

Google-backed Cuemath announces Oman launch

Our Correspondent Muscat

Leading education technology company Cuemath - a one-to-one personalised math-learning platform backed by Google - has announced its expansion into Oman.

Cuemath is now present in four GCC countries; the three others being the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. 'This exciting expansion follows the company's explosive growth in the UAE,

where its subscriber base has grown 600 per cent to over 180,000 customers since June 2021,' a statement said.

In keeping with Cuemath's rapid regional and global expansion, the catalyst for its expansion into Oman has been organic, word-of-mouth amongst consumers, the company stated.

Announcing the expansion, Vivek Sunder, CEO of Cuemath, said, "We are growing rapidly in the Middle East and are delighted to expand into Oman. Under His



Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman has implemented great reforms to promote investment, and diversify its economy. The jobs of the 21st century will increasingly have math skills at their core, so this is the perfect

The jobs of the 21st century will increasingly have math skills at their core, so this is the perfect time for Cuemath to enter the Omani market

VIVEK SUNDER

time for Cuemath to enter the Omani market."

He informed that Cuemath's market entry in Oman is in response to demand and the company is confident of growth in the sultanate following its success in

the region.

Omani consumers are ideally positioned to benefit from Cuemath's math-learning platform, the company stated.

'Oman Vision 2040 prioritises technical and entrepreneur-

ial capabilities, youth and education. All these areas complement the math and problem-solving skills that Cuemath teaches in a fun, enjoyable way.'

The Middle East's education technology sector is growing rapidly. Independent research by The Insight Partners - an international research consultancy - forecasts the Middle East and Africa education technology market to grow to US\$7.6bn by 2027, a doubling in size from 2019.

Market drivers include a high focus on education, rising young populations, and the rising trend of digitalisation in education sector.

Cuemath has grown its global market presence to over 50 countries, including the United Kingdom, United States, Singapore, Canada, UAE, Egypt, Nigeria, India and Thailand. The programme is led by over 10,000 teachers from various professional backgrounds.



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Over 23,000 residential plots to be distributed in 2022: MHUP



Our Correspondent Muscat

To support families and urban development, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) will distribute more than 23,000 residential plots in 2022.

On Tuesday, MHUP handed over title deeds of land to citizens in various governorates under its 'Choose Your Land' programme.

According to a ministry official, "MHUP recently launched the new programme to grant residential plots of land to citizens. The programme gives citizens the opportunity to select land of their choice. All citizens who are allotted land will receive a text message stating so."

For the purpose of transparency, MHUP published a list of citizens eligible for the land al-

lotment programme on Monday. The ministry will continue to publish names of citizens eligible for the programme. A total of 23,066 residential plots will be distributed in 2022.

"Eligible citizens will be allowed three attempts in five days to select a plot of their choice," said the official.

According to him, land allotment is based on specific criteria, including age, date of submission of application and social status. Priority is given to those who do not own housing or land.

Eligible citizens can pay the land reservation fees after registering with the programme and cannot sell the land allotted to them, the MHUP official said.

Citizens can register for the programme via <https://webapps.housing.gov.om/mohlottery/landing.html>

Industry Day motivates development of sector: OCCI

Muscat - Eng Rida Juma al Saleh, chairman of Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), has said that Omani Industry Day celebrations serve as an incentive as well as motivation for industrialists to develop the sector, which is one of the priority sectors in supporting the economic diversification plan of the sultanate.

He pointed out that partnership with the private sector starts with the role entrusted to it in stimulating economic growth. The government's economic stimulus plan includes several incentives related to taxes and improving the business environment, investment and support for small and medium enterprises.

Saleh added that the role of OCCI includes enabling the private sector to contribute to the advancement of the industrial sector. OCCI also studies legisla-

tion, regulations, plans and policies related to the industrial sector, and forwards suggestions and recommendations to competent authorities.

"This is in addition to studying and researching the problems and issues presented to the committee by industrialists, including proposed draft laws related to the industrial sector, and proposing appropriate solutions in this regard, besides conducting field visits to industrial projects to identify the challenges they face," Saleh said.

He further added that the chamber's role in supporting the industrial sector includes promoting Omani-made products by organising and holding exhibitions locally and abroad. Additionally, it focuses on finding suitable ways of supporting industrial projects for national products to compete globally. ONA

WEATHER WATCH

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	23	15
Doha	23	12
Kuwait City	21	12
Manama	21	12
Muscat	24	16
Riyadh	23	11

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	5.27am
Sunrise	6.44am
Duhr	12.26pm
Asr	3.39pm
Maghrib	6.03pm
Isha	7.15pm

Oman received 652,000 visitors in 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The number of visitors to Oman in 2021 fell by 25.4 per cent over 2020 and astoundingly by 81.4 per cent compared to 2019.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), 652,000 people visited the sultanate in 2021.

The sultanate had welcomed 874,444 visitors in 2020 and 3,506,441 in 2019, which was 8.2 per cent more than the 2018 figure of 3,241,757.

According to the latest figures from NCSI, GCC citizens were among the top nationalities that visited the sultanate in 2021. They were followed by Indian, Yemeni and Pakistani citizens.

While 22,322 people from the UAE visited Oman in 2021, 106,042 Indian nationals visited the sultanate in the year.

Last year, 41,823 visited from Yemen, 19,326 from Pakistan,



(Supplied photo)

GCC citizens were among the top nationalities that visited the sultanate in 2021

According to data released by the Directorate General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, the number of visitors to the Land of Frankincense sites in the governorate last year was 43,174.

The number of visitors to the Al Baleed Archeological Park and the Museum of the Frankincense Land was 27,962, while visitors to the Samahram Archeological Site stood at 12,916. The number of visitors to the Wubur Archeological Site was 2,296.

Additionally, the ministry stated that the number of hotels increased to 547 in 2020, compared to 492 in 2019 and 412 in 2018.

18,173 from Egypt, 17,000 from Germany, 13,955 from England, 12,976 from Italy and 12,729 from Iran, among others.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism confirmed that the reason for the decrease in visitors is the COVID-19 pandemic, which

has severely affected this vital sector.

The ministry also confirmed that there were 193,467 cruise

ship visitors in 2018, 383,488 in 2019 and 109,647 in 2020 – a decrease of 71.4 per cent compared to 2019.

Safer Internet Day promotes better online environment

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman, represented by the National Centre for Information Safety in the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology participated with nearly 200 countries in celebrating Safer Internet Day on Tuesday.

This year, the world celebrated the 19th edition of Safer Internet Day under the theme 'Together for a better Internet'. On this day, stakeholders around the world come together to make the Internet a safer and better place. Additionally, they look into making the Internet a less harmful place for children and young people.

Oman National CERT, which actively participated in disseminating information on safe Internet measures on the day through its social media platforms, stated that Safer Internet Day aims to promote a safer online environment for users of electronic devices, where the user is empowered to use technology responsibly and with a sense of digital citizenship.

'The campaign targets children and youth, parents, teachers and educators, social workers, and decision makers in order to encourage everyone to take an active role for a safe Internet,' Oman National CERT said.

It said that Safer Internet Day aims to promote joint action among countries of the world to raise awareness of the dangers of the Internet, the importance of maintaining privacy and warning against harmful use and legal consequences.

Omani-Iranian Businessmen Council meeting to focus on investments

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Omani-Iranian Businessmen Council will hold a meeting at Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Wednesday.

Reza Fatemi-Amin, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister, arrived in Oman on Tuesday. He met H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and H E Qais Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and cooperation



between the two friendly countries in various fields.

Mohamed Abdul Hussain Baqer, head of the Omani side in the Omani-Iranian Businessmen Council, said that

the council seeks to encourage trade delegations between Oman and Iran and to hold

trade fairs for Omani products in Iran as well as for Iranian products in the sultanate, and to raise the level of Iranian investments in Oman in sectors such as mining, fishing and medical materials.

"There are proposals for the establishment of Iranian companies in Oman in the tourism, mining and food sectors, and proposals for Omani companies to produce Iranian products. These proposals need primary steps, such as conducting economic feasibility studies and knowing their practicality in the Omani and Gulf markets,"

said Baqer.

He explained that the council seeks to push for the export of Omani products to Iran and to reduce customs duties on Omani products in Iran.

According to Baqer, Omani-Iranian trade exchange amounted to about US\$800mn in 2020, and that by the end of this year, it will amount to about US\$1.2bn.

"We seek to reach US\$5bn over the next few years through trade exchange and opening up avenues for sea freight between the two countries," he added.

We aim to continuously develop the performance of our industrial processes efficiently and effectively

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TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

THE TENDER COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER:

Tender No.	Subject	Document Fees	Tender Bond	Closing Date
MJN-KWM-PM-TED-00019	Invitation for submission of bids for facilities management, food, laundry, waste management, cleaning & pest control services at the Karwa Motors Factory Portable Cabin Facilities	OMR 100/-	1% of Bid Value	3 rd March 2022

CONDITIONS:

- The tender documents package can be obtained from the Finance Department of the company from the 7th of February 2022 from 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM, upon payment of the non-refundable document fees to the following bank account and providing proof of deposit and signed authorisation letter to collect the tender document with a company stamp.
- Qualification criterion: a minimum of two years' proven experience in managing similar facilities with a minimum of 200 employees.**
- Payment should be processed by bank transfer or deposit to the following bank coordinates or by cash:
Account Name: **Karwa Motors**
Bank Name: **Meethaq Islamic Banking**
Bank Branch: **Al Khuwair Islamic Branch**
Account Number: **0625500193570001**
Swift Code: **BMUSOMRXISL**
- KEY DATES:**
 - Issue Tender Package – 7th to 15th February 2022 (Weekdays)
 - Compulsory Tender Briefing - 15th February 2022, Time: 12 NOON (Karwa Motors, Duqm Factory)**
 - Last Date for Queries – 28th February 2022
 - Last Date for Submission – 3rd March 2022
- Tender should be submitted not later than 12.00 Noon on the closing date and must be deposited at Karwa Motors Tendering Office located at Office No 5-25, 2nd Floor, Finaa Al Fardan Building No.254, Way 4204, Plot No 836, North Al Ghubra, Postal Code: 1115, Muscat, and should be in a sealed envelope addressed to 'Tender Committee, Karwa Motors', quoting the 'Tender No.' and subject.
- Offers arriving after the closing date and time shall not be accepted
- For queries please e-mail: **tendercommittee@karwamotors.com**

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MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,115.21
Sensex	57,808.58

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	194.16
Pakistani Rs	452.91
Bangladesh taka	223.34
Philippines peso	133.70
Sri Lankan Rs	524.74

*Rates as on February 08
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Bahrain announces long-term visa

Bahrain announced the creation of long-term visas for foreigners in an effort to "boost the economy", following in the footsteps of some of its Gulf neighbours.

With just over half of its 1.7mn population made up of foreigners, Bahrain is seen as a hub for professional expatriates, like much of the Gulf region.

Dubbed the "golden residence", the new Bahraini visa can be allocated to those who receive a salary of at least 2,000 dinars (about US\$5,300) or pensioners with an income of 4,000 dinars, the interior ministry said. Those who own properties worth at least 200,000 dinars are also eligible to receive the golden residence, as well "talented" individuals, the ministry added.

Oman ranks 6th in emerging markets business fundamentals

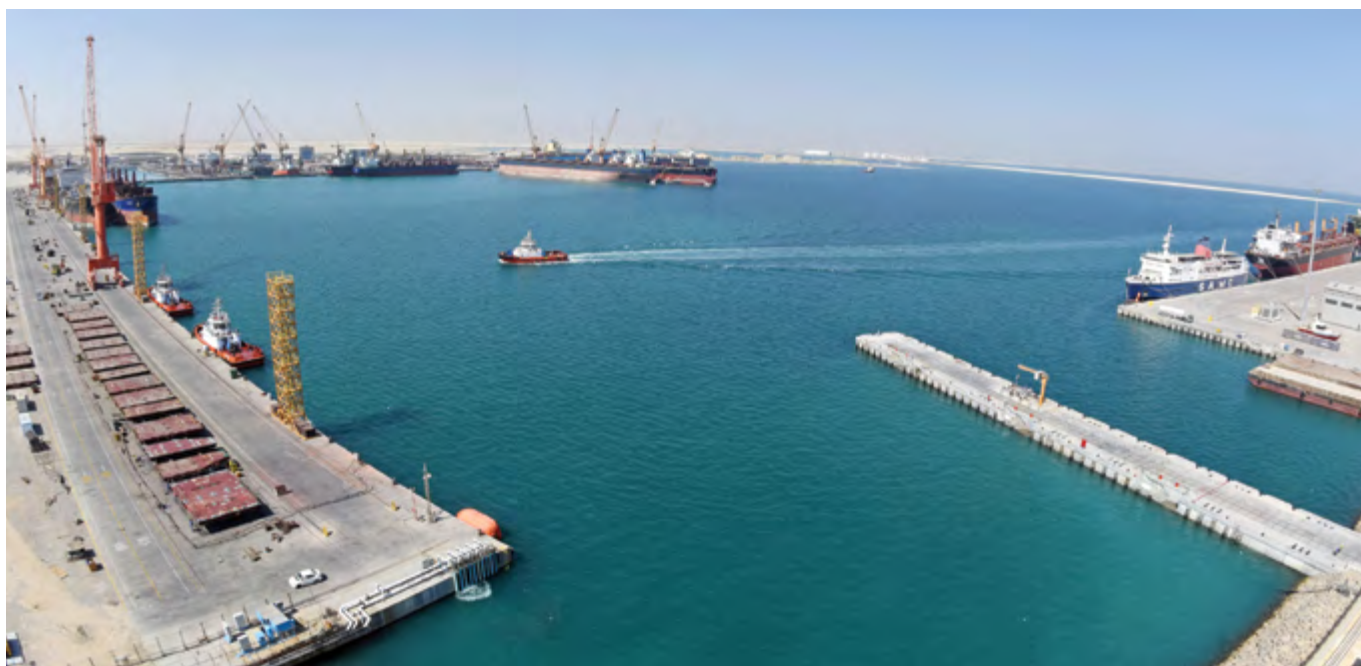
Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman jumped to 6th place in the area of business fundamentals and ranked overall as the 14th most competitive emerging market, according to the 2022 Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index.

The UAE (3), Saudi Arabia (6) and Qatar (7) ranked among the top 10 emerging markets in the 2022 index, which was led by China (1) and India (2). Also performing well were Bahrain (15) and Kuwait (17).

The 2022 Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index is the company's 13th annual ranking of the world's 50 leading emerging markets. The index ranks countries for overall competitiveness based on their logistics strengths, business climates and, for the first time, their digital readiness - factors that make them attractive to logistics providers, freight forwarders, air and ocean carriers, distributors and investors.

The global supply chain company Agility's Emerging Markets Logistics Index includes a survey of 756 supply chain industry pro-



fessionals.

The UAE outperformed all 50 countries in business fundamentals, an area where Gulf and MENA countries are clear leaders. Others near the top globally: Saudi Arabia (3), Bahrain (5), Oman (6), Morocco (9), Jordan (10), and Kuwait (12).

The UAE also ranked highest for digital readiness, a new category in the index. Digital readiness assesses digital skills,

training, Internet access, e-commerce growth, investment climate, and ability to nurture startups, as well as sustainability factors such as renewable energy mix, lower emissions intensity and green initiatives.

Top 10 in digital readiness were: UAE, Malaysia, China, Saudi Arabia, India, Thailand, Qatar, Indonesia, Chile and Philippines. Kuwait (12) and Oman (15) also ranked highly.

"The connection between a country's digital capabilities and growth prospects is undeniable," Agility's CEO Tarek Sultan said in a press statement on Tuesday.

He said, "The competitiveness of emerging markets countries will be determined by their ability to develop digitally skilled businesses and talent pools, and find the resolve to lower their emissions in ways that spur growth rather than sacrificing it."

The importance of digital readiness was apparent in the survey. Logistics executives identified adoption of technology as the leading driver of economic and business growth for emerging markets. The top focus areas for their companies: technology and sustainability.

Most logistics industry executives see moderate-to-strong economic growth and little or no chance of recession in 2022,

even without immediate relief from the snarled supply chains and sky-high ocean and air freight rates triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Roughly two-thirds of the 756 industry professionals surveyed for the Agility index believe shippers will see cargo rates come down by the end of the year. Eighty-per cent see port bottlenecks, air capacity shortages and trucking issues easing by year end. "The industry's optimism reflects the fact that emerging economies are getting more resilient and figuring out ways to weather supply chain disruption," Sultan said.

"If emerging markets can get better access to vaccines and give small business a boost, they can help power a broad, dynamic global recovery."

China and India, the world's two largest countries, held their spots at No 1 and 2 in the overall rankings. UAE, Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Thailand, Mexico and Turkey rounded out the top 10.

Transport Intelligence (Ti), a leading analysis and research firm for the logistics industry, compiled the Agility index.

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Salalah Free Zone plans to set up food industries zone

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Salalah Free Zone has announced the plan to establish a dedicated zone for food industries to meet the increasing demand from investors who want to establish projects in food industries.

In an interview published in the latest edition of *Duqm Economist* magazine, Dr Ali bin Mohammed Tabouk, CEO of Salalah Free Zone, said that Salalah Free Zone seeks to establish a zone for food industries and logistics, in cooperation with Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

"This project aims to establish a centre for commercial and industrial businesses based on value-added chain. It strives to benefit from natural resources, achieve sustainability of resources and provide integrated services and incentives for investors," he said.

"Establishing the food industries zone in Salalah Free Zone supports our strategy to become a global centre for investments, streamlining Oman Vision 2040 to diversify sources of income and build a solid foundation based on economic diversification and increase investment in the value-added sectors. The availability of high quality water as well as electricity as required



by the projects in the food sector mark the key infrastructure components," Tabouk added.

He further said that providing infrastructure for investment in agriculture sector is key to achieve sustainable agricultural development and attract investors from within and outside the sultanate, contributing to strengthen food security system.

Salalah Free Zone is distinguished by its proximity to the agricultural areas in Najd, which are about 150km from the zone, and availability of large quantities of fish in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

"Salalah Free Zone provides an easy and smooth connection through the Port of Salalah to

agricultural production zones for importing raw materials, and to consumption zones for exporting food products after processing them in the zone," Tabouk said.

The number of existing food industries projects in Salalah Free Zone stands at 27. Eight projects have started actual production and 19 projects are still under construction, he informed.

Salalah Free Zone is a subsidiary of Asyad Group, the largest logistic company in Oman. This adds a competitive advantage to the zone in terms of the support provided by Asyad Group in the logistics sector.

Salalah Free Zone is furnished with paved roads, which facilitate the movement between in-

vestment projects within the zone, as well as equipped with dry and cold warehouses ready to store production materials. It is located adjacent to the Port of Salalah, which is one of the largest container ports worldwide. The free zone is also linked to the Port of Salalah and the highly efficient road network, connecting other governorates of the sultanate and from there to other GCC countries and Yemen.

Salalah Free Zone has witnessed a commendable growth in the projects supporting the establishment of food industries zone. Existing investments in the petrochemical sector also attract other projects on which the food industry projects depend.

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Pfizer's 2021 profits doubled to \$22bn on vaccine sales

New York, US – Pfizer said on Tuesday it expects US\$32bn in revenue from COVID-19 vaccines in 2022 as it reported annual profits had more than doubled to US\$22bn.

The pharmaceutical giant, which with German company BioNTech won approval for the first vaccine to counter the deadly virus, saw annual revenues nearly double to US\$81.3bn, with US\$36.8bn from the COVID-19 vaccine.

Pfizer also expects US\$22bn in sales of Paxlovid, the company's pill for COVID-19, in 2022.

The results are the latest to show how the coronavirus has transformed Pfizer, which a year ago had projected just US\$15bn in COVID-19 vaccines



sales in 2021 and ended up selling more than twice that amount after repeatedly lifting the forecast.

Pfizer's scientists "continue to

monitor the COVID-19 virus and believe it is unlikely that it will be fully eradicated in the foreseeable future," Chief Executive Albert Bourla said in a statement.

"That said, we now have the tools - in the forms of vaccines and treatments - that we believe will help enable us to not only better manage the pandemic but also help countries move into the endemic phase," Bourla said.

"In other words, we believe these tools will help allow us to go back to normality and spend time with family and friends, travel, attend indoor dining and concerts, and enjoy many other activities while lowering the risk of overburdening hospitals and healthcare systems around the world."

Although Pfizer's profit per share topped analyst expectations, revenues fell short. Shares fell 4.1 per cent to US\$51.02 in pre-market trading.

AFP

MSX drops 0.4% amid thin trading

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) dropped 0.42 per cent on Tuesday to close at 4,115.21 points. Trading activity at the Muscat bourse remained weak and the declining trend continued.

Services sector stocks fell the most as the sector index recorded 0.58 per cent drop for the day. Financial index increased 0.33 per cent while Industrial index increased by 0.25 per cent. MSX Sharia index inched up 0.1 per cent to close at 506.5 points.

Total trading volume decreased by 35.1 per cent to 26.16mn shares on Tuesday compared with 40.3mn shares traded on Monday. Market turnover decreased 31.5 per



cent to RO3.64mn against RO5.32mn recorded in the previous trading session.

Market breadth of the MSX remained negative with eight advancing stocks to 11 decliners. As many as 22 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers of the day were Al Hassan Engineering (55.0 per cent), Raysut Cement (3.78 per cent), Taageer Finance (2.47 per cent), United

Finance (1.54 per cent) and Oman National Engineering and Investment (0.85 per cent).

Top losers were SMN Power Holding (-8.33 per cent), Oman Emirates Investment Holding (-5.06 per cent), Phoenix Power (-2.04 per cent), Al Batinah Power (-2.04 per cent) and Oman Investment and Finance Company (-1.91 per cent).

BP swings into \$7.6bn annual profit

London, UK – BP returned to profit in 2021 as oil and gas prices surged following a huge loss the prior year when the pandemic struck, the British energy giant revealed Tuesday.

BP posted a net profit of US\$7.6bn last year, compared with a loss after tax of US\$20.3bn in 2020, the company said in a statement. "2021 shows BP doing what we said we would - performing while transforming," said BP chief executive Bernard Looney.

The company also announced plans to accelerate its target to reduce operational carbon emissions.

"We are accelerating the greening of BP," Looney said.



"This allows us to raise our low carbon ambitions, and we are now aiming to be net zero across operations, production and sales by 2050 or sooner - unique among our peers."

BP said it aims to reduce operational emissions by 50 per cent by 2030. That compared with its previous target of 30-35 per cent by the end of the decade on its path to net zero by mid-century.

"The past two years have reinforced our belief in the opportunities that the energy transition presents - to create value for our shareholders and to get to net zero," added Looney, who became BP chief executive when the coronavirus began taking hold worldwide in early 2020.

BP on Tuesday also said it would return US\$4.15bn to shareholders via a share buyback thanks to a surplus cash flow.

AFP

TENDER NOTICE

Duqm Logistic Lands & Investment Company LLC

Duqm Logistic Lands & Investment Company LLC., hereby announces the following Tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of receiving Specifications	Date of Bid Submission	Suppliers	Tender Fee OMR	Place of Submission
DILC/001 /2022	levelling works at Duqm IP6 Port Logistic Zones for 75ha	16th February 2022	23rd February 2022	Only Specialized Companies	Free	Port of Duqm Company 3rd floor

Taking into consideration the following:

All specialized companies that wish to participate in the tender must submit a copy of the Commercial Registration Certificate and the contact details of the authorized individual (business card) to the address presented below. From 08:00 - 13:00 and 14:00 (Sunday – Thursday).

Complete Tender documents should be submitted in sealed envelope with red wax with tender number and title and addressed to the "Board of Duqm Logistic Lands & Investment Company LLC". The envelope should not make any reference to the bidder details.

All applicants are required to submit the Tender in the Tender box in the main office of Port of Duqm Company at or before 02:00 PM on the assigned date for submission of the Tender. Tenders submitted after the above mentioned date and time shall not be considered.

- * The company is not obliged to accept the lowest offer or any other offer without any justifiable reasons.
- * The company reserve the right to issue the order either in part or full for the quoted items without any justifiable reasons.
- * The company reserve the right to reject the tenders not complying with the tender documentation requirement. For any clarification, please contact us through tenders@portofduqm.om

Duqm Logistic Lands & Investment Company LLC
PO Box: 2409, PC: 111, Sultanate of Oman,
Almashreq Building, 18 November Street, N. Azaiba
T: (+968) 24342800 | F: (+968) 24587343 | www.portofduqm.om



Musandam Power Company SAOG

PO Box 228, PC 134, Al Qurum,
Jawharat Al Shatti, Muscat, Sultanate Of Oman.
www.musandampower.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Musandam Power Company SAOG (the "Company"), I have the pleasure to present the Annual Report of the Company for the year ended 31st December 2021.

Musandam Power Company SAOG (the "Company") was registered and incorporated as a closed joint stock company in the Sultanate of Oman on 18th November 2014. Subsequently, the Company was converted to a joint stock company ("SAOG") and was listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange ("MSX") on 5th December 2019.

The Company is engaged in the design, construction, ownership, financing, operation and maintenance of a dual fuel power plant (the "Plant") with natural gas as the primary fuel and diesel oil as the alternative fuel with a capacity of 120 Mega Watt (MW) located in Wilayat Bukha in the Musandam Governorate, Sultanate of Oman. The Company is selling the electrical energy generated to Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOG (the "OPWP"). Before listing, the Company was a subsidiary of Oman Oil Facilities Development Company LLC ("OOFDC") which is owned by OQ SAOG ("OQ"), a closely held joint stock company incorporated in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Company commenced commercial operations on 17th June 2017.

Corporate Governance

The Company has a comprehensive system of internal controls in place with clear structure, delegated authorities and accountabilities.

During 2021, the Company continued to carry out a review of key internal policies and procedures in order to ensure highest standards of corporate governance and to ensure compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance and applicable circulars issued up to 31st December 2021 by the Capital Market Authority.

As per Clause no 2(i) of the fourth principle of Corporate Governance Codes the Chairperson must arrange for appraisal of the performance of the Board impartially and independently by a third party appointed by the Annual General Meeting in accordance with a benchmark and standards set by the Board or general meeting. The selection of a third party is completed in last AGM and the outcome of the evaluation report will be presented to the shareholders for approval in the upcoming AGM on 10th March 2022.

Operational Results

The operational performance of the plant during the year was excellent, with 99.97% plant reliability against 98.00% planned (2020: 99.97%). The plant witnessed a high plant load of 75.98 MW during the year (2020: 76.3MW). The total energy generated and delivered was 395,110 MWh (2020: 380,394), an increase of about 3.9% over the previous year.

The splendid plant reliability and fulfilling Tierwear load demand was achieved with a continued focus on excellence in Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Management. We acknowledge the excellent performance of our dedicated and diligent Operation and Maintenance Contractor's (Wartsila) team.

The Company duly met all the stringent environment permit conditions promulgated by Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. All HSE activities planned successfully completed and all key performance indicators achieved.

Gas availability from Musandam Gas Plant ("MGPP") is declining due to lower gas reservoirs in Musandam as a result, the dependency on diesel operation is likely to be higher resulting in more expensive operating costs. The Company is protected under the NGS to get reimbursed for any incremental fuel costs due to diesel consumption in the event of shortage or unavailability of gas. The Company is currently working on various options with MEM for alternatives to diesel use.

Financial Results

The Company recorded a net profit of RO 3,095 million in 2021 compared to RO 2,335 million 2020, representing an increase of 33%. The Company's overall profit from the operation and after removing the impact of the other income is higher by RO 0.757 million as compared to 2020. The increase was primarily due to:

- Maintaining the high plant reliability level of 99.9%
- increase in thermal efficiencies resulting in lower heat rate optimizing the power production cost,
- rising diesel prices
- lower interest cost inline with reduction of long term loan payable

The Company has duly met all its commitments under the facilities agreement. Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOG (OPWP) continues to settle all invoices raised by the Company as per the payment provisions provided within the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) and Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM) settlement was paid some of it and the remaining is expected to be settled during 2022.

Finally, the Company's better operational and commercial performance during 2021 enabled it to declare to pay an aggregate dividends of 27.6 Baiza per share (with nominal value of share as Baiza 100 per share). This corresponds to 27.6% of the paid-up capital of the Company.

The share price of the Company stood at 300 Baizas per share on 31st December 2021.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Company takes its role as a responsible corporate citizen seriously. As part of the settlement agreement between the Company and Wartsila (EPC Contractor), Wartsila provided funds of USD 300,000 on behalf of the Company to install the solar power for schools in Musandam Governorate. This was planned to be implemented by end of 2021. During the year 2021, the Company has completed installation of solar power system in Musandam school. The company also provided interactive boards, printers and laptops to Musandam schools students as part of our vision to provide the latest technology to the governate educational system.

Medium term & Future Outlook

The Company continuously endeavors to identify and implement areas of improvement in plant operations. All reasonable measures are being taken by the management to maintain excellent operational performance and the thermal efficiency of the plant during the year 2021 despite the challenges faced due to COVID-19. Any change in the power supply and demand landscape in the Sultanate has limited impact on the financial performance of the Company since its profitability is mainly derived from plant's availability and reliability and the fact that the plant is performing in isolated grid.

The Company and its Operation & Maintenance Contractor are making serious efforts to steadily increase the Omission, while ensuring smooth and reliable operation of the plant. currently, the Company is on track to meet Omission commitment made to the Authority for Public Services Regulation and Ministry of Labour.

On the 1st of January 2022, The Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOG (OPWP) has achieved a significant milestone in the implementation of Oman electricity market which is the Middle East's first electricity spot market. This market will provide new era of the efficient and economical based offered prices for the forecasted demand. The electricity market will initially be implemented in the Main Interconnected System across the northern part of Oman, with prospects to expand to cover other regions over time. The Company's Power Purchase Agreement with OPWP expires in 2032. Accordingly, the spot market will have no impact on the revenue stream of the Company until the expiry of the Power Purchase Agreement.

In terms of challenges and opportunities, the company is facing certain challenges like the availability of natural gas and higher dependency on diesel. The company is working closely with the government to find out solutions by materializing the options of Dolphin Gas, expected in Q222, and LNG, in the planning stage. The Company is in the process of renewing the O&M contract with Wartsila for another

Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2021

	2021 RO '000	2020 RO '000
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	70,035	71,924
Current assets		
Inventories	3,381	3,165
Trade and other receivables	19,051	12,741
Cash and bank balances	1,707	53
Total current assets	24,139	15,959
Total assets	94,174	87,883
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	7,039	7,039
Legal reserve	1,250	940
Retained earnings	2,848	2,006
Total equity	11,137	9,985
Non-current liabilities		
Senior facility loan	55,773	59,327
Provision for asset retirement obligation	174	168
Lease liability	103	106
Deferred tax liability	3,199	2,653
Provision for end of service benefits	2	-
Total non-current liabilities	59,251	62,254
Current liabilities		
Senior facility loan	3,620	3,733
Lease liability	3	3
Trade and other payables	17,663	11,908
Short term loan facility	2,500	-
Total current liabilities	23,786	15,644
Total liabilities	83,037	77,898
Total equity and liabilities	94,174	87,883
Net assets per share	0.158	0.142

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2021

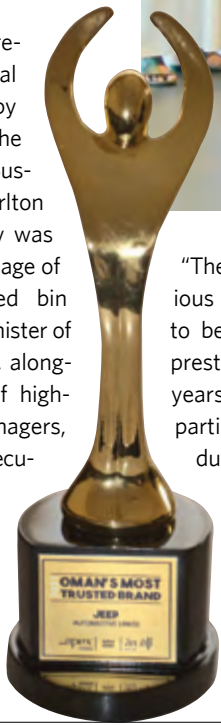
	2021 RO '000	2020 RO '000
Revenue	18,178	17,658
Operating costs	(10,851)	(11,102)
Gross profit	7,327	6,556
General and administrative expenses	(660)	(646)
Finance costs – net	(3,026)	(3,136)
Other income	-	21
Profit before tax	3,641	2,795
Tax expense	(546)	(460)
Profit and total comprehensive income for the year	3,095	2,335
Basic and diluted profit per share for the year	0.044	0.033

Jeep wins Oman's Most Trusted Brand Award

Dhofar Automotive, the official distributor of Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Fiat, Ram, Alfa Romeo vehicles in the Sultanate of Oman announced that the Jeep brand has been crowned with the 'Oman's Most Trusted Brand Award' for 2021 in the 4WD category. This follows its excellent results in an online survey conducted by Apex Media that saw the voting of the most trusted brands in the sultanate for 2021. The fifth edition of the prestigious awards witnessed more than 700,000 votes across 45 categories. The Jeep brand achieved the highest votes in its category for the second year in a row.

The award was received during a special ceremony organised by Apex Media at the Majan Hall in the Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel. The ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals, alongside the presence of high-level companies' managers, senior officials and executives from various sectors.

Commenting on the occasion, Hatem El-Naggar, general manager at Dhofar Automotive, said,



"The Jeep brand and its various models have continued to be bestowed with many prestigious awards over the years. It is no surprise that participants in the poll conducted by Apex Media voted for the Jeep brand in the sports 4WD category for the year 2021. With so many options available, Jeep continues to be the vehicle of

choice for power and unmatched capabilities for driving enthusiasts on harsh terrain or in the desert. With several available options for modification, everyone can customise their vehicle with genuine Mopar accessories. Jeep models feature unlimited versatility, making them even more attractive to all drivers as well as adventure and off-road driving fans."

The 'Oman's Most Trusted Brand Award is one of the coun-

try's most prominent awards that reflect the opinions of the public. Votes are counted on a specialised platform that relies on the latest technologies to ensure that there is no duplication or repetition of voting by recognising the 'IP'. This contributes to determining the results with high accuracy and selecting the winners after the end of the poll, which took place in December 2021.

"We are very pleased to be

awarded this prestigious accolade and to receive such a significant honour for Dhofar Automotive. By winning this award, we are pleased to affirm our commitment to excellence and provide the most prominent models in the automotive sector. On this occasion, we take the opportunity to thank our valued customers and all survey participants. On behalf of my colleagues from the Dhofar Automotive team, we strive to

continue working hard to provide our customers with a valued ownership experience that is reflected through the extension of the highest quality services," added El-Naggar.

Jeep models have always occupied a prominent position on the list of the most trusted cars in the Sultanate of Oman, where this multi-use sports car continues to meet the desires and needs of those passionate about adventure and driving pleasure.

The Jeep brand is known for its legendary models that offer unprecedented capabilities in four-wheel drive off-road with superior on-road performance, many technological features and the most advanced safety features in its class.

In the sultanate, Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Fiat, Ram, Alfa Romeo models are available at Dhofar Automotive showrooms with different equipment classes



Enjoy your trip with A'Safwah juices

With its extensive experience in local markets since 1983 and a deep understanding of consumer needs, A'Safwah offers a variety of natural and fresh juices to cater to the taste buds of all its consumers. Its 200ml pack that is easy to carry on trips and is especially suited for long-distance travel has been finding increasing popularity amongst the masses. The range of juices helps consumers to feel refreshed, revitalised and energised as they enjoy their journey with family and friends.

A'Safwah's beverage portfolio has 100 per cent sugar-free juices in apple and orange flavours, which apart from offering a number of health benefits to consumers, are also available in easy-to-carry 200ml packages. Its range of juices includes popular favourites like guava, lemon, mango, orange and pineapple, and also offers a blend of flavours like berry mix, kiwi lemon, mixed fruit and orange carrot, therefore, making it an ideal combination with any snack.

A'Safwah spokesperson said, "With A'Safwah range of juices in the specially designed 200ml pack, we aim to provide innovative products that keep pace with the current lifestyle of today's modern, on-the-go consumer – be it mothers, kids, or working individuals. The distinctive and attractive design of the square bottle and its convenient size with a capacity of 200ml is the result of extensive research conducted by the company to understand the preferences of

consumers looking for on-the-go refreshment products. At the same time, we have also ensured that our products are sold at a price point that suits everyone."

A'Safwah has remained committed to promoting a healthy lifestyle among people. In line with the same, the company has undertaken various initiatives to encourage consumers to look for healthy food options. The new packs are more practical in terms of their size, which meets the needs of consumers looking for a refreshing and nutritious beverage on the go.

One of the A'Safwah's customers said, "Winters in Oman is a time for outdoors and people all over generally plan trips to various touristic sites. Many of the popular locations require a couple of hours of driving, making it a fun road trip. For all such trips, A'Safwah has been my favourite companion. The 200ml pack is especially convenient to carry and I can also choose from a variety of flavours to take along with me. This ensures my family and I get the necessary nutritional supplements while indulging in a refreshing beverage from A'Safwah."

"A'Safwah products are my preferred choice during family gatherings. Earlier, I used to opt for two large packages in two different flavours, but with the 200ml juice range, I can pick an assortment of different flavours according to the preference of every member of my family. A'Safwah will continue to be our favourite Omani brand," another customer further stated.

H E Ameer Ajwad plants Sri Lankan fruit sapling to mark 74th Independence Day

H E Ameer Ajwad, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman planted a Sri Lankan fruit sapling called 'wood apple fruit' (Kaith fruit) at the Directorate General of Agricultural and Animal Research, at Rumais, Barka on the occasion of the 74th Independence Day of Sri Lanka which was celebrated on February 4.

Wood apple is a Citrus fruit tree grown in Sri Lanka which has many health and nutritional benefits including high amounts of fiber that improves digestion, protein, iron, calcium, and vitamins B and C which fortifies the immune system.

H E Ajwad together with his spouse Asmiya Ameer Ajwad planted the Sri Lankan fruit sapling with the presence of Dr Saif bin Ali Al-khamisi, Director of Date Palm and Plant Production Center of Oman, Sheikh Mohammed bin Ahmed al Shantari, head of the West Asia Department of the Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman and the officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Re-



sources of Oman. Dilini Abeysekara, First Secretary of the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Muscat also participated in the occasion.

Speaking during the event H E Ajwad said that Sri Lanka and

Oman have huge potential in agriculture cooperation and that he look forward to working for further enhancement of this co-operation between the two countries in the days ahead.

The Ambassador also extended his sincere appreciation to the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources of the Sultanate of Oman for making spe-

cial arrangements to plant the Sri Lankan fruit sapling in the Directorate General of Agricultural and Animal Research of Oman to mark the 74th anniversary of Sri Lanka's Independence.

ROHM presents Oman World Folk Music Festival

Performing artists from Oman and across the world will present their unique folk traditions at the spectacular Oman World Folk Music Festival over two nights at the Royal Opera House Muscat.

The Oman World Folk Music Festival will take place at the Royal Opera: House of Musical Arts making use of the open-air Seafront Maidan on February 11 and 12 at 7pm.

Singers, dancers, poets and musicians will present the unique traditions of their various regions. In hosting this wonderful array of talent, Oman embraces the diversity of cultures and celebrates the remarkable artistry and beauty of folk music.

In this, the 2022 season festival, ensembles from Costa Rica, Poland and Bashkortostan have been invited to perform. Each



visiting group represents the important cultural history of their country and is proud to demon-

strate these traditions. Folk traditions are shared from generation to generation, adapt to

include new cultural references without losing their authenticity. Each performance is a snapshot

into the heritage of a different culture, performed with vibrant costumes, spectacular dances, joyful expression and a deep sense of national pride.

The festival demonstrates the Royal Opera House Muscat's promotion of the national musical heritage of Oman and support for musical ensembles of the world.

All visits to the opera house are conducted under the guidelines of the Supreme Committee responsible for measures to tackle the development of COVID-19.

Social distancing is maintained throughout the building and the wearing of facemasks is mandatory.

For more details, please download the app or check the ROHM website.

OAB promotes easy renewal of vehicle insurance via its app

As part of its efforts to increase the range of innovative products and services as well as digitisation of its banking facilities, OAB announced a vehicle insurance renewal policy via the OAB Online App. This step stems from its agreement with National Life & General Insurance Company (NLG), one of the most trusted insurance companies in the sultanate, which took place several years ago and was initially aimed at launching new Bancassurance products for OAB customers.

Commenting on service, Rashad al Shaikh, head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "OAB always strives to offer its customers a wide range of services and products that will enrich their banking experience. As part of our transformational strategy, we are keen to enhance digitalisation. This process was accelerated by the pandemic, allowing us to transition a majority of our facilities to the digital sphere. This enabled customers to benefit from the ease of accessibility by conducting all their banking transactions and requirements via the OAB Online App. The online vehicle insurance renewal facility is currently live on the OAB Online App and we are proud to integrate our banking services with one of the leading insurance companies in Oman,"

The Motor Insurance renewal



can be carried out in a few easy steps. By navigating to the OAB Online app, customers can enter the required details such as the vehicle registration code and number, select the type of insurance and number of seats. Upon completion, they will be directed to the payment options section to choose the account from which they would like to pay for the insurance.

"Through our partnership with National Life & General Insurance Company, we have successfully put together a holistic motor insurance plan for our customers. To-

gether, we extend the best possible coverage at affordable prices. Moreover, it is our continuous endeavour to adapt to change, considering the dynamic needs and expectations of our valued customers and building a customer-centric relationship based on trust and reliability," he added.

"At National Life and General Insurance Co, we are continuously working on providing multiple digital options of buying insurance by adapting to new technologies for a simplified customer journey. We have a strong Bancassurance partnership with

OAB and now we shall be providing our insurance products and services through the Banks mobile app as well, creating value for a vast base of our OAB customers", said S Venkatachalam, CEO of NLG.

In addition to motor insurance, the Bancassurance umbrella hosts an array of plans for health, travel, home contents and comprehensive personal insurance. For more information, details can be found on the OAB website: <https://www.oman-arabbank.com/home/personal-banking/bancassurance/> Oman Arab Bank has a rich

and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the sultanate. Today, the Oman Arab Bank Group operates a nationwide network of 50 conventional branches, 15 Islamic branches, 150 conventional ATMs and 15 Islamic ATMs in high footfall locations across the Sultanate. OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App. Customers can now digitally open an account and benefit from several other services, directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.



Under Armour opens first brand house in Oman

Under Armour, has officially opened its very first brand house in Oman, located in the brand-new shopping destination, Mall of Oman in Muscat. The Under Armour store is the first in the region to be fitted out and designed to create an elevated, seamless and consumer-friendly retail experience.

Mall of Oman is the country's newest and largest shopping destination for tourists, families, residents, and Omani citizens alike. Positioned within easy reach of the city's main neighbourhoods, as well as retail and business hubs, the new store is in the perfect spot to cater to all fitness enthusiasts' needs.

The new store concept is designed in line with Under Armour's global guidelines to ensure a smooth walk-through experience for customers with visible display of all apparel,

footwear and accessories. The store will play host to the latest male, female and kids' sports apparel, in addition to the latest pieces from the brands training, running, golf and hugely popular Rock collections (designed in collaboration with Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, Under Armour's global brand ambassador).

Catering to athletes of all ages and abilities, the Under Armour store has been created to meet the expectations and aspirations of every customer, with highly trained staff on hand to offer advice on a variety of topics to meet the needs of individuals, as well as sports teams' enthusiasts.

Lee Devon, Vice President for Under Armour Middle East said, "We are delighted to open our first store in Sultanate of Oman and in the newest, largest mall in the country."

Milipol Qatar returns to Doha

Milipol Qatar, the Middle East leading international event for homeland security and civil defence, returns to the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) from May 24-26 against a background of rising demand for innovative solutions and advanced security systems to face increasingly complex issues to homeland security.

Held under the patronage of Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, the 14th edition of Milipol Qatar will be officially opened by Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani, Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister of Interior. The event is organised by Qatar's Ministry of Interior in partnership with Paris-based international event organiser Comexposium, acting on behalf of the GIE Milipol headed by Civipol, the cooperation implementer of the French ministry of the Interior.

Milipol Qatar 2022 is expected to attract over 240 official delegates and dignitaries from 30 nations including Ministers from Iraq, Lebanon, Moldova and Ukraine.



"In a context of heightened security challenges (COVID-19, intensification of cyber threats, geopolitical instability), decision makers, security forces, technical implementers, infrastructure developers and citizens are seeking new solutions to tackle rapidly evolving security issues. To this regard, this year's event will be a powerhouse of innovation," explained Prefect Yann Jounot, CEO of Civipol and president of Milipol events.

"Milipol Qatar last year cemented its status as the region's unrivaled homeland security and

civil defense event with beyond €89mn of contracts and 82 per cent exhibitor satisfaction rate."

"The industry is eager to showcase its innovations to buyers and opinion leaders, meet official international delegations, develop business in the Middle East and learn and network with security experts during Milipol Qatar's highly respected knowledge-sharing seminar programme," said, François Jullien, Milipol events director.

Online registration for exhibitors is open via www.milipolqatar.com

OABC hosts its first family day at Bait Al Ghasham Museum

In partnership with Al Maamari Tours, the Oman American Business Center (OABC) hosted its first ever family day on January 29 at Bait Al Ghasham Museum. Professionals and business leaders from within the OABC membership enjoyed the opportunity to bring their entire families for a day out together. Attendees enjoyed a delicious Omani lunch and, following current health and safety guidelines, mingled and made new connections with other families.

Both OABC and Al Maamari Tours share the core value of conducting business in a sustainable way, considering the local population and helping to preserve the cultural heritage of Oman. "Inviting members and their families to visit the 200-year-old Bait Al Ghasham Museum was an excellent opportunity to introduce members to the fascinating and rich history of the building itself, traditionally a royal dwelling, as well as the local area," said Jasmin



Nutt, managing director at Maamari Tours. "We were also proud to connect with and support the

local ecosystem, as the highlight of our day was the shared traditional meal, cooked by women

from the surrounding village."

"This was the very first time we've hosted an event for families instead of executives only," said Rebecca Olson, executive director of the OABC. "The feedback has been great - people are ready to make new connections in person, and find the OABC community a safe and positive place to do so. We're thankful to corporate member Al Maamari Tours and Bait Al Ghasham for co-hosting this wonderful, historical, eye-opening experience for us all."

Located in the Al Shal'li village in the town of Afi, a 50-minute drive from Muscat, the museum is open from Saturday to Thursday: 9am to 2pm, and Friday: 9am to 12pm.

As the official affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce in Oman (AmCham Oman), the OABC promotes understanding, partnerships and other matters of mutual economic interest between business communities in Oman and the United States.

Design without compromise: Mazda's signals from the heart

Dimming Turn Signals (DTS) are a Mazda innovation that replicate the human heartbeat. Mazda Stories spoke to Mazda designer and lamp development leader Atsushi Yoshida to find out more.

Why did Mazda create a new turn signal?

We place great value on our human-centric designs and how people relate to the various aspects of our cars. A turn signal lamp must effectively communicate a driver's intent and catch the attention of pedestrians and other drivers. I hoped that the feeling of a human heart - echoed in how the turn signal lamp instantly appears and then gradually dims - can reduce

driver tension and create feelings of calmness and safety for the viewer. Overall, it took my team and I two years to create this feature.

How did you recreate the human heartbeat in the DTS?

Conventional LED lamps create strong digital images by turning on and off instantly, but this can result in a cold feeling. I focused on how a driver's intention emanates from their heart, extending to their heartbeat and body's pulse. Using an electrocardiogram, I watched heartbeat waveforms undulate, linger and diminish, resulting in a turn signal that expresses the warmth lacking in LED lamps.

I wanted to infuse a sense of



life into the turn signal lamp, a feeling that would manifest the concept of 'Car as Art'.

What was one of your most difficult challenges?

This had never been done before, and it took two years from concept to production. A big setback came when its first scheduled installation into the Mazda3 was cancelled because the light dimmed inconsistently. However, working with Mazda engineers and our supplier, Stanley Electric Co, Ltd, we repeatedly re-adjusted the signal light in .01 second increments, solved the problem, and installed it successfully into the Mazda CX-30. We achieved what was initially thought to be impossible.

What experience of DTS do you want for Mazda owners?

I hope that DTS shows the level of attention and intentionality that goes into every Mazda car. This concept was born from the spirit of 'breathing life into cars' as well as a refusal to compromise Mazda's design philosophy.

How can we experience the 'breath of life' in a car?

Touching the various elements of a well-designed car - its shape, surface quality, and light - allows you to experience the hands of its creators. I wanted to embody Jinba Ittai - the intuitive connection between car and driver - so that even the act of making one turn of the wheel is a human-centric experience.

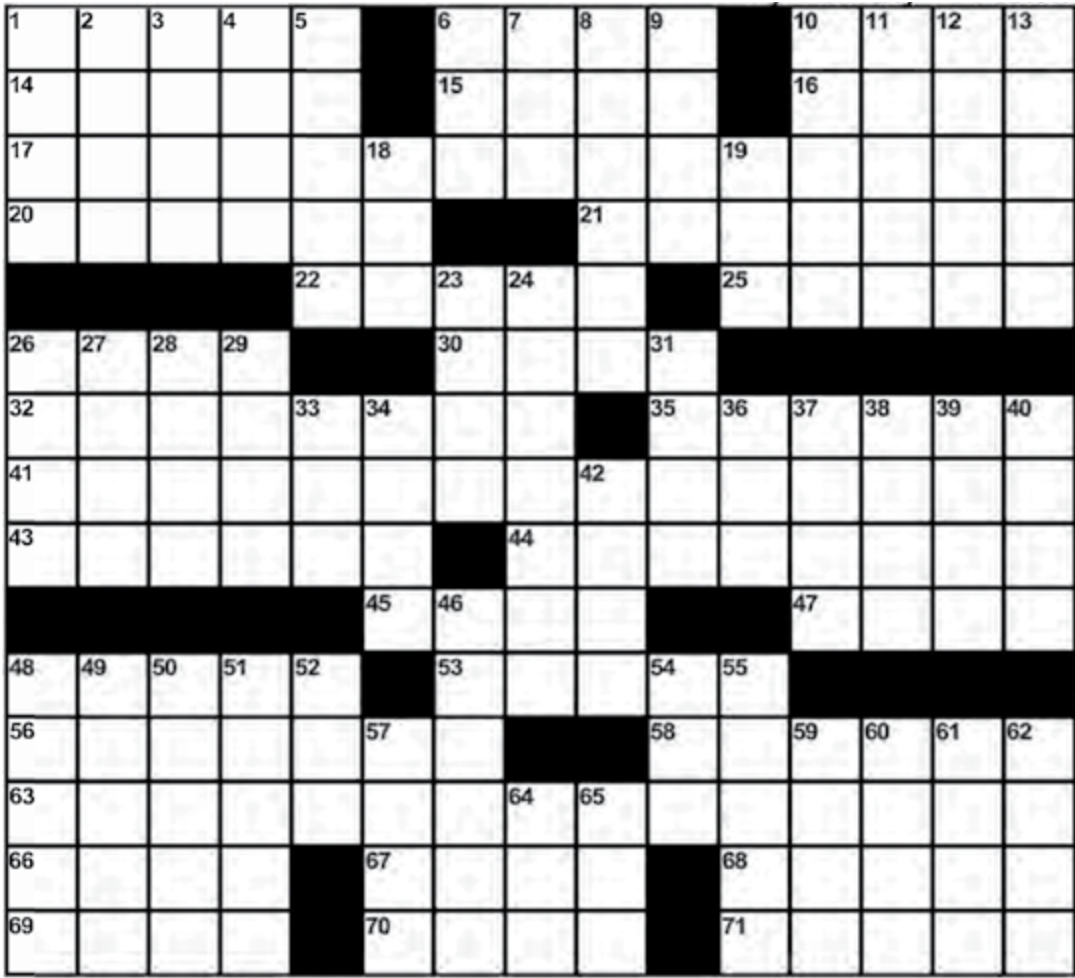
What Japanese design qualities influence your work?

Focus and determination, an obsession with honing and refining, and a sensitivity of touch - these are qualities that have been embodied in Japanese crafts for centuries. They are very real to me, and I feel them even in the simple act of washing and wiping down a beautifully crafted car.

What are your thoughts for the future?

I want to help increase Mazda design value through lighting. Though competition is intensifying with electric cars and autonomous driving, I want to see outstanding car design continue without compromise.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Goes from snow to slush
6) Make a contract official
10) Mass garments
14) Priest's leave
15) Doing nothing
16) Numbered circle
17) Used the black credit card
20) Start to give in
21) Olympics participant
22) "Nevermore" speaker
25) Jeter of baseball fame
26) Basic impulse
30) "Not to mention ..."
32) Levy anew
35) Type of columnist
41) Certain homey
43) Like the Milky Way
44) Catholic prayer
45) _ spumante (sparkling wine)
47) Irsome insect
48) Flowery writing
53) Cardiff-born
56) Pakistani neighbor
58) County, in Louisiana

63) Is evenhanded
66) Soon-to-be adult
67) Sound of an active blender
68) British cleric
69) Poker pay-in
70) Beginner or apprentice
71) Cousin of a gazelle

DOWN

1) Untidy situation
2) World's Fair, for one
3) New thing to tum over?
4) Lemony, e.g.
5) Have the helm
6) Violate a command-ment
7) Awaited words at a wedding
8) Learns little by little
9) At the front of the line
10) British pop sensation
11) Ocean vessel
12) Keep the turkey moist
13) Glossy
18) Modern evidence type, briefly
19) High degree
23) Bouquet holder
24) Take to another level?

26) _ Major ("Big Bear" constellation)
27) Agents, briefly
28) Decorated with gold
29) Kuwaiti VIP
31) Leer over
33) Sch. support group
34) _ podrida (spicy stew)
36) A little resistance?
37) Cleansing bar
38) Certain
39) Wife of Osiris
40) Boggy matter
42) Opposite of good
46) Like nets around Stephen Curry?
48) Serving in an Italian restaurant
49) Much more than occasionally
50) White-plumed wading bird
51) "Rise and_!"
52) Talk, talk, talk
54) Place for mud baths
55) Bisect
57) Little salamander
59) Amtrak transporta-tion

60) Andean civilization
61) Check out groceries, perhaps
62) Bovine bunch
64) Tire filler
65) Sib of sis

NOTE PAD

BASH
ALTO
ROAN
SERGE
ORIOLE
NOON
CONGRAT
EMS
TASER
ENCROACH
SNAG
LORE
AYES

OFTEN
FREYA
LANES
ANTS
KETCH
SPIRE
TULATIONS
ELEGY
SPIT
WHIRR
HINGUPON
DOING
ANGEL
MESSY

RAPT
EWE
WARY
TARMS
WREST
LIED
NAP
NUTS
JETSET
JETS
EMIT
RATS

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You're great at cutting to the chase, so head games don't usually work for you unless they're the kind that people who are attracted to each other like to play. Since you can easily spot frauds and those who hold info back, you've got an edge in those kinds of games. If your instincts tell you that's what's going on today, make your excuses and leave. Nobody says you have to stay for dessert!

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You've never minded working overtime. You do whatever it takes to get things done right, but when it's time for fun, it's time for fun. In fact, for a while you've been thinking about taking time off. You may have come close to marching up to your boss and telling them that you're wandering off, at least for a week or so. Now is the time, but you do need to temper your words if you'd like to return to work eventually.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You're not afraid of hard work, but you've been doing far more than your fair share lately, and you seriously need some time off. Let yourself go! You can be extravagant when it comes to downtime or anything else that perks you up. All your self-discipline is good for your soul but not all that great for your love life. Walk away from it all and get out there. Enjoy the day with no boundaries, just relax.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You're not usually known for having much of a temper. It takes quite a lot to get you riled up for one thing, and by the time you actually get around to expressing anger, you've realised that it's likely not worth the energy. You've got tremendous self-control most of the time. Every once in a while, though, the dam bursts and someone ends up gored by a raging bull. That could easily happen today. Someone (not you) had better hire a bodyguard!

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

To you, there's nothing quite as dangerous as boredom. It can cause even the most rational person (you) to behave in some crazy ways. Instead of letting that happen, try to find a new way to amuse that big brain of yours. If you can't, you may end up getting so riled that one missing paper could inspire an all-out, unforgettable tantrum right in the middle of work. Try ducking out for a while instead.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

There's only one thing you can do to get out of this rut: take action. Let that wild urge for activity lead you somewhere new and pleasant. Have everyone over for some fun. You've earned the right to goof off and so have they. And besides, you need their opinion on those big changes you're thinking about making. While they're all in the house, pass out a sign-up sheet for the painting or moving party.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Secrets aren't really your thing. You much prefer chatting about anything that crosses your mind just as soon as it passes through. Right now, one big secret is becoming almost impossible to keep quiet about, though. It's just too thrilling to keep to yourself! If you must share it with a friend, go for it, but make sure to choose the right one. It's a lot of details to handle and your friend shouldn't be overwhelmed by it.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Anyone who tries to zip through an encounter with you using superficial chatter had better be ready for a lesson, because it just won't work. You're often a fan of pleasant small talk because you love getting along smoothly with everyone. Today's mood, though, isn't exactly conducive to whimsical chitchat. You don't want to argue with anyone, but you will probably do so rather than talk about absolutely nothing.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You've decided that something just isn't working for you. It's not really in your nature to accept the unacceptable, and you're famous for having little patience with those who do. You need to make some changes and move quickly on them, maybe so quickly that your people wonder who you are and what you've done with the person they thought they knew. Resist the urge to guide them through it. Things get better soon.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You love entertaining at home almost more than anything else. You're a natural caregiver, and when you've got everyone you love under one roof, eating whatever you've whipped up (with plenty of TLC), it's as close to heaven as it gets in this world. Now is the time to treat yourself and your people to just such an event. Gather everyone together for an impromptu shindig at your place.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Today might be tough for you, but if anyone is up for a bit of a challenge, it's you. The good news is once you've done your duty and start to head home, you could find a sweet surprise waiting for you thanks to your partner or roommate. Their instincts are just as sharp as yours, and they know what you need. Things are definitely looking up for tomorrow too, so hang in there.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You've just broken out of a dark place. It certainly wasn't easy, but now that you're back out in the sunshine, you don't take kindly to anyone who tries to drag you back. That's especially true for anyone who tries to make you feeling guilty over something you didn't do. Talk to them and straighten it all out as soon as you can. You might be able to compromise with them or at least cease the hostilities.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What field of work is Alessandro Volta (1745-1827) best known for?

A. Study of rivers
B. Electricity
C. Sports science
D. Theory of evolution

2. Where are the Balearic Islands?

A. Caspian Sea
B. Caribbean Sea
C. Tasman Sea
D. Mediterranean Sea

3. Who would use an inkblot or Rorschach Test?

A. Chemist
B. Butcher
C. Psychologist
D. Astronomer

Answers: 1. b 2. d 3. c

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	C	X	A
L	I	D	E
D	E	M	E
E	P	A	H

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

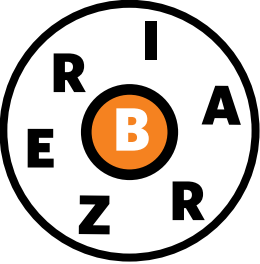
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

7	3		2					8
	8		7	3			6	5
			1	5				
						8	1	3
	5	1		8		6	2	
8	9	2						
				4	1			
9	4			6	2		8	
6				5			3	2

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1
1	8	5	2	9	3	7	4	6
9	7	6	1	4	8	3	2	5
4	5	7	3	1	9	2	6	8
6	2	9	7	8	4	1	5	3
3	1	8	1	6	2	9	7	4
7	6	3	8	5	4	1	9	2
5	9	2	4	7	3	6	8	1
8	4	1	9	6	2	3	5	7

Iran nuke talks resume with deal ‘in sight’

Wien, Austria - Talks to revive a deal with Iran on its contested nuclear programme were set to resume on Tuesday in Vienna after both Washington and Tehran signalled their willingness to clinch an agreement as soon as possible.

The negotiations - attended by Britain, China, France, Germany, Iran, Russia and indirectly the United States - were halted at the end of last month.

The resumption of talks comes after parties in recent weeks cited progress in seeking to revive the 2015 accord that was supposed to prevent Iran from acquiring an atomic bomb, a goal it has always denied pursuing. “A deal that addresses all sides’ core concerns is in sight, but if it is not reached in the coming weeks, Iran’s ongoing nuclear advances will make it impossible for us to return to the JCPOA,” a US State Department spokesperson said on Monday, referring to the 2015 framework agreement.

Parties have been negotiating in Vienna, with indirect US participation, since last year.

A source close to the discussions told AFP that the delegations had arrived in the Austrian capital and that the discussions were set to resume in the afternoon at the upmarket Coburg Palace hotel.

The United States, under former president Donald Trump,



A cameraman films the Hotel Palais Coburg, venue of the meeting of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Vienna on Tuesday (AFP)

unilaterally withdrew from the pact in 2018 and reimposed tough economic sanctions on Iran, prompting the Islamic republic to begin pulling back from its commitments under the deal and step up its nuclear

activities.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday that answers that ‘the United States brings... to Vienna will determine when we can reach an agreement’.

“We have made significant progress in various areas of the Vienna negotiations” including on guarantees sought by Iran that the United States would not breach the deal once again, Khatibzadeh told reporters.

‘Decisive moment’

Experts say the Iranians have deviated so much from the restrictions of the 2015 deal that they are only weeks away from having enough fissile material to make an atomic weapon.

Washington has sought direct negotiations in this home stretch, but said talks remain indirect at Iran’s request.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called it ‘the decisive moment’ in an interview with the *Washington Post* published on Monday.

“We gave them a clear message that now this is the time for decisions and for progress, and not for prolonging the process,”

2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

The waiver allows other countries and companies to participate in Iran’s civil nuclear programme without triggering US sanctions, in the name of promoting safety and non-proliferation. The move “should facilitate technical discussions necessary to support talks on JCPOA return in Vienna,” negotiators of Britain, France and Ger-

A deal that addresses all sides’ core concerns is in sight, but if it is not reached in the coming weeks, Iran’s ongoing nuclear advances will make it impossible for us to return to the 2015 accord

US SPOKESPERSON

he said. “We hope that they will use the chance.”

“We are five minutes away from the finish line,” Russian negotiator Mikhail Ulyanov said in an interview to the Russian daily *Kommersant*.

“A draft of the final document has been crafted. There are several points there that need more work, but that document is already on the table,” he continued.

On Friday, Washington made a gesture by announcing it was waiving sanctions on Iran’s civil nuclear programme, a technical step necessary to return to the

many said in a joint statement on Saturday.

For Iran, though, the move fell short. “Continuing maximum pressure against #Iran, current US administration has so far tried to meet the goals that Trump failed to achieve through bullying, by making unsupported promises. With this Washington’s illusions, the path to negotiations will not be smooth,” Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, said in a tweet written in English on Tuesday.

AFP

Dozens killed as fighting rages around Yemen city

Dubai, UAE - Dozens of Yemeni pro-government fighters have been killed in a new offensive to take a rebel-held city, loyalist sources said on Tuesday, following a surge in violence including missile attacks on the United Arab Emirates.

Thirty-two soldiers have died and at least 100 have been wounded in three days of fighting to drive the Iran-backed rebels from Haradh, north of the capital Sanaa and near the Saudi border, the sources said.

Yemen has been embroiled in a civil war between the government - supported by a Saudi-led military coalition - and the Iran-backed Houthis, who control much of the north, since 2014.

The latest clashes come after the Houthi rebels, after suffering territorial defeats to UAE-trained troops, killed three oil workers in a series of drone and missile attacks on Abu Dhabi. Fighting was still raging around Haradh on Tuesday, the pro-government sources said, adding that the loyalists have besieged the area but are yet to seize the city.

One loyalist source said at least 56 rebels were killed in the fighting and accompanying coal-



People sit outside tents at a camp for displaced Yemenis in Hays, near the conflict zone in western province of Hodeida, on Saturday (AFP)

tion air strikes. The Houthis rarely report casualties in their ranks. The Yemeni conflict has intensified in recent weeks, with the coalition and loyalist forces launching a series of offensives to recover territory lost to the rebels further south.

Meanwhile, the Houthis have stepped up their missile and drone attacks on neighbouring Saudi Arabia and have launched similar assaults on the United Arab Emirates, a member of the military coalition.

General Frank McKenzie, commander of the US Central Command who is in Abu Dhabi as part of efforts to bolster UAE defences, said US forces were looking at ways to combat the rebel’s low-tech, low-flying drones, which are notoriously hard to spot and intercept.

“We are working with our partners here in the region to develop solutions that would work against drones,” McKenzie told the official WAM news agency. AFP

‘Nightingale of India’ legacy lives on at lifelong superfan’s home museum

Meerut, India - Beloved Bollywood superstar Lata Mangeshkar’s legacy has been kept alive at a home museum in India curated by one of the much-mourned singer’s biggest admirers.

Mangeshkar was known as the ‘Nightingale of India’ and her high-pitched melodies were an instantly recognisable feature of the country’s cinema, with her work appearing in more than 1,000 films.

The 92-year-old died on Sunday and her body was cremated later that day in a Mumbai park, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi among the mourners laying flowers on her funeral pyre.

News of her death devastated Gaurav Sharma, a lifelong superfan who recalled meeting the songstress at her home nearly a decade ago.

“When I saw her for the first time, I felt she had some kind of incandescent glow around her,” the 38-year-old told AFP.

“She was so simple and down to earth. We talked for a long time. I got a lot of love



Gaurav Sharma holds a book - a part of his collection at his home museum where he has meticulously catalogued thousands of compact discs and books featuring Lata Mangeshkar, in Meerut on Monday (AFP)

from her.”

Sharma maintains what could be the world’s largest collection of Mangeshkar memorabilia at his house in the city of Meerut, where he has meticulously catalogued thousands of compact discs, films and books featuring the singer.

A teacher by profession,

Sharma also has samples of the singer’s perfume, movie posters and almost every article on Mangeshkar that has ever appeared in print.

“I even have the recording from 1974 when she sang at London’s Royal Albert Hall,” Sharma said in an interview.

“She appeared in only one advertisement, which was for a cough syrup in the early days of her career, and I have that.”

The singer’s death cast a pall of gloom over the Sharma home, and he told AFP he could barely contain his tears at the news.

AFP

UK PM Johnson under fire over ‘Trumpian’ attack on rival

London, UK - Britain’s embattled Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced renewed pressure on Tuesday to apologise to opposition leader Keir Starmer for what critics have called a misleading ‘Trumpian’ attack on him last week.

Johnson - facing calls to step down after months of scandals - accused Starmer of failing in 2013 to take action against notorious celebrity paedophile Jimmy Savile as head of the country’s prosecution service.

Labour leader Starmer, who led the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) from 2008 to 2013, was not personally involved in the case but has previously apologised on behalf of the CPS for

its failures. Critics, including numerous Conservative MPs, have decried Johnson’s claim - made during a fractious parliamentary session - noting it had been propagated by far-right conspiracy theorists.

Johnson later clarified the remark, noting Starmer’s apology and apparent acceptance of responsibility, but refused to say sorry or retract his original statement. It has come under fresh scrutiny after several dozen anti-lockdown demonstrators mobbed Starmer on Monday as he left parliament, with one protestor heard claiming he was ‘protecting paedophiles’.

A video posted online showed the Labour leader being jostled



Keir Starmer (centre) attends the House of Commons in London on Monday (AFP)

before police, who arrested two people, intervened and escorted him to a car. Within hours, several Tory lawmakers were renewing calls for Johnson to apologise.

“PM - apologise please,” Tobias Ellwood wrote on Twitter.

“We claim to be the Mother of all Parliaments. Let’s stop this drift towards a Trumpian style of politics from becoming the norm. We are better than this.”

Johnson himself took to Twitter to criticise Starmer’s treatment on Monday as ‘absolutely disgraceful’. “All forms of harassment of our elected representatives are completely unacceptable. I thank the police for responding swiftly.”

Meanwhile his ministers sought to distance the UK leader’s previous attack on the Labour leader from the events.

“I don’t think you can say that’s why it happened,” Technology Minister Chris Philp told Sky News. He noted other politicians and public figures had previously faced similar treatment from rowdy protesters. But the incidents appear to have heightened unease within the restive Conservative Party at Johnson’s conduct. Ellwood is one of 13 Tory MPs to have publicly submitted a no-confidence letter in Johnson to a committee of backbench lawmakers with the power to call a leadership contest.

AFP

Macron in Kyiv says no ‘escalation’ from Putin

The French President said he offered Putin ‘concrete security guarantees’ during a meeting in Kremlin

Kyiv, Ukraine - French President Emmanuel Macron said on Tuesday he had convinced Russia’s Vladimir Putin not to escalate the crisis around Ukraine, ahead of talks in Kyiv aimed at defusing fears Moscow could invade.

During a five-hour meeting over dinner in the Kremlin on Monday, Macron said he offered Putin ‘concrete security guarantees’ as the West scrambles to deal with Russia’s massive troop build-up on Ukraine’s border.

“I obtained that there will be no degradation nor escalation,” the French leader told journalists as he arrived in Kyiv for talks with Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky. “My aim was to freeze the game, to prevent an escalation and open up new perspectives,” Macron said. “This objective for me is fulfilled.”

Putin - who has demanded sweeping security guarantees from NATO and the United States - told Macron that Moscow would ‘do everything to find compromises that suit everyone’.

He said several proposals put forward by Macron could ‘form a basis for further steps’ on easing the crisis over Ukraine, but did not give any details.

At the same time as sending its military hardware to Ukraine’s borders, Moscow issued demands the West says are unacceptable, including barring Ukraine from joining NATO and rolling back alliance forces in eastern Europe.

The French presidency said Macron’s counter proposals include an engagement from both



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (left) welcomes French President Emmanuel Macron before a meeting in Kyiv on Tuesday (AFP)

I obtained that there will be no degradation nor escalation. My aim was to prevent an escalation and open up new perspectives

EMMANUEL MACRON

sides not to take any new military action, the launching of a strategic dialogue and efforts to revive

the peace process in Kyiv’s conflict with Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

It also said an agreement would ensure the withdrawal of some 30,000 Russian soldiers from Belarus at the end of joint military exercises later this month.

“I didn’t think for a second that he was going to make any gestures yesterday,” Macron said of Putin.

Kyiv’s ‘red lines’

Macron - who was the first Western leader to meet Putin since the crisis began in December - faces a tough task trying to convince a wary Zelensky to accept any compromises.

Kyiv has laid out three ‘red lines’ that it says it will not cross to find a solution - no compro-

Blinken heads to Asia as Ukraine crisis boils

Washington, US - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken headed for the Asia-Pacific on Tuesday aiming to shore up regional partnerships in the face of an expansive China, even as the crisis on Ukraine’s border simmers.

Blinken will spend three days in Melbourne for a meeting with foreign ministers of the Quad, the informal US-Japan-India-Australia grouping that Washington hopes will become a bulwark against Beijing’s push for regional dominance. The visit will include meetings with senior Australian officials, including Prime Minister Scott Morrison, as they seek to build on September’s AUKUS trilateral defence pact with Britain. The shock challenge to China included a Washington-Canberra deal to buy eight nuclear-powered submarines. His trip comes only hours after a Washington press con-

ference with top EU officials sought to show a united front on the threat presented by the estimated 140,000 Russian troops now massed on Ukraine’s border.

After departing Australia on Saturday, Blinken will stop briefly in Fiji to meet with a number of Pacific island leaders - many of who are being wooed by China.

“The key message that the secretary will take with him on this trip is that our partnerships deliver,” said Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink.

“The Quad is a key component of US foreign economic and security policy in the Indo-Pacific region,” he said. “It’s through this partnership that we’re strengthening the security environment in the region to push back against aggression and coercion.”

AFP



This file photo shows women carrying water from a collection point to a makeshift camp in Baidoa, in Somalia (AFP)

13mn face hunger as drought in Horn of Africa worsens: UN

Nairobi, Kenya - An estimated 13mn people in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia are facing severe hunger as the Horn of Africa experiences its worst drought in decades, the World Food Programme (WFP) said on Tuesday.

Three consecutive rainy seasons have failed as the region has recorded its driest conditions since 1981, the UN agency said.

The drought has destroyed crops and inflicted ‘abnormally’ high livestock deaths, forcing rural families who rely on herding and farming to abandon their homes.

Water and grazing land is in short supply and forecasts of below-average rainfall in coming months only threaten more misery, said Michael Dunford, WFP’s regional director in East Africa.

“Harvests are ruined, livestock are dying, and hunger is growing as recurrent droughts affect the Horn of Africa,” he said in a statement. ‘The situation requires immediate humanitarian action’ to avoid a repeat of a crisis like that of Somalia in 2011, when 250,000 died of hunger during a prolonged drought.

Food aid is being distributed across an arid swathe of Kenya,

Ethiopia and Somalia where malnutrition rates are high and some 13mn people are at risk of severe hunger in the first quarter of this year. Some 5.7mn needed food assistance in southern and south-eastern Ethiopia, including half a million malnourished children and mothers.

In Somalia, the number of people classified as seriously hungry is expected to rise from 3.5mn to 4.6mn by May unless urgent interventions are taken.

Another 2.8mn people need assistance in south-eastern and northern Kenya, where a drought emergency was declared in September. WFP said US\$327mn was required to respond to immediate needs over the next six months and support pastoral communities to become more resilient against recurring climate shocks. In 2011, failed rains led to the driest year since 1951 in arid regions of Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Uganda.

Experts say extreme weather events are happening with increased frequency and intensity due to climate change - with Africa, which contributes the least to global warming, bearing the brunt.

AFP

Indonesian crocodile trapped in tyre rescued

Palu, Indonesia - A wild crocodile in Indonesia who was trapped in a tyre for more than five years has been rescued, freed from its rubber vice and released back into the wild, officials and residents said on Tuesday.

Conservation workers have been trying to lure the stricken saltwater crocodile from a river since 2016 after residents of Palu city on Sulawesi island spotted the animal with a motorbike tyre wrapped around its neck.

But it was a local resident who snared the 5.2-metre long reptile - who was regularly seen sunbathing in the Palu river in Central Sulawesi - from its tight squeeze late on Monday.

Tili, a 34-year-old bird-seller, used chicken as bait and ropes to catch the beast at the end of what he said was a three-week rescue effort, before dozens of locals helped to drag the crocodile to shore and cut the tyre around its neck.

“I just wanted to help, I hate seeing animals trapped and suf-



Residents free a crocodile from a tyre, before releasing it into a river in Palu, Central Sulawesi on Monday (AFP)

fering,” Tili, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, told AFP.

His first two attempts to rescue the croc failed because the

ropes were not strong enough to contend with its weight, he said, before turning to nylon ropes used for tugging boats.

“I was already exhausted so I

let them finish the rescue, the crocodile was unbelievably heavy, everybody was sweating and getting very tired.”

The crocodile was released

back into the water immediately after the rescue to relieved cheers from locals.

Conservationists believe someone may have deliberately placed the tyre around the croc’s neck in a failed attempt to trap it as a pet in the archipelago nation that is home to several species of the animal.

Tili beat the authorities to the capture because they lacked the proper equipment for a rescue in the river that houses more than 30 other crocodiles.

“Yesterday was a historical day for us, we are grateful the crocodile was finally rescued and we appreciate the locals who showed concern for the wildlife,” Hasmini Hasmar, head of the local conservation agency, told AFP. The reptile made headlines in early 2020 when the local government promised a reward to anyone who caught the croc and removed the tyre, but later called off the contest over fears it could endanger its safety.

AFP

Philippines kicks off chaotic election campaign season

Manila, Philippines - The race to lead the Philippines kicked off on Tuesday, with the son and namesake of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos the favourite to succeed authoritarian firebrand Rodrigo Duterte and return his clan to the presidential palace they once fled.

Candidates hit the hustings for the three-month campaign season in a chaotic and colourful charm offensive aimed at wooing millions of voters typically more interested in personality than policy. More than 35 years after the country emerged from his father’s dictatorship, polls showed Ferdinand Marcos Jr heading towards a landslide victory in the May 9 elections.



Opposition presidential candidate Leni Robredo (left) speaks from a truck during a campaign rally in Libamanan, south of Manila on Tuesday (AFP)

Boosted by a massive social media campaign and a formidable alliance with first daughter and vice-presidential candidate Sara Duterte, Marcos Jr - one of

the most polarising figures in the Philippines - has vowed to ‘unify the country’.

“This is not the time and place to be arguing about the history of

the Philippines,” Marcos Jr - a supporter of Duterte’s deadly drug war - told broadcaster GMA on Saturday.

“We need to talk about and discuss what we need to be doing in the next few years in order to give back jobs to people so that they will have money in their pockets.”

Incumbent Vice President Leni Robredo - a former lawyer for the disadvantaged and a rival of Marcos Jr and Duterte - is a distant second in voter surveys.

Kicking off her pink-coloured campaign in Lupi town in the central province of Camarines Sur, Robredo told supporters she was ‘filled with courage because you are with me’.

Robredo is ahead of celebrity mayor Francisco Domagoso, boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao and ex-police chief Panfilo Lacson.

“The overwhelming presidential favourite remains Marcos,” said Eurasia Group analyst Peter Mumford, giving the former senator ‘70 per cent odds’ of winning. “Many of Duterte’s ‘pro-authoritarian’ supporters see Marcos as the continuity ‘strongman’ candidate,” Mumford said.

Outgoing presidents usually identify their preferred successor, who they hope will keep them out of prison as much as protect their legacy.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Canada-inspired NZ protest jams roads near parliament

Wellington, New Zealand - A convoy of trucks and campervans blocked streets near New Zealand's parliament in Wellington on Tuesday to protest against COVID-19 restrictions and vaccinations, inspired by a similar demonstration in Canada.

Plastered with messages such as 'give us back our freedom' and 'coercion is not consent', hundreds of vehicles parked in streets surrounding the parliament building known as The Beehive. Hundreds more drove around the city centre with their horns blaring as more than 1,000 protesters on foot listened to speeches.

Wellington man Stu Main said the protesters felt their concerns about rights being eroded were not being heard by the government. "I'm actually vaccinated but I'm against mandating people to be vaccinated. I think it's disgraceful, forcing vaccination on people who don't want it," he said.

The demonstration remained peaceful, with police reporting no arrests or major incidents.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said she had no intention of entering discussions with convoy participants, arguing that the majority of New Zealanders had shown their support for the government's vaccination programme.

"Ninety-six per cent of New Zealanders have gone out and got a vaccination, which has enabled us to live now with fewer



A convoy of trucks and other vehicles sit parked on the streets in front of the parliament in Wellington on Tuesday (AFP)

I'm actually vaccinated but I'm against mandating people to be vaccinated. I think it's disgraceful, forcing vaccination on people who don't want it.

STU MAIN

restrictions because of the extra protection that has provided," she told Radio New Zealand.

COVID-19 vaccinations are

mandatory for people working in certain sectors in New Zealand, such as health, law enforcement, education and defence.

A pass system is also in force, with people required to show proof of vaccination to enter restaurants, sports events and religious services. It is not required for public transport, supermarkets, schools and accessing health services.

Several of the Wellington protesters carried Canadian flags, including an expatriate named Billy, who declined to give his surname.

"I'm just supporting the brothers in Canada, fighting for freedom over there," he said.

A 'Freedom Convoy' of truckers has gridlocked the Canadian capital Ottawa for more than a week, prompting city authorities to declare a state of emergency.

Organisers of the Wellington convoy have not said how long they intend to remain parked in the city.

AFP

Chinese scientists claim developing test giving results in four minutes

Beijing, China - Chinese scientists say they have developed a new coronavirus test that is accurate as a PCR lab test but gives results within four minutes. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests are widely considered the most accurate and sensitive for the virus that causes COVID-19, but they usually take several hours.

Some countries have experienced severe backlogs in the face of heavy testing demand, fuelled by the explosive spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant.

Researchers from Fudan University in Shanghai say they have a solution.

In a peer-reviewed article published on Monday in the journal *Nature Biomedical Engineering*, the team said their sensor - which uses microelectronics to analyse genetic material from swabs - can reduce the need for time-consuming COVID lab tests.

"We implemented an electromechanical biosensor for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 into an integrated and portable prototype device, and show that it detected (virus RNA) in less than four minutes," the team said in the paper, referring to the official name of the COVID pathogen.

The researchers said their method offers speed, ease of operation, high sensitivity and portability.

Their trial involved taking

samples from 33 people in Shanghai who were infected with the coronavirus, with PCR tests conducted in parallel.

The results from their method were a 'perfect' match with the PCR tests, according to the article.

Their study involved testing the new method on 54 samples, which included people with fever who did not have the coronavirus, those with influenza, and healthy volunteers. Those cases did not yield any false positives, the team said.

The Fudan researchers said that once developed, their testing device can be used for quick testing in a variety of situations, including airports, health facilities and 'even at home'.

PCR tests are not only slow, but they also require lab infrastructure that can be limited in many countries, reducing the number of cases that can be handled each day.

And while rapid diagnostic tests have now become available in many parts of the world, they are generally less accurate.

China is one of the world's biggest makers of coronavirus test kits.

According to customs data, it exported US\$1.6bn worth of test kits in December, a 144 per cent increase from the previous month.

AFP

Hong Kongers picnic to avoid check-in app at restaurants

Hong Kong, China - When Hong Kong made a COVID-19 check-in app mandatory at restaurants, friends Birdy and Bu - wary of government tracking - decided to avoid eateries entirely and go for picnics instead. The idea caught fire: Their private social media picnic group has swelled from 50 in December to more than 6,000 members, as many look to avoid sharing data in a city where distrust of the Beijing-backed authorities runs deep.

Instead of scanning QR codes at restaurants with the government's 'Leave Home Safe' app, they simply order takeaway and find spots to eat with friends.

"I just don't like being forced," Birdy told AFP over a weekend picnic with Bu and another friend Dominic at a small park, their food and drinks

neatly arranged on a blanket next to a playground.

Birdy and Bu - who declined to share their full names over safety concerns - named their picnic group 'Leave Home Wild'.

Hong Kong has kept the coronavirus at bay with a relatively tiny COVID-19 caseload, thanks to some of the world's strictest border controls and social distancing requirements.

In December, the government made it compulsory for all adults under 65 to log their presence at various public venues - including eateries, cinemas and gyms - with the official app. Similar apps have been deployed around the world during the pandemic.

But in Hong Kong, acceptance of the technology is unavoidably linked with the public's relationship with the authorities.

"I am so frustrated," one user wrote in the picnic group. "But I will never scan that code for eating inside a restaurant."

Hong Kong is in the grip of a crackdown on dissent, with China remoulding the city in its own authoritarian image following the huge and sometimes violent democracy protests of 2019.

The clampdown has snuffed out protests but public trust in the government has plummeted to historic lows, complicating the fight against the pandemic.

This distrust was among the factors blamed for the city's sluggish take-up of COVID-19 vaccines - for many, not getting a shot was a way to thumb their noses at the government.

It has come into play with the COVID-19 tracking app too - fears have swirled about how



Dominic (left), Bu (centre) and Birdy, creators of a social media picnicking group, have a picnic in a public seating area next to a play area for children in Hong Kong on January 22 (AFP)

the information it collects will be used, despite assurances about data security from the authorities. Some are particularly concerned about how the app links with the far more intrusive tracking system in mainland China. "I think the app is quite problematic, especially given the current political circumstances in Hong Kong," said data protection specialist Kwong Chung-ching.

"The source code... has never been open for us so there is no way for people to check where data goes and how it operates."

Currently, Leave Home Safe stores information linked to phone numbers instead of names. It does not track the users' location, instead relying on the QR code check-ins to determine where they have been.

AFP

Climate change threatens Hadrian's Wall treasures in England



This file photo shows a section of Hadrian's Wall near Hexham, northern England, on January 19 (AFP)

Once Brewed, UK - Nineteen hundred years after it was built to keep out barbarian hordes, archaeologists at Hadrian's Wall in northern England are facing a new enemy - climate change, which threatens its vast treasure trove of Roman artefacts.

Thousands of soldiers and many of their families lived around the 118km stone wall, which crosses England from west coast to east coast, marking the limit of the Roman Empire and forming Britain's largest Roman archaeological feature.

The wall was begun in 122 AD during the reign of emperor Hadrian and marked the bound-

ary between Roman Britannia and unconquered Caledonia, helping to keep barbarian raiders out of the empire.

The Roman soldiers who lived there left behind not just wooden structures but the fascinating detritus of everyday life that allows archaeologists today to reconstruct how they lived in the windswept north of the empire.

They include the fort of Vindolanda, some 53km west of the modern day city of Newcastle upon Tyne, a Roman settlement at the original eastern end of the wall, then named Pons Aelius.

"A lot of the landscapes at Hadrian's Wall are preserved

under peat bog and marsh - very wet, very moist ground, which has protected the archaeology for almost two millennia," Andrew Birley, director of excavations and chief executive of the Vindolanda Trust, told AFP.

"But as global warming takes place, climate change takes place," he added.

The ground heats up more rapidly than the air temperature, caking the previously moist soil and letting oxygen in through the resulting cracks.

"When that oxygen gets in there, things that are really delicate, that are made of leather, textile, items of wood, crack,

decay and are lost forever," said Birley.

Over the years, the dramatic landscape around the wall has revealed stone and wooden structures, leather shoes and clothing, tools, weapons and even handwritten wooden tablets, feeding knowledge of what Roman life in Britain was like.

Only around a quarter of the site at Vindolanda has been excavated, and the fort is just one of 14 along Hadrian's Wall, a designated UNESCO World Heritage site since 1987 and one of Britain's best-known ancient tourist attractions.

AFP

SWEET FACTORY

SUGAR & SPICE



A traditional UK sweet factory enjoys the global sugar rush in the time of COVID-19 when its hard-boiled herbal sweets are in good demand

"But we've had requests from America, Korea, Japan, Australia." A lot of the interest comes from those who moved long ago out of Dudley, some 10 miles (16km) west of Birmingham, and who are yearning for a taste of nostalgia. "They say in their emails they used to live in Dudley, used to love the smell of the factory," he said.

Another fine mess
Despite the incessant demand, the factory has no plans to expand, preferring to maintain its intimate feel and traditional ethos. "Because the old-fashioned machines only go so fast, the only way you're speeding up is by putting on a smaller cog so it spins faster. But you can't expand the factory because it's in a residential street. It is a museum-status factory...you couldn't develop it," Healy explained. He warned that counterfeit herbal pills were on the market, and to look out instead for the logo of a Wirehaired Fox Terrier on the packet. The logo harks back to Edward 'Teddy' Gray, who was also a champion dog-breeder and once won the world-renowned Crufts dog show. "In them days, the old Mr Gray was very much like a celebrity in his area," said Healy. "They were proper well-to-do, mixing with the stars like Laurel and Hardy." Apparently, the story goes, that Laurel and Hardy actually stopped at the factory. "There's a house in the middle of the factory. When Laurel and Hardy came to perform at the Hippodrome, Ted Gray offered them somewhere to stop for the night," he said. While having to sleep overnight in a sweet factory might sound like a preamble to one of their calamitous adventures, the pair reportedly had a pleasant time and "wrote to say thank you for being such a wonderful host."

Soaring costs
Although demand is soaring, the firm is suffering from the current supply chain issues and soaring inflation. "We had terrible problems getting the sugar in October, then it went from sugar to glucose in December," explained Healy. "Glucose is going up 50 per cent - their gas bill has gone up 300 per cent. We couldn't put our stuff up 50 per cent, they wouldn't stand it," he asserted. Whatever the supply constraints, it is unlikely he will go without his fix. "I eat them all the time. Someone's got to test them, it's like a quality control. It's not a bad thing, though I wish it was a brewery," he added. AFP

Members of staff at work at the traditional sweet manufacturer Edward Grays of Dudley

Edward Gray sweet factory in central England evokes a bygone age where brass cauldrons steam with molten sugar and workers wrestle with huge chunks of gooey treacle, but its handmade produce now enjoys a global demand. The company - also known as Teddy Grays - dates back to 1826 when John Gray went house-to-house in a horse and cart buying homemade sweets, before selling them to retailers. But it was his son Edward, an entrepreneur in the mould of Willy Wonka and Colonel Sanders, who built the business's name. The small factory in Dudley now makes around five tonnes of boiled sweets a week, with products including rhubarb and custard, pineapple rock, strawberries and cream, pear drops, toffee and chocolate-coated coconut ice. But the jewel in the crown is its 'Herbal Tablet', a menthol sweet that it claims has provided relief from cold nights and mornings for more than 100 years. "It's an acquired taste, but with COVID-19 now, it relieves coughs and colds," explained Dave Healy, the company's marketing manager.

Secret recipe
The secret recipe is locked in a vault in a nearby bank. Two descendants of the founder are the only people alive aware of its contents. "They wouldn't tell me because I talk in my sleep," joked Healy. "It's all down to the blending, if you don't get the blend correct, you get an oily taste." The sweet was only really known in the surrounding area, known as the Black Country because of the smoke and soot of its industrial past. But the fashion towards local and artisan produce, coupled with endorsements from celebrities, such as actor and writer Stephen Fry, has seen its fame spread. "When COVID-19 kicked in, we opened an online sweet shop... just to basically generate some sort of movement of the stock," said Healy.

It's an acquired taste, but with COVID-19 now, it relieves coughs and colds



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BUDGET COOKING



Mince Stuffed Tomatoes

Ingredients
6 large tomatoes
250g chicken/beef mince
1 red onion – minced
2 green chillies minced
1tsp minced ginger
1tsp minced garlic
1tsp red chilli powder
½tsp turmeric powder
2tbsp oil
1 small bunch of coriander – minced
2tsp grated Parmesan cheese
4tbsp breadcrumbs
1 egg
Salt, to taste

Method
Boil the mince with salt to taste and set aside. Cut a slice

of the top of each tomato, scoop out the core, leaving behind neat cups. Chop up all the cores and set aside. Heat oil in a pan and add the mince onion. After 1 minute, add the minced ginger, garlic, and green chillies and fry for a minute. Then add red chilli powder and turmeric, followed by the chopped up cores of the tomatoes. Cook on medium flame for 5-6 minutes till the tomatoes turn mushy. Add the boiled mince and the coriander and mix well. After a minute, turn off the heat.
Now assemble the tomato cups in a baking tray and fill each till the top with the seasoned mince. Mix the breadcrumbs and Parmesan and keep in a plate. Beat the egg, then add a spoonful on the top of each stuffed tomato and sprinkle the breadcrumb mixture generously over each. Press each tomato lightly with your fingers so that they are packed tightly. Bake at 200° C for 25 minutes. Check in between, so that the tomatoes don't get overcooked and collapse. Serve hot as a side dish.

Celebrate OMANI PRODUCE

Roasted Cabbage Steaks

Ingredients
1 head cabbage – cut into quarters or large wedges
2tbsp olive oil
1tbsp garlic paste
1tsp salt
½tsp ground black pepper
1tbsp chopped parsley – for garnish

Method
Preheat oven to 200° C and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place the cabbage wedges on the baking sheet. Brush with oil and garlic paste, and sprinkle salt and pepper. Turn over and season the other side in the same way. Roast for about 20 minutes, then turn the sides over and roast for another 20 minutes, until the leaves get crispy around the sides. Garnish with chopped parsley before serving. As an interesting option, drizzle a mixture of 2tbsp soy sauce and 2tbsp maple syrup before serving. Enjoy straight from the oven when the leaves are crisp.



Homemade Coleslaw

Ingredients
200g cabbage, 1 carrot
¾ cup mayonnaise
2tbsp honey
1tbsp apple cider vinegar
A pinch of salt (optional)

Method
Thinly slice or shred the cabbage and carrot and set aside. In a large bowl, combine the mayonnaise, honey, vinegar, and salt to get a nice flowy consistency. Add the shredded cabbage and carrot and mix well. Chill in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes before serving as a delightful accompaniment with burgers, fries or grilled chicken.

Omani vegetables are available in the retail market for rockbottom prices these days – cabbage costs 100bz/kg and tomatoes 150bz/kg. It's time to make the most of it and celebrate Omani produce in your kitchen

Try these easy recipes:



Homemade Tomato Ketchup

Ingredients
2kg tomatoes - chopped, 2 apples – skinned, deseeded and chopped
1 red onion - chopped, 4 cloves of garlic
1 cup vinegar, 5 dried red chillies, 4 cloves
¼tsp black peppercorns, 1tsp salt, ¾ cup sugar

Method
Put the tomatoes, apples, onion, garlic and red chillies in a pot and boil on medium heat until tomatoes are soft and mushy. Remove from heat and let it cool. Strain out the seeds and tomato skins, and blend the rest into a smooth puree. Set aside. Boil vinegar with the whole spices for a few minutes and then remove the spices. Now, combine the tomato puree, sugar, salt, and spiced vinegar in a pot. Bring it to boil and simmer on medium to low heat for 15-25 minutes until sauce thickens and is reduced a little. (The thick sauce will splutter, so adjust heat as needed.) Set aside to cool completely before filling into sterilised jars.
Optional: You may add a few drops of red food colour during the final boiling, if you like a nice red hue for your homemade ketchup.



History-making Mayer retains men's Olympic super-G title

Yanqing, China - Austria's Matthias Mayer went "all in" to successfully defend his Olympic super-G title on Tuesday in Beijing and make history as the first men's alpine skier to win gold medals in three consecutive Games.

Mayer, who won his first super-G title in Pyeongchang in 2018 and also took downhill gold at the 2014 Sochi Olympics, clocked a winning time of 1min 19.94sec.

American Ryan Cochran-Siegle took a surprise silver with a time 0.04sec behind Mayer, with Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde claiming bronze at 0.42sec.

Mayer, 31, again went one better than his father Helmut, won silver when the super-G made its Olympic debut in 1988.

"I tried to push hard, really hard," said Mayer, who also won a bronze medal in Monday's downhill, won by Switzerland's Beat Feuz.

"I saw Kilde's run on TV at the start and it was really good so I knew that I had to go all in. I tried to push hard to the last gate, and it was good."

Kilde was the big favourite coming into the race as the

MEDALS TABLE				
	G	S	B	T
Sweden	4	1	1	6
Netherlands	3	3	1	7
China	3	2	0	5
Germany	3	2	0	5
Norway	3	1	4	8
Italy	2	4	1	7
Russian OC	2	3	5	10
Austria	2	3	2	7
Slovenia	2	1	2	5
France	1	4	0	5
Canada	1	1	4	6
Japan	1	1	2	4
Switzerland	1	0	2	3
Australia	1	0	1	2
Czech Republic	1	0	0	1
New Zealand	1	0	0	1
United States	0	4	1	5
Belarus	0	1	0	1
Hungary	0	0	2	2
Finland	0	0	1	1
Poland	0	0	1	1
South Korea	0	0	1	1

G

 Gold

S

 Silver

B

 Bronze

T

 Total

delivered a gliding masterclass in the bottom section of the 2.3km-long "Rock" course that helped him take the definitive lead.

Hitting speeds of 120 kilometres per hour (75 miles per hour), Mayer was behind on the first intermediaries in the testing upper section that snaked through the barren mountainscape of Yanqing, north of Beijing. But the Austrian somehow found more speed in a consummate descent of the vertical drop of 645 metres on hard-packed artificial snow in brilliant sunshine.

"I did really well in the last section," said Mayer. "It was a great race and a very close race."

Cochran-Siegle, who also comes from a family of skiers with his mother Barbara having won slalom gold for the United States at the 1972 Olympics, added of Mayer, "He's an incredible skier, takes advantage of the big moments. To be so close to him, it's something special."

It was indeed a remarkable result for the Austrian, who had won just one World Cup super-G since his triumph in Pyeongchang, although he has made the podium three times this season.

AFP



Austria's Matthias Mayer competes in the men's super-G final during the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games Yanqing on February 8 (AFP)





Gold medalist Czech Republic's Ester Ledecka celebrates after the snowboard women's parallel giant slalom final (AFP)

Ledecka defends snowboard parallel giant slalom title

Zhangjiakou, China - Dual winter sports champion Ester Ledecka successfully defended her snowboard parallel giant slalom title at the Beijing Olympics on Tuesday - even if she did not immediately realise it.

The 26-year-old Czech became the first woman to win a gold medal in two different sports at a Winter Olympics when she took skiing and snowboarding titles in Pyeongchang four years ago. She won snowboard paral-

lel giant slalom gold again in the Chinese capital when she cruised to victory in the final against Austria's Daniela Ulbing.

But Ledecka did not immediately realise that she was an Olympic champion again.

"I was concentrating on each run and I was still thinking about what I could do better in the next run," she said.

"And then I realised that there wasn't going to be any other run."

AFP

US-born Gu saves best for last to win Olympic gold for China

Beijing, China - Californian-born Eileen Gu won gold for China at the Beijing Olympics on Tuesday, earning victory in the inaugural women's freeski Big Air with a stunning jump she had never tried before.

After a strong opening jump, the 18-year-old saved her best for last by landing a left double cork 1620 - four and a half rotations in the air - before landing backwards.

The teenager, who switched allegiance from the United States to China in 2019, shed tears of joy after landing cleanly and realising she had pulled off the winning move.

"The tears were mostly of joy, that I had pushed myself to the absolute limit," Gu said.

"That was the best moment of my life. The happiest moment, day, whatever... of my life. I just cannot believe what just happened."

The spectacular jump saw her snatch first place from France's Tess Ledeux, 20, the Big Air freeski champion at last month's



X Games in Aspen, who had to settle for silver.

Gu said she had only made the decision to attempt the difficult trick after defying the advice of her Chinese mother who called her before the jump.

"I have never done the 'left 16 before', I hadn't prepared much for it apart from two days on the air bag," Gu said.

"My mom called me before my last jump and told me not to, but I was adamant I wanted to do the 'left 16'. 'I felt it was a chance to push myself to the limit, so I made an executive call.'"

"It's the biggest honour, the biggest dream to win gold here today, especially in front of this crowd," said Gu.

AFP



Shonal bags another podium finish in UAE

Muscat-based racer bounces back from a fifth spot to take third place at Yas Marina circuit

Abu Dhabi, UAE- Muscat-based go-karting racer Shonal Kunimal displayed his potential to overcome setbacks in abundance as he claimed yet another podium finish at the recently-concluded sixth round of UAE Rotax Max Challenge Series at the Yas Marina circuit in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

The back-to-back races were held at the Formula One Yas Marina circuit and ten-year-old Shonal, who was pushed out by a rival in the fifth round, came back strongly to take the third place in the next round.

The UAE Rotax Max Challenge Series features some of the best young drivers in the region and Shonal, a student of the Indian School Ghubra in Muscat, has now been on the podium on four occasions in the six rounds held.

Russian Maxim Bobreshov continues to dominate the series as he picked up yet another win to lead the overall standings while Greek racer Leonidas Peruzzi, who was found guilty of pushing Shonal out of the track with a contact in the fifth round, is overall second.



I am delighted that I could record a lap time of 37.495 seconds, which is one of the fastest laps in my category this year

SHONAL KUNIMAL

the remaining 13 laps.

Later, the race jury penalised Leonidas for his contact with Shonal and was given a penalty of ten seconds pushing him to sixth and Shonal keeping the fifth spot. Maxim won round five while Pierre Abou Diwan was second and Emilen Boul third.

After six rounds and with three more rounds remaining in March, the series top honours seems to be going Maxim's way as he leads with 585 points. Only 32 points differentiates Leonidas and Shonal with the former currently placed second with 507 points and Shonal 475. In each round a racer can pocket a total of 100 points with 40 for a race

win and 30 each for a win in the pre-final and a heat race.

Speaking after his podium finish in the sixth round, Shonal said, "It was a great experience racing on a Formula One track. It is a very fast track than the circuits we usually race on."

"I am delighted that I could record a lap time of 37.495 seconds, which is one of the fastest laps in my category this year."

Shonal expressed his thanks to his coach and his father, Shojai Kunimal, for their constant support.

"I owe a lot to my father and my coach Sanad, along with my technical team of Carlo John Bariquit and Mark Rose," he said.



Australia's tour to Pakistan will be its first in 24 years

Australia names full-strength squad for Pakistan tour

Sydney, Australia - Australia named a full-strength squad on Tuesday for its first Pakistan tour in 24 years, with spinners Mitchell Swepson and Ashton Agar drafted to back up their pace attack.

Pat Cummins' side, which recently lost coach Justin Langer in acrimonious circumstances, are slated to play a three-Test series in Rawalpindi, Karachi and Lahore from March 4.

Bowler Josh Hazlewood will be back in action after missing most of Australia's recent 4-0 demolition of England in the Ashes.

Scott Boland who thrilled fans with a stunning debut at the Melbourne Cricket Ground during that series -- including a spell that saw him take six wickets for seven runs - has been retained.

But there will be more backup in the spin department for Nathan Lyon, who is joined by leg-spinner Swepson and left-hander Agar. Batters Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Michael Neser, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson, David Warner

It is Australia's first tour of Pakistan in almost a quarter-century. Cricket-mad Pakistan has struggled to entice foreign sides back after home internationals were suspended following a deadly terror attack on the Sri Lanka Test side in 2009.

Pakistan was forced to play their home international matches abroad - mostly in the United Arab Emirates - until 2015, when normal service tentatively resumed.

For Australia, the tour will be a major test of Cricket Australia's decision to push Langer out of the coaching role. Andrew McDonald has been appointed interim coach.

THE AUSTRALIA SQUAD:

Pat Cummins (c), Ashton Agar, Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Michael Neser, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson, David Warner

AFP

Third ODI between Oman, UAE ends in a tie

Muscat- One of the most dramatic and topsy-turvy ODIs in recent memory - the third and final match between Oman and the United Arab Emirates ended in a tie.

The UAE chose to stick with the winning formula after winning the toss, and asked Oman to bat first. The hosts shuffled their batting order around this time, sending domestic opening partners Jatinder Singh and Kashyap Prajapati out to lead the line.

That decision was vindicated, as the pair erected a 50+ opening stand - Oman's first in this three-match series. However, just like in the game on Sunday, the batsmen who got starts failed to convert them into match-defining knocks. Jatinder, Kashyap and captain Zeeshan all looked in great touch - Kashyap especially so with an assertive 89 ball 57 - but none of them dominated the innings.

Basil Hameed stepped up with the ball once again for the visitors and followed his fiver from the previous game by claiming the priceless scalps of Kashyap and Zeeshan in back-to-back overs.



UAE's Kashif Daud in action



UAE's Kashif Daud receiving the man of the match award



Oman's Kashyap made 89 ball 57

BRIEF SCORES

Oman 214/10 in 49.3 overs (Kashyap Prajapati 57(89) 3 x 4, 1 x 6 Kashif Daud - 41/3 Zahoor Khan - 57/3) tied with UAE 214/10 in 50 overs (Kashif Daud 52(52) 3 x 4, 3 x 6 Nestor Dhamba - 20/3 Khawar Ali 49/3)

gapoyil Rizwan and Vriitya Aravind packing in back-to-back deliveries of the 10th. But as effective as Oman's pacers were, it was the spinners who stole the show.

Khawar Ali got rid of the dangerous Muhammed Waseem, while Zeeshan Maqsood kept the pressure on the batsmen. Nestor Dhamba, the pick of the bunch, crippled the UAE batting

line-up time and again by picking up wickets at crucial moments.

The game went down to the wire, with the UAE needing nine off the final six.

Khawar Ali kept it tight for the most part, but a full toss and an untimely missed run-out opportunity meant that the spoils were shared in the end.

With the series ending 2-0, Oman have extended their lead atop the ICC CWC League 2 with 30 points from 23 matches.

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