

Oman crude trades above \$100 a barrel

Oman crude was traded for \$100 and above for the first time since August 2014. According to Dubai Mercantile Exchange, on Tuesday, the Oman crude was traded at \$100.85 for May delivery, an increase of \$4.98 from Sunday. The last time the Oman crude traded for above \$100 was on August 29, 2014, while the highest price at which the crude traded was \$137. 50 on June 30, 2008. **DETAILS ON P13**



P10

FIFA THROWS RUSSIA OUT OF WORLD CUP



P13

FITCH UPGRADES OMATEL'S OUTLOOK TO STABLE



P20

A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES: THE GROWING RELATIONS OF OMAN AND ROMANIA



MUSCAT

HM SENDS CABLE OF GREETINGS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Zeljko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the chairman and the friendly people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. — ONA

TUNIS

ARAB INTERIOR MINISTERS MEET

Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, met Maj Gen Ibrahim Ali Haidan, Yemeni Interior Minister, on Tuesday. They discussed ways of fostering bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and matters of common concern. Sayyid Hamoud also met Bassam Mawlawi, Lebanese Minister of Interior and Municipalities, on Tuesday. The Tunisian capital is hosting the 39th meeting of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers on Wednesday. **SEE ALSO P2**

HM greetings to Cambodia King



Saleh bin Mohammed al Saqri, Resident Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, submitted his credentials to King Norodom Sihamoni of the Kingdom of Cambodia at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh, as Ambassador Extraordinary of the Sultanate of Oman to Cambodia. The ambassador conveyed greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to King Norodom Sihamoni and the friendly Cambodian people. **DETAILS ON P2**

State Council to hold fourth regular meeting

MUSCAT: The State Council will convene its fourth regular meeting of the third annual session under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman, on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the State Council will discuss a study submitted by the Social Committee on enhancing water resources, desert and mountain sports. It will also discuss two proposals submitted by the Technology and Innovation Committee for studying the Cyber Defence Centre system promulgated by Royal Decree No 64/2022 and the regulatory and legislative frameworks of artificial intelligence technology.

The council will also discuss a study submitted by the Economic Committee on 'strengthening the legislative and regulatory frameworks of real estate financing, financial leasing and consumer financing activities'. Besides, the council will deliberate the committee's proposal on a study entitled "the agricultural sector: economic returns and competitiveness". The council will approve the minutes of the third regular meeting of the third annual session.

The meeting's agenda includes reviewing a number of reports submitted by council's members, messages received by the State Council from authorities and the secretariat-general's report on the State Council's activities during between the previous and current meetings. — ONA

RUSSIA TELLS KYIV RESIDENTS TO FLEE HOMES

MOSCOW SAYS WILL PUSH ON UNTIL GOALS MET



A child fleeing Russian bombing of Ukraine reacts as she stands outside the tent, at a temporary camp in Przemysl, Poland, on Tuesday. — Reuters

KYIV: Russia warned Kyiv residents to flee their homes on Tuesday and rained rockets down on Kharkiv, as Russian commanders who have failed to achieve a quick victory shifted their tactics to intensify the bombardment of Ukrainian cities.

With an armoured column miles long bearing down on the capital, Russia's defence ministry said it was planning to strike targets in Kyiv used by Ukraine's security service. Residents near such sites should evacuate their homes, it warned, while giving no information about where in the city of 3 million people those targets were located.

Rocket strikes on Kharkiv killed at least 10 people and wounded 35, Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Herashchenko said. Similar strikes had killed and wounded dozens in the city the previous day.

"The rubble is being cleared and there will be even more victims and wounded," he said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the artillery barrages on Kharkiv amounted to state terrorism.

Nearly a week since Russian troops poured over the border, they have failed to capture a single major Ukrainian city after running into far fiercer resistance than they expected.

"The Russian army is an artillery army primarily and it looks like they are shifting into war-fighting mode," said Nick Reynolds, a land warfare analyst at RUSI in London.

"The failure of the Russians to achieve their goals quickly has galvanised Ukraine resistance to them. Really what we are seeing now is the Russian military shifting gears."

Russia still has more forces to throw into the fight even though President Vladimir Putin faces worldwide condemnation and international sanctions. **SEE ALSO P7**

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READ IN OPINION



IS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING REALLY A NEW TREND? **MIRIAM KUGEL** P8

ANOTHER UNEXPECTED TWIST OF 2022? **SAMUEL KUTTY** P9

INSIDE



440 CIVILIANS KILLED IN SOUTH SUDAN CLASHES | P6



AFRICA 'NOT READY' FOR CLIMATE STRESS | P9

A hotter planet means a hungrier planet, warns climate report

LONDON: The future of food is troubling. Nearly a third of the world's crop fields and livestock rangeland will be unsuitable for food production by the end of this century if climate-warming emissions aren't heavily curbed, a report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says.

Simultaneous crop failures in the world's breadbaskets and livestock deaths from extreme heat are just a few of the disasters that may befall the world's food system by 2050 as the planet warms. Such scenarios would lead to higher



A child sits on an area affected by a drought on Earth Day in the southern outskirts of Tegucigalpa, Honduras. — AFP file photo

prices and put an additional 80 million people at risk of hunger.

"The future looks dark if we do not take action," said Rachel Bezner Kerr, an IPCC lead author and global development researcher at Cornell University.

Scientists say the worst effects of climate change would start to be unleashed if global temperatures rise more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Having already warmed 1.1C, the planet is expected to hit the 1.5C threshold within two decades.

The UN report released on Monday looked broadly at many consequences of climate change, from unliveable cities to shrinking economies. But its outlook on future food supply was especially grave. Global food production is still increasing, but not as fast as in the past. Climate change already has curbed production growth by some 21 per cent over the last six decades at a time when demand for food is rising.

Heavy rains, high temperatures, poorer soil quality, an increase in pests such as locusts and a decrease in helpful pollinators such as bees will cause grain supplies to stumble. — Reuters



In brief

TUNIS



INTERIOR MINISTER MEETS LEBANESE COUNTERPART

Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior met with Bassam Mawlawi, Lebanese Minister of Interior and Municipalities, on Tuesday.

They discussed ways of fostering bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and matters of common concern.

The Tunisian capital is hosting the 39th meeting of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers on Wednesday.

MUSCAT



UAE LAND FORCES COMMANDER ARRIVES IN OMAN

Major General Saeed al Shehhi, Commander of the Land Forces of the brotherly United Arab Emirates and his accompanying military delegation, arrived here on a two-day official visit to the Sultanate of Oman, on Tuesday.

He was received at Seeb Air Base by Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) and a number of RAO senior officers.

ADAM



PARTNERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT SEMINAR

The Ministry of Social Development organised on Tuesday a symposium entitled "Partnership and Empowerment" in the Wilayat of Adam, as part of the fifth annual Al Bashayer Festival for camel racing.

The symposium included the presentation of five working papers, the first of which included a visual presentation of the Tamkeen programme of the Ministry of Social Development

The second paper discussed services provided by the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises in supporting and empowering families of craftspeople.

The third paper discussed the role of Oman Development Bank in financing youth projects and providing technical, administrative and financial advice.

The fourth paper addressed the free services provided to rural women and the subsidy system. The fifth paper was about assisting social security families and enabling them to find a source of income.

— ONA

Over 846,000 visit Oman pavilion

THE PAVILION HIGHLIGHTS TOURISM POTENTIAL OF AL BURAIMI



MUSCAT: Over 846,000 visitors visited the Oman pavilion in the Dubai Expo 2020, which will conclude on March 31. The theme of Oman pavilion is 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future'. Young Omanis were instrumental in the making of the pavilion, which attracted scores of people from around the world. It showcases the works and programmes of the Sultanate of Oman as well as its heritage and knowledge.

Expo 2020 Dubai's Global Goals Week has been focusing on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that focus on ending poverty, improving health and education, reducing inequality and spur economic growth while also tackling climate change and working to preserve oceans and forests.

The Omani pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai threw open its doors on October 1, 2021. The Sultanate of Oman sought, through its participation in Expo 2020 Dubai, to embody the achievements of Oman civilisation throughout history, as well as highlighting its progress, renewed renaissance and future aspirations under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

What distinguishes the Oman pavilion from others is its design inspired by the frankincense tree, which reflects the Oman civilisation and heritage. The pavilion was designed by Omani young women, Rehab al Zakwani and Alyaa al Battashi.

The external spaces surrounding the pavilion host 10 frankincense trees, which were protected by the Oman Botanic Garden. These natural trees are planted in a panoramic landscape view and they will be returned to

the garden after the expo.

The Omani pavilion begins with narrating to the visitors the life of the frankincense tree as the story of the pavilion. It seeks to highlight four key themes — sustainability, fostering talents, communication and knowledge. The pavilion consists of two floors: the ground floor (the mother tree), where the visitor is at a real-life meeting with the electro-mechanical design of the tree, which is centred in the middle of the hall, mimicking the exact details of the natural tree and symbolising many physical, emotional and spiritual meanings, as well as its various practical uses.

On the perimeter wall, a panoramic screen shows the story of Omani frankincense from Wadi Dawkah and its journey via the world's various civilisations through time (trade in the Arabian Peninsula, mummification in ancient Egypt, Christian prayers in the Old Testament and traditional Chinese medicine), in line with the key theme of Expo 2020 Dubai – Connecting Minds.

On the first floor, in the Growth Hall 'The Forest of Sustainability', visitors walk through a virtual forest of frankincense trees made from transparent display screens used to showcase eight different sustainability stories in Oman. The stories are about projects of

sustainable dimensions, namely the Million Date Palm Plantation Project, the use of drone techniques for pollination and fish farming, the use of Internet of Things (IoT) technology to feed fish, renewable energy and wind energy project in Dhofar, sustainable cities, environmental conservation, waste management, the Oman Botanic Garden and the unique diversity of terrain in the Sultanate of Oman.

The first floor, themed the Harvest Hall, displays the methods adopted by the Sultanate of Oman in fostering talents and resources, the transfer of skills and knowledge between generations and disciplines.

It also highlights new ideas and opportunities to create a vibrant society.

The first floor of the pavilion is a modern and active area with a focus laid on people through the use of display screens that resemble frankincense crystals telling stories about Oman's knowledge-based economy, such as an Omani scholar specialising in antiquity who talks about frankincense, music, creative industries, women in the higher fields, nascent Omani companies and Sultan Qaboos academic chairs.

The first floor also hosts the Hall of Trade, which is about a journey through time and space, starting from a display on the wall of an ancient port (Al Baleed site) for the export of frankincense till reaching Oman's future vision. The hall shows activities of transporting humans, goods and information and highlighting land, sea, air transport initiatives and the ambitious large-scale infrastructure in Oman.

The second and final floor houses a future interactive library of expertise and represents a spiritual and futuristic space, where visitors are treated with multi-sensory experiences, starting with the future garden and conducting a live experiment on frankincense seedlings during the expo. On Monday, the pavilion highlighted the tourism potential of the Al Buraimi Governorate. Folk dance and songs of the governorate were performed. Representatives from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the governorate, Al Buraimi University College and Al Buraimi University participated.

— ONA

Ambassador to Cambodia submits credentials

PHNOM PENH: Saleh bin Mohammed al Saqri, Resident Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, submitted his credentials to King Norodom Sihamoni of the Kingdom of Cambodia at the Royal Palace, as Ambassador Extraordinary of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The ambassador conveyed greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

to King Norodom Sihamoni and the friendly Cambodian people.

The King of Cambodia asked the ambassador to convey his greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik wishing him and the government and people of the Sultanate of Oman continued progress and prosperity.

The king welcomed the ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman wishing him success in performing his duties and hoping

for more developed bilateral relations between the two countries.

The ambassador voiced his pride for representing the Sultanate of Oman in the Kingdom of Cambodia and his keenness to bolster bilateral relations in various fields in a manner that contributes to strengthening the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two friendly countries and peoples. — ONA

Excavating mountains without license attracts RO 2,500 fine

KABEER YOUSUF

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Excavating mountains or removing rocks without license will attract a fine of RO 2,500. Article 2 of the Resolution No 212/2017 of Muscat Municipality stipulates that it is not permissible to cut a mountain or to carry out digging works except after obtaining permission.

"An application for a licence to cut a mountain or to carry out road digging shall be made to the municipality, in accordance with the approved form, accompanied by a set of documents," said a spokesperson from the civic body.

The plot's title deed, or an approval from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning if it doesn't have a title deed



along with the survey report, maps illustrating a survey of the plot must be submitted with the application. An administrative fine of RO 500 if other provisions are violated and the violator shall be granted a period of 10 days to make good the reasons of the violation failing of the license shall be considered revoked. The works shall be carried out during the day and it is prohibited to

cut off mountains or carry out excavation works at night after obtaining a prior approval from the Municipality. Violation of this rule too shall be an offense.

Contractors must remove waste or debris within a month. In the event the contractor breaches the rule, the competent authority of the municipality can seek clarification from the concerned parties.

SQU's history dept gets German accreditation

MUSCAT: The Department of History at the College of Arts and Social Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University obtained accreditation from the German Accreditation Institution AQAS. The institute is known for providing audit and consulting services for scientific programmes of higher education institutions.

Dr Ali bin Saeed al Riyami, Head of the History Department at the College of Arts and Social Sciences, said, "The History Department seeks to achieve a number of goals, including working on applying scientific principles in research and transforming them into programmes that benefit society and institutions; graduating highly qualified cadres with expertise. Knowledge, research and leadership skills; promoting the values of belonging and identity; and benefiting from the experiences and lessons of history."

He added that the history department's journey began with

obtaining programme accreditation through several steps, the first of which was to study the selection of the appropriate accreditation institution for the nature of the specialisation in the middle of the fall of 2016.

This accreditation comes from the university's keenness to provide high quality educational services to its affiliates, in accordance with scientific and professional standards, to achieve its vision and mission, which stipulated "excellence in teaching, learning, scientific research, innovation and community service."

There are three academic programmes in the department: the bachelor's programme, which began with the establishment of the College of Arts and Social Sciences in 1987. The Master's programme began in the academic year 2002-2003 while the doctoral programme began in 2010-2011 academic year. The department receives a number of international students for master's and doctoral programmes.



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WEDNESDAY | MARCH 2 | 2022

3

MoD's Engineering Services marks annual day



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Defence's Engineering Services marked its annual day under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, on Monday.

The celebration, held at Al Shafaq Club of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), began by staging a documentary highlighting the roles undertaken by the Engineering Services in supporting SAF in various fields in addition to its developmental roles. Then, an operetta entitled 'Haitham, the glory: we are your loyal soldiers', was staged.

The event also witnessed traditional arts shows, plays and patriotic songs.

The celebration was attended by Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO); Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo); Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) and Air Vice Marshal Engineer Saleh bin Yahya al Maskari, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC).

The engineering services of the Ministry of Defence is one of the major supporting units of SAF.

It plays a vital role in providing technical

and engineering support to SAF as well as basic services such as water, electricity, sewage networks and infrastructure facilities.

The Engineering Services contribute to road construction in the governorates within the framework of the Ministry of Defence and SAF'S contribution to the comprehensive development efforts in the country.

The Engineering Services possesses the comprehensive construction equipment project which is considered as a qualitative leap in the implementation of various engineering projects and systems.

GCC Consumer Protection Week begins

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has joined the rest of the GCC countries to mark the GCC Consumer Protection Week, on March 1-7.

Salim bin Ali al Hakmani, Chairman of CPA, said the CPA's participation in the GCC Consumer Protection Week comes within the framework of joint GCC action and aims at increasing consumers' awareness about their rights and duties, acquainting suppliers with their responsibilities towards consumers with a view to expanding consumer protection umbrella and realizing joint cooperation.

Al Hakmani said: "Within the framework of marking the GCC Consumer Protection Week, the CPA will organise several awareness-raising events in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman in conjunction with the ongoing Anti-Fraud Campaign 'stick to the original' with activities continuing until the end of this month."

The implementation campaign followed the issuance of the GCC Anti-Commercial Fraud Law.

The law aims to strengthen the legal system to protect markets from harmful practices and provide more protection — ONA


Oman Trading Establishment LLC


Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority

RECALL CAMPAIGN
For HYUNDAI AZERA



Date of Campaign : 2 / 3 / 2022

Campaign Type : Recall

Recall Segment : Electrical

Product Description : Hyundai Azera IG

Model Year	Division	Vehicle Model	Affected Vehicle VIN Range	No. of Affected Vehicles in Oman
2016-2020	Hyundai	Azera IG	KMHF241EBHAG00006 to KMHF241F6MA419402	129

Description:
Some vehicles might experience the HECU (Hydraulic Electronic Control Unit) is damage

Procedure:
Reinstall the multi-fuse kit and replace the upper cover.

For More Information:
Customers of affected vehicles may please call Oman Trading Establishment for further details/booking Appointment etc from Date - 2/3/2022

Contact Details:
Toll free No 80050003 on all working days between 8.00 AM to 1.00 PM & 2.00 PM to 5.30 PM with effect from Date 2/3/2022

Announcement

Pre-Qualification for the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) of the Industrial Waste Treatment Facility in Sohar Free Zone Phase 2

Oman Environmental Services Holding Company "be'ah" was officially established in July 2007 and granted the Supreme Royal Decree No. (46/2009) issued in 2009 to become the authority responsible for Waste Management in Oman.

As part of achieving the objective of conserving the environment and supporting Oman's economy, be'ah would like to invite interested Companies or Joint Ventures (JV) to participate in the Pre-qualification for the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction(EPC) of the Industrial Waste Treatment Facility in Sohar Free Zone Phase 2.

Phase 2 of the Industrial Waste Treatment Facility development in large is concentrated around a rotary kiln incineration plant, physical/chemical treatment facility and supporting infrastructure and balance of plant systems.

The Companies or Joint Ventures (JV) should demonstrate their experience and document to satisfy be'ah's requirements regarding the company status, experience, capability, and capacity to undertake, complete, and deliver the required scope of work. This must be done through elaborating and documenting their previous experience in projects of a similar type, size, scope, quality and complexity. Companies must also document the capability of completing similar project works in a timely manner.

Interested Companies or Joint Ventures (JV) are requested to contact (tenders@beah.om) to submit the request to participate in the pre-qualification on or before **17th March 2022**.

The last date for the submission of the required information shall be no later than **12th May 2022 at 10:00 am**.



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وزارة المالية
Ministry of Finance



March, 2022

Request for Qualification for

Design, Construction, Finance, Operation and Maintenance of 42 School Buildings under Public Private Partnership Agreement

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) is entrusted with the supervision of implementing Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreements in order to encourage the private sector to invest in infrastructure and public services. In this regard and in coordination with MOF, the Ministry of Education seeks to engage the private sector in its schools development under PPP agreements, which would contribute in fostering service innovation and achieve sustained growth.

Interested local & international companies can obtain the qualification document by sending an email outlining company name, competent staff name, contact number and email ID to: ppp.schools@mof.gov.om

RFQ NO	Last date for obtaining qualification document	Last date for clarification	Last date for submitting the required qualification document
PPP2/2022	March 15, 2022	April 05, 2022	April 28, 2022



For further information, please contact us via 00968-24962294 or by e-mail ppp.schools@mof.gov.om

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Muscat International Book Fair

the 26th edition

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WEDNESDAY | MARCH 2 | 2022

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LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Abdulaziz al Jahdhami is a former journalist and now in the corporate world. He launched two books at the 26th Muscat International Book Fair where he signed copies on Monday.

The pandemic period gave him the opportunity to work on his books 'On Stage of Life' and the Arabic version of 'Fuel of Life', which was launched in 2018.

His books look at the journey of life and what people go through. So does it require him to be a good listener or an observer?

"My writing, most of the time, reflects on people's experiences, while some of them are my own stories and experiences in a way which have been the case when I write a weekly column or in the form of books," said Al Jahdhami, who is from the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi.

Being in the corporate world has actually given him the sense of being out of the box and has given him more space to be creative and expressive.

Accordingly, there are elements also in his new book. The chapter titled 'When you are the brand ambassador' deals with corporate elements.

Another chapter reads: 'A relationship never dies a natural death; they are murdered by attitudes and behaviours, ego or arrogance.'

Yet another chapter titled — 'If I were a manager like him'.

So does he come across people who are suffering?

"I have been through experiences of dealing with managers of various attitudes with a distinct outlook on managing their teams. I am sure there are others who are suffering; we receive first-hand experiences from colleagues, friends and relatives. So I thought it would be good to shed light on this topic," he explained.

Managers, this book might be about you.

The chapter 'If I were a manager like him' states, "I wish to be a manager someday, and if I do become, I would be exemplarily good manager bringing in fruitful results. These are some of the very common utterings among employees while critiquing their bosses. This is another way to express their frustrations or reactions about the workplace and boss in particular. The reason could be work environment or bad management with a discouraging attitude. These are just some observations resulting in employees looking for other alternative job opportunities.

"Yes, this is what happens when employees are not taken care of or when an uncaring person occupies the seat, which is supposed to maintain a smooth and friendly environment.

"How can you expect good deeds from a dispirited person who is undervalued professionally and ethically? Could you sometimes imagine that sometimes an employee is pushed down mentally and psychologically being overburdened with extra tasks and job requirements on his small plate of tasks are given to do — relevant and irrelevant tasks as per his job description."

So what would the author do in such a situation?

He said: "People long for a stress-free environment. If we have an unpleasant boss one way or the other, we can change him."

There is hope, and never giving up is the message.

Yet another chapter titled, 'Stitching wounds with thread of care', looks at the professional world and appreciates the role of nurses in society.

"Nurses are sometimes not valued enough. They sacrifice their time and life. We had the recent example when the pandemic was at the peak of coronavirus, and nurses could hardly rest. They were at the hospitals day and night, hardly getting a chance to be with their families as we have seen throughout the world," he noted.

When asked what was the best time for him to write? and Al Jahdhami quipped, "Late night or early morning."

Writing, according to him, "is an art, just like painting or sculpting or singing. Once you have the passion and the motivation to keep up, you will definitely take the time to practice it and write and sacrifice time and effort."



Writing is an art, just like painting or sculpting or singing. Once you have the passion and the motivation to keep up, you will definitely take the time to practice it and write and sacrifice time and effort.

**ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI**

THIS COULD BE YOU





Omani teachers honoured

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 1

The Ministry of Education celebrated the Omani Teacher's Day on Sunday and honoured the winners of the Omani Teacher Proficiency Award and the Teacher Education Initiatives Competition for the academic year (2019-2020) under the auspices of Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, at Jibreen Hall at the InterContinental Hotel Muscat.

The ceremony included the ministry's speech delivered by Prof Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, in which he said: "There is no doubt that the teachers contribute to the advancement our country, under the wise and enlightened leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The prominent role that teachers and educators played during pandemic deserve praise and appreciation. They had a prominent role in achieving the objectives of the study plan, and addressing and overcoming all challenges in teaching our students and in reducing educational loss."

The Under-Secretary for Education added: "The ministry has honoured teachers on Teacher's Day, to encourage and enhance their achievements and improve educational performance. We celebrate the first round of the award, honouring those who have excelled in the development of educational work. More than 400 were shortlisted out of nearly 2,000 applicants from various governorates. The winners of the



award were honoured with the Educational Initiatives Award."

The ceremony also included the speech of the winners. Siham al Saeediyah, from the Directorate-General of Education in the North Al Batinah Governorate, said: "We are proud of the great achievements made during the past years in quantitative and qualitative terms, which were praised by international organisations. The ministry's launch of these two competitions for the Educational Proficiency Award for Omani teachers, and the educational initiatives with their multiple themes, which included all aspects of the educational process, expresses its deep belief and great trust in

the teacher, and that innovation and creativity in various areas of life are a feature of this era, and that the educational field is a fertile field.

It is full of many innovative initiatives and ideas that will achieve progress and development, and it also confirms that what results from unleashing the imaginations of teachers in their field of work will be welcomed and honoured. By following the best innovative teaching methods due to their expertise, skills and educational initiatives, the educational system overcame difficulties."

The ceremony included a visual presentation of a poetic poem entitled "Hymns of Thanks", which was recited by

Sarah al Siyabiyah, a student from Durrat Al Hashimia School for Basic Education in South Al Batinah Governorate. The students of the Directorate-General of Education in the Governorate of Muscat also presented a chant entitled: "The Light of the Universe" and after that the sponsor of the ceremony honoured the winners of the two competitions.

Mona bint Salem Baween, an Arabic language teacher at the Directorate-General of Education in the Governorate of Dhofar, said: "The honouring is the first step on the path to excellence, which gives us the motivation to continue and do more in building this generous country. I am honoured today for my contribution with the "Key for Future" initiative in the educational initiatives' competition for teachers, which aims to raise the level of academic achievement of students because they are the focus of the educational process, and they also aim to raise the professional efficiency of teachers through scientific codified methods."

Ali bin Nasser al Araiimi, assistant director at Imam Al Salt bin Al Qasim Al Kharusi School in the Directorate-General of Education in the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, said: "I received the encouragement award in the Omani Teacher's Educational Proficiency Award, as this award is a badge of honour for every Omani, and this honour coincides with a dear day for every Omani teacher.

Undoubtedly, this award came to shed light on the efforts of glorified teachers in the educational field and works to develop and improve the individual performance of the Omani teacher."

Climate affairs to get top priority in national policies

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The meeting of the National Committee for Climate Change and the Protection of the Ozone Layer put stress on the country's policy priorities in which climate affairs stands on the top.

The meeting was held in Muscat on Monday, chaired by Nayef bin Ali al Abri, President of the Civil Aviation Authority.

The event, which saw the participation of 31 members from various relevant authorities, highlighted the Department of Climate Affairs requirements in the Sultanate of Oman, the compliance with the Montreal Protocol, and the National Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change (2040-2020).

Speaking on the occasion, Al Abri said the Sultanate of Oman has been subject to many adverse effects of climate changes, as it has witnessed many extreme weather conditions and destructive cyclones, a rise in temperatures, and a change in the pattern of precipitation.

He emphasised the Sultanate of Oman's interest in confronting the negative effects of the risks of climate change and contributing to reducing its challenges at the national and international levels, and in line with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

The committee's role is to contribute to the proposal and implementation of the necessary policies and national action plans to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the negative impacts resulting from climate change and protect the ozone layer in line with Oman Vision 2040. It will also follow up on the decisions and recommendations of the meetings of the parties to the agreements and ensure that the obligations of the Sultanate of Oman towards those agreements are fulfilled.

It will also contribute to the

Al Abri emphasised the Sultanate of Oman's interest in confronting the negative effects of the risks of climate change and contributing to reducing its challenges at the national and international levels, and in line with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040

preparation of national strategies related to climate affairs and the protection of the ozone layer and follow-up on their implementation.

The committee added that it would suggest ways to qualify and groom national cadres and build capacities in the field of climate affairs and the protection of the ozone layer by periodically reviewing the progress of work.

"The Sultanate of Oman has supported efforts in the field of climate affairs, notably by ratifying all conventions and protocols concerned with climate affairs, issuing legislation on climate affairs, implementing a number of studies and research in the field of climate affairs and preparing reports," Al Abri said.

Among others, the government has implemented the Green Climate Fund, while the National Committee for Climate Change and the Protection of the Ozone Layer was formed under the chairmanship leadership of Al Abri.

This committee is considered a forum that brings together stakeholders to manage and follow up on issues related to climate affairs to ensure that the negative effects of climate change are confronted with appropriate mitigation, and adaptation measures are taken, the ozone layer is protected, and political and societal awareness is raised.



Crafts expo held on the sidelines of Al Bashayer camel fest



AMAL AL RIYAMI
ADAM, MARCH 1

The Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate organised the Entrepreneurs and Craftsmen Exhibition in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, as part of the Fifth Annual Al Bashayer for Arabian Camel Racing 2022 in the Wilayat of Adam.

The exhibition was held coinciding with the Sultanate of

Oman's celebrations on the Omani Craftsman Day, which falls on March 3 each year. The expo will continue until Saturday from 4 pm to 10 pm.

About 30 craftsmen participated with their products and works. It also saw a participation from entrepreneurs from small and medium enterprises.

Issa bin Saleh al Subaihi, Director of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department in Al Dakhiliyah Gov-



ernorate, said, "This exhibition is important to support entrepreneurs and craftsmen by involving them in events and creating a community partnership to introduce the public with their enterprises. It also highlights the authentic Omani craftsmen and the progress and development of craft industries and how it keep up with modern life."

The exhibition also included a stall for Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority. It

participated in the forum to interact with the public and respond to inquiries regarding all of the Authority's various services.

The Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development also participated in Partnership and Empowerment Symposium by presenting a working paper entitled "The Services Provided by the Authority in Support and Empowerment of Families". There was also a dialogue session for entrepreneurs on the sidelines of the event.



UN says 440 civilians killed in S Sudan clashes

NAIROBI: At least 440 civilians died in brutal fighting between rival factions in southwestern South Sudan over just a few months last year, the United Nations said on Tuesday.

The report comes on the heels of a warning by the United Nations last month that the world's youngest country risked a return to war, with bouts of interethnic violence and political infighting threatening to undo even the limited progress made in implementing a stuttering peace process.

"Grave human rights violations and abuses, including hundreds of killings, were committed against civilians during fighting in Tambura County, Western Equatoria State," according to the

joint report issued on Tuesday by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the UN Human Rights Office.

It blamed members of the armed forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and rivals in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) of Vice-President Riek Machar, and "their respective affiliated militias" for the violence.

Between June and September last year, at least 440 civilians were killed in fighting between rival groups in Tambura county, 18 injured and 74 abducted, the report found.

At least 64 civilians were also subjected to conflict-related violence, among them a 13-year-



South Sudanese government soldiers in a pick-up truck at the military base in Malakal, northern South Sudan. – AFP File

old girl who was abused to death, it said, while at least 56 people were reported missing during the June-September period. In addition,

some 80,000 were forced to flee their homes to escape the fighting, it said.

"Looting and destruction of property, child conscription, attacks on personnel and facilities, hate speech and incitement to violence were among the other human rights violations the investigation uncovered"

The report said a large number of victims and witnesses interviewed "depicted men armed with AK-47 rifles as well as machine guns... and other weapons including machetes, knives and clubs".

The attackers often moved in small groups, dressed in black, concealed their faces and spoke a combination of languages — Azande, Balanda and Arabic, it

said.

The Tambura region, which lies not far from the border with the Central African Republic, has long been the scene of rivalry between the Azande and Balanda ethnic groups.

The UN report said those suspected of instigating and aiding the latest Tambura violence included high-ranking military officials and community and religious leaders. "We call on all parties to the conflict to hold to account all individuals implicated in the killings, and abductions, among other grave human rights violations," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said in a statement. — AFP

HOMELESS AND SUFFERING



People wade floodwaters as they evacuate after floods in Serang, Banten province. – AFP

Australia tells tens of thousands to flee floods

GRAFTON: Deadly floods swept Australia's east coast on Tuesday, stranding people on bridges and rooftops and forcing tens of thousands to flee their homes. Dozens of emergency warnings are in effect across the states of Queensland and New South Wales, where a week-long "rain bomb" has dumped a metre of water on some areas.

Several waterways have burst their banks or broken through levees, inundating towns and forcing residents to evacuate or seek safety on higher ground.

Nine people have died and more than a thousand people have been rescued. Authorities have warned that more fatalities are likely.

The latest victim was a woman in her 80s whose body was found by police inside a home in the country town of Lismore.

"She is yet to be formally identified," said New South Wales

Police.

In the usually laid back surf town of Byron Bay, Hannah Leser had enjoyed the weekend celebrating her wedding with 150 guests.

But the new bride and groom are now rescuing friends stranded in the nearby towns of Ballina and Mullumbimby in a borrowed four-wheel-drive.

About 30 people are camped at a house where the couple were to spend their honeymoon.

"It's chaos but all of our friends and family are safe," she said. "This is not quite the honeymoon I expected but it is what it is."

Australia's military has deployed two MRH-90 Taipan helicopters to aid the rescue effort.

In one daring aerial rescue, the crew plucked two people to safety as muddy waters lapped at the corrugated metal roofing of their home. — AFP

17 feared dead in Myanmar jade mine landslide

YANGON: At least 17 people are feared dead after a landslide trapped dozens of workers inside a Myanmar jade mine, sources and local media said on Tuesday.

The incident came on Monday evening near Hpakant township in northern Kachin state — the same region where a massive landslide in 2020 entombed 300 workers in the country's worst ever mine disaster.

Pictures of the scene showed the aftermath of the landslide, with a broad swathe of brown earth and

rock covering the pockmarked side of a hill.

A local source said "17 bodies were found so far", but was unable to independently confirm these figures.

The source added that the mine's owners — Yangon Technical and Trading Co, a firm linked to the country's military which took power last year in a coup that sent the country into turmoil — had so far prevented rescue teams from entering the area.

Local media and sources in



The aftermath of a landslide at a jade mine near Hpakant, Kachin state. – AFP

the area said that 40 people were buried in the landslide, which struck around 10:30 pm.

Dozens die annually while working in Myanmar's highly lucrative but poorly regulated jade industry, which uses low-paid migrant workers to scrape out a gem highly coveted in neighbouring China.

Jade and other abundant natural resources in the country's north — including timber, gold and amber — have helped finance both sides of a decades-long civil war

between ethnic Kachin insurgents and the military.

Civilians are frequently trapped in the middle of the fight for control of the mines and their lucrative revenues, with a rampant drug and arms trade further curdling the conflict.

"The workers' rights in jade mines are never ensured by law — whenever they die in a landslide, they get a small compensation in the end," said one local environmental activist, who declined to be named. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

LONDON

Queen Elizabeth returns to duties after Covid scare

Queen Elizabeth II held two virtual audiences, Buckingham Palace said, after she was forced to cancel engagements last week due to Covid. Concerns have mounted for the 95-year-old monarch's health since she tested positive on February 20, overshadowing the start of her record-breaking 70th year on the throne. But a palace statement indicated she was now well enough to hold engagements, hosting the new ambassadors of Andorra and Chad from



her home at Windsor Castle. The Queen last week cancelled similar scheduled engagements with new ambassadors as she was suffering from what were described as "mild" Covid symptoms. — AFP

MUMBAI

New Air India CEO appointment annulled

Former Turkish Airlines boss Ilker Ayci will not take the helm at freshly-privatised Air India after all, despite being named the airline's CEO last month, owners Tata group said. Ayci — who oversaw extensive cost-cutting at Turkish Airlines — was chosen as the debt-ridden carrier's first foreign CEO in mid-February after Tata group bought it back from the government following 69 years in state ownership.

"I can confirm that Ayci will not be taking up the post," a



spokesperson for tea-to-steel conglomerate Tata said. Ayci reportedly stated that he had been "closely following the efforts to give another meaning to my appointment", without giving details. — AFP

JENIN

Forces kill two Palestinian gunmen in clash

Israeli forces killed two Palestinian gunmen in clashes that broke out during a raid in a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, the fighter group said.

Witnesses said undercover Israeli forces exchanged fire with Palestinians during a pre-dawn raid in the camp of Jenin.

Israel's border police said its undercover forces came under heavy gunfire during an operation in the camp to arrest a suspect wanted.



After the man was detained, gunmen fired at the Israeli forces and a crowd of around 150 Palestinians threw fire-bombs, stones and an improvised grenade at them, the border police statement said. — Reuters



Civilians cross a river on a blown up bridge on Kyiv northern front. – AFP

Russian column bears down on Kyiv

★ Rockets rain down on second city ★ Russia says will push on until goals met ★ Refugees pack border crossings

KYIV: A Russian armoured column bore down on Ukraine’s capital Kyiv on Tuesday and invasion forces fired rocket barrages into the centre of the country’s second largest city Kharkiv, on the sixth day of Russia’s assault on its western neighbour.

Rocket strikes on Kharkiv killed at least 10 people and wounded 35, Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Herashchenko said. Similar strikes killed and wounded dozens in the city the previous day.

“The rubble is being cleared and there will be even more victims and wounded,” he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the artillery barrages on Kharkiv amounted to

state terrorism.

Nearly a week since Russian troops poured over the border, they have failed to capture a single major Ukrainian city after running into fierce resistance. The civilian deaths of the last 48 hours were an ominous sign that frustrated Russian commanders could be resorting to more devastating tactics. Russia still has more forces to throw into the fight even though President Vladimir Putin faces worldwide condemnation and international sanctions for his actions.

Oil company Shell became the latest Western firm to announce it was pulling out of Russia. The sanctions and global financial

isolation have already had a devastating impact on Russia’s economy, with the rouble in freefall and queues outside banks as Russians rush to salvage their savings.

Russia’s TASS news agency reported new peace talks would be held on Wednesday. Talks between Russian and Ukrainian officials held on Monday at the Belarus border failed to reach a breakthrough. Ukrainian foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba said Kyiv was ready to talk to Moscow but would not just follow Russian ultimatums.

Zelenskiy’s government remains in control of Kyiv with soldiers and civilians ready to fight invaders

street by street.

Pictures released by US satellite company Maxar showed Russian tanks, artillery and fuel trucks stretching for 60 km along a highway to the north.

“For the enemy, Kyiv is the key target,” Zelenskiy, who has remained in the capital rallying Ukrainians, said in a message overnight. “We will neutralise them all.”

Some residents in the capital of 3 million people have been sheltering in underground metro stations at night. There are long lines for fuel and some products are running out in shops, but by day the city is still holding out, with a semblance of ordinary life

on the streets.

Russian troops fired artillery at Kyiv, Kharkiv and the southern port city of Mariupol overnight while the Ukrainian side shot down Russian military planes around the capital, presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said in a briefing.

Ukrainian authorities also reported 70 soldiers killed in a rocket attack in a town between Kyiv and Kharkiv.

Zelenskiy, addressing the European Parliament by video link a day after he signed an official request to join the European Union, urged the bloc to prove that it sided with Ukraine.

“Do prove that you will not let

us go. Do prove that you are indeed Europeans and then life will win over death and light will win over darkness. Glory be to Ukraine,” he said in an emotional speech.

RISK TO CIVILIANS

In Moscow, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said the Kremlin would press its military operation in Ukraine until it achieves its goals. It aimed to protect itself from threats created by the West and was not occupying Ukraine’s territory. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov told a Geneva disarmament meeting via video link on Tuesday that Ukraine had been seeking nuclear weapons. Dozens of diplomats walked out as he began his speech. — Reuters

Indian student killed in Ukraine shelling

NEW DELHI: An Indian student was killed by shelling in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, prompting New Delhi to step up demands for safe passage to evacuate thousands of its nationals trapped in the war zone. Invading Russian forces are trying to lay siege to Kharkiv, firing volleys of artillery that have killed civilians including children, Ukrainian officials say.

Indian foreign ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said the ambassadors of Russia and Ukraine had been called in “to reiterate our demand for urgent safe passage for Indian nationals who are still in Kharkiv and cities in other conflict zones.” In a post on Twitter, he added that the ministry was in touch with the family of the student, who he did not name.

Khamenei criticises US over crisis

VIENNA: Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the war in Ukraine should be stopped and accused the “mafia-like regime” of the United States of creating the conflict. Russia, whose troops invaded Ukraine last week, is a strategic partner for Iran, which has been under Western sanctions for years. While Tehran and Washington have been foes for decades, Iran and Russia have deepened trade ties and have been allies in the Syrian conflict.

“The US regime creates crises, lives off of crises and feeds on various crises in the world. Ukraine is another victim of this policy,” Khamenei said in a televised speech. “In my view, Ukraine is a victim of the crises concocted by the United States,” he said.

UN seeks \$1.7 billion for urgent aid

GENEVA: The United Nations launched an emergency appeal for \$1.7 billion to provide urgent humanitarian aid to people caught up in the Russian invasion of Ukraine and refugees fleeing the fighting. The UN estimates that 12 million people inside Ukraine will need relief and protection, while it projected that more than four million Ukrainian refugees may need help in neighbouring countries in the coming months. “This is the darkest hour for the people of Ukraine,” UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said in a statement. — AFP/Reuters

UK relaxes visa rules for refugees

WARSAW/LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned on Tuesday about the growing humanitarian crisis caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, saying refugee numbers could reach millions, with possibly more than 200,000 coming to Britain to join family members.

Less than a week after Moscow launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, western leaders are looking at ways to help the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who have left their homeland.

Poland has estimated that about 350,000 people have crossed its border from Ukraine since last Thursday, while the European Union has emphasised the need to prepare for millions of refugees entering the bloc.

“We will make it easier for Ukrainians already living in the UK to bring their relatives to our country. Though the numbers are hard to calculate, there could be

more than 200,000,” Johnson said during a visit to Warsaw.

“Putin’s invasion has already cost hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes, and we must prepare for an even larger outflow, perhaps in the millions.” — Reuters

Watch what you’re saying, gentlemen! And don’t forget that in human history, economic wars often turned into real ones’

DMITRY MEDVEDEV
Former Russian president

Ukrainian reaches safety in time for his 2nd birthday

Svetlana, a Ukrainian from Kyiv, with her son Semyon

TISZABECS: Clutching her son dressed in a thick green snowsuit to protect him from the freezing cold, 28-year-old Ukrainian Svetlana smiled faintly when asked his name as they arrived at a shelter in Hungary. “His name is Semyon. He will be two years old in two days.”

She, Semyon, her older son Dmitry and her mother finally made it across Ukraine’s border to Hungary on Tuesday, after a perilous, long drive from Kyiv. Semyon’s father will not be with them to celebrate his son’s birthday in safety. — Reuters

Is experiential learning really a new trend?



Miriam Kugel
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If you work in the learning space, experiential learning is an expression you probably have come across over the last years.

Experiential learning is an active learning process through which the learner develops knowledge, transferable skills and attitudes from direct experiences. Many experts today go as far as hailing the approach to close the ever-growing skill gap we are facing in today's work environment.

But is experiential learning really a new trend?

In 1984 David Kolb described experiential learning as a fundamental component of adult education and as far back as the 1940s, Edgar Dale theorised that learners retain significantly more information by what they “do” (90 per cent) as opposed to what is “heard (20 per cent), “read” (10 per

cent) or “observed” (30 per cent).

Even centuries ago, Chinese Philosopher, Confucius has been attributed to saying: “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn” which later was reimagined by Benjamin Franklin in one of his famous quotes. Today, learning thought leaders such as Gomez assert that the most effective method of assessing and developing the skills for the 21st century is through hands-on learning.

Given the large body of research, it is surprising that organisations are not deploying experiential learning yet as a major part of learning strategy and still tend to rely on classroom-based lectures or, since the pandemic, on self-directed online-only learning.

So, how can you include the approach at your organisation as a

IT IS SURPRISING THAT ORGANISATIONS ARE NOT DEPLOYING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING YET AS A MAJOR PART OF LEARNING STRATEGY AND STILL TEND TO RELY ON CLASSROOM-BASED LECTURES

business leader, people manager, or L&D and HR professional?

First of all, it is important to distinguish between experiential learning activities and team-building games.

While the latter is often designed for the main purpose of fun and team bonding, experiential learning follows a clear purpose and outcome aligned with your

strategic business challenges or skill gap objectives and is targeted at specific groups of employees.

Activities complement knowledge injections, are embedded into the flow of work, and always incorporate an element of reflection at the end to help transfer the experience into the day-to-day work.

Examples of experiential learning activities that we have designed include an exploration of Selfridges London to learn about customer experience and future store concepts, a computer-based simulation on Mergers & Acquisitions of two retail banks to understand how to engage stakeholders, a plane crash crisis simulation to practice media speaking under stress with a real film crew, Lego-based play to help the exec team of a major media

company to design their strategy as well as activities in the wild to build leadership, resilience, and agility.

Anisa al Raissi, Experiential Learning Facilitator at New Metrics observes: “Learning should be active where employees have to think creatively and collaborate to solve complex problems. Activities should be designed to test limitations and boundaries and encourage to take risks.”

“The ability and power to transform an organisation from within should never be underestimated by today's leaders and experimentation should therefore be encouraged.”

If you are trying to build a future-ready workforce or if you are just looking to increase learning retention and skills at work, now more than ever is the time to get experiential.

Emotional Ukrainians arrive by train

YANNICK PASQUET

At Berlin central station, commuters rush past a mother and her four children as they stand bewildered on the platform, weighed down by heavy luggage. Two of them, still toddlers, are wearing hats and jackets in blue and yellow, the colours of the flag of Ukraine, the country from where they have just fled.

Germany has opened its doors to refugees from Ukraine since Russia's invasion of the country began last week, displacing more than half a million people already. National rail operator Deutsche Bahn has laid on free travel for refugees and is also preparing to charter additional trains from the Polish border.

“We are going to Dresden (in eastern Germany). We have a good friend there who said he could find us a place to stay”, 17-year-old says Ukrainian student Maxym Floria.

Floria set off four days ago with his mother and younger brother from Izmail, in the Odessa region, and has travelled through Moldova, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland to get here. “If Odessa fell we didn't stand a chance, so we decided to leave with my family”, he said. Only a relatively small number have made it to Germany so far: around 1,800, according to a spokesman for the interior ministry.

Of the more than 500,000 people who have left Ukraine to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, more than half of them are in Poland, according to the UNHCR.

Floria's father, like all men aged between 18 and 60, has not been allowed to leave Ukraine as he has been called up to fight.

The family are not intending to stay in Germany permanently.

“I firmly believe that we will be able to go home safely and that everyone will fight for our country”, Floria said, visibly emotional and exhausted.

Berlin is expecting to see a sharp increase in the number of women and children arriving from Ukraine in the coming days.

The German capital and the surrounding state of Brandenburg have already reactivated some of the systems deployed in 2015 to cope with an influx of refugees from the Middle East, mainly Iraq and Syria.

Ukraine is at least 700 kilometres from Berlin, but Interior Minister Nancy Faeser has repeatedly stressed that Germany's borders are open to those fleeing the conflict.

The Russian invasion has provoked an outpouring of support in Germany, with more than 100,000 people joining a demonstration in Berlin on Sunday to show solidarity with Ukraine. — AFP

Why Ukrainians believe they can win



Michelle Goldberg

The writer is an American journalist and author, and an op-ed columnist for *TNYT*

I met Volodymyr Yermolenko, a Ukrainian philosopher and the chief editor of UkraineWorld, an English-language news site, in Kyiv in 2019.

I'd gone there to report on how Ukrainians felt about Donald Trump's attempts to extort their president, Volodymyr Zelensky, and on the American right's demonisation of Ukrainians who'd worked against corruption.

Yermolenko spoke, then, of Ukraine as a front line in the global battle between democracy and authoritarianism, with Europe on one side and Vladimir Putin's Russia on the other — and the role of the United States under Trump confusing and ambiguous.

“It's about whether democracy, rule of law, are spreading farther to the east”, he said of the conflict over Ukraine's future.

“It's a long story how it spread to Eastern Europe — first it was Eastern Europe, Central Europe, then there was Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova. We hope it will someday reach Russia.”

But it was possible that the ideological tide would go the other way. “There is a new authoritarianism going westward”, said Yermolenko. In this view, the fate of Ukraine's nascent democracy was a sort of weather vane for the world.

I spoke to Yermolenko again on Sunday, as Russian troops besieged his country. “The spirit is very strong”, he said. “There is no fatalism, no willingness to negotiate on Russia's terms. There is decisiveness.”

Ukrainian self-defence, he said, was chiefly a matter of patriotism, of people defending their home and way of life against a cruel foreign power. But he also saw it as part of the great ideological contest we'd discussed two and a half years ago.

“There is a strong feeling that if Ukraine wins — and I'm sure it wins — that can bring the end of both Putin's and Lukashenko's regimes”, he said, referring to Alexander Lukashenko, the strongman president of Belarus, who is reportedly preparing to send troops to Ukraine to fight alongside Russia.

His confidence amazed me, but it appears to be widely shared across the country: According to a recent poll,

70 per cent of Ukrainians outside of Russian-occupied territories think they will prevail against Russia. Oleksandra Ustinova, a member of the Ukrainian Parliament who is in Washington working on diplomatic outreach, said that Putin thought he could easily seize control of her country. “Ukrainians have proved that we're not going to go down, and we do believe that we will

win this war”, she said.

I have no idea if she's right, though obviously I hope she is. Russia appears to have stumbled in the opening days of the invasion, but Ukraine's army is still enormously overmatched, and Putin has the power to rain hell on the country. The Ukrainians' stalwart faith

ACCORDING TO A RECENT POLL, 70 PER CENT OF UKRAINIANS OUTSIDE OF RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES THINK THEY WILL PREVAIL AGAINST RUSSIA

in their ability to resist Russia, however, is an important political fact, one that people who predicted a quick Russian victory didn't fully account for. It's a faith that has stirred much of the world to unite against Russia, reinvigorating a liberal internationalism that until recently seemed spent and flaccid.

As inspiring as Ukrainian determination has been, it's perhaps not that surprising. Anyone who's visited Kyiv in recent years could see how much pride people took in the 2014 revolution that forced Viktor Yanukovich, the Kremlin-backed kleptocratic president, to flee to Russia.

In Kyiv's Independence Square, a monument to the revolution included photos, mounted on giant copper-coloured plinths, of demonstrators burning tyres to repel a crackdown and getting ready to pelt the riot police with cobblestones. Nearby, a vendor sold toilet paper with Putin's face on it.

Not all Ukrainians welcomed the revolution — Yanukovich had a real base of support in the country's south and east. But there was a culture of reverence for citizens who'd stood up to Russian domination.

— *The New York Times*



The damaged local city hall of Kharkiv destroyed as a result of Russian troop shelling. — AFP

Another unexpected twist of 2022!



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

When the world started battling the coronavirus pandemic, what we often heard was the use of war metaphors to describe the fight against Covid-19 because of the nature of the measures adopted by the governments all over the world were at par with those required in war-hit countries.

The pandemic was marked as a security issue. Whether all the leaders spoke of the ‘war’ literally or metaphorically, they identified an enemy albeit it was invisible. Citizens of all countries became ‘soldiers’ in

the ‘conflict’.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres even called it a “fight of a generation” and a significant threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. Former US president Donald Trump’s rhetoric of “a wartime president” and his proclamation that “we will win this war” attracted world attention.

We also heard many other world leaders using the militarised language to frame it as a “war”. Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom announced that “We must act like any wartime government”; and Emmanuel Macron of France said “We are in a war” and Narendra Modi of India said his country is in the midst of a war and every India is a soldier in the fight.

IF THE WAR METAPHOR BECAME PREVALENT IN MOST DISCOURSES SURROUNDING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC TILL THE RECENT WEEKS, NOW IT IS A REAL TIME WAR WHICH HAS DISRUPTED PEACE AND SECURITY

Giuseppe Conte of Italy went a step further by invoking the Second World War when he used Winston Churchill’s words to talk about Italy’s “darkest hour.” In many other countries, the governments introduced national emergency bills, which gave them extraordinary power and right to detain people and ban public meetings.

Schools were closed, both air and sea ports closed, blanket ban on travels and an undeclared halt to economic activities! Newspaper editorials even screamed that “We are at war with Covid-19. We need to fight it like a war”!

If the war metaphor became prevalent in most discourses surrounding the coronavirus pandemic till the recent weeks, now it is a real time war which has disrupted peace and security. The Russia-Ukraine war has set off a geopolitical earthquake! The war is another unexpected twist of 2022!

The escalation of violence is leading to grave human suffering. The world has become bear witness to innocent deaths, destruction of civilian infrastructure and massive displacement and soaring humanitarian needs. The victims of this man-made war are human beings like everywhere in the world.

They want to live a normal, free life; enjoy family and friends and community; learn; work; and, each in their own way and find meaning in the world. Alas! They are in an unnecessary tragedy that does not want for unavoidable suffering and destruction. Among the consequences of war, the impact on the mental health of the civilian population is one of the most significant. Studies of the general population show a definite increase in the incidence and prevalence of mental disorders.

Women are more affected than men. Other vulnerable groups are children, the elderly and the disabled. Prevalence rates are associated with the degree of trauma, and the availability of physical and emotional support.

Histories of past wars remind us that failure to end the war can lead to horrific, generational consequences. Whether it is in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Cambodia, Chechnya, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine or Rwanda, conflict situations have caused more mortality and disability than any major disease.

Wars destroyed communities and families and disrupted the development of the social and economic fabric of nations. The effects of war include long-term physical and psychological harm to children and adults, as well as reduction in material and human capital.

Whether this is one of those moments remains to be seen, but as it becomes clearer that valiant and vigorous attempts at diplomacy are falling on deaf ears, the military dimensions of a response need urgent definition.

Since the current conflict has the potential to be the worst humanitarian crisis not only in Europe, but also in other parts of the world, conflicting nations must give priority to de-escalation, and refrain from all hostilities, including unconventional acts of aggression.

Diplomatic resolution must be premised above all other outcomes while international law must be fully respected by all parties. The UN call to protect civilians in line with international humanitarian law should be respected.



A SUBMERGED SHED

A submerged shed is seen on the bank of the overflowing Clarence River in Grafton, some 130 km from the New South Wales town Lismore, Australia, on Tuesday. – AFP

From food to floods, Africa ‘not ready’ for climate stress

Laurie Goering

Africa’s population is set to nearly double by 2050 — but growth in food production is slowing faster than in any other region of the world as climate change-driven droughts, floods, heat and pests take a toll, African scientists said this week.

As rains grow more erratic, the hydropower many African countries depend on to run their economies is becoming unreliable, while coastal communities face worsening erosion, heat, flooding and migration of fish stocks they depend on.

But the money African nations need to tackle those threats is largely missing or coming only in the form of loans, while poor governance and siloed thinking about how to address the problems are hampering effective action, the scientists noted.

“We are not on track to achieve climate resilience,” said Youba Sokona, Malian vice-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as the UN science body released a report on impacts, adaptation and vulnerability to global warming this week.

It warned that, around the world, efforts to adapt to accelerating pressures — from more extreme heat and drought to increasingly severe floods and sea level rise — are inadequate and threaten billions of people as fossil fuel use keeps rising. That is despite a range of smart measures to adapt to the impacts — from early warning systems to beefed-up social welfare and growing use of natural flood barriers like coastal mangroves — which are showing promise in many parts of the world.

The new report by 270 leading climate scientists “is a dire warning about the consequences of inaction”, said Hoesung Lee, the IPCC’s chair.

In Africa, already battling challenges from widespread poverty to lack of electricity access, pursuing development and a better life for people remains a top focus, the scientists said.

That has led some African officials to question prioritising climate action, arguing the continent should use its oil reserves to spur growth as many richer countries did — especially as enough cash to adopt cleaner energy is not being provided.

Yet climate change threatens to fundamentally undermine development, the IPCC scientists warned, even as efforts to adapt — from crop irrigation to protecting urban slums from floods — could both save lives and lift people out of poverty.

“We have to deal with climate change as part of the bigger development challenge we’re facing,” said Debra Roberts, co-chair of the report’s working group and head of city resilience efforts for Durban’s eThekweni Municipality in South Africa.

Christopher Trisos, director of the Climate Risk Laboratory in Cape Town, pointed to a project there to improve water supplies by hiring locals to cut down thirsty invasive trees, after the city nearly ran out of water in 2018.

Such projects boost employment and help protect people from climate shocks, he said — and could help inform more Africans about climate-related risks and opportunities.

“Education is absolutely necessary for accelerating climate change adaptation in Africa,” Trisos noted, saying studies showed under half of Africans are aware of global warming and that it is human-caused.

FUNDING MISMATCH

Daniel Olago, director of the Institute for Climate Change and Adaptation at the University of Nairobi, said African nations should make use of natural systems — from wetlands to mangroves — to battle floods, rather than rely mainly on building concrete barriers.

The risks “require we move very, very fast”, said Olago, an IPCC report author.

The scientists expressed particular concern about “cascading” threats, with rising heat, for instance, driving away fish, making outdoor work harder and parching crops, leading to food shortages that could be global as well as local.

Africa already faces “high” risks from climate impacts — particularly

to food systems — even if warming remains below a globally agreed limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius, Trisos said.

Above that, the continent’s economies, health, ecosystems and food production would see “very high” threats — and “we’re not ready for that”, he added.

Africans could significantly lower their risks through adaptation measures, ranging from diversifying crops and rural income sources to targeting flood protection funds at the most vulnerable urban communities in slums, the scientists said.

“We have this mismatch between where money is being spent and where the vulnerability and exposure are,” Roberts said.

The scientists also urged that, for swifter, better-coordinated action, climate change should not be treated as an issue just for environment ministries but also put on the agenda of finance, security and agriculture officials.

To make a success of African adaptation, securing more funding for it is crucial, they added.

“The amount of finance being targeted to adaptation is billions of dollars less than even the lowest-cost estimate” of what is required for Africa, Trisos noted.

Roberts warned that the continent, like other parts of the world, could see “irreversible” changes to its food and water supplies and its natural ecosystems, if global fossil fuel use and the climate change it drives are not reined in this decade.

“That window of opportunity will close and then there will be very significant challenges,” she said.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation



A member of a team clearing alien vegetation moves felled pine trees high above the Franschhoek mountains near Cape Town, South Africa. – Reuters

sport

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Russia stripped of hosting 2022 Volleyball World Championships

PARIS: Russia has been stripped of hosting the men's Volleyball World Championships in August and September due to its invasion of Ukraine, governing body the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) announced on Tuesday. The championships are the latest major sporting event to be taken away from Russia since President Vladimir Putin launched the invasion last Thursday.

"Following Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, the FIVB remains gravely concerned by the escalating situation and for the safety of the people of Ukraine", said the International Volleyball Federation in a statement. "The FIVB Board of Administration has come to the conclusion that it would be impossible to prepare and stage the World Championships in Russia due to the war in Ukraine.

"It has accordingly decided to remove from Russia the organisation of the FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship scheduled to be held in August and September 2022." — AFP

GENEVA: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Monday urged sports federations and organisers to exclude Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials from international events following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Just hours later, Fifa kicked Russia out of the 2022 World Cup as football's global governing body and Uefa joined forces to expel Russian national teams and clubs from all international competitions.

Russia were due to take part in World Cup play-offs this month, but plans to play on neutral territory were dismissed as "unacceptable" by their rivals Poland, Sweden and the Czech Republic.

"Football is fully united here and in full solidarity with all the people affected in Ukraine", Fifa and Uefa said in a joint statement.

Rugby's world governing body banned Russia and Belarus from all international rugby "until further notice" on Tuesday.

Russia's membership of World Rugby was also suspended indefinitely, meaning the country's slim hopes of qualifying for next year's World Cup in France are over.

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) on Monday also cancelled all sanctioned tournaments in Russia and Belarus, banned them from hosting future tournaments "until further notice" and ordered their flags and anthems banned from all BWF tournaments.

The IOC, meanwhile, said it faced a "dilemma which cannot be solved".

"While athletes from Russia and Belarus would be able to continue to participate in sports events, many athletes from Ukraine are prevented from doing so because of the attack on their country", it said in a statement.

"In order to protect the integrity of global sports competitions and for the safety of all the participants, the IOC EB (executive board) recommends that International Sports Federations and sports event organisers not to invite or allow the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials in international competitions."

If international federations follow the IOC's advice and football's action en masse, Russia would join the Yugoslavia of Slobodan Milosevic and South Africa under apartheid rule as major sporting pariahs.

The IOC also withdrew the Olympic Order, its highest award, from all high-ranking Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin.

IOC CALLS FOR RUSSIA SPORTS BAN

FIFA THROWS RUSSIA OUT OF WORLD CUP

Invasion fallout: football

Impact since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24

Support for Ukraine at Chelsea vs Liverpool English League Cup final Wembley, Sunday Feb 28
Photo: Justin Tallis

Feb 25	Feb 26	Feb 27	Feb 28
- Champions League final moved from Saint Petersburg to Paris - Manchester United ends sponsorship deal with Aeroflot	- Poland refuses to play Russia in a scheduled World Cup (WC) play-off - Sweden say they would refuse to play Russia in potential WC scheduling - Chelsea's Russian owner Roman Abramovich hands over control of the club to its charitable Foundation	- Czech Republic refuses to play Russia in WC - France football federation president Noel Le Graet calls on Russia to be kicked out of the WC - England and Wales FAs say they would not play against Russia in any competition - FIFA says Russia should play home matches at neutral venues, bans the Russian flag and anthem at games - Poland, Czech and Sweden still refuse to face Russia	- German football club Schalke 04 ends Gazprom sponsorship - FIFA suspends Russia from WC and all internationals - UEFA suspends Russia from its competitions - UEFA ends partnership with Russian state energy giant Gazprom

AFP

The IOC EB (executive board) recommends that International Sports Federations and sports event organisers not to invite or allow the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials in international competitions



IOC 'CONTRADICTING' OLYMPIC SPIRIT

Stanislav Pozdnyakov, the president of the Russian Olympic Committee, said the IOC's recommendations "contradict" the Olympic charter and the "spirit of the Olympic movement".

"We strongly disagree with them", Pozdnyakov said.

The IOC said that if it is not possible for "organisational or legal reasons" to prevent Russian and Belarusian athletes competing, sports officials should do "everything in their power" to stop athletes from the two countries taking part under their country's flags.

It is a matter of particular urgency in relation to the Paralympic Winter Games, which begin on Friday in Beijing.

The body "reiterated its full support for the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the Games".

CALLS FOR PEACE

The IOC last week urged all international sports federations to cancel forthcoming events in Russia, angry at Moscow violating an "Olympic Truce" with its attack on Ukraine.

Prominent Russian sports stars have not been shy in voicing their disquiet over Putin's invasion.

Andrey Rublev, who won the Dubai ATP title on Saturday, veteran Russian football international Fedor Smolov, United States-based ice hockey great Alex Ovechkin and cyclist Pavel Sivakov, who rides for the Ineos team, have all expressed a desire for peace.

Several countries had already moved to bar Russian competitors from their territory.

On Monday, Ukrainian star Elina Svitolina became the first tennis player to say she will refuse to play Russian and Belarusian opponents. She was due to face Russia's Anastasia Potopova in the first round in Monterrey on Tuesday.

Uefa ended its contract with Russian state energy giant Gazprom with immediate effect. The deal was widely believed to be worth around 40 million euros (\$45 million) a year.

European football's governing body last week stripped Saint Petersburg of hosting this season's Champions League final on May 28 at the Gazprom Arena, awarding it to Paris.

The International Ice Hockey Federation banned all Russian national teams and clubs from its events, while organisers of basketball's Euroleague and Eurocup competitions announced that Russian teams had been suspended.

The Formula One Russian Grand Prix scheduled for September 25 was cancelled last week. — AFP



Players of New Zealand and South Africa pose with the trophy during the presentation ceremony after the end of day five of the second Test at Hagley Oval. – AFP

SA OUTSMART NZ TO LEVEL SERIES

RABADA TAKES FIVE AS VISITORS WIN BY 198 RUNS

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: South Africa outwitted and outplayed New Zealand in a crushing 198-run second Test victory in Christchurch on Tuesday to draw the two-match series 1-1.

New Zealand, facing a record fourth-innings chase of 426 to win, were all out for 227 eight balls after tea on the final day.

It completed a remarkable turnaround for South Africa who read the conditions far better than New Zealand after being thrashed by an innings and 276 runs in the first Test on the same ground.

Captain Dean Elgar set the tone when he became the first captain to win the toss and bat first at Hagley Oval, demanding his side “front up” after that humiliation and they obliged.

“It paid off for us. I am one for taking risks. This is a big one in terms of playing well away from home,” he said. “We needed to rise up and level the series. We have shown in the past that we have a lot of character in the team.”

In terms of South African Test victories “it ranks quite high,” he added.

A century by Sarel Erwee laid

the base for a first innings 364, Kagiso Rabada took five for 60 as New Zealand folded 71 in arrears and an unbeaten 136 from Kyle Verreynne in the second innings tightened the clamp on New Zealand.

A disappointed New Zealand captain Tom Latham, who saw the chance of a history-making first series win over South Africa

slip away, put the blame on his batsmen. “Our blueprint is about putting a big first innings score on the board, if we were able to do that things might look slightly different,” he said.

“Unfortunately we were not able to build partnerships in the first or second innings.”

New Zealand started the final day at 94 for four and while Devon Conway and Tom Blundell were at the crease they held hope they could salvage a draw.

But it was a forlorn hope and their 85-run partnership ended shortly before lunch when Conway went leg before wicket for 92.

New Zealand’s hopes of salvaging a draw rose again at 227 for nine when rain forced the players from the field, but it was a brief respite. — AFP

SCOREBOARD	
South Africa 1st innings 364	K Jamieson c Rabada b Jansen12
New Zealand 1st innings 293	T Southee c Sipamla b Rabada17
South Africa 2nd innings 354-9 dec	N Wagner not out10
New Zealand 2nd innings	M Henry lbw Kagiso0
T Latham c van der Dussen b Rabada1	Extras (lb 1, nb 1)2
W Young c Bavuma b Rabada0	Total (all out, 93.5 overs)227
D Conway lbw Sipamla92	Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-6, 3-25, 4-81, 5-166,
H Nicholls b Maharaj7	6-187, 7-188, 8-201, 9-220
D Mitchell b Maharaj24	Bowling: Rabada 19-5-46-3, Jansen 23-6-63-
T Blundell c Bavuma b Jansen44	3, Maharaj 31.5-9-75-3, Sipamla 14-5-29-1,
C de Grandhomme c Mulder b Jansen18	Mulder 6-1-13-0

Iran’s Javid takes charge as Oman squash head coach



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 1

The Oman Squash Committee (OSC) recently appointed Iran’s Mohsin Gholamnejad Javid as head of technical staff of the national squash team.

Javid signed an agreement with the OSC and has taken charge of Oman’s squash team. This move is expected to enable good progress for squash in the Sultanate of Oman.

The selection of the Iranian head coach came after revision series of curriculum vitae. OSC had requested from West Asian Squash Federation, Arab Squash Federation and Asian Squash Federation to nominate best coaches for this position. More than 20 coaches had sent applications for the post.

Previously, Javid was the head coach of Bangladesh squash national team since 2021. He also worked as head coach of Iran national junior team during 2017 to 2020.

Javid is a certified coach and holder of level 3 world squash coaching certificate. He had completed national level 1,2,3 coaching courses and national 1,2 and 3 refereeing courses.

With the appointment, the OSC aims to define the players of squash in the Sultanate of Oman. Also, to determine the locations of the squash centres in Oman and to begin a technical programme to select potential men and women squash players for the national team.

Javid started his first internal trip to Dhofar Governorate accompanied by Eng Taher bin Taghlib al Barwani, board member of OSC and head of technical committee. The visit to Salalah will feature meeting with the players. Also on agenda will be discussion with the squash centres owners to support squash events in Oman. Moreover, the OSC delegation will meet the Culture, Sports and Youth Directorate representative for future cooperation.



OWCA Women beat ISC Women in League final

MUSCAT: Oman Women’s Cricket Academy beat Indian Social Club Women by 47 runs in the final of the Women’s League Season 2021-22.

Electing to bat first after winning the toss, OWCA put up a formidable first innings score of 157-2 at the end of their 20 overs.

ISC Women started the match on the front foot, sending Nitya Joshi back for a golden duck in the very first over. But a 138-run third wicket partnership between newcomer Nayan Anil and Sakshi Vijaya Shetty completely turned the tide in OWCA’s favour. Sakshi top scored with a 66-ball 78 that included 9 boundaries. Nayan ended the innings unbeaten on 57.

The pair rotated strike

effectively and dispatched loose balls to the boundary efficiently — a combination that first served to put the pressure back on ISC after Nitya’s dismissal, and then keep it that way for the rest of the innings. They were clinical and composed under pressure and by the time ISC managed to break their stand in the 19th over, the damage had already been done. They went into the dressing room at half-time with a mountain to climb.

As it turned out, ISC Women fell well short, mustering 110-6 after 120 deliveries. Suhaani Dadhwal top scored with 35 runs. Trupti Pawde was dismissed cheaply in the powerplay, but Suhaani and Priyanka Mendonca kept ISC in the game. Priyanka



was the pick of the ISC bowlers in the first innings too and followed up her figures of 1-25 with a 28-

ball 31. Suhaani scored at a much slower pace, but she locked down the other end of the wicket and the pair managed to erect a 64-run stand.

However, Priyanka’s untimely

run-out in the 14th over ended all hopes of a successful run chase. The asking rate was sky high, and with boundaries proving elusive, the ISC batters desperately looked for risky singles and doubles to keep the scoreboard ticking. OWCA took full advantage and inflicted two further run outs to put the result beyond doubt.

Snehal Nair was their star with the ball in hand, giving away just 15 runs from her 4 overs while also picking up a deserved wicket at the death.

BRIEF SCORES:
OWCA Women 157-2 in 20 overs (Sakshi Vijaya Shetty 78(66) 9 x 4, Nayan Anil 67(57) 6 x 4; Priyanka Mendonca 25(1) beat ISC Women 110-6 in 20 overs (Suhaani Dadhwal 35(50) 1 x 4; Snehal Nair 15(1) by 47 runs.

Archana, Sreeja book last 32 spots | WORLD NO 75 CIFUENTES CRASHES OUT, PICARD THROUGH

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MARCH 1

Indian world number 99 Archana Girish Kamath and compatriot Sreeja Akula (World No 111) qualified to the last 32 round of the WTT Contender Muscat 2022 after impressive wins here on Tuesday.

At the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Archana, 21, outsmarted Olge Yilmaz of Turkey 3-1 (11-8, 5-11, 12-10, 11-7) while Sreeja had a tough five-setter with Yang Huijing of China to prevail 3-11, 11-7, 12-10, 9-11, 12-10.

World Youth champion Kuai Man of China ended the fine run of Andreea Dragoman of Romania to progress. Kuai, 16, was clinical in her straight-set win 11-6, 11-3, 11-7.

Minhyung Jee of Australia qualified with a close-fought 3-2 win over Huang Yu-jie of



Sreeja Akula



Archana Girish Kamath

Chinese Taipei.

Adina Diaconu of Romania made it to the last 32 with a 3-1 victory over Simay Kulakceken of Turkey. Fan Siqi of China was also through with a 3-0 win over Huang Yi-Hua of Chinese Taipei.

Chen Yi battled past Qi Fei 3-2 in all-China qualifier and Shi Xunhao of China edged India's

Diya Parag Chitale 3-2 to make it to the main round. Chitale, ranked 272, had stunned World No 91 Natalia Partyka 3-0 of Poland in the last round.

CIFUENTES OUT

In men's section, World No 75 Horacio Cifuentes of Argentina suffered a straight-set defeat



Vincent Picard of France celebrates.

against 116th ranked Sun Wen of China.

Frenchman Vincent Picard continued his dream run with a close 3-2 win against China's Cao Wei by 11-4, 11-8, 6-11, 9-11, 11-6. The World No 891 had upset India's Sanil Shetty 3-2 in the preliminary third round.

Yuan Lichen of China booked

last 32 spot with a 3-1 win over India's Manav Vikash Thakkar, while 16-year-old Iulian Chirata giant-killing run was stopped by Qihao Zhou of China in emphatic fashion.

Antoine Hachard of France also advanced with a 3-1 defeat of Xiang Peng of China.

Tom Jarvis of England (World

Frenchman Vincent Picard continued his dream run with a close 3-2 win against China's Cao Wei by 11-4, 11-8, 6-11, 9-11, 11-6. The World No 891 had upset India's Sanil Shetty 3-2 in the preliminary third round.

No 175) saw his fine campaign end with a 3-1 defeat against Xu Yingbin of China.

Also in last 32 were Chinese players Zhang Yudong and Liu Dignshuo who marched past French opponents Alexandre Cassin and Leo De Nodrest respectively with a 3-1 score in the fourth round.



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‘Mutebah’ grabs Al Bashayer Cup on second day



WALEED AL JAHWARI
ADAM, MARCH, 1

‘Mutebah’ belonging to ‘Hejen Al Bashayer’ owned by HH Asaad bin Tarik al Said claimed the Cup and car in the second day competition of the fifth Al Bashayer Camel Race Festival in Adam on Tuesday.

‘Mutebah’ won the race for young category ‘3 years old’ for 4 km which saw strong competition between the participants from the GCC countries for five rounds.

‘Mutebah’, coached by Hamid bin Muhammad al Jahafi, covered a distance of 4 km in a time of 7:39 out of 19 camels to take the first round.

The second round was for Cup and car and ‘Al Dabi’ owned by Mohammed bin Mubark al Shamsi from the UAE won the race, covering 4 km in 7:37 out of 53 participants.

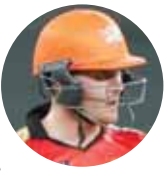
In the third round for gun and car, ‘Nasi’ owned by Saed bin Salim al Shamsi from the UAE finished on top out of 37 camels. In the fourth round for car, ‘Mahubah’ owned by Saed bin Salim al Gdeali, which covered the distance in 7:42 out of 71 participants, bagged the prize. In the fifth round, ‘Al Hather’ owned by Saed bin Hamed al Amri won the car beating 65 camels and covering the race in 7 minutes and 43 seconds.

England opener Roy pulls out of IPL

LONDON: England opener Jason Roy announced on Tuesday he has withdrawn from this season's Indian Premier League, in which he was due to play for new franchise Gujarat Titans.

The 10-team Twenty20 competition is scheduled to run from March 26 to May 29.

Roy, who had a second child in early January and played in the Pakistan Super League last month, said he needed a break. — AFP





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Oman crude jumps to over \$100/b for first time in 8 years

JOMAR MENDOZA
@jmObserver

Oman crude prices surged more than 5 per cent on Tuesday to \$100.85 per barrel as international oil markets weighed a coordinated international release of crude inventories against Russian supply disruptions in the wake of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine.

According to data from the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME), the price of Oman crude rose by \$4.81 to close at \$100.85 a barrel, the highest level since August 2014.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for March delivery amounted to \$83.62 per barrel, an increase of \$10.48 compared to February’s delivery price.

Prices of international crude benchmarks too hit multi-year highs. May Brent crude futures were up \$4.58, or 4.67 per cent, to \$102.55 a barrel after hitting an intraday high of \$104.60. The benchmark touched a seven-year high of \$105.79 after the invasion began last week. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) April crude futures were up \$4.14, or 4.33 per cent, at \$99.86 a barrel after hitting its highest level since July 2014 at \$101.53.

According to Reuters, buyers of Russian



oil are facing difficulty over payments and vessel availability due to sanctions with BP cancelling fuel oil loadings from a Russian Black Sea port.

Amid concerns of large-scale supply disruptions, the United States and allies began discussing a coordinated release of crude stocks — a move estimated at 60 million to 70 million barrels, media outlets reported.

“OPEC will likely stick to its original plan of a monthly 400,000 bpd increase, which will not alleviate fears,” Tamas Varga, analyst at PVM Oil Associates, said.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers — including Russia — will meet on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, members of the International Energy Agency (IEA) began an extraordinary ministerial meeting on Tuesday which could lead to a coordinated oil stocks release to help cool off oil prices.

Russia exports some 4 million to 5 million barrels per day of crude oil and 2 million to 3 million barrels per day of refined products

(With inputs from Reuters)

Fitch upgrades Omantel’s outlook to stable

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAR 28

International ratings agency Fitch Ratings has revised the outlook on Oman Telecommunications Company SAOG’s (Omantel) Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Ratings (IDR) to stable from negative and affirmed the IDR at ‘BB-’.

The revision of the outlook reflects that on the Sultanate of Oman’s Long-Term Foreign Currency IDR.

“The revision of Oman’s outlook reflected improvements in fiscal metrics and reforms supported by high oil prices and potentially reduced need for external financing. Fitch rates Omantel under its Government-related Entities methodology (GRE), given close ties with the government and significant domestic operations in the country,” it noted in a press statement.

Key ratings drivers:

Government linkage assessed as strong: Omantel’s rating is constrained by Oman’s sovereign rating, said Fitch, adding: “The company is 51 per cent owned by the state and our assessment of the overall links under the GRE methodology is strong with a score of 25. We view the status, ownership and control factors as well as the financial implications of default as strong.”

Potential tower sale:

Omantel has agreed to sell Helios Towers its 2,890 mobile towers in the Sultanate of Oman for \$575 million. The transaction is expected to close in 2H22, according to the company, pending regulatory approvals. A disposal of more than 50 per cent of infrastructure assets could trigger prepayment clauses under Omantel’s existing term loan agreement. We do not factor in the proceeds of sale in our base case. However, we acknowledge that proceeds could be used to repay debt and reduce leverage.

Strong domestic market: Omantel maintained its leading market share in mobile and fixed segments at 54 per cent



and 70 per cent, respectively in 3Q21. According to Fitch, the prepaid market in Oman suffered the most during the pandemic, resulting in a 17 per cent loss in subscriber base and 7 per cent decline in prepaid average revenue per user (ARPU) by end-2020.

“The company continues to monetise its mobile subscriber base through migration to postpaid plans, resulting in 18 per cent growth in its subscriber base and offsetting a 4 per cent decrease in ARPU as competition intensifies. We forecast the fixed broadband customer base will keep growing in 2022, supported by continuous 5G network and fibre roll out in the country,” the ratings agency noted.

Multi-layered competition:

Competition is expected to increase significantly with the entrance of Vodafone in January 2022 and potentially pressure mobile revenue. Omantel has thus far managed to maintain market share and limit ARPU deterioration through its bundle offers.

The mobile segment in Oman consists predominantly of prepaid subscribers, similar to other GCC markets. The migration of customers to high value-added packages remains subdued by significant competition between Ooredoo and mobile virtual network operators, which represented 46 per cent of Omani mobile subscriber market share in 3Q21, it added.

South Al Sharqiyah’s long-term growth to centre on ‘Blue Economy’

PROMISING FUTURE: Oman National Spatial Strategy to host ‘dialogue’ on urban development roadmap for governorate

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Omani government’s long-term vision for the development of South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, centring primarily on its rich fisheries potential, will be outlined at a forum due to be held today in the governorate under the auspices of Shaikh Khalifa bin Saleh al Busaidy, Wali of Al Kamil W’al Wafi.

Organised by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning’s Spatial Strategy Unit, the forum is part of a series of public engagements planned across the country to shed light on the country’s National Urban Development Strategy unveiled by the government early last year.

For South Al Sharqiyah, the spatial development strategy is themed around the ‘Blue Economy’, envisioning the eventual transformation of the governorate as a “leading centre” in marine activities encompassing fisheries, marine research and marine tourism. This positioning will be based on international standards, the Oman National Spatial Strategy (ONSS) unit at the Ministry noted in a post on Tuesday.

Approved by His Majesty Sultan Haitham



bin Tarik in March 2021, the ONSS is the “essential enabler” for the implementation of the Oman 2040 Vision and serves as the broad framework to guide the country’s broader urban development over the next 20 years.

The underlying goal is to enable the Sultanate of Oman’s spatial development sustainably, while at the same time, balancing its socio-economic growth and safeguarding its valuable natural and cultural resources for future generations – all in alignment with the objectives set out in Oman Vision 2040.

According to the Spatial Strategy for South Al Sharqiyah, growth will be enabled through investments and initiatives in a diverse range of activities linked to the Blue Economy.

“This will be (achieved) in balance with the unique, but vulnerable, coastal environment and with the spectacular nature of mountains and deserts. Ancient cultural links with sea and marine resources will be at the foundation of a broad range of new economic activities, which will coexist with traditional settlement patterns,” the ONSS report said of the long-term development plan for the governorate.

Sur, the administrative centre of the governorate, is anticipated to evolve into a “well-developed urban, commercial and tourism centre” with investments in intensive agriculture, aquaculture and tourism activities. These activities, however, will take into account local settlements, culture and environment constraints, it noted.

The Blue Economy vision for South Al Sharqiyah is also sought to be achieved by “making the city of Sur a regional centre for the governorate, developing and strengthening ferry services from Al Ashkharah to Sur and Muscat, developing agriculture in its interior parts and achieving a higher level of protection and management for environmental and heritage areas of a special nature,” the Spatial Strategy Unit added.

Given its geographical and climate related characteristics, South Al Sharqiyah is also seen as promising for investments in, among other things, national tourism events, cultural tourism, locally driven eco-tourism, desert tourism, waterfront recreation and beachfront tourism.

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Launch of Electricity Spot Market places Oman in vanguard of market liberalisation

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 1

The recent launch of an Electricity Spot Market in the Sultanate of Oman — the first of its kind in the Middle East — involved a key role played by leading industrial software giant GE Digital, the company said in a press statement.

Operated by the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP), the sole buyer of electricity and water in the Sultanate of Oman, the spot market makes it possible for generating companies, including those with ongoing power and water purchase agreements, as well as those whose agreements have expired, to sell uncontracted output to the market at the most competitive prices. This creates new revenue opportunities for these companies, a particular benefit for solar and wind projects because it can help speed their return on investment.

Electricity and water producers access the spot market via a single unified portal, where they can participate in the daily market operations that contract for supply for the following 24-hour period.

The digital infrastructure enabling the system was developed, commissioned and configured by GE Digital's Grid Software



business in collaboration with OPWP.

The system is flexible enough to incorporate OPWP's market rules, updates to the rules, changes in the number of market participants, and real-time issues such as grid congestion and transmission capacity, said GE Digital.

This flexibility also means the system can manage the expiry of existing power

purchase agreements, as OPWP pursues its roadmap towards an increasingly liberalised electricity market.

"With the launch of its spot electricity market, Oman is in the vanguard of market liberalisations and innovations that are happening in the utility sector in the Gulf region," said Talal Eskandar, Senior Director VP Sales at GE Digital.

"The system supports OPWP in achieving its long-term goals regarding more competitive pricing and improved efficiency around electricity and water procurement."

"The spot market gives OPWP the ability to swiftly and efficiently adjust to changes in supply, demand and transmission capacity, while at the same

time encouraging sector-wide efficiency improvements, lower costs to end users, and reduced carbon intensity of the sector," said Eskandar.

GE Digital's Advanced Market Management System (AMMS), which includes scheduling, trading and settlement components, is hosted in Muscat. It provides a framework to master energy trading by integrating Core Market operations, Modeling, and Analytics into one modular solution.

Currently, the market mechanism is open to generating companies connected to the country's Main Interconnection System (MIS), which operates in most of the country.

It is anticipated that once an interconnection line is completed to link the MIS with the Dhofar grid system in the country's south, generating companies in that system also will be able to participate.

"In Oman, we are witnessing the future of the power and water. As the country begins to experience the benefits of this system, their example will encourage other regional markets to speed their liberalisations, creating a cascade of benefits flowing across the entire region," Eskandar added.

OOMCO opens mega service station at SQU



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 1

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) has opened its highly awaited mega service station at Al Khoudh 6, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), which was inaugurated under the auspices of Hilal al Sarmi, Shura Representative of the Wilayat of Seeb. The complex is part of a new concept the fuel marketing company is rolling out, transforming the traditional service station into a one-stop-shop for shopping, food and other lifestyle services.

"We are proud to have officially opened our first mega station in Oman as it reaffirms our commitment to go 'beyond

the pump.' We are dedicated to grow our non-fuel services that contribute to the nation's social and economic development and inspiring others to do the same," said Hilal bin Ali al Kharusi, Chairman at OOMCO. "Our objective is to become the most customer-centric marketer in the Gulf Cooperation Council in 2027 and with this mega station, we are one step closer to achieving our goal." Hussain Jama Bait Ishaq, Acting Chief Executive Officer at OOMCO, said, "We continue to transform the industry, enhancing both customer and shareholder value through expansion and innovation. While catering to the needs of today's fast-

moving world, our mega station has been created as a destination of convenience and leisure for motorists. We have partnered with various popular global brands in order to offer our customers a much more exciting experience that takes them out of their usual routine when visiting a fuel station." Catering to SQU students and staff in addition to Al Khoudh 6th residents, the 10,000 m2 project comprises a fuel service station, coffee shops, a car care centre, convenience store, shopping complex with global brands, a separate gym for men and women, a children's play area, a pharmacy, a nursery, ATMs and a business centre for students.

Arab Aviation Summit opens with focus on recovery

HAMMAM AL BADI
RAS AL KHAIMAH, MARCH 1

The 9th edition of Arab Aviation Summit (AAS), the region's leading aviation and tourism industry event, was inaugurated on Tuesday by HH Shaikh Saud bin Saqr al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, at the Al Hamra International Exhibition & Conference Centre in Ras Al Khaimah.

Under the theme 'Roadmap to recovery', hundreds of international and local industry experts as well as media representatives gathered to discuss an array of aviation and tourism topics.

Since its inception, the Summit has proved to be an ideal platform to shed light on the status of the region's aviation-tourism requirements and its prospects.

This year's edition aimed to create a post-pandemic roadmap to recovery. It also amplified the messaging that emanates from discussions on important topics and issues, including knowledge sharing that are vital to helping industry players unify their efforts towards uplifting the aviation and tourism sector.

Endorsed by Arab Governments, the 2022 AAS is hosted in collaboration with Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) and supported by global industry partners such as Airbus, CFM, Air Arabia, Turkish Technic, Collins Aerospace, and others.

Al Hamra International Exhibition & Conference Centre in Ras Al Khaimah, the location of the 2022 Arab Aviation Summit, offers state-of-the-art, elegantly designed meeting facilities, and is the first safe meeting facility in the world, as certified by Bureau

Veritas, the international leader in testing and inspection services and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Safe Travel Stamp.

The certification follows the implementation of stringent safety and security protocols by Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, offering hospitality and event providers access to global best practice, supportive policies and professional guidance on safety and hygiene.

The Arab Aviation Summit is an industry initiative committed to improving the state of Arab aviation and tourism by facilitating a constructive dialogue for public-private cooperation.

Referred to as the 'voice of the industry', this initiative attracts the largest assembly of Arab media together and top executives from the aviation and tourism sector. The summit is held in a different Arab host city every year.



Ukraine war tests the power of tech giants

ADAM SATARIANO and SHEERA FRENKEL

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has become a defining geopolitical moment for some of the world's biggest tech companies, as their platforms have turned into major battlefields for a parallel information war and their data and services have become vital links in the conflict.

Over the past few days, Google, Meta, Twitter, Telegram and others have been forced to grapple with how to wield that power, caught between escalating demands by Ukrainian, Russian, European Union and US officials.

On Friday, Ukrainian leaders pleaded with Apple, Meta and Google to restrict their services inside Russia. Then Google and Meta, which owns Facebook, barred Russian state-run media from selling ads on their platforms. Google CEO Sundar Pichai also spoke with top EU officials over how to counter Russian disinformation.

At the same time, Telegram, a widely used messaging app in Russia and Ukraine, threatened to shut down channels related to the war because of rampant misinformation. And on Monday, Twitter said it would label all posts containing links to Russian state-affiliated media outlets, and Meta said it would restrict access to some of those outlets across the EU to ward off war propaganda.

For many of the companies, including Facebook, Google and Twitter, the war is an opportunity to rehabilitate their reputations after facing questions in recent years over privacy, market dominance and how they spread toxic and divisive content.

They have a chance to show they can use their technology for good in a way not seen since the Arab Spring in 2011, when social media connected activists and was cheered as an instrument for democracy.

But the tech companies face tricky decisions. Any missteps could be costly, adding more momentum to efforts in Europe and the United States to regulate their businesses or leading Russia to ban them altogether.

Executives inside the companies are making judgement calls about what to do, employees said.

If Google, Meta, Twitter and others take some steps and not others, they might be accused of doing too little and looking halfhearted. But curbing too many services and information might also cut off ordinary Russians from the digital conversations that can counteract state-run propaganda.

"These companies want all the benefits of monopolising the world's communications with none of the responsibility of getting swept up in geopolitics and having to choose sides", said Yael Eisenstat, a fellow at the Berggruen Institute, a Los Angeles think tank, who formerly led Facebook's election integrity operations. In many ways, she said, tech companies are "in a no-win situation in the midst of an international crisis."

Many of the companies have moved gingerly, said Marietje Schaake, a tech policy expert and former member of the European Parliament. Although Google and Meta blocked Russian state media from selling ads on their sites last week, the companies did not bar the outlets, as many Western policymakers had urged.

As the conflict has ratcheted up, the companies have taken additional steps. On Sunday, Google's Maps division stopped displaying traffic information inside Ukraine out of concerns that it could create safety risks by showing where people were gathering.

Facebook announced that it had taken down a pro-



Traffic during the evening rush hour in Kyiv, days before Google stopped displaying traffic information inside Ukraine out of concerns that it could create a safety risks.

Kremlin influence campaign and a separate hacking campaign targeting its users in Ukraine.

On Monday, Twitter began labelling all tweets containing links to Russian state-affiliated media outlets so users would be aware of the information sources. Since the conflict in Ukraine began, users have tweeted links to state-affiliated media about 45,000 times a day, the company said.

Schaake, now the international policy director at Stanford University's Cyber Policy Center, said the measures were not enough. She said the companies must block Russian propaganda outlets and establish clearer policies about their beliefs in human rights and democracy that could be applied beyond Russia. "The interventions under huge pressure also underline what has not been done for so long", she said.

Others warned that there would be negative consequences if the platforms were blocked in Russia. "It's the most important place for public debate about what's going on", said Andrei Soldatov, a Russian journalist and censorship expert. "Nobody would take it as a good sign if Facebook blocked access for Russian citizens."

Telegram's experience illustrates the competing pressures. The app is popular in Russia and Ukraine for sharing images, videos and information about the war.

But it has also become a gathering ground for war misinformation, such as unverified images from battlefields. On Sunday, Pavel Durov, Telegram's founder, posted to his more than 600,000 followers on the platform that he was

considering blocking some war-related channels inside Ukraine and Russia because they could aggravate the conflict and incite ethnic hatred.

Users responded with alarm, saying they relied on Telegram for independent information. Less than an hour later, Durov reversed course. "Many users asked us not to consider disabling Telegram channels for the period of the conflict, since we are the only source of information for them", he wrote.

Inside Meta, which also owns Instagram and WhatsApp, the situation has been "chaotic" because of the volume of Russian disinformation on its apps, said two employees, who were not authorized to speak publicly.

Russian experts on Meta's security team, which identifies and removes state-sponsored disinformation from Facebook and Instagram, have been working around the clock and communicating regularly with Twitter, YouTube and other companies about their findings, the two employees said.

Ukraine's vice prime minister called on Meta, Apple, Netflix and Google on Friday to restrict access to their services inside Russia to isolate the country.

"We need your support", his letter to YouTube said. US policymakers have also made requests to clamp down on Russian propaganda.

"What strikes me is the power of the platforms is just so unequivocally recognised", Schaake said. "I don't ever recall seeing such a high-level political push for the companies to do more."

European sanctions could strand leased planes in Russia

Western sanctions meant to punish Russian President Vladimir Putin for invading Ukraine may have also dealt a big blow to European companies that leased commercial aircraft to Russian airlines.

The majority of commercial aircraft flown by Russian companies are leased, more than half of them from companies abroad. Most of those companies are based in Ireland, a member of the European Union, which banned the sale or leasing of aircraft to companies in Russia as part of its sanctions package.

At stake is the fate of hundreds of planes worth an estimated \$12 billion, according to Ishka, a consulting firm that specialises in the aviation industry. Those based in Ireland are particularly exposed, with \$4 to \$5 billion worth of aircraft in Russia, it said. The sanctions give companies leasing the planes until March 28 to terminate existing contracts, the Irish government confirmed on Monday.

But getting the planes back won't be easy. The repatriation of leased planes is normally planned years in advance. Airlines in Russia may not cooperate or may be ordered by Putin's government to throw up obstacles. Another challenge is that Europe and Russia have closed

their airspaces to each other's planes.

"The logistics are immense. We are talking hundreds of planes that need to be flown out", said Phil Seymour, an aviation specialist with IBA, a consulting firm. He listed off the questions that the companies that own the aircraft now face: "Where in the world can they go? Will they play ball? Will there be any edict from above, telling not to cooperate?"

AerCap, the world's largest leasing company for commercial aircraft, said on Monday that it would fully comply with sanctions requiring it to cease leasing planes to Russian airlines. Based in Dublin, AerCap is likely to be the company most heavily exposed to the sanctions, with 152 planes valued at nearly \$2.5 billion in Russia and Ukraine, according to IBA. Nine other leasing companies based in Ireland also have planes in Russia.

In a filing to investors, AerCap said its contracts with Russian airlines, which according to its website include Aeroflot and Rossiya, accounted for roughly 5% of its fleet, by value, at the end of December.

The company acknowledged at the end of the year that doing business in places such as Russia was inherently risky. AerCap said at the time that recovering planes would be difficult if it was forced to cancel contracts because of government sanctions.

The logistics are immense. We are talking hundreds of planes that need to be flown out. Where in the world can they go? Will they play ball? Will there be any edict from above, telling not to cooperate?

PHIL SEYMOUR
AVIATION SPECIALIST,
IBA CONSULRING FIRM

"We may encounter obstacles and are likely to incur significant costs and expenses conducting reposessions", the company said in a securities filing. For a company as large as AerCap — the company had assets of \$75 billion at the end of 2021 — the losses could be bearable, aviation experts said. But the sanctions could devastate companies with much smaller fleets and those with greater exposure to Russia.

Even when plane leasing companies are working with cooperative customers, they have sometimes faced problems. For example, the plane may no longer have the engines that were installed originally because airlines have swapped in others for maintenance or other reasons.

"It could prove very costly for the lessors", Seymour said. Normally, he said, before a plane is returned, it has to be brought back into shape, it must have a spotless interior and the paperwork documenting its maintenance history and any problems must be in order. If leasing companies were unable to recover their planes, they would end up taking on all of the risk associated with the aircraft, said Paul O'Driscoll, a consultant with Ishka.

Once contracts are canceled, Russian airlines no longer have to make payments for planes or maintain them. "The local airline is absolved of its responsibility", O'Driscoll said. "You're really stuck. You have to leave the metal there."

Investors face mark-to-no-market problem

Investors in Russia are facing a mark-to-no-market problem. The rouble tanked and the country’s stock exchange did not open after the West cranked up sanctions against President Vladimir Putin. Even when trading resumes, foreign money managers and companies face the prospect of writing off their investments in the country, as oil giant BP did.

Investors in Russian securities face two big questions after the United States and allies restricted the country’s foreign exchange reserves and promised to kick some banks out of the SWIFT global payments system. The first is whether investors will be able to sell. Russia’s equity and derivatives markets remained closed on Monday, while the central bank ordered brokers not to execute sell orders from foreign shareholders.

The second question is whether they’ll be able to get their money out. Russian authorities are scrambling to preserve foreign currency reserves, while banks are navigating a thicket of rapidly changing sanctions when processing international payments. It’s far from clear what investors like Norway’s sovereign wealth fund, which said it was selling its \$2.8 billion portfolio of Russian securities, will get back.

Western companies with big businesses in Russia face similar challenges. The European Central Bank said Russian lender Sberbank’s subsidiaries in Croatia and Slovenia were “likely to fail”.

It’s not hard to imagine the Russian central bank taking similar aim at local subsidiaries of European lenders like Raiffeisen Bank or Société Générale. A rapid exit is costly, as BP demonstrated when announcing it would offload its 20% stake in Russia’s Rosneft.

Global financial markets should be able to cope with some turmoil in Moscow. According to Morningstar, Russian equities accounted for less than 0.3% of the 12 trillion euros invested in long-term European funds at the end of January. However, the consequences of disrupting flows of capital and credit with a \$1.4 trillion economy will take longer to become clear.

Given the broader geopolitical uncertainty, Russia’s mark-to-no-market problem looks set to ricochet around the world for weeks to come.

— Reuters



Investors in Russian securities face two big questions after the United States and allies restricted the country’s foreign exchange reserves and promised to kick some banks out of the SWIFT global payments system



CUTTING COAL USE

A worker uses a torch to cut steel pipes near the coal-powered Datang International Zhangjiakou Power Station at Zhangjiakou, in China’s northern Hebei province. When China’s President Xi Jinping issued his traditional Lunar New Year wishes from the country’s coal heartland in January 2022, the signal was clear – Beijing is not ready to kick its coal addiction, despite promises to slash emissions. – AFP

UK banks to be wary of cyber attacks



ANDY JALIL andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

THE UK’S NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY CENTRE URGED UK ORGANISATIONS A FEW WEEKS AGO TO BOLSTER THEIR CYBER SECURITY RESILIENCE IN RESPONSE TO “MALICIOUS CYBER INCIDENTS IN AND AROUND UKRAINE”

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has contacted some of the UK’s top banks to make sure they are prepared for a potential cyberattack, with the current situation between Russia and Ukraine.

Some of the biggest firms under the UK regulator’s watch have been contacted with a ‘Dear CEO’ letter, asking them if they have adequate systems and controls to manage cyber risk in light of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The UK’s National Cyber Security Centre urged UK organisations a few weeks ago to bolster their cyber security resilience in response to “malicious cyber incidents in and around Ukraine.”

The FCA’s letter to chief executives asks them if they have seen the NCSC’s guidance and whether they have taken any steps as a result.

An FCA spokesperson said: “As you’d expect, we’re contacting firms to highlight the NCSC’s statement that organisations should bolster their cyber security resilience. We’d encourage all the firms we regulate to refer to the NCSC guidance on actions to take when the cyber threat is heightened.

‘Dear CEO’ letters are normally sent to firms in a particular sector or undertaking a particular activity where the FCA spots emerging issues, and are made public by

the watchdog in due course, enabling the market to understand its concerns fuller.

The threat of cyber warfare continues to hover over the Russia Ukraine conflict.

As the US and western powers impose sanctions against key Russian companies and oligarchs, the financial district of London (known as the ‘City’) could become a target for retaliation, as concerns continue that wealthy Russians are using the City’s property market and financial services infrastructure to launder money.

The UK supports strong sanctions alongside multiple other global powers. Earlier on February 9, Reuters reported that the European Central Bank had posed similar questions to lenders in the bloc about the strength of their defences.

US authorities have also braced for the financial fallout of any conflict — financial institutions had earlier received an alert from the New York Department of Financial Services on the possibility of cyber retaliation.

It is also borne in mind that severe Russia sanctions could threaten stability. Global financial stability could come under pressure if some of the harshest possible sanctions are imposed on Russia, the chair of the world’s most powerful financial regulator has warned.

Western allies have discussed a raft of measures to punish Russia for the invasion of Ukraine. Severing Russian banks’ ties to

international payments network Swift is reportedly among the harshest measures. Financial Stability Board chair Klaas Knot told the Financial Times such a move could cause a “severe disruption in payment flows”.

He said: “When applying severe measures, one should always think twice and also be aware of the consequences.”

Swift backs trillions of dollars in transactions every year between banks through its secure messaging services, and was also a talking point for potential sanctions when Moscow annexed Crimea in 2014.

While the decision on sanctions is “taken on different grounds” than financial stability risk, Knot said that “they might have some financial ramifications”.

Knot’s warning came on the back of fears raised by the European Securities and Markets Authority on February 15 that a “significant” market correction could come about. Knot said that banks were in a much better position today to survive any potential fallout from the conflict in Europe.

“A well-capitalised banking sector has proven its value over the last few years. I think if you look at the main difference between the pandemic shock and the global financial crisis, it was that this time around, the banks were absorbing rather than amplifying the shock”, said Knot.

The Fed’s historic error



MOHAMED A EL-ERIAN

The author, president of Queens’ College at the University of Cambridge, is a professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

A close friend who has been incredibly successful in his tech career once observed that an initial suboptimal decision is likely to lead to a series of subsequent bad decisions. Economists call this “multiple equilibria.”

And the Federal Reserve, the world’s most influential monetary institution, finds itself in the midst of such a situation regarding inflation — with implications that extend well beyond US economics and finance.

The initial phase of the Fed’s ongoing inflation mistake — an error that will likely be remembered as one of its biggest ever — started with last year’s protracted mischaracterisation and dismissal of price increases as “transitory.” Although evidence of persistently high inflation

dynamics was increasingly visible, the Fed repeatedly dismissed these signs, failing, most notably, to heed the warnings expressed by firms on one earnings call after another.

It is not entirely clear what was behind the Fed’s initial misstep on inflation. What remains baffling is that, for most of 2021, policy makers seemed eager to double down on their “transitory” claim, rather than show humility as their inflation forecasts were revealed to be repeatedly and spectacularly wrong.

Even today, officials are hindering the restoration of the Fed’s badly damaged credibility by not explaining why they made this protracted mistake. I suspect the reason involves some combination of cognitive capture, loss of focus, unwillingness to admit error, and reluctance to abandon a “new monetary framework” that

quickly became outdated and counterproductive.

It was not until the end of November 2021 that Fed Chair Jerome Powell declared it was time to “retire” the word “transitory.” But then came the second stage of the Fed’s multifaceted blunder. The policy adjustments that followed Powell’s statement were extremely modest, with the Fed announcing only that its large-scale asset-purchase programme, known as quantitative easing (QE), would be wound down entirely by March 2022.

That was the time for the Fed to do two things to restore its inflation credentials and retain adequate control of its policy narrative. First, it should have explained why it messed up its inflation call so badly and how it had adjusted its forecasting models to be less wrong in future. Second, the Fed should

have taken significant initial policy steps and provided guidance about what would follow.

Having failed to do either, the Fed then entered the third stage of its historic mistake by losing control of the policy narrative just as inflation readings were getting worse.

Nothing highlighted better the big hole that the Fed had dug itself than the fact that, as late as February 2022, it was continuing its QE liquidity injections, even though inflation was running at 7.5%, a 40-year high. Astoundingly, and despite calls to act, the Fed had rejected an immediate halt to QE at both its December and January policy meetings.

All of which brings us to today. Inflation readings continue to surprise on the upside, and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will increase the risk of a stagflationary shock.

Meanwhile, Fed officials have offered different views publicly regarding how the central bank should approach both interest-rate hikes and reducing its bloated \$9 trillion balance sheet.

Lacking any proper guidance from the Fed, the market rushed to price 7 to 8 rate hikes in 2022 alone. Some Wall Street analysts went as far as 10, including a 50-basis-point hike as soon as the Fed’s mid-March meeting. Others urged the Fed to implement an emergency intra-meeting rate increase.

The Fed’s suboptimal decisions over the past 12 months mean that its next policy decision also is likely to be suboptimal. Even if it had a good feel for the current “first best” policy response, the Fed is unlikely to be able to implement it, given how far policy makers have fallen behind economic realities.

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features

A tale of two countries: The growing relations of Oman and Romania

Just as Oman boasts of towering castles, breathtaking caves and ancient cities, Romania's preserved medieval towns and fortified churches and castles are objects of global tourism curiosity. But what do the two countries have in common and what are their differences that make them both attractive destinations...**P20**



READ



BLACK CAKE
BY CHARMAINE WILKERSON

Charmaine Wilkerson's debut novel is a story of how the inheritance of betrayals, secrets, memories and even names, can shape relationships and history. Deeply evocative and beautifully written, Black Cake is an extraordinary journey through the life of a family changed forever by the choices of its matriarch.

DISCOVERY

Archaeologists find 7,000-year-old ritual hunt site in Jordanian desert

ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE discovered a 7,000-year-old stone age site in a remote desert in Jordan, with structures which show humans were rounding up and hunting gazelles much earlier than previously thought. The team of French and Jordanian experts also found over 250 artefacts at the site, including exquisite animal figurines which they believe were used in rituals to invoke super-

natural forces for successful hunts. The objects, which include two stone statues with carvings of human faces, are among some of the oldest artistic pieces ever found in the Middle East. "This is a unique site where large quantities of gazelles were hunted in complex rituals. It has no rival in the world from the stone age", said Wael Abu Azizeh, the co-director of the



French archaeological team. The experts found converging long stone walls several kilometres long, which were used to trap the gazelles into a confined

area where they could be hunted more easily. Although such structures, known as "desert kites" can also be found elsewhere in the arid

landscapes of the Middle East and south west Asia, these are believed to be the oldest, best preserved and the largest, the experts said. "They attest to the rise of extremely sophisticated mass hunting strategies, unexpected in such an early time frame", said a statement by the South Eastern Badia Archaeological Project (SEBAP) working on the site since 2013. The settlement's circular hut-like dwellings and large quantities of gazelle remains show the inhabitants were not just hunting for their own needs but were also exchanging with neighbouring settlements. Tourism Minister Nayef al Fayed said that the discoveries were a spectacular addition to Jordan's archaeological gems, which include the city of Petra hewn out of the desert rock, the Roman city of Jerash, and castles from the Middle Ages. — **Reuters**



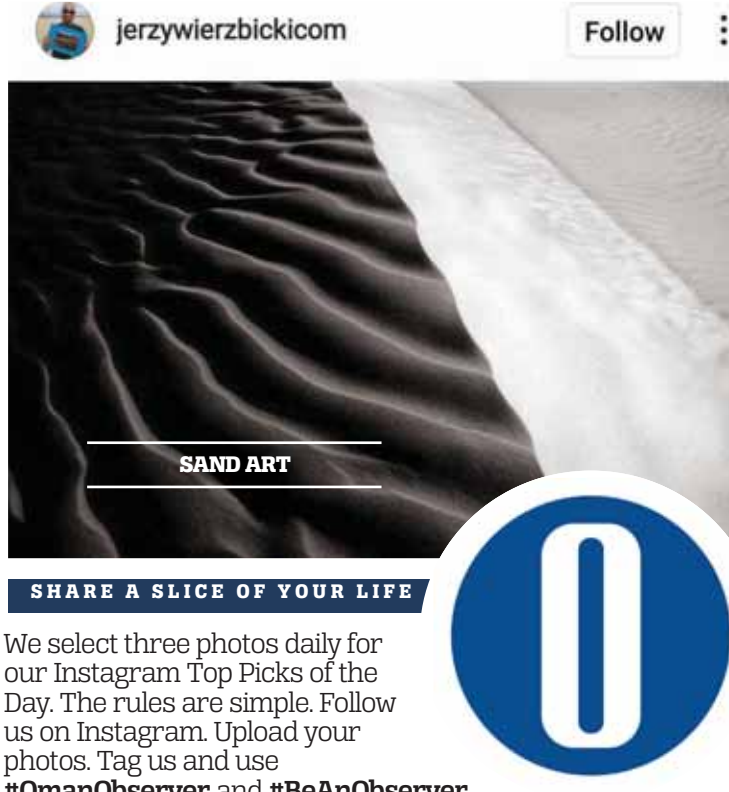
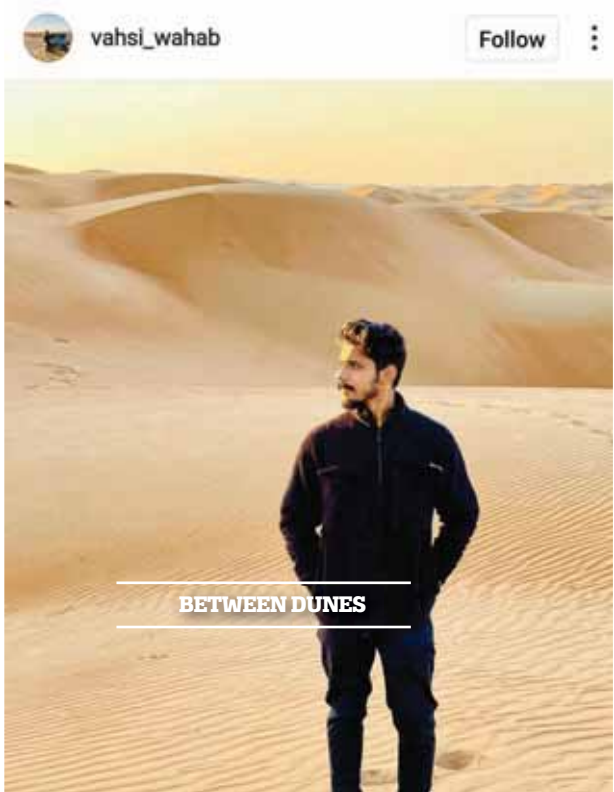
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AROUND THE WORLD

CONSERVATION

New WWF study on threats to global whale population, including those residing in Oman

WHALE SUPERHIGHWAYS



A NEW REPORT from the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and partners provides the first truly comprehensive look at whale migrations and the threats they face across all oceans, highlighting how the cumulative impacts from industrial fishing, ship strikes, pollution, habitat loss and climate change are creating a hazardous and sometimes fatal obstacle course for the marine species.

The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) has contributed towards this assessment. Protecting Blue Corridors, released by WWF, has for the first time, visualised the satellite tracks of over 1,000 migratory whales worldwide.

The report outlines how whales are encountering multiple and growing threats in their critical ocean habitats — areas where they feed, mate, give



birth and nurse their young — and along their migration superhighways, or 'blue corridors'.

As a result of these hazards, six out of the 13 great whale species are now classified as endangered or vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Protecting Blue Corridors calls for a new conservation approach to address the mounting threats faced by whales and safeguard their future, through enhanced cooperation at the local, regional and international levels. The benefits from protected blue corridors extend far beyond whales.

Growing evidence shows the critical role whales play maintaining ocean health and our global climate — with one whale capturing the same amount of carbon as thousands of trees.

Since its inception in 2004, ESO has focused on developing a better understanding of the distribution and ecology of the different whales found in Oman's waters. Echoing the call made in the WWF report for a new approach to conservation for whales, part of ESO's objectives for 2022 include implementing a Conservation Management Plan, aiming to engage with local authorities to implement alternative solutions to harmful marine practices that threaten the whales' survival.

For more information on how to support, make a donation, or to find out other ways to get involved, visit eso.org.om.

FASHION

Corsets and cargo pants: Versace plays with contrasts at Milan show



Italian fashion house Versace offered roomy cargo pants and corset dresses at its Milan Fashion Week show, presenting an autumn/winter collection that played with contrasts.

Designer Donatella Versace opened the show on Friday night with a sharp black trouser suit, before swiftly introducing satin corsets in purple, lime, pink, cream or checked worn as tops or adorning tight-fitting dresses as bodices.

Sometimes even puffer jackets bore the shape.

Models wore latex leggings, loose pinstripe trousers or luxury cargo pants. There was also an array of mini skirts, printed T-shirts and sparkly colourful chain tops. Large checked prints adorned jackets and skirts.

"Seen, unseen; mystery, discovery; constrained, unleashed. This collection is built on contrast and tension — like an elastic band pulled tight and about to snap-back with a build-up of energy," Donatella Versace said of the line.

"That feeling is just irresistible to me. It opens new possibilities and makes things happen."

Versace also peppered the line with denim, presenting wide-leg jeans and mini skirts.

Milan Fashion Week, which follows autumn/winter 2022 events in New York and London, wraps up on Monday. — **Reuters**



A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Have we entered the stage of controlling the pandemic?

AFTER THE PASSING of two years of the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), many people or communities in different countries are ready to announce the end of the chapter of the Corona crisis and transition to a new chapter!

But while we are all ready to move forward, it is important to debate the extent of what is happening right now. Is this ending premature or just as the earlier precedence, is this just a sign of something else? We have gone through similar turns before, specifically at the end of the first wave and again in a pre-variant Delta slope. And base on that previous experience we have seen that every time, the virus just came again sometimes in a different form or variant. This looks like the coronavirus is not over with us and we may need a new approach to deal with it.

In fact, I assert here, that what awaits us is not the end of Corona, but the beginning of our control or control phase, as we will have to invest in certain measures to reduce the burden of the virus to a more manageable size.

In other words, we have to look at the bigger picture and think of a long game. Without a doubt, even thinking about controlling the coronavirus, in the long term means overcoming some of the limits of our knowledge. Perhaps our future will depend both on the continuing evolution of the virus, which is currently impossible to predict and on our response, which will depend on the strength of our resources and our preparedness.

Undoubtedly, with the coronavirus 'one of the only things we can be sure of is that it will be difficult to control. It spreads stealthily and quickly and can jump between many types of animals. We see from multiple studies how it changes shape so frequently that our immune systems have a hard time keeping track of it, thus making it harder to suppress. However, with the tools that we have — among which are vaccines,

treatments, tests and masks — the timeline for control can stretch for an extraordinarily long time... or isn't it possible? Do we not see that after thousands of years of coexistence with the bacteria that cause tuberculosis, for example, which kills about one and a half million people annually, humanity is still trying to reduce its global burden until now?

On the other hand, we know that the control of the coronavirus will not be static and probably at this point, we can expect the disease to wane and disappear. But stopping the virus and keeping it there, will require monitoring it even when it appears rare. Not to mention that not all interventions and measures to confront the Corona pandemic can come and continue, but some tools or preventive measures work at the individual level and these are indeed the wildcards for the control stage. Unequivocally — as we have seen at some point in the pandemic — the success of any health system depends not only on capacity and planning, but on general acceptance by people and society. Protection will not work if no one is willing to adopt it.

In the end, everyone is aware that the response must change at a steady pace with the threat, thus we can gradually in our health plans to confront any epidemic, instead of just imposing a procedure and turning everything on or off! Such a system would be roughly analogous to how we classify and respond to hurricanes (that we have witnessed before some time). Most of the time, life can go on, as usual, our tools are on standby and our monitoring systems are ticking. But as soon as the danger begins to arise, the protection and measures will begin to fall back into place.

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



A tale of two countries: The growing relations of Oman and Romania

By Kabeer Yousuf
@kabeeryousef

With sharp contrasts and unbelievable similarities, Romania has been attracting an increasing number of tourists from the Sultanate of Oman while Oman's rugged mountains and plains and sands have proved to have an impact among the Central Eastern European country.

Just as Oman boasts of towering castles, breathtaking caves and ancient cities, Romania's preserved medieval towns which include Sighisoara, and the fortified churches and castles, predominantly clifftop Bran Castle, long associated with the Dracula, are objects of global tourism curiosity.

While Oman's traditional cities like Nizwa and Bahla are home to traditional pottery and artefacts, Romania has a rich pottery culture that is transcended from generations.

Contrastingly, the vast plains and expanse of the deserts distinguish the Sultanate of Oman, Romania is known for the forested region of Transylvania, ringed by the Carpathian Mountains.

These common features and contrasts that make the two which have long 48 years of relations stand out from

the rest have indeed made them closer to each other, and the newly opened Embassy of Romania in Muscat has been helping the relations flourish between the two.

"We believe that the opening of the Romanian Embassy in Muscat in 2018, represents a genuine proof of our willingness to enhance and diversify the friendly relations with Oman and we spare no stones unturned to promote bilateral boost tourism, visits to Romania by delegations of Omani businessmen and entrepreneurs and assure the possibilities of Omani students to study at Romanian Universities", said Mircea Mircea, Chargé d'affaires.

"I would like to re-emphasise that the Embassy of Romania in Muscat makes every possible effort to assure to Omani people the possibility to travel, study and research in Romania and the opportunity to improve their knowledge about Romania and to develop an economic partnership with Romanian contractors", Chitic added.

At the crossroads of Central and Eastern Europe, Romania is perhaps best known for its Black Sea resorts and the Danube Delta, listed by Unesco as a World Heritage Site for its rich wetlands and abundant bird-life. Besides that, Romania offers other

great vacation experiences: Medieval towns in Transylvania, the world-famous Painted Monasteries in Bucovina, traditional villages and churches in Maramures, the magnificent architecture of Bucharest, fairy-tale castles and the majestic Carpathian Mountains.

Romania is a country with rich biodiversity (ecosystems, species and genetic diversity) and a high percentage of natural ecosystems — 47 per cent of the land area of the country is covered with natural and semi-natural ecosystems. The natural integrity of forest ecosystems is indicated by the presence of the full range of European forest fauna, including 60 per cent and 40 per cent of all European brown bears and wolves, respectively. Europe's largest wetland, the Danube Delta, also lies predominantly in Romania.

Rural tourism is a new phenomenon and an old one at the same time. Rural tourism represents one of the first ways of tourism manifestation in Romania. It was known since early times, along with travelling, horse or nautical tourism.

The Romanian community in Oman represents a bridge between the two nations, providing the impulse for economic, social and cultural exchanges with mutual benefit and

according to him, Romania's interest in the preservation of the cultural, linguistic and spiritual identity of the Romanian community in Oman.

