadhimi’s office.

A dozen missiles from outside Iraq struck Erbil on Sunday, resulting in material damage without causing casualties.

The attack was in retaliation for suspected Israeli attacks in the Syrian capital Damascus that killed two Iranians last week.

Iraq had previously seen a series of attacks targeting facilities hosting US military personnel. Washington blamed those attacks on fighters in Iraq. — **dpa**



Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al Kadhimi inspects a damaged building in Erbil. — **Reuters**

Sudanese rally against military, economic crisis

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces opened fire on Monday as protesters in several cities across the northeast African nation marched against military rule and a worsening economic situation, witnesses said.

Costs of bread and transport have soared in recent days and protesters marched to demand a return to civilian rule and protest the rising cost of living.

Regular protests calling for civilian rule have taken place since a military coup led by army chief Abdel Fattah al

Burhan on October 25, with heavy-handed crackdowns leaving 87 dead, according to medics. “Down with military rule”, protesters chanted in Damazin, a city some 450 kilometres southeast of the capital Khartoum.

Security forces opened fire to disperse protesters, witness Mohamed Abdel Qader said. On Sunday, the price of bread shot up over 40 per cent, from 35 to 50 Sudanese pounds, or from five to eight US cents.

Sudan has been especially vulnerable to fears of global supply shortages in the wake

of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

As costs of fuel spike, the cost of transport has also jumped 50 per cent across Sudan.

In Nyala, state capital of South Darfur in the west, security forces fired a barrage of tear gas canisters to stop crowds.

“No to rising costs,” people shouted, according to resident Abdel Moneim Mohamed. “No to military rule.”

Protesters in Nyala also included residents of the vast camps set up when people were forced from their homes during the conflict that broke out in Darfur in 2003.

“The situation has become intolerable,” said Hamad Bashir from Atbara, a city 280 kilometres northeast of Khartoum, a traditional centre of the country’s railway industry. Bashir said that railway workers have not been paid for two months.

Rail workers began a strike on Sunday, said Hasham Khedr, the head of the Railway Workers’ Union.

Food insecurity is a major issue in the impoverished country, where one in every three people are dependent on aid, according to the United Nations. — **AFP**



Sudanese protesters take part in ongoing demonstrations in Khartoum. — **AFP**

Famine conditions in Yemen rising sharply, says UN

DUBAI: The number of people in war-torn Yemen starving in famine conditions is projected to increase five-fold this year to 161,000, UN agencies warned on Monday, amid fears of a dire shortfall of life-saving aid.

Over 30,000 people are already struggling in famine conditions, a joint statement by the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN children’s fund Unicef and the World Food Programme (WFP) said.

Calling the sharp rise “extremely worrying”, the joint UN statement comes two days ahead of a high-level conference to raise aid for Yemen, as fears mount that Russia’s attack on Ukraine threatens global food supplies.

“These harrowing figures confirm that we are on a countdown to catastrophe in Yemen and we are almost out of time to avoid it,” WFP chief David Beasley said, warning of “mass starvation and famine” should donors not offer aid to avert it.

Yemen depends almost entirely on food imports, with nearly a third of wheat supplies coming from Ukraine, the UN said.

War in Ukraine following Russia’s invasion “is likely to lead to significant import shocks, further driving food prices,” the UN said.

“The resounding takeaway is that we



Vehicles queue at a petrol station in Sanaa amid fuel shortages in the war-torn country. — **AFP**

need to act now,” said David Gressly, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen.

UN-backed assessments use a ranking called the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), which rates hunger levels from one to five. Under the IPC system, level five is classified as “catastrophe,” and when it applies to 20 per cent of the population is deemed a famine.

IPC results on Monday showed 17.4 million people out of Yemen’s 29 million people are facing high levels of acute food insecurity and total likely to increase this year to 19 million. “An extremely worrying new data point is that the number of people experiencing catastrophic levels of hunger... is projected to increase five-fold, from 31,000 currently to 161,000 people over the second half of 2022,” the UN statement read. — **AFP**

BEIJING

China records more local Covid cases this year

China has reported more local symptomatic Covid-19 cases so far this year than it recorded in all of 2021, as the highly transmissible Omicron variant triggers outbreaks from Shanghai to Shenzhen.

Mainland China reported 1,337 new domestically transmitted Covid cases with confirmed symptoms on March 13, the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Monday. That brought the total this year to more than 9,000, compared



with 8,378 in 2021, according to Reuters calculations. In the past week, new Covid cases have been reported in Beijing and the financial hub of Shanghai — China’s most populous cities.

COLOMBO

Lanka FM meets top IMF official

Sri Lanka’s finance minister held talks with a top International Monetary Fund (IMF) official, two sources said, as the island nation seeks help to deal with its plunging reserves, a sliding currency and surging inflation.

IMF Asia and Pacific Department Director Changyong Rhee met Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa and Treasury Secretary S R Atyagalle, two finance ministry officials said.

Sri Lanka is expected to start formal talks with the IMF in April



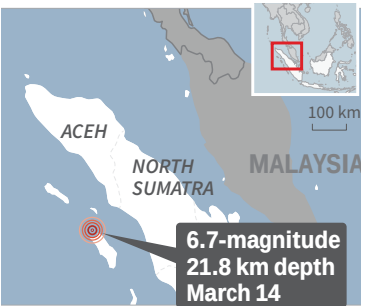
on a possible programme that could boost reserves and put growth on a sustainable path. Officials discussed IMF’s latest review of the economy. — **Reuters**

JAKARTA

Strong quakes shake Indonesia

Strong and shallow earthquakes shook western Indonesia and the Philippines’ main island early on Monday, rattling buildings and sending panicked residents fleeing, but causing no casualties or damage.

In Indonesia, a 6.7-magnitude earthquake hit off the west coast of Sumatra island and in the Philippines, a 6.4-magnitude tremor struck 110 kilometres off Luzon island, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said. Officials in both countries said there were no



immediate reports of casualties or damage and there was no tsunami threat from either quake. The one off Indonesia hit at 4:06 am at a depth of 21 km. — **AFP**



A woman reacts as she stands outside destroyed apartment blocks following shelling in the northwestern Obolon district of Kyiv. – AFP

Kyiv apartment block shelled

LVIV: Ukraine said it held “hard” talks on a ceasefire, immediate withdrawal of troops and security guarantees with Russia on Monday, despite the fatal shelling of a residential building in Kyiv.

Both sides had suggested some results could be in sight after earlier rounds primarily focused on ceasefires to get aid to towns and cities under siege by Russian forces and evacuate civilians; those truces have frequently failed.

Firefighters tackled the remains of a blaze at the damaged apartment block in the capital, where a stunned young resident described the chaos of the previous night in a city targeted by the Russian advance but so far largely spared bombardment.

Officials said at least one person died in the shelling and a second person was killed by falling debris after a missile strike on another part of the Ukrainian capital.

“The staircase was not there anymore, everything was on fire”, Maksim Korovii said, describing

how he and his mother had first hid inside their dust and smoke-filled apartment, thinking Russian forces were breaking down the door.

“We didn’t know what to do. So we ran out to the balcony. We managed to put on whatever clothes we had at hand and made our way from balcony to balcony and in the end we climbed down by the next building’s entrance”, he said.

Russia denies targeting civilians, saying it is conducting a “special operation” to demilitarise and “denazify” Ukraine. Ukraine and Western allies call this a baseless pretext for a war of choice.

Russia’s defence ministry said at least 20 people had been killed and 28 wounded in the capital of the eastern Donetsk region by what it said, without providing evidence, was a Ukrainian missile with a cluster charge. Pro-Russian separatists who control the region said earlier a child was among those hit, calling it a war crime. A Ukrainian official denied the

reports, which Reuters was unable to independently verify.

“It is unmistakably a Russian rocket or another munition”, Ukrainian military spokesman Leonid Matyukhin said. Ukraine and its allies have previously said Russia might attack its own side to create pretexts for further offensives against Ukraine.

The UN human rights office said its monitors in Ukraine had confirmed the deaths of at least 636 civilians, including 46 children. The actual toll is likely much higher, it said, since there have been delays receiving and corroborating reports from areas of intense hostilities such as Kharkiv and Mariupol.

More than 2,500 residents of Mariupol have been killed so far, presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said. A pregnant woman pictured being evacuated from a bombed maternity unit there last week had died, according to the foreign ministry. Reuters was not immediately able to verify those

reports.

Multiple evacuation attempts from the besieged southern port have failed but the city council said 160 cars had left Mariupol at lunchtime on Monday.

Ukrainian negotiator Mykhailo Podolyak, who on Sunday said Russia was beginning to talk “constructively”, wrote ahead of Monday’s talks: “Negotiations. 4th round. On peace, ceasefire, immediate withdrawal of troops & security guarantees.”

He later said discussions were hard, because the political systems of Russia and Ukraine were too different. Talks paused on Monday and would resume on Tuesday, he said.

Podolyak said he believed Russia “still has a delusion that 19 days of violence against (Ukrainian) peaceful cities is the right strategy.”

Russia has accused Ukraine of using civilians as human shields, an allegation Kyiv has firmly denied.

— Reuters

Economy could collapse if war drags on: IMF

WASHINGTON: Ukraine’s government continues to function, the banking system is stable and debt payments are viable in the short-term, but the Russian war could plunge Ukraine into a devastating recession, the International Monetary Fund said on Monday.

And it warned that the war could have broader repercussions, including threatening global food security due to rising prices and the inability to plant crops, especially wheat.

At a minimum the country would see “output falling 10 per cent this year assuming a prompt resolution of the war”, the IMF said in an analysis of the economy in the wake of the Russian attack.

But the fund warned of “massive uncertainty” around the forecasts, and if the conflict is prolonged, the situation will worsen.

Citing wartime data for conflicts in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, the IMF said the “annual output contraction could eventually be much higher, in the range of 25-35 per cent.”

The country’s economy grew 3.2 per cent in 2021 amid a record grain harvest and strong consumer spending.

But in the wake of the Russian attack on February 24, “the economy in Ukraine dramatically changed”, said Vladyslav Rashkovan, alternate executive director for Ukraine on the IMF board.

“As of March 6, 202 schools, 34 hospitals, more than 1,500 residential houses including multi-apartment houses, tens of kilometres of roads and countless objects of critical infrastructures in several Ukrainian cities have been fully or partially destroyed by Russian troops”, the official said in a statement.

Ports and airports also have been closed due to “due to massive destruction”, he said. — AFP



Ukrainian refugees rest and eat upon their arrival at the main railway station (Hauptbahnhof) in Berlin. – AFP

Negotiations with Moscow paused

BERLIN: Negotiations between Ukraine and Russia on an end to the fighting have been put on hold until Tuesday, according to Kiev.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak described the top level delegations as taking a pause to sort out technicalities, but that discussions among working groups were still under way. “Negotiations are ongoing”, he tweeted. The two sides had met by video link on Monday. Before that, the delegations had met three times in person in Belarus. There has been no breakthrough so far, though the parties had expressed cautious optimism over this week’s talks.

ZELENSKY TO ADDRESS FULL US CONGRESS

WASHINGTON: Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky will deliver a virtual address to Congress on Wednesday as the western ally comes under intense shelling from Russia, Democratic leadership in the US Congress said. “We look forward to the privilege of welcoming President Zelensky’s address to the House and Senate and to convey our support to the people of Ukraine as they bravely defend democracy”, House leader Nancy Pelosi and her Senate counterpart Chuck Schumer said in a joint letter to lawmakers.

UK AIRLIFTS 21 CHILDREN FOR CANCER CARE

LONDON: More than 20 Ukrainian children with cancer have been airlifted to the UK, the government said, as an appeal began for Britons to take in refugees in their homes. Health Secretary Sajid Javid said the 21 children had been receiving treatment in Ukraine but were forced to leave their homes because of Russia’s attack.

They are now being given “life-saving” care by the state-run National Health Service (NHS) and have been accompanied by their carers, he told Sky News television. — Agencies

World faces food crisis due to war: Russian billionaire Melnichenko

LONDON: A global food crisis looms unless the war in Ukraine is stopped because fertiliser prices are soaring so fast that many farmers can no longer afford soil nutrients, Russian fertiliser and coal billionaire Andrei Melnichenko said on Monday.

Several of Russia’s richest businessmen have publicly called for peace since President Vladimir Putin ordered the war on February 24, including Mikhail Fridman, Pyotr Aven and Oleg Deripaska.

The United States and its European allies have cast Putin’s war as an imperial-style land grab. They have sanctioned Russian businessmen — including EU sanctions on Melnichenko, frozen state assets and cut off much of the Russian corporate sector from the global economy in an attempt to force Putin to change course.

Putin refuses to. He has called the war a special military operation to rid Ukraine of dangerous nationalists and Nazis.

“The events in Ukraine are truly tragic. We urgently need peace”, Melnichenko, 50, who is Russian but was born in Belarus and has a Ukrainian mother, said in a statement emailed by his spokesman.

“One of the victims of this crisis will be agriculture and food”, he said.



Russian tycoon Andrei Melnichenko

Global food crisis is brewing and war in Ukraine must stop says Melnichenko

Melnichenko is the founder of EuroChem, one of Russia’s biggest fertiliser producers, which moved to Zug, Switzerland, in 2015, and SUEK, Russia’s top coal producer.

Russia’s war on Ukraine has killed thousands, displaced more than 2 million people, and raised fears of a wider confrontation between

Russia and the United States, the world’s two biggest nuclear powers.

Putin said last Thursday that food prices would rise globally due to soaring fertiliser prices if the West created problems for Russia’s export of fertilisers, which account for 13 per cent of world output.

Russia is a major producer of potash, phosphate and nitrogen containing fertilisers — major crop and soil nutrients. EuroChem, which produces nitrogen, phosphates and potash, says it is one of the world’s top five fertiliser companies. The war “has already led to soaring prices in fertilisers which are no longer affordable to farmers”, Melnichenko said.

Food supply chains already disrupted by Covid-19 were now even more distressed.

“Now it will lead to even higher food inflation in Europe and likely food shortages in the world’s poorest countries”, he said.

Russia’s trade and industry ministry told the country’s fertiliser producers to temporarily halt exports earlier this month.

International food and feed prices could rise by up to 20 per cent as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, triggering a jump in global malnourishment, the United Nations food agency said on Friday. — Reuters

Did pandemic leave a gap in the growth of children?



Massrat Shaikh

The writer is an educational psychologist

As children return to in-person school, educators observe that many children appear overwhelmed at the task of lining up, making conversation, and eating with their peers after months of relative isolation at home.

It has taken some time for educators to recognise students emerging struggles, especially those related to skills and routines that teachers and staff typically take for granted.

Teachers report that their elementary students have difficulty focusing and attending after returning to the in-person classroom. Some children have seen their parents sick or dealing with job loss.

Research done by Education Week shows that the stress and challenges of the pandemic combined with online schooling have led children to struggle with their emotions and with social routines. In some cases, this leads

children to withdraw, and in others, it may lead them to act out or seek attention.

Teachers also realise that some of our young students returning to school have minimal experience with the routines of in-person education. Some elementary grade students returning to school this year have never been in the school building. These young children returning to school show difficulty staying on task or navigating their emotions when their peers want to share things with them.

Initial years of schooling are essential for young children's social and emotional development. Children learn how to take turns, talk to their friends, and indicate their likes and dislikes through school experiences. This critical milestone has gone missing for our young students, and it will take them a while to catch up.

In January, the EdWeek Research Centre published the

TEACHERS MAY ALSO HAVE TO DEVELOP MORE-INFORMAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS, LIKE MAKING EXTRA EFFORTS TO LEARN SMALL FACTS ABOUT EVERY CHILD

study showing that most educators report, compared to prior to the pandemic in 2019, their current students' social skills and emotional maturity levels are much lower. This research comes when educators are designing and adapting a recovery plan, and through this research, we know that recovery plan at schools will have to emphasise helping our students with mental health, emotional stability and regaining a sense of normalcy.

Here are some tips that may help schools and teachers make in-person learning easier for students.

Teachers may have to pace

themselves, allowing children to internalise concepts they may have missed and allow their emotional resolve to grow alongside their academic learning.

It will be difficult for schools and teachers to catch up with a year and a half of academics in the next few months; however, focusing on children's social and emotional needs and helping them cope with their emotional challenges will help educators make academic progress faster.

Schools will need to incorporate social-emotional learning lessons that teach them how to identify and respond to their emotions. Schools can also bring in guest speakers to talk to families about issues like child development.

School can train older students to mentor their younger peers, greeting them in the morning and seeing them off in the afternoons. A trained cohort of students can help their classmates cope with

challenges at school and help them find a trusting adult if they have any significant problems.

Older students should be encouraged to talk and ask for help from school counsellors about any emotional or social struggles they are going through. School counsellors and social workers play a vital role in providing the resource room where students can find support.

Teachers may also have to develop more-informal relationships with students, like making extra efforts to learn small facts about every child. This will help them build a connection with their students in vulnerable moments.

The most critical strategy for educators this year is to listen. By listening to children, we understand what their actual problem is. When we share a positive, trusting relationship with our children, we have an opportunity to really educate them.

Models who swapped Milan catwalks for war aid

BRIGITTE HAGEMANN

Ukrainian model Bogdana Didenko Nevodnik was in Milan for fashion week when Russia attacked. Unable to return home afterwards, she now sorts aid parcels in the Italian city for her war-torn country. "I felt it was a bit stupid, unreal, to be on the catwalk when people are dying. I was ashamed and had the feeling that the spectators didn't really care," the 22-year-old said.

Every time air raid sirens sound at night in the river port city of Kamianske, her home, Didenko Nevodnik is woken by a smartphone app set up to warn her. She lives the war minute by minute, from a distance.

At first, her instinct was to "return by the first train or bus" to her home, just upstream of the central city of Dnipro.

But she was dissuaded by her husband, a young surgeon in Ukraine, and her family.

Now, her long, dark hair tied at the nape of her neck, she works long hours alongside some 20 other volunteers, sorting through aid packages left in the small courtyard of the Ukrainian consulate in Milan.

Colourful children's drawings saying "No to war!" bedeck the entrance, above bouquets of flowers. Cars and lorries load and unload parcels of food, medicine, batteries and toys destined for the war zone.

"I would risk my life for Ukraine," says Didenko Nevodnik, who is dressed from head to toe in black and models for major brands around the world. "If necessary, I would join the army".

She took boxing classes as a teenager and says, "I always had a fighting spirit". She was also "a good shooter" with a gun because "we practiced on targets in our spare time".

"The Russian military who attacked my country are terrorising our people. They want to destroy us.

"They show to the whole world that they are just animals. They have no humanity inside. They are just killing machines," she said.

"They are destroying maternity hospitals with pregnant women. What kind of strategic objective is that?"

Another Ukrainian model, Valya Fedotova, who is also volunteering, says she was on the verge of tears during her Milan show — which also happened to be her fashion week debut. — AFP

The Ukraine war and the retro-future



Ross Gregory Douthat

The writer is an American political analyst, blogger, author and NYT columnist

Long before Vladimir Putin's attack on Ukraine, his aggressions were often met by the accusation — levelled by John Kerry and Angela Merkel, among others — that he's a 19th-century figure in a 21st-century world.

It's a line that seemed intended to judge Putin guilty not just of wickedness but of anachronism, which is somehow more confounding to the modern mind.

But today there is a sense in which being a 19th-century man in the 21st century actually makes Putin extremely of the moment — a characteristic figure for our era, not an unfrozen cave man confused by a world that's passed him by.

He exemplifies our transition to a kind of retro-future, in which crucial elements of the Victorian age are superimposed on our era's very different social, cultural and technological landscape.

What's returning from the past, as American primacy wanes, is a certain kind of great-power consolidation and competition, echoing the late-1800s dynamics of European empire but this time with global rather than mostly Western players.

In this analogy the US resembles both Victorian Britain (the great

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO RUSSIA AT THE MOMENT, IS A PERIL GREATER THAN THE EMPIRE BUILDERS OF THE 19TH CENTURY FACED

naval power and global imperium) and late-19th-century France (the republic torn apart by culture war) — a long-dominant power haunted by the specter of decline.

Then contemporary China, India, Russia and arguably the European Union all have goals that echo the ambitions of 19th-century Germany and Italy, the Russia of the Romanovs and eventually the Empire of Japan: to establish the largest possible political union based on shared ethnicity or cultural inheritance; to grow strong enough to challenge Anglo-Saxon hegemony; to project power in regions of the globe that lack a dominant nation-state, whether in Central Asia and the Middle East or Africa and



A view of an apartment building heavily damaged after a Russian rocket exploded just outside it in Kharkiv amid the ongoing Russia's war with Ukraine. — AFP

Latin America.

Within this multipolar world, you have emergent alliances that echo alignments of the kind that preceded World War I — for now, Russia and China against Europe and America.

And then you have the smaller nations and regions caught between, stirred by their own ambitions and offering potential tinderboxes for larger wars. Manchuria, Alsace-Lorraine and the Balkans then; today, Taiwan, Afghanistan, Syria and now Ukraine.

But all these echoes and revivals have not brought the 19th century back to life in full. Instead, the old geopolitics is reemerging against a thoroughly 21st-century background.

First, globalisation has gone further than it ever did in the 19th century. The scale of our interdependence is sometimes exaggerated, but it is still extraordinary, and so is the scale of wealth at stake in any sustained disruption of the world system. That doesn't mean that some strands in the vast web cannot be unwound. But to have it happen suddenly and wrenchingly, as is happening to Russia at the moment, is a peril greater than the empire builders of the 19th century faced.

Those empire builders also operated in a world where it was still possible to claim real public legitimacy for imperialism, conquest, autocratic rule.

That day may come again, for now even de facto rulers like Putin feel they have to pretend to be democratically elected, pay lip service to self-determination, deny that they're invading their neighbour even when it's obvious to all.

This fraudulence then feeds into the cynicism and alienation that are also defining features of our era. The consolidation of Germany or Italy or, for that matter, the United States in the 19th century shaped and were shaped by new forms of mass mobilisation and mass politics — including the rise of political parties, labour unions, ideological movements and more. But our age is more a time of fragmentation and isolation, of a retreat into virtual escapes. — *The New York Times*

Mistaken and unmistaken identities



Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior
journalist and a
radio anchor

In the midst of hectic schedule and deadlines the phone beeps with a message notification indicating a voice message. And I think to myself that this is going to be fast and might even be an appropriate short break.

I take a deep breath and hit the play while noting it is from an unregistered number. “Hi Lakshmi,” said a female voice, “We urgently need a babysitter. Please let me know if you can help.” I realised I had forgotten to exhale and doing so replied, “I do not babysit.”

Prompt came the reply, “Oh that’s okay. If you know someone else who can, send me the number.”

I sat up. Unknowingly I had become quiet. I had forgotten the deadlines and the anxiety and gently send back a message with a question, “May I know who is this?”

She returned with her name and urging again to send a babysitter’s number.

Life is tough and I can understand the stress level. But my curiosity in this mistaken identity could not be held back any longer and so sent another question, “How did you get my number?”

Alas no reply.

While that could have been a total case of mistaken identity as ‘Lakshmi’ is a popular name and I frequently get calls for booking air tickets because somewhere out there is a Lakshmi in a travel agency. I am also guilty of this confusion as I keep calling two people when I want to speak to the other. I have attached so many hints and clues to their names, but no matter what when the moment comes invariably I will end

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up calling the wrong one. They have got so used to it that they ask me what it is about and tell me which Aziz to call.

As for the call seeking a babysitter, I realised that there are always job opportunities and services that are required in the society. The whole incident made me smile in the end.

Now here was another situation, but this was dangerous and definitely not cute.

This was last week when a hacker had stolen an identity of a friend who is prominent in the society. While browsing the Net came a request of the friends and being on auto pilot mode immediately accepted not wondering why this friend was not already an Facebook friend. Within seconds a message appeared on the messenger - “Hi, How are you?”

Of course yours truly gave a genuine reply of how the day has been.

Then came the question, “Do you have Google pay?”

When the answer was negative, the person on the other end texted, “Then can you ask your friends please?”

The ‘please’ and ‘ask’ made me pause to take the phone and call to ask my friend why did he need Google pay?

He had already received many calls and he had been informed that 400 people had already accepted the request from the fake account.

By the time I returned to the messenger, the account had deleted messages from the other end.

It only proved how vulnerable we are online. It just takes seconds to reveal personal information to a stranger through a mistaken identity.

It also reminds us how easy it is for others to access personal pictures while being on social media. It is also a reminder on how vulnerable we are on the social media - what we share and what we post goes through people we know as well as total strangers whose intentions will always remain unknown.

Before the week was over, received a notification from yet another friend, “There has been a fake account created on my name so please do not accept any friendship requests.”

So it goes on part of the reality of online life.



A FOUR-DAY
PILGRIMAGE

An aerial view shows pilgrims gathering at Qabr Nabi Hud in Yemen's central Hadramawt Governorate, during the four-day pilgrimage which precedes the fasting month of Ramadhan.
– AFP

Germany awakens with Ukraine war!



Ana Palacio

The author is a former
minister of foreign affairs
of Spain and former
senior vice president
and general counsel of
the World Bank Group,
is a visiting lecturer at
Georgetown University

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s war on Ukraine seems to have awakened Germany from its post-Cold War slumber, with a dramatic shift in foreign and defence policy indicating a newfound recognition of Russia’s unreliability as a partner and the broader security challenges Europe faces. But can Germany’s tougher approach withstand a painful and protracted crisis, or will accommodationist voices regain traction, urging acceptance of the realities on the ground?

There is no doubting the resoluteness of Germany’s response to the Russian invasion. Beyond halting the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project, Chancellor Olaf Scholz has announced a €100 billion (\$109 billion) increase in defence spending this year and agreed to send weapons – not just helmets – to Ukrainian fighters.

Moreover, Germany has participated in the imposition of sweeping Western sanctions aimed at isolating Russia and inflicting maximum economic pain. More fundamentally, Germany seems finally to have abandoned its long-held belief that dialogue is the only way to deal with the Kremlin.

Germany’s newfound mettle, which has been welcomed across Europe, was by no means guaranteed. For decades, Germany’s approach to geopolitics had emphasised rapprochement and economic engagement, with its Russia policy representing a kind of misguided continuation of the Federal Republic’s Cold War-era Ostpolitik. This persisted through Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008, its downing in 2014 of MH-17, a passenger flight passing over eastern Ukraine, and the Kremlin’s poisoning of political opponents like Alexei Navalny, who recovered from a nerve-agent attack in a German hospital.

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BUT CAN GERMANY’S RESOLVE
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Germany was not alone in taking a soft-handed approach to Russia. The United Kingdom has continually – and willingly – attracted Russian oligarchs’ dark money. In this sense, Britain’s sanctioning of oligarchs like Roman Abramovich also represents a notable shift.

But, historically, Germany has been at the centre of Europe’s political tangles. This was often for the worse: Germany repeatedly disrupted Europe’s balance of power, leading to conflict and unparalleled bloodshed, culminating in World War II. But with the 1951 creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, which bound together Germany and France, the country’s role was transformed.

From Chancellor Konrad Adenauer’s tenure in the 1950s and early 1960s through Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s in the 1980s and 1990s, it was said that Germany would find its interests in the interests of the European project. Integration was the only conceivable path to a sustainable and lasting European peace, and Germany was essential to achieving that goal.

After reunification in 1990, Germany leveraged its economic strength and

pro prowess to assume a unique convening power in Europe, which enabled it to define the EU’s agenda – and, thus, trajectory – for decades.

But Germany’s leadership was always selective. It used its influence – enhanced by an EU presidency – to press for the completion of an EU-China investment agreement just a month ahead of US President Joe Biden’s inauguration last year. (That deal is now in limbo, unlikely to be ratified by the European Parliament any time soon.) Germany also pushed forward Nord Stream 2, despite its allies’ concerns.

However, in areas that drew less German interest, such as banking union, the EU was left largely directionless. This dynamic is what prompted former Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski to declare in 2011 that he feared Germany’s power less than its inactivity. In fact, Germany’s selective leadership prevented the EU from forging ahead strategically and left it reliant on former Chancellor Angela Merkel’s personal mediation, which ended when her 16-year tenure did.

In this sense, Putin has done the West a favour. By launching an attack on Ukraine and threatening the West with nuclear escalation, he has shaken the very foundations of the postwar order – and jolted Germany out of its dream of Wandel durch Handel (change through commerce). If recent policy changes are any indication, a more comprehensive and strategic form of German leadership could emerge.

But the Western countries imposing costs on Russia will also face high costs, from low growth to skyrocketing energy bills. The post-pandemic recovery could be all but wiped out in much of Europe. Over time, this – together with the existential dread generated by Putin’s wanton nuclear threats – could generate significant pressure on European leaders to pursue normalisation of relations with Russia and even greater accommodation of it. Germany’s coalition government will be no exception.

Putin would view any such shift as yet another demonstration of Western weakness, all but inviting him to pursue ever-bolder gambits. That is why the West, with Germany as a central player, must stand firm in defending its values and opposing Russia’s illegal aggression, despite the costs. Otherwise, sooner or later, we will find ourselves once again living in a world where, as the Athenian historian Thucydides famously put it, “the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.”

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This file photo shows a man taking pictures of an Eurofighter jet of the German Air Force on the tarmac of the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) airbase in Noervenich, western Germany. – AFP

sport

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SHABIB CLAIMS SECOND IN ENDURO MTB WORLD QUALIFIER

FAHAM BAGS TOP HONOURS

**ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH**
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

Faham al Kayari of Al Waal MTB – Oman claimed the men’s overall title in the Oman Enduro Championship mountain biking competition held in Muscat on Saturday. Al Kayari finished on top with a timing of 12 hours 55 minutes and 7 seconds in the 20 km World Series Qualifier.

Shabib al Balushi of Gulf Cycle – Oman came second in 13:14:02 and Jefferson Odviar of Cycleomania – Philippines finished third in 13:33:04.

A total of 39 racers were in action in the event jointly organised by the Oman Cycling Association (OCA) and Oman Trailbuilders with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The EWS enduro world series, with races in 35 countries, is

recognised as the highest level of enduro racing in the world and it is sanctioned by the UCI. EWS races are gravity based events consisting of three or more timed stages with untimed liaison stages (with time cut off). The stages predominantly are long downhill with technical and steep sections. Finishing time of each timed stage are added up to determine the winner.

PROUD OF FAHAM

The mountain bike race qualifier was a big success, said OCA General-Secretary Ishaq al Balushi.

“It was a great success in the first edition. Everything went smoothly and the competition level was very high. We tried to cover all the standards of the UCI and MTB bike races.”

“It was the best opportunity for the OCA to host the World Qualifiers and we did our best maintaining the standards for

these kind of races.”

International racers were spell-bound to compete under the background of picturesque Omani mountains, Ishaq said.

The OCA official congratulated overall winner Faham al Kayari for his achievement.

“We are really happy for the Omani riders and teams. We are proud of Faham and his team Al Waal which had an excellent race. The OCA is looking to send Faham to the Nations Championship during Slovenia Enduro Open in August.”

The OCA general secretary said the Oman cycling body is now focusing on mountain bike competitions after proving success with several road races across the country.

TARA TOPS WOMEN’S RACE

In the women’s section, Tara Atkinson of United Kingdom

(Oman Trail Foxes) bagged the honours with a timing of 19:05:06 and Zabrine Cornejo of Filipino MTB Explorers – Philippines came second on 22:46:01.

In the men’s masters (35+) section, Matthew Kinch of Australia topped the race with 13:43:08. David Hynes of MTB – The Best Thing —United Kingdom came second at 14:35:07 followed by Mustafa al Gharbi of Al Waal MTB – Oman at 14:51:08 in third.

In the men’s under-21 section, Sem Geilnkirchen (Loose Riders Oman – Netherlands) came first at 17:40:02 followed by Ammar Ali of Bahrain at 22:20:01. Ali Ameer of Bahrain did not finish the race.

EXCITING EVENT

Said al Mahrouqi, co-founder of Oman Trailbuilders, said it was an exciting event.

“Hosting a EWS Event in Oman will shine a global spotlight

on Oman as EWS events are internationally recognised and world class events. In addition, it will allow local riders to get ranking points to be sent to the ‘Trophy of Nations’ Enduro world championship.

The Enduro World Series came to the region for the first time, and racers with different nationalities had joined the event.

“Oman is ranked as a gold qualifier, the highest level of race before the 10 world stages, and has attracted entries from riders around the world, including Jordan, Australia, Netherlands and Bahrain as riders seek to gain ranking points to enter the world championship,” Al Mahrouqi said.

“We are so excited that Oman Trailbuilders in association with OCA successfully hosted an Enduro World Series (EWS) gold qualifier race. This is a big leap in attracting mountain bikers from

all over the world to our trails and will promote Oman as a sport and tourism destination. Hosting a EWS Gold Qualifier will increase the number of professional riders participating in our local competitions, pushing our events and local riders to the next level, and enhancing the skills of our young riders.”

EWS races are designed to be the definitive test for the mountain biker.

“The race was held amongst the beautiful terrain of the mountains above Al Bustan.”

We have hand built the trails for all five stages (with more enhancements to come over the coming weeks). Our goal is to enhance the Sultanate’s trails and event management to be able to host a full tier 1 round of the Enduro World Series within the coming years,” Al Mahrouqi added.



INDIA THRASH

SRI LANKA BY 238 RUNS

HOSTS WIN PINK BALL TEST TO SWEEP SERIES 2-0

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

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

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

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

Their key roles brought an emphatic victory that left the hosts unbeaten in all three of their home day-night Tests.

India also won the opening Test in three days and this win gives new

all-format captain Rohit Sharma a winning start to his Test leadership.

"It's been a good run, (I) enjoyed it personally," the skipper said after the match.

"As a team, there were so many things we wanted to achieve and I think we did."

Left-handed Karunaratne made a second wicket stand of 97 before Ashwin broke through for the stumping of the captain's overnight partner Kusal Mendis, who recorded his 12th Test half-century.

Karunaratne went on to wage a lone battle and raised his century — the sole hundred for a Sri Lankan batsman in this Test series — with a boundary off Bumrah.

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

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

Dominant from day one

India, who gained crucial Test championship points in the

whitewash, remained dominant from day one after Iyer hit 92 and lifted the team from a precarious 86-4 to 252 all out.

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

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

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

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

Lakmal scored one before being bowled by Bumrah, who joined India's team in a rush to farewell the 35-year-old veteran.

The tourists, who lost the opening Test by an innings and 222 runs, suffered a total whitewash after they lost the preceding Twenty20 series 3-0.

Players from India and across the world will now assemble for the Indian Premier League, which begins on March 26. — AFP

SCOREBOARD	
India 1st innings 252	
Sri Lanka 1st innings 109	
India 2nd innings 303-9 dec	
Sri Lanka 2nd innings	
L Thirimanne lbw Bumrah	0
D Karunaratne b Bumrah	107
K Mendis st Pant b Ashwin	54
A Mathews b Jadeja	1
A de Silva c Vihari b Ashwin	4
N Dickwella st Pant b Patel	12
C Asalanka c Rohit b Axar	5
L Embuldeniya lbw Ashwin	2
S Lakmal b Bumrah	1
V Fernando c Shami b Ashwin	2
P Jayawickrama not out	0
Extras (b16, lb3, nb1)	20
Total (all out, 59.3 overs)	208
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-97, 3-98, 4-105, 5-160, 6-180, 7-204, 8-206, 9-208	
Bowling: Bumrah 9-4-23-3, Shami 6-0-26-0, Ashwin 19-3-55-4, Jadeja 14-2-48-1, Axar 11-1-37-2	

Pakistan, England face WC exit as Bangladesh make history

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, New Zealand: Defending champions England were on the brink of Women's Cricket World Cup elimination on Monday while Pakistan's campaign imploded after Bangladesh made history with their first-ever win at the one-day showcase.

England suffered their third straight defeat of the tournament in New Zealand when South Africa held on for a nail-biting three-wicket win in Mount Maunganui. England captain Heather Knight said she was "gutted" after another agonising loss, admitting the odds were firmly against the 2017 champions making the play-offs.

"It's not through lack of effort, I guess we shot ourselves in the foot at times in the field," she said.

"We're going to have to turn things around and keep believing there's a small chance we can go through."

South Africa have emerged as the tournament dark horses with three successive victories and are second only to Australia in the standings.

Pakistan remain bottom of the standings with four losses and almost certainly out after a spectacular late collapse against tournament newcomers Bangladesh in Hamilton.

Pakistan appeared to be cruising to victory, powered by a maiden century for Sidra Ameen, but slumped to a nine-run defeat after losing six wickets for 26 runs.

"It's very hard to digest, we were in the game but some poor shots from the middle order cost us the game," captain Bismah Maroof said.

"THIS IS HISTORY"

Bangladesh skipper Nigar Sultana praised her side's never-say-die approach.

"I cannot describe this in words because it's our first-ever win in a World Cup and this is history that we've made today here," she said.

"We're looking forward to carrying this momentum through the tournament." — AFP

BRIEF SCORES

England 235-9 in 50 overs (T Beaumont 62, A Jones 53; M Kapp 5-45) lost to South Africa 236-7 in 49.2 overs (Wolvaardt 77, S Luus 36; A Shrubsole 2-34)

Bangladesh 234-7 in 50 overs (F Hoque 71, N Sultana 46, S Akhter 44; N Sandhu 3-41) bt Pakistan 225-9 in 50 overs (S Ameen 104, N Khan 43; F Khatun 3-38)



Bangladesh celebrate their win during the 2022 Women's Cricket World Cup match against Pakistan at Seddon Park in Hamilton. — AFP

Bausher, Amerat register D10 opening day wins

MUSCAT: The first game of the D10 tournament held at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground on March 12 saw the Amerat Royals beat the Khuwair Warriors by 27 runs.

Electing to bat first after winning the toss, the Amerat Royals posted a total of 94-8.

Akshaykumar Patel top-scored with a 12-ball 27, with 24 of those runs coming in sixes. Pratik Athavale, Mehran Khan and Yasir Ali were the other batters to enter double figures.

All the bowlers for the Warriors were expensive, but picked up at least 1 wicket each. Syed Amir Ali finished with figures of 3-18 in his 2 overs.

In response, the Khuwair Warriors could only manage 67-9 at the end of their 10 overs. Kuttiraja S'mugrajan made 22 runs but with wickets falling at regular intervals at the other end, it wasn't enough to steer his side to an opening day victory.

In another D10 fixture held at 10 pm on the same day, the Bausher Busters made light work of the Qurum Thunders, beating them by 7 wickets with 22 balls to spare.

The Thunders won the toss and elected to bat, but were only able to post 69 runs on the board at the end of 10 overs. Jahanzeba Ali top-scored with an 11-ball 18.

The star of the first innings was Bilal Muhammad of the Bausher Busters. In his 2 overs, Bilal picked up 3 wickets and gave away just 2 runs. Mehdi Hasan recorded 2-8 in his 2 overs.

BRIEF SCORES:

Amerat Royals 94/8 in 10 overs (Akshaykumar Patel 27(12) 4x6; Syed Amir Ali 18/3, Muhazir Raza 17/2) beat Khuwair Warriors 67/9 in 10 overs (Kuttiraja S'mugrajan 22(18) 2x4; Khafid Un Nabi 9/2, Rafi Ullah 21/2) by 27 runs.

Qurum Thunders 69/8 in 10 overs (Jahanzeba Ali 18(11) 1x4, 1x6; Bilal Muhammad 2/3, Mehdi Hasan 8/2) lost to Bausher Busters 70/3 in 6.2 overs (Abdul Rauf Atta Ullah 46(15) 3x4, 5x6; Samay Shrivastava 16/1) by 7 wickets.

Khimji Ramdas felicitates gold medallist paralympian staff

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

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

Congratulating him on his decisive victory, Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas stated: "Talib al Balushi has upheld the paralympian motto of 'Spirit in Motion'; and inspires each one of



us to go beyond the expected and savour success that comes from grit and resilience. His success story motivates us to continue to play a crucial role in guiding our employees to achieve their full potentials, thereby doing our bit towards securing a stronger workforce for the nation."

Commenting on the group's

ongoing social responsibility endeavours, he added: "As an organisation that is steadfastly committed to facilitating its people, particularly its youth realise their true capabilities, we have, and continue to initiate and support ventures that foster inclusion and all-round national development. The Oman team and Talib's victory

is testimony to the efforts put in identifying, nurturing, promoting, and celebrating talent at every level in the country. We believe that this is just the beginning of a glorious future for Oman sports, and will continue to strive to put the Sultanate of Oman on the world sporting map."

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

Seeb, Al Rustaq in intense preparation for HM Cup showdown

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAR 14

Three-time winners Seeb will take on Al Rustaq, who are chasing their maiden title, in the His Majesty’s Cup football final on Thursday night. The Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex will be the venue for the tight clash to be kicked off at 7 pm.

Both teams are undergoing intensive warming-up sessions for the title showdown. After an absence of 17 years, Seeb will target their fourth title in this edition. The battalion of coach Boris Bunjak is upbeat despite their defeat in the last round of Omantel League against Al Nahdia.

The coaching staff of Seeb



preferred to provide rest for the top players in the match to avoid any injuries. The training sessions will continue during evening time at the headquarters of the club in

Al Khoudh under supervision of coach Bunjak.

On the other hand, Al Rustaq’s players began their warm-up sessions at the training yard in



Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex under watchful eyes of Romanian coach Catalin Mihai.

Mihai also decided to provide rest for the key players in the

last game of Omantel League against Al Nasr which ended in a goalless draw. More than three comprehensive training sessions will be awaiting Al Rustaq’s

players ahead of the final clash. Al Rustaq players are keen not to miss the historic chance to lift the first title of the top domestic competition.

A good turnout from the supporters of both the clubs is expected for the final.

The Oman Football Association (OFA) has announced the umpiring team who will officiate the concluding encounter. International referee Ahmed al Kaaf will be the main referee of the match while AbuBaker al Amri and Hamed al Ghafri will assist him. Mohammed al Othmani is assigned as fourth referee while Naif al Balushi as first additional referee and Yahya al Balushi as second additional referee.

Under-pressure Chelsea snatch late winner against Newcastle

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, MARCH 14

Chelsea were made to strive in their first game at home since the UK government placed strict sanctions last week on their Russian owner Roman Abramovich which has put the club in turmoil and under restrictions on expenditure. While Newcastle are relishing their new-found wealth having been bought by the Saudi Arabian Investment Fund for 300 million last October, Chelsea, have suddenly been jolted out of their financial comfort.

They made hard work of their 1-0 win over Newcastle, their fourth consecutive win amid the confusion surrounding the club. Chelsea manager confirmed that their travel plans to Lille for Wednesday’s Champions League game are largely unaffected despite the restrictions placed on expenditure.

Chelsea’s technical and performance advisor, Petr Cech, became the club’s most senior member of staff to speak about the turmoil. Worryingly, he refused to guarantee that the club can complete the season, saying: “We have to admit that we can go day by day because it’s not in our hands. The conversations are going on that we can operate in a way that we can finish the season.”

When asked whether the club can continue paying all their employees, Cech added: “I hope so. But I don’t have the answers.”

The game remained goalless for 89 minutes with neither side able to find openings. There wasn’t a shot on target in the first half hour and only in added time at the end of the first half that Chelsea goalkeeper, Edouard Mendy, was forced to make a diving save from a fine volley by Miguel Almiron. Prior to that Dan Burn headed narrowly wide from a cross by Matt Targett.

Kai Havertz missed an excellent chance when his header went straight into the goalkeeper after receiving a pass from Hakim Ziyech in the 72nd minute.

Earlier, Havertz was fortunate not to receive a red card when he elbowed Burn in the 39th minute when both went up to head the ball. Burn suffered a cut near the eye and Havertz was shown the yellow card.

Newcastle were upset at not being awarded a penalty in the 57th minute when Trevoh Chalobah tugged at the shirt sleeve



Chelsea’s Kai Havertz celebrates scoring their first goal. – Reuters

of Jacob Murphy and appeared to put his leg in front of the winger’s stride which sent him sprawling to the ground. Despite the check on VAR the penalty was somewhat surprisingly not given.

Chances were missed by both sides and a goalless draw beckoned until a minute from time when

Chelsea put an end to Newcastle’s nine-match unbeaten run in the Premier League. It was also the first time they failed to score in 10 games.

Havertz, took his goal superbly despite Burn in close attendance. He controlled the pass from Jorginho with one touch from

the outside of his boot and then slamming the ball into the net from eight yards for his fourth goal in three matches.

In stoppage time, Chelsea nearly got a second when Havertz’s shot as pushed against the bar by Martin Dubravka in the Newcastle goal.

Bank Muscat evaluates applicants for Green Sports 2022 programme



MUSCAT: Bank Muscat has announced that it is currently screening and evaluating the applications to the 2022 edition of the bank’s flagship Green Sports programme.

A large number of applications from different teams across Oman were earlier accepted online through the digital application process during a month-long registration process which concluded earlier last month.

Green Sports, which is one of the bank’s longest-running CSR programmes continues to benefit many sports teams across the Sultanate of Oman even as the annual programme brings together different generations on a single platform on the evergreen theme of sports. The bank’s efforts complement the government’s efforts to develop modern sports infrastructure across the Sultanate of Oman in the spirit of the Public-Private Partnership model.

Once the evaluation process is over, the bank will announce the 20 successful teams whose football fields will be developed in 2022 as part of the Green Sports programme. The Green Sports initiative, which was launched by Bank Muscat in 2012, has supported 143 sports teams across Oman till date. It is estimated that the total number of people who have so far benefitted from this programme throughout the country is over 42,900.

Oman under-18 second behind UAE



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

Oman’s men’s team is in the fifth place currently behind the UAE and Oman under-18 team is in the second place behind the UAE in the GCC Golf Championship in Abu Dhabi on Monday.

“They have pretty much battled their way today and has got some good scores. They have got good experience today so hopefully we get good results tomorrow and keep on the process,” said Peter Bailey reflecting on the first day’s performance.

The players in the 24th edition of GCC Golf Championship Men’s Division has 72 hole, four- round event finishing on Thursday while the the 13th Junior GCC Championship has 54 holes with three rounds over three days on Monday through Wednesday.

Speaking to Observer, Peter Bailey, Oman team manager said, “The team are all in good spirits after their arrival and preparations at Abu Dhabi Golf Club. Everyone is looking forward to the next few days, competing among friends from the other GCC nations. The course is playing nicely and the setup is fair for all the competitors.”

He said hopefully the experience of the men’s team and the U18s will help to inspire the younger national team players who should be playing later this year in the same event.

“There are aspiring young players who look up to the older players and the more experience they all get, and the more interest there is shown, the better for all of golf in the Sultanate of Oman and the future of our youth,” Bailey noted adding, “We are very fortunate to be supported by our kind sponsor - Mohsin Haider Darwish, Infrastructure, Technology, Industrial and Consumer Solutions. Whose support is invaluable for this exciting event.”

Golf player Mohammed al Busaidy said he really enjoyed the atmosphere at Abu Dhabi National golf course, a world class course with lots to offer.

“I am really excited to represent my country and play for my team. It has been a while since we travelled together because of the Covid restrictions. Now that we are here, we are all really thankful and looking forward to the challenge,” said Mohammed al Busaidy.

business

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Oman to freeze new gas-based power projects

RENEWABLES PUSH: Regulations on bilateral agreements, wheeling charges under finalisation; Guidelines on EV charging stations to be rolled out before year-end: APSR

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Sultanate of Oman is making a clean break with new gas-based power generation investments for the foreseeable future, in line with a commitment to harnessing renewables for an increasing share of the nation's energy requirements, a top official of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) announced here on Monday.

Shaikh Dr Mansoor al Hinai (pictured), Chairman, said the switch from gas-based generation, currently the mainstay of the nation's power generation segment,



to solar and wind resources, is broadly mandated by the Vision 2040 charter for the country's long-term development.

"A decision has been taken that, meeting any growth in electricity demand in the new future, is from renewable sources only," Dr Al Hinai said. "Accordingly, we are no longer floating any tenders other than for solar at this time, and we are considering wind as well. These are primarily the sources of power generation

The switch from gas-based generation, currently the mainstay of the nation's power generation segment, to solar and wind resources, is broadly mandated by the Vision 2040 charter for the country's long-term development

SHAIKH DR MANSOOR AL HINAI
Chairman, APSR

for Oman for the upcoming period, with the objective to achieve targets set out in the Vision 2040."

Taking part in a 'High-Level Policymakers and Senior Executives

Session' held during the start of the ISRTC Conference, which opened at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on Monday, Dr Al Hinai said all of the key sector stakeholders are pulling together to support the Sultanate of Oman's transition from a predominantly fossil fuel-based energy supply to greener energy.

"The future is all about renewables for Oman from this point forward," the Chairman noted, adding that the initiative is being supplemented by an energy efficiency drive supported by, among others, the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) and Oman Electricity Transmission Company – both members of Nama Group.

Importantly, APSR is also preparing to roll out regulation to support bilateral agreements and wheeling – initiatives that will spur the growth of private-led green energy supply directly to large customers.

Such direct supply arrangements between the generator and the end-user – typically a large industrial consumer – sidestep OPWP, currently the Single Buyer of all electricity output before it is transmitted and distributed.

"From the regulatory perspective, there are certain enablers we are planning to put in place that will encourage different

industries to move towards green energy (for their electricity requirements). We are in the process of finalising the bilateral agreements and the wheeling charges. All of these regulations will further liberalise the market and will give the opportunity for many industries to utilise green energy without putting any additional burden on the Single Buyer," Dr Al Hinai stated.

Furthermore, to popularise the adoption of Electric Vehicles, APSR aims to introduce guidelines before the end of this year to regulate technical specs governing the installation of EV charging stations – a key requisite for the uptake of EV cars in the Sultanate of Oman.

"We are currently working on this objective, with the help of key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and the Royal Oman Police as part of a multi-stakeholder task force," he added.

Also taking part in the session were HH Sayyid Dr Adham al Said, Assistant Professor of Economics at the College of Economics and Political Science, Sultan Qaboos University (as Moderator); Dr Ali al Shidhani, Communications and Information Technology Under-Secretary – Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Eng Ahmad al Subhi, Chairman – Oman Environmental Services Holding (be'ah).

شركة
تأجير التمويل
Taageer Finance
Co. S.A.O.G

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Taageer Finance Company SAOG, I am pleased to present the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2021.

Performance Summary

As per the financial results for the year 2021 the total income for the year ended December 31, 2021 is RO 18.9 million as compared to RO 17.9 million for the year ended December 31, 2020 registering an increase of 5.6%. The Interest Expenses for the year 2021 stood at RO 8.23 Million as compared to RO 8.43 million for the year 2020 (reduction of 2.37%). The Company registered Profit of RO 5.86 Million before Expected Credit Losses (ECL) charge and taxation for the year 2021 as against RO 4.49 Million for the previous year an increase of 30.51%. The Net Profit after ECL charge of RO 2.854 million and RO 459k Taxation stood at RO 2.543 Million for the year 2021 vis-à-vis RO 2.070 Million for the year 2020 an increase of 22.85%. Gross portfolio registered a growth of 3.70% over 2020 and stood at RO 252 Million as on 31st December 2021 (Dec 2020 RO 243 million). The cumulative borrowings including unsecured non-convertible bonds stood at RO 136 million (2020 – RO 129 million).

Cumulative provisions as at Dec 2021 is RO 20.05 million as per IFRS 9 requirements. Allocation to ECL has increased by 41.22% during 2021 as compared to the previous year reflecting prudence judgement on ECL.

Issue of Unsecured Non-Convertible Subordinated Bonds

Focusing on the need for diversification of funding avenues, Taageer Finance successfully issued 2 year Unsecured Non-convertible Subordinated Bonds worth RO 13.232 million through private placement which was oversubscribed by 32.32%.

Impact of COVID-19 and Taageer's measures

Financial institutions across the world are continuously monitoring and making efforts to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are working to understand the immediate challenges to society and economies, and the long-term impact on the interconnected financial system. They are using their expertise to help themselves and their customers to make good decisions to support the business needs in a highly volatile operating environment prevailing currently. Your Company implemented the Supreme Committee guidelines on Covid Protocols and ensured that the entire staff and their families are fully vaccinated. Created remote work platforms / staff rotation to ensure continuity in operations.

Your Company initiated various measures to facilitate deferment requests received from customers within the guidelines stipulated by the Central Bank of Oman. Pro-active measures to ensure healthy and safety of the employees and the customers were initiated with the guidance of the decisions announced by the Supreme Committee. The Company has ensured that the employees and their families were fully vaccinated.

Taageer is taking all initiatives to swiftly enhance its fintech capabilities and implement digital transaction channels. It aims to offer a complete digital experience to its customers.

Change in the Composition of the Board

During the year 2021 at the Annual General Meeting held on 24 March 2021, Mr. Ali Mohammed Ali Al Farisi and Mr. Omar

Mohamed Nasser Al Rasbi were elected as Directors. Mr. Hussain Mohamed Redha and Mr. Engr. Ahmed Hamed Al Subhi resigned from the Board.

Proposed Dividends

The company has distributed dividends consistently year on year since the commencement of business. The Board of Directors are pleased to recommend a cash dividend of 3 baizas per share (RO 760,770/-) for the financial year 2021, for approval by the shareholders at the Annual General Meeting to be held on March 27, 2022.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

During the year the company kept its spirit of contributing to the community by taking several initiatives to support CSR activities in the areas of Education and Health. As a part of the company's commitment to disaster relief an amount of RO 50,000 was pledged as contribution to Oman Charitable Organization towards relief and rehabilitation of areas severely affected by tropical cyclone during Q4 2021. The contribution will be placed for ratification of shareholders at the Annual General Meeting scheduled to be held on 27 March 2022.

Corporate Governance

Company continued its commitment of adhering to the highest standards of Compliance and Corporate Governance. As elicited more elaborately in the Corporate Governance Report, we assure that the Company has in place policies and procedures that are commensurate to the operations and established internal controls.

Future Outlook

The infrastructure sector has a role to play in paving the way for societies towards economic recovery, reinforced by sustainable and resilient growth. Oman has approved its annual budget for 2022, allocating 12.13 billion Omani riyals (\$31.5bn) for spending, with a focus on basic public services, from health to social support, stimulating investment. This certainly reflects a positive outlook and business units are effervescent with energy and enthusiasm.

Rating agencies have improved the sovereign ratings following positive movements in key fiscal metrics, including government debt, GDP and the budget deficit.

With its strong leadership and skilled management team, the Company is well placed to maintain its high standards in doing business through technological innovation, liability management, process automation. With the expected improvement in the economy and the customer centric approach being adopted by the Company the year 2022 looks promising.

Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to express sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik 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

AUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021 RO'000	2020 RO'000
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	16,655	2,412
Net investment in finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	165,064	170,154
Other receivables and prepayments	582	441
Deferred tax asset – net	89	88
Vehicles, equipment and right-of-use assets	440	771
Statutory deposit	250	250
Total assets	183,080	174,116
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
LIABILITIES		
Creditors, accruals and other liabilities	2,216	2,480
Bank overdrafts and short-term loans	60,603	65,496
Unsecured non-convertible bonds	13,351	-
Tax payable	471	377
Corporate and security deposits	9,820	8,645
Long-term loans	52,272	55,314
Total liabilities	138,733	132,312
EQUITY		
Share capital	25,359	25,359
Legal reserve	5,395	5,141
IFRS 9 impairment reserve	2,222	2,222
Fair value reserve	(441)	(441)
Retained earnings	11,812	9,523
Total equity	44,347	41,804
Total equity and liabilities	183,080	174,116
Net assets per share (baizas)	175	165

AUDITED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021 RO'000	2020 RO'000
Income		
Finance income	17,641	16,802
Interest expense	(8,228)	(8,426)
Net finance income	9,413	8,376
Other operating income	1,247	1,035
	10,660	9,411
Expenses		
Operating expenses	(4,366)	(4,506)
Depreciation	(438)	(419)
Impairment in net investment in finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	(2,854)	(2,021)
	(7,658)	(6,946)
Profit before taxation	3,002	2,465
Taxation	(459)	(395)
Profit for the year	2,543	2,070
Basic and diluted earnings per share (baizas)	10.03	8.16

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.

Major forum opens with emphasis on sustainability



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

Impactful insights by key policymakers set the tone for three days of deliberations that began at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) as part of Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) on Monday.

The primary focus of OSW activities on Monday was the start of the maiden edition of the International Sustainability Resources and Technology Conference (ISTRC) 2022 under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth

In welcome remarks, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi (pictured), Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, noted that the event has attracted as many as 75 high-level experts as speakers from 22 different countries, in addition to around 500 delegates taking part in-person and online. He expressed his profound thanks to the large portfolio of

organisations, sponsors and patrons that make possible the organising of the prestigious event.

A high-level Policymakers & Senior Executive session that followed the opening was moderated by HH Sayyid Dr Adham al Said, Assistant Professor of Economics at the College of Economics and Political Science in Sultan Qaboos University.

The participants were: Dr Mansoor al Hinai, Chairman - Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR); Dr Ali al Shidhani, Under-Secretary for Communications and Information Technology - Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; and Eng Ahmed al Subhi, Chairman – Oman Environmental Services Holding (be'ah).

Dr Al Shidhani said the Sultanate of Oman had the necessary technical and infrastructure wherewithal to support the achievement of its sustainability objectives, but noted the potential for this infrastructure to be developed further. **TO PAGE 15**

Lexus RX now with exclusive benefits



MUSCAT: Own a Lexus RX and benefit with free service 3 years / 30,000 kms and free registration (Conditions apply. Please visit your nearest Lexus showroom for details). The campaign is valid up to March 23, 2022 (Conditions apply. Visit any Lexus showroom for details).

The Lexus RX is powered by a choice of two powertrains. The RX 350 model is equipped with a 3.5-litre V6 petrol engine, which produces 296 HP and 37.7 Kg.M of torque and is paired to an eight-speed automatic transmission.

Meanwhile, the RX 450h hybrid variant is equipped with a 3.5-litre V6 petrol engine and two electric motors and produces a combined system output of 308 hp. The RX Hybrid is available with a hybrid battery warranty of 8 years or 160,000 kms, whichever is earlier.

The Lexus RX 450h can be driven in EV drive mode to reduce noise while driving in residential areas and to reduce exhaust gas in indoor parking lots and garages or through a combination of its petrol engine and two electric motors, depending on the vehicle's speed and customer's driving behaviour.

The batteries in the hybrid electric drivetrain are automatically charged by either the petrol engine or when braking and decelerating, eliminating the need to plug in a power cord.

A host of advanced technologies ensure the RX 450h drives like any other conventional vehicle, while not requiring special fuel.

For more information, please visit www.lexusoman.com or www.youtube.com/lexusoman or www.facebook.com/LexusOmanSBA or instagram.com/oman.lexus/. For further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Lexus showroom.

ODBW showcases innovative solutions in building, construction and real estate sector

MUSCAT: The Oman Design and Build Week (ODBW) and Oman Real Estate Exhibition 2022 was inaugurated by the Chief Guest, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance on March 14, 2022 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. Organised under the patronage of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning with the support of Oman Real Estate Association and Muscat Municipality, the 3-day exhibition will showcase innovative products, advanced services and emerging solutions for the construction and real estate industry.

The opening ceremony witnessed Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning and also included in attendance a number of key figures from different ministries, top-level delegates and industry leaders. Following the inauguration was the soft launch of TATWIR and the launch of the Hai Al Naseem project.

Other key highlights of the



event are the Oman Real Estate Expo (OREX) as well as the Oman Real Estate Conference, both of which are co-located with ODBW and are being hosted in Hall 3 of OCEC.

Commenting on the event,

Ashley Roberts, General Manager, CONNECT said, "ODBW aims to boost the building, construction and real estate industry in Oman by injecting international experiences into the local market, sharing of knowledge and by

encouraging innovative solutions. It is also geared at helping those in the sector to form meaningful alliances, showcase their brand strengths and expand their presence.

At the same time, owing to the

diversity of exhibitors, ODBW is also proving to be an excellent platform to address the various interests of the public. With over 250 exhibiting companies, the event will showcase a number of products from international manufacturers across seven countries with dedicated pavilions for Germany, India, Iran, Kuwait, Turkey, United Kingdom and more. We encourage everyone to visit the exhibition to familiarise themselves with new trends in the sector, witness cutting-edge innovation and benefit from insightful panel discussions."

Positioned as a forum offering opportunities for face-to-face business networking, the chance to engage in meaningful exchanges of information and enhancing the prospects of connecting with industry peers to form long-term partnerships in the future, visitors to OREX will also gain access to real estate developers, investors, cities and regional authorities and service providers.

OOMCO commences operation of 5th service station in Saudi Arabia



DAMMAM: Under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) has commenced the operation of its fifth service station in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Located in the Eastern Province, Dammam, the one-stop-shop service station caters to customers living in the metropolitan area. The service station features an exciting range

of on-the-go shopping, and food and beverage offerings, in addition to essential automotive services that go "beyond the pump".

The latest addition is part of OOMCO's strategy to accelerate its expansion in KSA as well as its global expansion footprint. The company will also add another five service stations around Jeddah to its portfolio in the Kingdom. The facility comprises a car care centre, a convenience store, cafeteria, a drive through coffee shop and ATM.

Alizz Islamic Bank opens new branch in Wilayat of Al Suwaiq

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank celebrated the launch of its 15th branch in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq in North Al Batinah Governorate under the auspices of Shaikh Saif bin Hamyar al Shehhi, Governor of North Al Batinah and in the presence of Sulaiman bin Hamed al Harthy, CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank and a number of senior management executives from the bank.

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

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



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

Despite the challenges that affected the overall economy and the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Alizz Islamic Bank has been able to grow sustainably while enriching the bank's values through its multiple initiatives to add value to customers. It has remained committed to the objective of providing its customers with cutting-edge

products, services and new branches in order to make their banking needs more convenient.

Sulaiman bin Hamed al Harthy said: "Alizz Islamic Bank continues to extend its top-quality services and products to all customers and the bank has been able to reformulate its banking services for institutions by reviewing its business strategy, which resulted in the growth of high quality banking facilities."

Bank Nizwa wins award for sustainability at OSW Awards

MUSCAT: Committed to achieving economic growth with minimal impact on the environment, Bank Nizwa has spearheaded several unique initiatives to promote sustainable practices in the local community. In the recent Oman Sustainability Week Awards, the bank was recognised for its ongoing endeavours towards sustainability and was awarded a special award in the bronze category.

The Oman Sustainability Week Awards was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Fahad bin al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor at Sultan Qaboos University to honour the efforts

of local companies who had made significant contributions in areas of sustainability.

Khalid al Barwani, DGM Wholesale Banking of Bank Nizwa received the award on behalf of the bank. Expressing his delight in receiving the award, Al Barwani said, "This is a moment of great pride for Bank Nizwa. The OSW Awards is indeed an excellent platform to encourage organisations to move towards a green and circular economy.

As an Islamic bank that places great emphasis on ethical practices, the concept of sustainability has always been deeply integrated



with everything we do. The sustainability Linked financing initiative recently launched by the bank is another testament to

our commitment to contribute towards the country's efforts to transition to Net Zero emissions and attain a sustainable future.

The programme will further incentivise companies to adopt sustainable practices in their operations. At Bank Nizwa, we are in strong alignment with Oman Vision 2040 which favours investments in socially responsible businesses. By pledging our commitment to sustainability practices, we have been able to support eco-conscious customers and investors and also contribute to community development projects."

While Bank Nizwa has attained significant growth in the past years, it has also remained steadfast in its endeavours to promote an all-inclusive

financial ecosystem that factors in sustainable programmes.

Focusing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as well as Oman's Vision 2040 to be listed among the top 20 countries in the worldwide Environmental Performance Index, the bank has conceptualised innovative, sustainable and Sharia-compliant finance solutions for the benefit of its customers. With a strong portfolio of clients, Bank Nizwa has also played an instrumental role in helping companies from different sectors integrate environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria into their businesses.

Major forum opens with emphasis on sustainability

FROM PAGE 13

In this regard, he cited the example of the estimated 1,300 sites that form part of the 5G telecom infrastructure rolled out across the country. These sites can be used to connect Internet of Things (IoT) devices, which in turn, can be harnessed to collect data on different environmental parameters.

This data, if suitably analysed, can provide insights to help with better decision-making on the environment, he explained. Dr Al Subhi of be'ah said the solid waste management entity has, from the outset, embraced international best practices in laying the foundations for a circular economy-based solid waste

sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

As a first step in this approach, all of the dumpsites in the country were converted into modern-style engineered landfills.

In the next phase, the focus will be on recycling of waste – a process that has already begun, but will need to be further developed, he said. Dr Al Hinai of APSR said the smart meters and prepaid meters rolled out across the country were helping reduce and optimise electricity consumption, thereby contributing not only to savings for customers, but also helping conserve resources and mitigating environmental impacts.

Inaugural ABGO Connect workshop held for Omani, Australian SMEs

BUSINESS REPORTER
 MUSCAT, MARCH 14

The Australian Business Group Oman (ABGO) hosted on Sunday the inaugural ABGO Connect workshop with over 75 Omani and Australian SMEs, Omani Alumni and ABGO members. The panel included Mustafa Salman (Australian Honorary Consul), Mac Thomson (Chair, ABGO), William Crew (CEO, Inspired Solutions) and Mubarak Tyebbhoy (Honorary Secretary, ABGO). Mustafa Salman welcomed the audience with inspiring words designed to spark interest in the Omani alumni. He noted that “these alumni and their businesses are the future of the Oman economy and ABGO is a great vehicle to drive this emerging force.”

Mac Thomson in his address expressed that the “Sultanate of Oman is a wonderful gateway into the GCC, and there is a growing



need for Australian and Omani businesses to connect at the commercial level.”

The workshop provided an opportunity for Omani alumni to be part of an accelerator led by William Crew, who stressed on the importance of networking and noted that “we can look at ABGO

Connect as giving individuals within the network a competitive advantage - a recipe for success”.

ABGO also announced a notable success story as a result of ABGO Connect breaking news. Dr Andrew Forrest, Chairman of Fortescue Future Industries (FFI), alongside a senior delegation from the company,

visited Muscat on March 12, 13.

FFI held high-level meetings with senior government officials that paved the way for the next steps. FFI is working closely with the Oman government to develop a Green Hydrogen Project that will employ thousands of Omanis for generations to come.

Dr Forrest mentioned that the level of investment would be significant and the future of green energy and green hydrogen in Oman is bright. This workshop is the first of many in the ABGO Connect series and will continue to provide a platform for young Omanis to find their voice, passion and develop strong commercial ties between Australia and the Sultanate of Oman.

ABGO Connect is the flagship programme that introduces Omani alumni and corporate members to the many commercial opportunities with Australian businesses interested in expanding and investing in the Sultanate of Oman.

New wave of inflation hits US factory floors

WASHINGTON: Surging inflation is disrupting everything from carpools to the ability to quote prices on new business at already-strained US factories. At BCI Solutions Inc., a metal foundry in Bremen, Indiana, 14 workers quit in the last two weeks — over 7% of its total workforce and an unprecedented number compared with pre-pandemic times. BCI has long struggled to hold workers but never lost that many in such a short span.

Company Chief Executive Officer JB Brown blames at least part of the sudden loss of workers on the spike in gasoline prices in the wake of Russia's attack on Ukraine, which has roiled global energy markets and sent prices at the pump through the roof. Regular unleaded gas was a record \$4.33 a gallon on Friday, up 85 cents in a month.

“When gas goes up, people want to work



A worker operates one of the metal cutting machines at a factory in Cleveland. — Reuters

closer to home”, he said, and with the jobless rate in the surrounding largely rural Marshall County under 1%, according to Bureau of Labour Statistics data, those jobs are easy to find.

In some cases, he knows workers who

don't want to quit — but do so because the person they carpool with does.

The current wave of disruptions come as many manufacturers felt they were starting to untangle supply chain and labour problems created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Backlogs at major US ports have declined in recent weeks, for instance. And it remains too early to fully assess how much the crisis in Ukraine will slow a return to normal operations — or create new issues.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has said the central bank would start “carefully” hiking interest rates at its upcoming March meeting as it balances the threat of high inflation and complex new risks posed by the war in Europe. He has also said, however, that the Fed would be ready to move more aggressively if inflation does not cool as quickly as expected. — Reuters

China to ensure stable economic operations

BEIJING: China will ensure stable economic operations this year, keep economic growth, employment and prices within reasonable ranges, state media quoted the cabinet as saying.

China's economy faces new downward pressure and difficulties and challenges increase, the cabinet was quoted as saying after a regular meeting. China will “strengthen cyclical adjustments and put stabilising growth in a more prominent position, deepen reforms and opening up to strive to achieve the full-year targets and tasks”, the cabinet said.

China is targeting slower

economic growth of around 5.5% this year as a property downturn and lacklustre consumption cloud the outlook for the world's second-largest economy. China will enhance the availability of financing for small firms and lower comprehensive financing costs, the cabinet said.

China will closely monitor changes in the international situation and commodity prices and the possible impact on China's economy, and take steps to cope with it, the cabinet said.

The government will quicken the pace of tax refunds to help firms, the cabinet added.

— Reuters

From one global financial catastrophe to the next

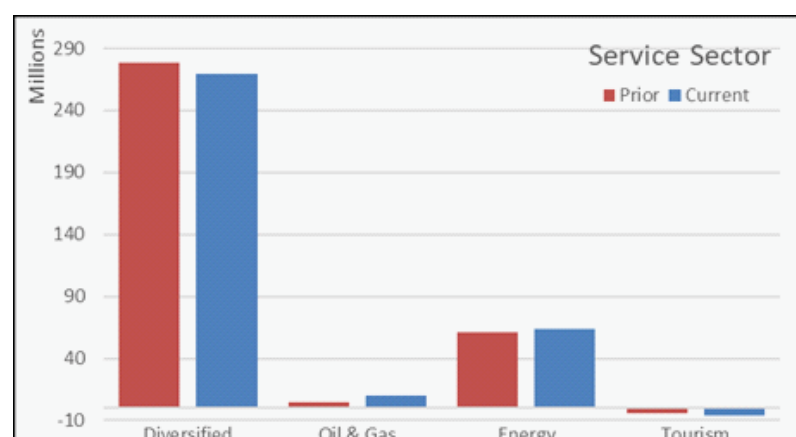
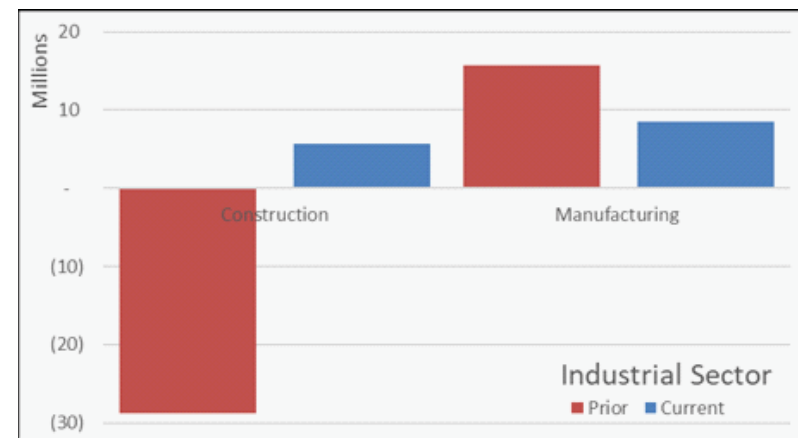
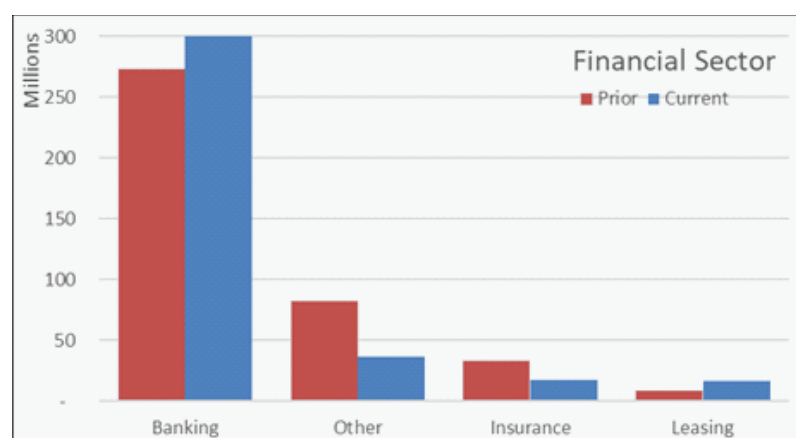


KARL JACKSON

Traditional economic wisdom typically predicted a big financial event every 10-20 years but as the world has become global and thus inter-connected, we are now seeing such huge catastrophic events occurring every couple of years.

Just as we were all beginning to hope that the demand side impact of the Covid pandemic was eventually receding, we have the outbreak of war between Russia and the Ukraine, which is putting huge pressure on the supply side. Whether this will be a net benefit (due to high prices of oil) or cost (due to increasing prices of many imported items) to Oman will be evident only in the coming year ahead.

Looking back, over what we



their bankers.

It is unlikely that they will all be successful. The insurance companies are struggling to return to pre-Covid levels of profitability, as premium pricing in a smaller market is challenging and the cost of the pandemic in terms of

medical and life insurance payouts has bitten.

Excluding the one-off “accounting impact” as DIDIC changed its status from an investment entity to a holding company, the remaining companies in the other category

have showed flat performance.

Within the Industrial sector, even after removing the impact of the successful restructuring at Galfar in which the group booked RO 28m of losses in 2020, the other construction companies have recorded a modest net recovery, helped considerably by the strong performance of Al Jazeera Steel Products (RO 9m profit) but hampered by the ongoing difficulties at Raysut Cement who recorded a RO 15m loss for the second year running.

Within the manufacturing sector, we see many of the companies involved in the food industry continuing to struggle as they are unable to pass on the higher cost of imported

raw materials to customers. A situation that is only going to become much more acute as the conflict between Russia and the Ukraine continues, due to the high export of agricultural commodities from the region.

Finally, as we look at the Service sector, which in terms of listed companies in Oman is dominated by Omantel with profits of RO 233m, we observe relatively flat year-on-year performance. In the energy sector we see both winners and losers.

With a RO 19m favourable profit swing at ACWA Power being offset by RO 10m profit reductions at both Al Kamel Power and Sohar Power, as they booked asset write downs following the introduction of the spot market for electricity.

Although not a major sector for listed companies, the six hotels within the tourism sector continue to record losses as inward bound tourism is yet to witness any meaningful shoots of recovery.

[This article by Karl Jackson, Audit and Assurance Partner with Crowe Oman (karl.jackson@crowe.om), is based on financial data published by the Muscat Stock Exchange]

Russian sanctions snarl shipping even as pandemic pressure eases

LIZ ALDERMAN AND JENNY GROSS

Russian ships banned from docking in Britain. Cargo containers piling up at European ports. Airfreight rerouted around Ukraine and Russia.

Just as the global economy was on track to emerge from the coronavirus pandemic, Russia's attack on Ukraine and global sanctions against Moscow are rippling through logistics and supply chains, creating bottlenecks in the transport of goods and commodities and threatening fresh economic pain for countries and businesses near the conflict zone.

Transport companies, maritime insurance executives and industry analysts say the 2-week-old war, combined with uncertainty fuelled by the sanctions, is causing backups of ships at some ports and could lead to longer delays in shipments, especially around Europe.

The cost of transporting cargo delivered by sea, land and air, which had already jumped during the pandemic, is also under pressure as global oil prices surged past \$130 a barrel this week.

"We thought we experienced a bounce-back from Covid in January and February", said Detlef Trefzger, the chief executive of Swiss-based Kuehne+Nagel, one of the world's largest transport companies, which delivers cargo by ship, air, rail and truck. "But the Ukraine-Russia crisis is a huge setback", he said, "and it will be a long-lasting setback."

The most visceral blow is being felt near the heart of the war zone, in the Black Sea.

More than 100 ships and their crews have been stranded at Ukrainian ports since Russia invaded Ukraine.

Missiles have hit several commercial vessels, and an explosion on or near an Estonian dry cargo vessel sank it 20 miles off Odesa, a Ukrainian port. The Russian and Ukrainian crew members all survived.

The risk has forced shipowners to pay an additional insurance premium of 1 per cent to 5 per cent of a ship's value, said Marcus Baker, the global head of maritime and cargo at Marsh McLennan, an insurance broker and risk adviser.

The insurance industry's Joint War Committee widened its high-risk areas to the waters close to Romania and Georgia this week after adding Russian and Ukrainian waters last month.

The International Maritime



Workers are seen at the port of Mykolaiv, in Ukraine.

Organization's Secretary-General, Kitack Lim, said at an emergency council session on Thursday that there was serious concern about the safety and welfare of seafarers in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and that seafarers could not be collateral damage in the military crisis.

The blockage has squeezed global grain supplies from one of the world's biggest grain-producing regions, pushing wheat prices higher on world markets and fanning the threat of inflation. Russia and Ukraine together account for nearly a quarter of global exports of wheat.

Problems around the Black Sea are the tip of the iceberg, rippling disruptions throughout the logistics industry and pressuring global trade, analysts say.

At the Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, the largest seaport in Europe, some terminals have turned into "a parking lot" for hundreds of cargo containers destined for Russia, said Tie Schellekens, a spokesman for the port.

Many of the containers stacked on docks undergo time-consuming customs inspections to make sure they are not carrying blacklisted items, like spare

airplane parts or semiconductors. The pileup is not disastrous, Schellekens said, but to prevent further congestion, some port operators are refusing to accept ships carrying any Russia-bound cargo.

At the same time, he said, some European companies are not even trying to send goods to Russia, for fear of breaching a list of sanctions by Western allies that seems to grow longer by the day. Businesses are also starting to curb production amid worries that Russian clients won't pay them for shipped products, in part because financial sanctions are gumming up payment mechanisms.

"It means the effect of the sanctions is wider than the sanctions themselves", Schellekens said.

The bottlenecks are not only on the water. Sanctions against Russia are putting fresh pressure on already tight air cargo capacity, causing transport rates to spike. With Russian airspace off limits to most carriers, and the United States, the European Union and Canada banning Russian aircraft from their airspace, the global air cargo market is being rapidly squeezed, analysts said.

Flights between Europe and Asia in

particular have to be rerouted, adding three to four hours to some routes and requiring more fuel just as the war pushes oil prices to record highs.

Russian carriers such as AirBridgeCargo and Aeroflot Cargo — two big players, flying around one-fifth of global air cargo volume — have pulled back sharply. While just 3 per cent of global cargo travels in planes, air cargo makes up over a third of world trade by value.

Ground transport is also being affected, as the conflict disrupts key rail routes between the European Union and China, slowing trade. Some companies have suspended rail freight between the regions over concerns about disruptions at the borders. The sanctions also mean European companies cannot work with Russian railways.

Trucking isn't being spared, either. Kuehne+Nagel stopped deliveries to Russia from Europe and China to avoid violating the sanctions, Trefzger said. But Europe's trucking industry is also facing a fresh shortage of drivers, as tens of thousands of Ukrainian truckers head back to Ukraine to join in the fight against Russia, he noted.

Just as the global economy was on track to emerge from the coronavirus pandemic, Russia's attack on Ukraine and global sanctions against Moscow are rippling through logistics and supply chains, creating bottlenecks in the transport of goods and commodities and threatening fresh economic pain for countries and businesses near the conflict zone

Bitcoin was made for this moment. So why isn't it booming?

For years, Bitcoin buffs who were questioned by sceptics about the value of the cryptocurrency would respond by saying: Just wait.

Wait until inflation hits, and people look to park their savings in a stable digital asset that won't lose its value. Wait until war breaks out, and authoritarians start seizing assets and imposing capital controls on their citizens.

Wait until big banks and tech companies start censoring dissidents for their political views. Then you'll see why we need a stateless, decentralised, anonymous digital currency.

More than most cryptocurrencies, Bitcoin was seen by many of its libertarian-leaning fans as a kind of doomsday insurance, a form of "digital gold" that would be a source of stability as the world grew more chaotic and unpredictable.

Well, chaos is here. In the United States, inflation is rising at the fastest pace in decades, and the VIX — the so-called fear index used by Wall Street to measure expected volatility in the stock market — has risen more than 80 per cent this year.

Last month, Canada's government responded to the threat of a protest convoy of anti-vaccine truckers by threatening to freeze their bank accounts, drawing calls for a type of money that isn't subject to government seizures. Russia's attack on Ukraine was met with brutal sanctions that have tanked the rouble and devastated the Russian economy, and many US companies have pulled out of

The Bitcoin and crypto communities have been selling a false narrative all these years that Bitcoin is supposed to be a safe haven from the traditional financial markets

JIMMY NGUYEN
PRESIDENT, BITCOIN ASSOCIATION

Russia, making it nearly impossible for its citizens to access their bank accounts, use credit cards or even post on social media.

In other words, this is a perfect storm of economic and geopolitical events that should, theoretically, be great for Bitcoin.

But Bitcoin hasn't boomed. In fact, even as Wall Street analysts contemplate the possibility of nuclear Armageddon, crypto prices have fallen steadily. Bitcoin prices are down 10 per cent in the past month, and Ether, the second most popular crypto coin, is down roughly 15 per cent.

Day-to-day usage of cryptocurrencies isn't picking up the way you'd expect, either. Bitcoin trading volume rose after Russia invaded Ukraine, but it has remained relatively flat since, suggesting that people aren't rushing to trade their roubles and hryvnia (Ukraine's currency) for digital currencies. Russian oligarchs don't appear to be using crypto to evade sanctions en masse, either, despite initial fears that they might.

Granted, crypto has not been totally absent from these events. In Canada, some truckers raised money through crypto donations (while others had their crypto wallets seized as part of the crackdown), and Ukraine's government has reportedly raised nearly \$100 million in crypto donations.

And it's still too early to say, with certainty, that

crypto won't be useful in later stages of the Russian conflict.

But Bitcoin doesn't seem to be playing a central role in our global unraveling so far. Which raises the obvious question: Why not?

One possibility is that crypto is still too confusing and too difficult for normal people to use, especially during a war. Internet access is spotty in many parts of Ukraine, and reports have suggested that even the country's elites are struggling to convert their assets into crypto.

Another possibility, popular among sceptics of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, is that Bitcoin is still too volatile to be useful as a hedge against economic and political instability.

"The Bitcoin and crypto communities have been selling a false narrative all these years that Bitcoin is supposed to be a safe haven from the traditional financial markets", said Jimmy Nguyen, President of the Bitcoin Association, a cryptocurrency trade group. (His group promotes a Bitcoin spinoff, Bitcoin SV, that sees itself as a more useful version of the cryptocurrency.)

Bitcoin is doomed, Nguyen argues, because it can be slow and expensive to process transactions, making it less useful for paying for things. "And so a lot of Bitcoin supporters have had to come up with this argument that it's meant to be a reserve asset", he said.

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MARCH 15, 2022

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OMAN DAILY
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NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

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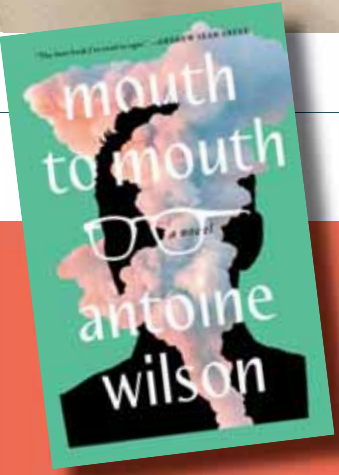
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Transforming his phobia into a business

Nasser al Rawahi has been scared of reptiles, especially snakes but after a forced interaction with one of them, he realised that his phobia stems from not knowing enough about them. When he decided to read and study about reptiles, he realised his fears were unfounded and is now looking forward to becoming the top distributor of reptiles as pets in Oman... **P20**

READ



MOUTH TO MOUTH

BY ANTOINE WILSON

Like *Gone Girl*, Antoine Wilson's *Mouth to Mouth* is a thriller titled after its inciting incident. It's the early nineties, and Jeff Cook, an aimless recent college graduate saves the life of a drowning swimmer off of Santa Monica beach by diving into the surf and performing CPR on the man.

FASHION

Burberry celebrates British culture in London live show return

BRITISH LUXURY label Burberry returned to the London catwalk on Friday with its first in-person fashion show in two years, presenting menswear and womenswear collections that celebrated British culture.

Following digital presentations in past seasons due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chief Creative Officer Riccardo Tisci said he mixed different vibes for the autumn/winter 2022 lines,

playing with the brand's classic camel trench looks.

"It was important for me to explore what it means to belong, how our roots influence our identity and how the power of community and togetherness is what truly brings meaning to the world," he said in a statement, also paying homage to London.

"The collection embodies an intangible essence that is Britishness, a unique fusion of



honouring the beauty of the past, whilst also remaining focused on the future with thankfulness, hope and love."

Models wore trench coats with chain details, country-style outerwear, bodysuits, detailed checked skirts and twin sets

paired with tight high platform boots.

The brand's classic check print in camel, red and black appeared on pleated dresses and skirts, while Tisci used Burberry's equestrian knight design and oak leaf crest as prints or embellishments.

For the evening, he reimaged a trench coat as a strapless gown, offered frocks trimmed with feathers and black velvet shirts worn with long skirts and tuxedo jackets. Shiny metallics decorated some designs.

Menswear featured puffer, aviator and tailored jackets, high-waisted trousers with corset-like laces, rugby shirts and jumpers with embellishments.

Some outfits had off-the-shoulder panels - in faux-fur, shearling or rib-knit. Accessories included baseball caps. — **Reuters**



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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



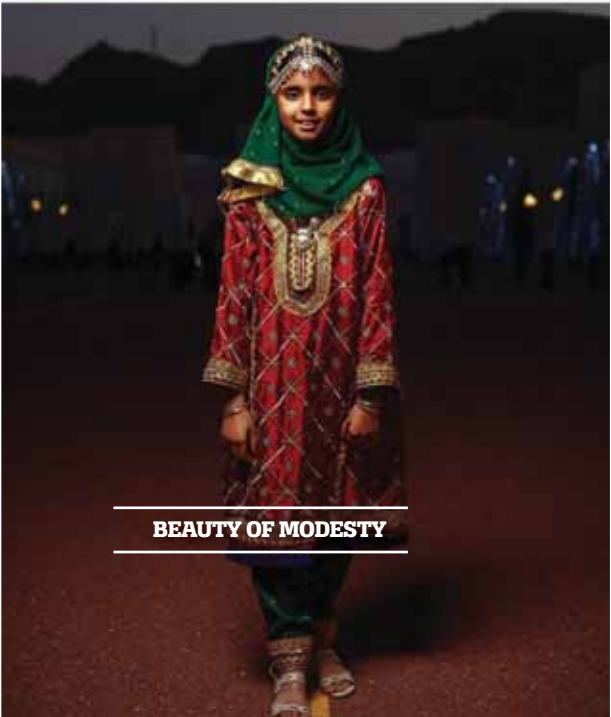
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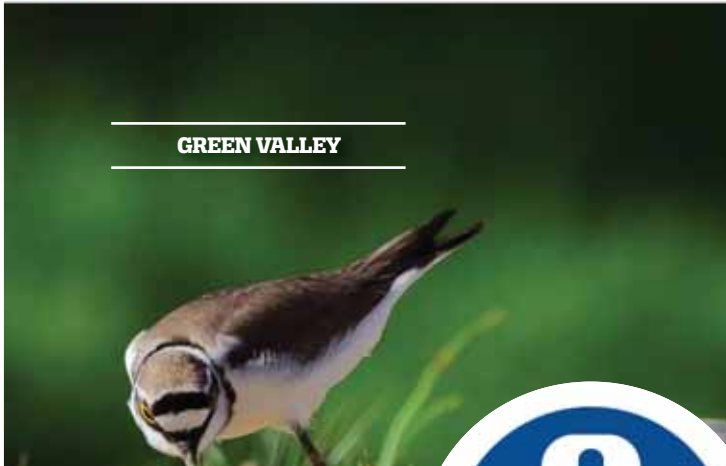
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AROUND THE WORLD

CONSERVATION

Endangered bat not seen in four decades found in Rwanda



A **CRITICALLY** endangered species of bats not sighted in 40 years has been found in Rwanda, with the "incredible" discovery delighting conservationists who had feared it was already extinct.

But the Hill's Horseshoe Bat was in fact still clinging to life in Rwanda's Nyungwe Forest — a dense rainforest that is home to endangered mountain gorillas — the consortium behind the discovery said.

There had been no information on the population of the mammals and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 2021 listed them as critically endangered.

Rediscovering the lost species "was incredible", Jon Flanders, director for Bat Conservation International (BCI), said in a statement late on Tuesday.

"It's astonishing to think that we're the first people to see this bat in so long."

The Texas-based non-profit had partnered with the Rwanda Development Board and Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association to conduct surveys in the jungle starting in 2013.

In 2019, after a 10-day expedition scouring the caves in the forest, the scientists found the bat.

"We knew immediately that the bat we had captured was unusual and remarkable," BCI's chief scientist Winifred Frick said.

"The facial features were exaggerated to the point of comical."

But it took them another three years to verify its species.

The creatures of the night have long been infamous as fanged monsters or vectors of disease, with the coronavirus pandemic doing little to improve that image after scientists said Covid-19 likely originated in the animals.

From the tiny two-gram "bumblebee bat", to the giant Philippine flying fox with its 1.5-metre (five-foot) wingspan, bats make up a fifth of all terrestrial mammals.

Some 40 per cent of the 1,321 species assessed on the IUCN's Red List are now classified as endangered.

Human actions — including deforestation and habitat loss — are to blame.

For the researchers in Rwanda, the elusive discovery marks the beginning of a new race to save the once lost species from disappearing again.

"Now our real work begins to figure out how to protect this species long into the future," said Flanders. — **AFP**

GASTRONOMY

New York pianist blossoms into a baker of lifelike bouquets



AS A **CHOPIN** nocturne glides effortlessly from pianist Navah Perlman Frost's fingers, a four-layer cake covered with lifelike pink and purple buttercream flowers sits in her New York kitchen.

Frost, 51, the daughter of renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman, started piano lessons at the age of 6. She played professionally for 35 years in Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, until the Covid-19 pandemic hit two years ago.

With concerts suspended, Frost took online baking and frosting classes, making cakes for friends and family because there was "nothing better to do," she said. "I didn't think I was going to actually end up selling any-

thing."

Her flowers of icing look like fresh bouquets of roses, peonies and tulips or mimic works of art like Vincent van Gogh's "Irises."

"I've always loved beautiful things to look at," said Frost, adding that she majored in art history.

At the urging of friends and family, she posted photographs of her sweet treats on Instagram that by December 2020 had blossomed into a small business, with cake prices ranging from about \$80 to \$200.

"People have said to me in the beginning, 'You're charging too little. I'm like, 'It's cake,' she said.

As Covid-19 cases

decline and life returns to normal, Frost may not return to the stage.

"There is a piece of me that is enjoying this so much that I would hate to stop doing it," she said. "This is almost expressive in a similar way as music... I'm enjoying that sort of feeling of creation."

A new-career highlight was a customer's reaction to a surprise birthday cake.

"You should have seen the expression on this woman's face when she opened the box, and the first thing she said is, 'Is this my cake?' She was so touched," she said.

"Even if you're getting very fleeting, momentary joy, I don't mind being part of that. I'll take it." — **Reuters**



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
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Memory of a Generation

The following is a translation of an excerpt from "A Soldier from Oman: Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid Al Kalbani

RETRIEVING THE TALE

Many of us see nothing in our lives that merits documentation. If we do, we tend to delay it as a project requiring further time or further maturity. No wonder we see but a few people who take it a duty unto themselves to narrate their life stories for the succeeding generations, explaining to them as they do the path they trod, the dreams they harboured and the obstacles they faced. Our reluctance to document our lives comes across as ironic in the face of the fact that we do, indeed, narrate thousands of times to our sons and friends. We talk about our past, what we did and what we said, how we discovered ourselves in its terms, how it was different from the present.

We cherish our past, relive its sweetness and vivacity, despite the fact that our present may glow with pleasure and comfort. Our past is but a school from which we learn patience and perseverance.

I understand my tale of birth, childhood and work is no different from that of my peers. Our childhood, though hidden behind the mountains of the past, hasn't left our hearts. It manifests itself as yearning, as a spiritual journey into our deepest souls. Those sons, friends, peers, relatives who heard our story find it worthy of being transformed into words, written on the page; some might not see it so. I, nonetheless, decided to go by the well-intentioned advice of my loved ones.

Before setting a word on the page, I sat back and pondered for a considerable period of time: what should I write? What is it in my life that deserves to be written about? Which details are cumbersome and, thus likely to cause boredom and which are stimulat-

ing, thus likely to grip the reader's attention? Settling on a particular course was no easy matter, as what one thinks too ordinary to mention others might think too exceptional to omit. Our reflections about our own selves vary from those of others.

Whatever I narrate to you is not an autobiography as such, but rather memory of a generation which lived between two distinctive periods, the pre-Renaissance Oman and the post-Renaissance Oman. We are talking about a generation whose childhood was so different from that of our children; places have changed and so have times and details.

Once settled, I began to dig into my mind. Retrieving the past is not an easy task, especially if one's life brims with all manner of events that crisscross many decades. But it is the steadfastness of my well-wishers that has galvanised me to go ahead on life's path, and it is the same steadfastness that urges me now to retrieve that path. This retrieval is bound to be reductive, though. Years and years have accumulated; retrieving them is akin to entering a dark cave. But I shall endeavour to do so in the hope to find a torch that will brighten that cave.

As I enter the cave and happily live my past moments, I see myself surrounded with jewels I thought I had forgotten: one story leads to another, no sooner this page ends than my pen invades the other. I decided to let the pen take its natural course, not hindered by any methodology or ideology.

I conclude this introduction with the hope that the current generation would consider our legacy with an open mind and an appreciative heart.



Transforming his phobia into a business

By Baraah Al Mujaini

Nasser al Rawahi was not a fan of reptiles. There was even a point that he was repulsed by them distancing himself away from these animals whenever he sense their presence.

But that repulsion and phobia would eventually go away and discovering the amazing potential of raising and selling reptiles, he fell in love working with them and eventually discovered his gifts of caring for them.

"The first time I touched a snake, it was only because my friend forced me to do it. My friend firmly insisted that I give it a try. It felt awkward", Nasser said.

But from that encounter, Nasser learned to keep an open mind. His curiosity also grew and from being scared, he became engrossed in learning about them. He read different materials and interacted with other experts to understand the lives of reptiles including his enemy back in the days – snakes.

The early interest would become an all-consuming passion. That passion will then develop into a business. In a short amount of time, Nasser is the go-to supplier of live snakes to buyers.

Having done his studies and readings, Nasser gained expertise in how to handle and care for them. He also became very proficient in identifying them when he sees them.

Having dived into the world of selling reptiles, he exerted efforts to better himself in understanding them. He spent countless hours trying to research the different reptiles around the world.

Nasser's keenness to procure unique reptiles became his dominant concern, therefore, he exerted sustained effort to hone and sharpen his skills in investigating and researching the reptile world.

"Now, I can detect and examine different reptiles' species precisely and easily in terms of their rareness degree and venom level", Nasser shared.

Pioneering something like reptile selling is new in Oman which is why Nasser has to contend with different issues. Sometimes policies are still in their infancy when it comes to requirements as well as import and export licenses. Nasser said that the paperwork is some of the most critical challenges that hinder him from doing good business and expanding what he does.

"What I do is that I order online some of the unique species that

are not available locally in stores or pet markets. Thankfully, there are a lot of good suppliers globally. The online delivery also allows me to save on time and usually, orders are received faster", he said.

Nasser is advocating that love for animals and reptiles should be built up in Oman and among Omanis. Nasser said that such passion for reptiles is not only a lucrative business but more interest in these creatures may actually result eventually for the industry to develop and eliminating the regional or international suppliers.

Due to the nature of his business, Nasser shared that he met several Omanis who are just as interested as him in raising reptiles as pets.

"I've met several amateur Omanis who have the same passion for reptiles. Over time, I expect this interest to gain popularity. This is already big within the neighbouring countries", said Nasser.

Nasser's home has become a centre of entertainment and offers a thrilling atmosphere for kids who are visiting. He is happy to see kids interact with the different animals including snakes and chameleons and he thinks that along with this interest is the education that he can share with those who visit his home.

Nasser also explained that he is on the constant lookout for new information as well as he wanted to create a suitable environment for all the different reptiles he has in his possession. He said he is very specific about lighting, cages, soil and food and has been studying the fundamentals. He also explained that he is in constant collaboration and consultation with reliable sources.

As of now, Nasser is focused on diversifying his collection. He said that it's a strenuous task but his goal is to become a reptile supplier in Oman and that means collecting all the interesting species he can find.

As an aid to his dream of becoming a major reptile distributor, he is also looking into expanding the area where he hosts the reptiles. He also wanted his shop to be interactive for his guests.

Oman is one of the most diverse countries in the Middle East and is home to more than 79 different species of reptiles. Preserving and securing Oman's environment is compulsory to avoid the extinction of the immensely-rare reptiles and to boost wildlife tourism in the country.

