



WEDNESDAY, 24 MARCH 2021

www.muscatdaily.com

Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

To subscribe, call toll free no: 80076000



30°C/23°C

LIVING LEGEND - SIR RANULPH FIENNES

GO TO PAGE 04 NATION

Further increase in COVID-19 cases

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Tuesday reported 836 new cases of COVID-19, taking the total number in Oman to 152,364. Four deaths were reported in this period taking the total number to 1,633.

Those needing hospitalisation

is increasing alarmingly as well with 72 being admitted on Monday and 58 on Tuesday, accounting for a total of 364 inpatients, including 105 in intensive care units (ICUs). The number of recoveries is 139,846, which is 92 per cent of the total cases reported.

Considering the fact that a nationwide immunisation pro-

gramme is currently underway, and more people are being vaccinated, cases and hospitalisation are expected to reduce, said Dr Salem al Tamimi, consultant for pediatrics, immunology and allergies at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

836
NEW CASES

"Vaccination against coronavirus will continue until we acquire the required immunity, and then the impact of the disease will be lesser than it is now.

Countries that have vaccinated a quarter of their population have witnessed a remarkable

decrease in cases," Dr Tamimi said during an interview with Oman TV.

He explained that there is noticeable awareness on the need to get immunised in the community now, and that demand for vaccination is increasing with the availability of more vaccines. "Today, more than 300mn doses of vaccines have been taken

worldwide," he said on Tuesday.

In Musandam, which started an immunisation drive on Monday targeting all citizens older than 18 years, more than 4,500 individuals have been vaccinated, representing 27 per cent of the targeted group. "The vaccination campaign in Musandam will cover 54 per cent of the governorate's population. There are

more than 1,000 people on the waiting list today (Tuesday) due to high demand," said Dr Ghanem al Sa'eedi, director general of health services in Musandam.

"There is increasing demand in Musandam from all age groups, especially those in between 20 to 40 years," he added.

CONDOLENCES OFFERED ON TANZANIAN PRESIDENT'S DEMISE



Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, accompanied by Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and a number of officials, offered His Majesty the Sultan's condolences on the death of the late President of Tanzania, Dr John Magufuli, on the premises of the Embassy of Tanzania in Muscat on Tuesday morning (ONA)

Saudi move to resolve Yemen crisis hailed

Muscat - Oman has welcomed the initiative announced by Saudi Arabia to reach a political solution for the crisis in Yemen.

A statement issued here on Tuesday asserts that the sultanate will continue to work with Saudi Arabia, the United Nations and the Yemeni parties concerned to achieve the desired political settlement that will restore security and stability in Yemen, establish peace in the region and fulfil the interests of its countries.

Saudi Arabia on Monday offered Yemen's Huthi rebels a 'comprehensive' UN-supervised ceasefire, as part of a series of fresh proposals aimed at ending a catastrophic six-year conflict.

But the Huthis swiftly dismissed the initiative and continued to push to seize the Saudi-backed Yemeni govern-



Forces loyal to Yemen's Saudi-backed government sit in the back of a pick-up as they deploy during clashes with Huthi rebel fighters west of the country's third city of Ta'izz, on March 16, 2021 (AFP)

ment's last northern stronghold in the war-torn country.

The initiative includes 'a com-

prehensive ceasefire across the country under the supervision of the UN,' a Saudi government

statement said.

Riyadh also proposed reopening the international airport in Sanaa, the rebel-held capital, and restarting political negotiations between the Yemeni government and the Huthis, the statement added.

Saudi Arabia's plan also called for depositing taxes and customs revenue from ships carrying oil to the Red Sea port of Hodeida - a key conduit for desperately needed aid - in a joint account of the Yemeni central bank.

"We want the guns to fall completely silent," said Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Saudi Foreign Minister.

"The initiative will take effect as soon as the Huthis agree to it," he added, hailing it as "an opportunity to end the crisis" in Yemen. Agencies



مناظر الحيل
AL HAIL VIEWS

Luxurious Apartments
& Shops for Sale
Sultan Qaboos Street
Al-Hail

The true meaning of owning
a unique property

Rates Start From
38,410 OMR

Contact Us

M : +968 91666607 | T: +968 24901202 | @tibiaan



tibiaan
properties
تبيان
للعقارات

Darsait bridge welcomed by residents

Overflowing wadi near Indian School Darsait disrupted lives of residents during showers

Muscat - A long-held demand of Darsait residents is finally being met. Their homes can only be accessed by a road that turns left and crosses a wadi just before Indian School Darsait, Senior Section. Even a light rain affected their lives as the wadi overflowed severing road connectivity with their neighbourhood.

Muscat Municipality is currently constructing a bridge over the Wadi al Kabir stream in Darsait which is likely to be completed soon.

Once built, the bridge will give a sense of safety and a reason to many residents of this neighbourhood to revert plans to move out of it. The swollen wadi often disrupted their lives leaving them stranded on either side.

Residents, pedestrians in particular, complained of the situation because in the absence of a permanent bridge, crossing the wadi posed a problem even when it didn't rain as water flows down the wadi all year round.

Muscat Daily reported the residents' grievances in several past editions, and on February 25, 2020, following a Muscat Municipality team's visit to the area, an official was quoted as saying, "Hopefully, a bridge with box culverts will come up soon."

Sachin Kumar, who has lived in the area for the last ten years, said, "Thanks to Muscat Daily for reporting and bringing the prob-

lems faced by Darsait residents to the authorities' attention to take action."

He further said, "My work keeps me out till late hours and some times, I get stuck due to the overflowing wadi and reach home at 3am."

For Lamya al Lawati, another resident of the area, waiting for hours for the level of water in the wadi to subside didn't bother her as much as the frightful prospect of watching cars entering the flowing wadi go adrift. "I advised approaching cars not to enter the wadi."

Lamya also wor-



Demand for bridge over wadi as rain leaves Darsait high and dry



Thanks to Muscat Daily for reporting and bringing the problems faced by Darsait residents to the authorities' attention to take action

SACHIN KUMAR



control. "We went for weekly shopping to the nearby hypermarket. There were no rains in Darsait. But when we returned around 9pm, the wadi was overflowing due to a drizzle in Wadi Kabir. Our children waited alone at home. It's such a relief to see the bridge being built now."

While the vehicular bridge will come as relief to most in the neighbourhood, Jaikish Pavithran, president of the Management Committee of Indian School Darsait, said a pedestrian bridge over the wadi is also needed to help residents and school students.

"The flowing wadi is a big a problem for students and staff who commute between the jun-

ior and senior school buildings, as these are on either side of the wadi. We make a makeshift walking bridge to help our students and staff cross, but whenever it rains, it gets washed away. A pedestrian bridge is a long-term solution. It will help our school and residents too."

Besides disrupting connectivity and life, the flowing wadi also damages cars.

"A stream of water flows in the wadi throughout the year and our cars begin to rust due to frequent exposure. We use our cars to cross the wadi at least twice a day. While maintenance cost increases, it reduces the value of our cars," Lamya said.

(Photos and text Syed Fasiuddin)



MoE inks three pacts on sidelines of Science Week

Muscat - H E Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary for Education in the Ministry of Education (MoE), signed three agreements on Tuesday morning, on the sidelines of the National Science Week 2021 at the ministry's headquarters.

As per a statement, the first agreement was signed between the ministry, represented by the Centre for Career Guidance and Student Counselling, and the SMN Power Holding Company to support and finance the 'My School Product' project.

The agreement is for the implementation and installation of a sheltered house for aquaculture in Rashid Bin Al Waleed School for Basic Education (5-12) in Muscat governorate. Dr Abdullah bin Humaid al Yahya, chairman of the Board of Directors of the company signed the agreement.

'The My School Product project contributes to instilling a culture of entrepreneurial work and achieving scientific and cognitive integration based on experimentation and application between the various curricula. It also con-

tributes to building positive attitudes among students towards various specialisations and professions related to the field of agriculture and fisheries, by providing them with a set of skills and knowledge that is necessary in the Omani labour market in the 21st century,' the statement said.

The second agreement was signed between the ministry, represented by the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiad, and the Ishraqa Foundation (the social responsibility wing at Khimji Ramdas) to support the 'Stimazon Initiative' for students of the sultanate's public and private schools.

Anil Khimji, chairman of the Board of Directors, at the company signed the agreement.

'This initiative comes as a complementary step to the role that educational institutions in the sultanate work on to inspire the next generation in line with the sultanate's Vision 2040 and the aspirations of the modern world.

'It also aims to employ modern technologies such as pro-



gramming, robotics, 3D printing, virtual reality and electronics. The initiative also seeks to hone the basic skills of creative and critical thinking, design, and problem-solving among the emerging generation through learning by experience.'

The company implementing this initiative will take place in the Children's Museum in Qurm, and the educational programmes will be virtual.

The third agreement was signed between the ministry and each of the Al Batinah Energy

Company, Sohar Energy Company, and Al Alawi Institute for Human Resources Development.

'The agreement came to organise a competition for 200 students from public and private schools from various governorates of the sultanate in the field of designing and preparing smart applications under the title 'Emerging Smart Application Developers Prize.'

The agreement was signed by Mohammed al Rawahi, CEO of Al Batinah Energy Company; Yaqoub bin Harbi al Harthi, CEO

of Sohar Energy Company, and Yusra bint Jumal al Alawi, CEO of Al Alawi Institute for Human Resources Development for their respective companies.

The prize comes as a translation of the fruitful cooperation between the ministry and the private sector institutions, and aims to teach students important aspects in designing smart applications, improving personal skills, technological skills, and the skills required for their future jobs.

It also motivates them to enrol in specialisations related to technology and science fields, in addition to preparing them to participate and compete in regional and international competitions.

'The prize also seeks to provide scientific solutions for many aspects in the various professions and businesses in the sultanate. This award will also provide training workshops in designing and preparing applications used in computers, tablets and smart phones, and programming. The prize will take place in a virtual training camp,' added the statement.



From March 29 all arrivals need to book hotels for isolation via Sahala

Our Correspondent
Muscat

All arriving passengers in Oman will have to book accommodation in hotels and institutional isolation centres through 'Sahala' platform, starting from 2pm on March 29, according to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

The authority stated that all confirmed hotel reservations made before the date specified in the circular can be listed on the Sahala platform.

Based on the decisions made by the Supreme Committee and the circulars issued by the Civil Aviation Authority on February 11 and 15, the CAA has issued the following guidelines to the travellers and all airlines operating in the sultanate:

- ▶ All arrivals into the sultanate starting from 2pm on March 29 will have to book accommodation in hotels and institutional isolation via Sahala on <https://covid19.emushrif.om/>
- ▶ Airlines are responsible for en-

suring that the passenger is holding a confirmed booking via the Sahala platform. All other requirements as stipulated in previous circulars remain valid.

CAA added that the exemptions to categories mentioned in the two previous circulars are still applicable. The following passenger categories are exempted from presenting pre-confirmed hotel reservations before they are checked in at the airport of departure:

- ▶ Diplomats working at foreign diplomatic missions accredited to the sultanate, their families, and diplomats visiting the sultanate
- ▶ Arrivals of those aged 18 or below if travelling alone, and those aged 60 and above
- ▶ Aircrew subject to adhering to the precautionary measures issued by the Ministry of Health
- ▶ Sick passengers whose health conditions require special attention. The exception includes two companions with female or under 18 years old patients and



only one companion with male patients above 18

▶ Holders of permits for private institutional isolation centres that are pre-approved by the Relief & Shelter Sector

▶ For sea crews moored in the territorial waters of the sultanate, airlines are obliged to ensure that there is a hotel reservation covering the duration of their stay in Oman based on the letter of the shipping agent

The Ministry of Social Development and eMushrif company signed an agreement to launch Sahala platform recently.

The platform aims to achieve the highest level of safety to limit infection, verify information to prevent fraud and inform arrival passengers in the sultanate of quarantine procedures. The platform also provides passengers with instructions issued by the Ministry of Health. The CAA added that whoever wants more details can contact eMushrif on 968-92187644 or email hm-support@emushrif.om

Over 65,000 expat workers register to leave Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As many as 65,173 expatriates have registered to avail an amnesty offer and leave the country permanently, according to the Ministry of Labour (MoL). The amnesty ends on March 31, 2021.

A statement issued by MoL said, 'The ministry confirms that the total number of non-Omani workforce wishing to rectify their status and leave the country permanently has reached 65,173, of whom 46,355 have already left.' The ministry affirmed that requests received after March 31 will not be considered. All those who register within the deadline will be allowed to leave by June 30, 2021.

The ministry initially opened the amnesty offer from Novem-



ber 15 to December 31, 2020, but later extended it to March 31, 2021.

Under the amnesty, employers and expatriate workers are exempted from all fees and fines registered against them for overstaying the residency period as a result of expired residency cards and passports.

Salem bin Saeed al Badi, director general of Labour Welfare at MoL, said the amnesty has seen a favourable response from the expatriate workforce. "They still have time to benefit from the scheme and can register on the ministry's website (www.mol.gov.om) or through Sanad centres."

GCC economic authority meeting held

Muscat - The second virtual meeting for senior officials at GCC Economic and Development Affairs Authority was held on Tuesday from the GCC Secretariat General.

The meeting came in response to a recommendation of the GCC Ministers of Finance and Economy, and members of the Standing Preparatory Ministerial Committee of the Supreme Authority for GCC Economic and Development Affairs to hold meetings for undersecretaries to evaluate the projects and initiatives.

The sultanate's delegation was headed by H E Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Mawali, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy.

No expats in mall management, cashier roles after July 20: MoL

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has reminded mall owners to expedite replacement of expatriate workforce with Omanis in professions specified in the Ministerial Decision No 8/2021 issued in January this year. The replacements should be made before July 20, the MoL stated.

According to the January decision, the professions to be Omanised include sales, accounting, cashier, merchandise arrangement and management in commercial and consumer malls.

'The Ministry of Labour notes to the owners of commercial and consumer malls the need to adhere to the Ministerial Decision No 8/2021, which will be implemented from July 20, 2021,' MoL said.



'Accordingly, the ministry requests the necessity to comply with the implementation of the aforementioned decision, as

licences to practise work in these professions will not be renewed after their expiry,' the statement said.

Oman aims to reduce TB incidence to less than one in a million by 2035

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Each year, the World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is marked on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB, and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the date remembers the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB, which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing the disease.

In Oman, the Ministry of Health (MoH) recently launched a national survey on community awareness, attitudes and practices related to the disease with an aim to reduce the incidence to less than one in a million by 2035.

'The survey intends to identify the most important information gaps that are reflected in the attitudes and practices of the community towards tuberculosis, to use the results of this survey after that in raising the level of community awareness so that



everyone becomes partners in the task of eliminating tuberculosis in the country,' an MoH statement read.

According to the WHO, TB remains one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases. Each day, nearly 4,000 lose their lives to TB and close to 28,000 people fall ill with this preventable and curable disease. Global efforts to combat TB have saved an estimated 63mn lives since 2000.

The theme of World TB Day 2021 - 'The Clock is Ticking' - conveys the sense that the world is running out of time to act on the commitments to end TB made by global leaders. This is especially critical in the context of

the COVID-19 pandemic that has put 'End TB' progress at risk, and to ensure equitable access to prevention and care in line with the WHO's drive towards achieving Universal Health Coverage.

TB is still considered one of the deadliest infectious diseases in the world, and Oman is classified as one of the countries with a low incidence of tuberculosis with less than ten per million people. 'In 2020, the infection rate was 7/100,000 as 314 cases were reported, out of which 95 were Omanis. There were 23 deaths also.'

'Oman aims to reach the TB pre-elimination stage; the incidence will be reduced to less

than one in a million by 2035. This will be achieved by reducing the incidence by 90 per cent and reducing mortality by 95 per cent compared to the year 2015 through the sultanate's national strategy for the elimination of tuberculosis, which will be implemented in stages,' the MoH said.

The objectives of the strategy to eliminate TB in Oman are dependent on several factors, including the level of community awareness of the disease.

The MoH, represented by the Directorate General of Disease Surveillance & Control, in collaboration with the concerned authorities, plans to conduct the national survey of community awareness, attitudes and practices related to TB. The survey will attempt to spread correct information and practices and stop the spread of misinformation by approaching and understanding the community.

On World TB Day, the WHO calls for diagnosis and treatment of 40mn people with TB by 2022, including 3.5mn children and 1.5mn people with drug-resistant TB.

Sultanate highlights efforts in conserving water resources

New York, US - The sultanate has reiterated its keenness to protect water resources through the enactment of laws and legislations and the establishment of an appropriate infrastructure for the management of water supplies in a rationalised and sustainable manner to help meet present and future requirements.

This was stated in the sultanate's statement delivered by First Secretary Sayyid Ahmed Hamoud al Busaidi before a high-level international meeting on water held at the United Nations premises in New York.

'Water is a national wealth that deserves to be protected and preserved and its resources have to be developed. To meet this goal, statutes and legislations have been enacted,' the statement read.

'The statutes include the Water Resources Protection Law



Sayyid Ahmed Hamoud al Busaidi

promulgated under Royal Decree No 29/2000, the Law on Protection of Water Against Pollution, promulgated by Royal Decree No 114/2001, and the Law on Protection of Drinking Water Against Pollution, promulgated under Royal Decree No 115/2001,' it added.

The statement of the sultanate also touched upon the National Strategy for Water Sec-

tor, focusing on five main themes: Securing potable water; striking a balance between water use and renewable water resources; consolidating principles for the preservation of water; increasing public awareness about the importance of water conservation, rationalisation in water use and lastly, supporting water techniques, research and innovation in the field of water.

The speech pointed out that Oman provides fresh water services to 97 per cent of the population in towns and cities and 88 per cent in rural areas. The strategies also furnished grounds for a sound wastewater system that benefited 75 per cent of the population. Oman pointed out that the it developed an integrated water desalination system comprising 60 plants and 93 wastewater stations.

ONA

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.49am	Duhr	12.13pm	Maghrib	6.19pm
Sunrise	6.07am	Asr	3.39pm	Isha	7.49pm



Sir Ranulph Fiennes during his secondment with Sultan Said bin Taimour's army in Dhofar (Sir Ranulph Fiennes)

In a freewheeling interview with *Muscat Daily*, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, OBE, the world's greatest living explorer, remembers his first visit to Oman, his hair-raising experiences and more

Tridwip K Das
Muscat

People flock around Sir Ranulph Fiennes with raised eyebrows, dropped jaws and pure admiration when he talks. The feats of 'the world's greatest living explorer' (Guinness Book of World Records, 1984) are the stuff of folklore. The first to reach both poles, the first to cross the Antarctic and Arctic oceans, the first to circumnavigate the world along its polar axis – the latter feat never successfully repeated... Sir Ranulph has experienced what no man has before him.

The living legend was in Muscat earlier this month when he reminisced about his first visit to Oman more than 50 years ago. Deputed by the British Army to the army of Sultan Said bin Taimour, he commanded the Reconnaissance Platoon of the Muscat Regiment and fought off insurgents in Dhofar for which he was decorated for bravery. The day he arrived in the sultanate was very hot – it may have been the hottest time of the year, he recalls.

"There was no air conditioning. And the only place we went to before going south was Bidbid. In my room in Bidbid there was a spider, the biggest spider I'd ever seen. British spiders are small. So the heat and the spider were the first impression."

In a reflection of the rapid changes in the region, he remembers an incident when he was tasked by Sultan Said bin Taimour to lead the Reconnaissance Platoon up Wadi Jizzi to Buraimi and further on to Dubai to meet the commander of the Trucial Oman Scouts (present day United Arab Emirates Armed Forces) on an urgent matter. "When I got as far as the place called Dubai, there was one house bigger than a single floor. And the people in the locality were angry with that man, because they said he was trying to get closer to God. That was 1968. It changed quickly."

When he left the army after serving for eight years, it was with the experiences of late-60s and early-70s Oman that sowed the seeds of exploration of remote parts of the world. He went back home, got married to his childhood sweetheart Ginny Pepper and soon realised they had no money. Armed with his experiences, knowl-



In my room in Bidbid there was a spider, the biggest spider I'd ever seen. British spiders are small. So the heat and the spider were the first impression

SIR RANULPH FIENNES

edge of Morse code and radio equipment, and Ginny's fluency in Arabic, they decided to embark on sponsored expeditions that took them all around the world.

Mad, bad and dangerous to know

He met Ginny when he was all of 12, she nine. His future father-in-law immediately warned his daughter that young Ranulph was 'mad, bad and dangerous to know'. That became the title of one of Sir Ranulph's autobiographies published in 2007. He has to his credit 25 other books.

In 2000, during an attempt to walk solo and unsupported to the North Pole, Sir Ranulph's sleds fell into the icy sea. To retrieve his supplies, he was forced to pull them out with his bare hands. Exposed to -63°C, he sustained severe frostbite to the fingertips of his left hand compelling him to abandon the attempt. Back home, his surgeon insisted on waiting five months to allow regrowth of the remaining healthy tissue before amputating the necrotic fingertips. The dead fingers "stuck out like mummified talons" and caused him agony. When Ginny

observed that it was making him irritable, Sir Ranulph sawed off his frostbitten fingers with an electric saw. The thumb took two days.

Among his numerous fabled feats is one leading the team that discovered the lost city of Ubar on the Yemeni border in 1992 after seven previous search expeditions over a period of 26 years. Malik al Hinai, former director of Bait al Baranda Museum who was then working with Oman International Bank, was appointed by the sultanate's government to assist Sir Ranulph in the mission in 1990. "His charm came through during our meetings with corporate chairmen whom we went to seeking funds for the project. We would get absolutely whatever we requested. It made life very easy and understandably so as the project was fascinating," Hinai said during a lunch he hosted at his residence for Sir Ranulph on his recent visit.

His charm had other effects, too. Among six final contenders to play James Bond, Sir Ranulph eventually lost out to Roger Moore. "Many years later, I saw him at an airport. I hadn't realised but he must have been at

least 6'5" or 6'6. (Moore was 6'2"). He was very... like a gentleman, more than the previous... Sean Connery. But I liked Roger Moore, Sean Connery and Daniel Craig. I wasn't very happy with the man called George Lazenby," he informed. There are other Fiennes who have become film actors, including his cousins Joseph and Ralph.

7 marathons on 7 continents in 7 days

He has, however, beat other illustrious folk to prestigious titles. He won the ITV Greatest Britons 2007 Sport Award beating, among other nominees, Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton. The award was in recognition of the Land Rover 7x7 Challenge of 2003. Three-and-a-half months after a heart attack, three days in coma and a double bypass procedure, the 59-year-old Sir Ranulph and Mike Stroud, an expert on human health under extreme conditions, ran seven marathons in seven consecutive days on all seven continents raising funds for the British Heart Foundation.

Since the early 1990s, he has raised funds for several charities and been named the UK's top celebrity fundraiser by JustGiving, a popular online fundraising platform. Ginny died in 2004 from stomach cancer, diagnosed the day after Sir Ranulph returned from the 7X7X7. He lost his sister and mother, too, to cancer all within the space of 18 months and has since been raising money for Marie Curie, a British charity that provides care for terminally ill patients.

At last count, he'd raised £18.9mn in all for various charities, but the figure he wants on his gravestone is £20mn. Age has come in the way of unfinished agenda, including the Global Reach Challenge for Marie Curie which started in 1982. On completion of the challenge, Sir Ranulph will become the first person to have crossed both polar ice caps and climbed the highest mountain on each continent. He has three more to climb but age "has a bad effect on getting up these mountains. I've had a couple of heart attacks, a double heart bypass, a cancer operation and this diabetes thing that doesn't help in the cold. So while other people my age are sensibly enjoying their retirement, I'm taking this challenge. It unfortunately really isn't going to be easy", he states in his website.

'Everyone's grandmother can do Everest...'

But Sir Ranulph has raised funds even in his failed attempts. In 2005, he climbed Mt Everest but 300m short of the peak, he developed a heart problem. He abandoned the attempt but raised £2mn for the British Heart Foundation. In his second attempt at Everest three years later, he returned from 400m to the summit due to bad weather. He still raised £2mn for Marie Curie. A year later, he finally summited Everest at the age of 65 – the oldest Briton to do so. While he still suffers from vertigo, apparently "everyone's grandmother can do Everest over a weekend nowadays". A sought-after public speaker, Sir Ranulph leaves audiences in splits with his dry wit.

Being driven by his wife was his most frightful experience, claims the man who has defied limits of human determination and endurance.

Many of his gruelling challenges predate the technologies available today – satellite navigation, satellite phones, GPS and the like. "At the end of the day, when you're completely tired, you can go to your tent, have a cup of coffee, switch on your sat phone and speak to your commander, not Morse code... Or switch on your sat nav and it'll tell you quickly where you are... everything is much easier now."

"When we were doing 2,000 miles with nothing to see except white, every two miles or 20 minutes, I'd stop and look back at the other two; keep a mile between each of them and I could see the degree we had come. If I was 2° out, I would compensate for that 2° in the next two miles. That's how we reached the South Pole accurately traversing all that distance with nothing to see, just by using the sun behaviour," Sir Ranulph recalled.

Back to the present, asked for a message for young Omanis, he said, "They are lucky to be in the best country in the world that I've visited. And to have a wonderful succession of rulers and governments. Long may the system here continue and they keep the peace between other people who are angry and nuclear. So thank God for (the late Sultan) Qaboos and people who behave like him and his successor. Thank God for Oman."

@TridwipKumar

MARKET WATCH

MSM30	3,736.01
BSE Sensex	50,051.44

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	188.55
Pakistani Rs	405.89
Bangladeshi Taka	220.28
Philippine Peso	126.43
Sri Lankan Rs	516.15

*Rates as on March 23
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

UK unemployment dips to 5%

Britain's unemployment rate dipped to 5 per cent in the three months to the end of January, remaining close to five-year highs on the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, official data showed on Tuesday.

The rate compared with 5.1 per cent in the three months to the end of December, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

'The UK unemployment rate, in the three months to January 2021, was estimated at 5 per cent, 1.1 percentage points higher than a year earlier,' the ONS said.

Analysts said that while the rate had steadied thanks to the UK government's jobs support package paying the bulk of wages for millions of private-sector workers, unemployment was set to shoot higher once the taps are turned off.

Sri Lanka secures \$1.5bn Chinese loan

Sri Lanka and China have signed a US\$1.5bn currency swap deal, the island nation's central bank said on Tuesday, as it struggles with a major foreign exchange crisis and debt repayments.

Colombo had been negotiating for months to secure credit from China - its largest single source of imports - as the island's foreign reserves plummet amid the pandemic.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka said the three-year swap arrangement for 10bn yuan with the People's Bank of China was 'with a view to promoting bilateral trade and direct investment for economic development of the two countries'.

Officials said talks were also under way to secure another US\$700mn from the China Development Bank.

Germany to take on billions in new borrowings

The German government will borrow a record €240bn in 2021 and break its taboo on taking on new debt again in 2022, ministry sources said as Berlin looks to soften the economic blow of the pandemic.

In budget adjustments to be put before Cabinet this week, Berlin is set to take on around a third more debt this year than initially forecast in December, with the total equivalent to US\$290bn.

Europe's largest economy will also borrow €81.5bn in 2022, breaching its so-called 'debt brake' for a third year in a row.

The limit on net new debt is a rule enshrined in the constitution which forbids the government from borrowing more than 0.35 per cent of gross domestic product in a year.

Having originally planned to halt borrowing in 2022, the government is now aiming to return to its constitutionally enshrined fiscal discipline a year later, with only €8.3bn of new debt in 2023.

Mazoon Electricity raises \$235mn through Islamic financing facility

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mazoon Electricity Company, a member of Nama Group, has raised US\$235mn through a syndicated Ijarah (Islamic financing) facility for the expansion of its electricity distribution network, according to Kuwait International Bank (KIB) which participated in the transaction as the mandated lead arranger.

'Kuwait International Bank has participated, as a mandated lead arranger, in the US\$235mn syndicated Ijarah facility for Mazoon Electricity Company in Oman, along with a consortium of local and regional banks,' KIB said in a press statement posted on its website on Tuesday.

This one-year bridge facility, which can be extended for an additional year, aims to support Mazoon's pre-approved capital expenditure plans for 2021, related to the expansion of the electricity distribution network,



KIB said.

Commenting on the successful closure of the transaction for Mazoon Electricity Company, Mohamed Khadiri, general manager of international banking and large corporate department at KIB, said, "The successful syndication of this debut Islamic facility is a major milestone in

Mazoon's efforts to tap Islamic funding. Against a backdrop of challenging market conditions, the facility was 2.4 times oversubscribed which reflects Mazoon's strong business fundamentals and confirms its strong credit appetite."

Khadiri added, "Our participation in this syndicated facility

comes as part of KIB's strategic vision to provide Islamic financing solutions to semi-government and government-affiliated entities, as well as large private conglomerates across the region."

This deal, he further said, adds to KIB's portfolio of noteworthy achievements and its

Dhofar Fisheries to set up new factory in Duqm

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dhofar Fisheries & Food Industries Company is planning to set up a fish processing plant in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm (SEZAD).

The upcoming project, which will include a full-fledged factory and a sardine cannery, is expected to start operations by 2022, Dhofar Fisheries said in its yearly financial report submitted to the Muscat Securities Market.

'This factory is being set up near to the coastal area for the utilisation of abundant supply of sardine. Incidentally, Oman's sardine resource is the third largest in the world,' Dhofar Fisheries said.

The company said its new factory, being located in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, will have many advantages that would significantly reduce the company's operating costs. It added that the construction work related to the new company in Duqm has already started.

Dhofar Fisheries said it intends to exploit Oman's strategic location to develop new products. The firm said it has potential to become an important vehicle to facilitate the conversion of local marine resources into valued added products for exports.

'The management has looked for a business model that includes a wider portfolio of products rather than depending solely

on tuna canning which is a highly competitive and low margin large volume business,' it added.

Dhofar Fisheries achieved a turnover of RO8.746mn for the year ended December 31, 2020, a 10 per cent increase compared to RO7.929mn turnover recorded in 2019. However, Dhofar Fisheries incurred a net loss of RO1.227mn for the year 2020. As of December 31, 2020, the company has recorded accumulated losses of RO8.078mn.

'The major shareholders will lift up the company's performance and drive its success and achievements of its goals by maximising the utilisation of the existing production facilities,' the company said.

Khazaen appoints new CEO

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Khazaen Economic City (KEC), the main developer of Oman's newest integrated economic city, has announced the appointment of Eng Salim bin Suleiman al Thuhli as the new CEO of the company.

Thuhli held the position of general manager of projects



Eng Salim bin Suleiman al Thuhli

and engineering at Khazaen during the past three years. He supervised the preparation and planning for Khazaen Economic City, KEC said in a press statement.

He also supervised technical studies, design and implementation of the infrastructure as well as the preparation of regulations, organisational and development laws for the city.

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability (OCGS) have launched a new landmark Code of Corporate Governance for super local community contractors (SLCCs).

The launch event, held on Tuesday at PDO's Learning and Development Centre at Mina Al Fahal, was attended by OCGS chief executive officer Sayyid Hamed bin Sultan al Busaidy, PDO's external affairs and value creation director Eng Abdul Amir bin Abdul Hussain al Ajmi, representatives from both organisations, and CEOs and chairmen of SLCCs.

SLCCs are closed Omani shareholding companies set up jointly by the government and PDO ten years ago, which are owned by more than 9,000 shareholders from PDO's concession area. These firms were established to create career opportunities and develop entrepreneurial skills to provide services to oil and gas companies in Oman in competition with other established local and international firms.

The Code of Corporate Governance, which was developed by OCGS in collaboration with



PDO, aims to provide a binding framework for corporate governance relating to the business objectives, organisation and supervision of SLCCs.

The code clearly pinpoints the roles and responsibilities of boards of directors, aims to develop a strong culture of accountability and transparency in their businesses, and enhance their knowhow in protecting shareholder interests. This will be achieved through a series of defined policies, processes and procedures to realise the main pillars of the code, which are transparency, accountability, fairness and integrity.

This code is the first of its kind in Oman to be developed for closed shareholding companies.

OCGS CEO Busaidy in a press statement said, "The OCGS is dedicated to building a stronger and more competitive economy

CBO issues treasury bills worth RO152mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tender of government treasury bills (issue number 534) was held at the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) this week. The total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO152mn, for a maturity period of 91 days (from today until June 23, 2021).

The average accepted price reached RO99.802 for every RO100 bill, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.800. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.79560 per cent and 0.79718 per cent, respectively.

It may be noted that the interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 0.5 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with the CBO is 0.75 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance.

PDO, OCGS launch code of corporate governance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability (OCGS) have launched a new landmark Code of Corporate Governance for super local community contractors (SLCCs).

The launch event, held on Tuesday at PDO's Learning and Development Centre at Mina Al Fahal, was attended by OCGS chief executive officer Sayyid Hamed bin Sultan al Busaidy, PDO's external affairs and value creation director Eng Abdul Amir bin Abdul Hussain al Ajmi, representatives from both organisations, and CEOs and chairmen of SLCCs.

SLCCs are closed Omani shareholding companies set up jointly by the government and PDO ten years ago, which are owned by more than 9,000 shareholders from PDO's concession area. These firms were established to create career opportunities and develop entrepreneurial skills to provide services to oil and gas companies in Oman in competition with other established local and international firms.

The Code of Corporate Governance, which was developed by OCGS in collaboration with

PDO, aims to provide a binding framework for corporate governance relating to the business objectives, organisation and supervision of SLCCs.

The code clearly pinpoints the roles and responsibilities of boards of directors, aims to develop a strong culture of accountability and transparency in their businesses, and enhance their knowhow in protecting shareholder interests. This will be achieved through a series of defined policies, processes and procedures to realise the main pillars of the code, which are transparency, accountability, fairness and integrity.

This code is the first of its kind in Oman to be developed for closed shareholding companies.

OCGS CEO Busaidy in a press statement said, "The OCGS is dedicated to building a stronger and more competitive economy

through streamlining corporate governance and sustainability into economic cycles and processes, by learning and leadership."

"One of the most vital steps towards building a solid and an adaptable firm is to have embedded governance practices within the company's culture, which flows smoothly across all management levels, starting from board members to operational and first line employees."

PDO's Ajmi, who gave the keynote address at the launch event, said, "I would like to congratulate SLCCs on this impressive milestone of embracing the Code of Corporate Governance. It is quite remarkable what they have accomplished to date, and the vision is to maximise the long-term value for SLCCs and their shareholders with the implementation of this new code."

White House considering \$3tn for US infrastructure: Reports

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden's administration is considering spending US\$3tn on infrastructure in the United States, split into two bills that face narrow paths to approval in Congress, US media reported.

The infrastructure plan would follow the US\$1.9tn American Rescue Plan Biden signed earlier month, which was aimed at helping the world's largest economy recover from the damage done by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biden, who took office in January, vowed to pass a second bill aimed at improving infrastructure in the United States and creating jobs, and US media reported that would likely be divided up into two proposals costing a total of US\$3tn.

"We'll use taxpayers' dollars

to rebuild America. We'll buy American products, supporting millions of American manufacturing jobs, enhancing our competitive strength in an increasingly competitive world," Biden said in the January speech announcing the two plans.

However any new measures could face tough odds in Congress, where Democrats hold a thin margin in the House and are evenly split with Republicans in the Senate, forcing them to use a special parliamentary maneuver to pass the American Rescue Plan without opposition support.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki disputed the reports, saying, "President Biden and his team are considering a range of potential options for how to invest in working families and re-



US President Joe Biden (AFP)

form our tax code so it rewards work, not wealth."

"Those conversations are ongoing, so any speculation about future economic proposals is premature and not a reflection of

the White House's thinking," she said.

Twin proposals

Citing people familiar with the proposals, US media said the

new measure would be broken up into two parts, with the first being aimed at improving infrastructure, including a US\$400bn investment in fighting climate change.

Also included would be US\$200bn for housing infrastructure, US\$100bn for low-income homes and US\$60bn for green transit networks.

The second proposal would focus on the labour force, and pay for free community college, pre-kindergarten education and paid leave.

It would also extend tax credits aimed at fighting child poverty and helping Americans afford health insurance, according to the reports.

The American Rescue Plan, along with the US\$2.2tn CARES

Act passed in March 2020 and a US\$900bn measure passed in December, have been credited with helping the US economy avoid a worse downturn after the pandemic caused mass layoffs and business closures nationwide.

Yet the expensive proposals have wreaked havoc on the national finances, sending the budget deficit to US\$3.1tn in 2020, an all-time high, which the Congressional Budget office forecasts the national debt will rise above GDP this year.

It remains unclear how Biden would pay for these plans, but the report said he could consider tax increases on corporations or the highest earners - proposals Republicans may reject.

AFP

MSM rises 0.11%; volumes down

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) rose 0.11 per cent to close at 3,736.01 points on Tuesday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 15.41 per cent to RO2.01mn and volumes fell 27.49 per cent to 11.17mn shares.

While Financial index rose 0.15 per cent, Industrial and Services indices fell 0.34 per cent and 0.14 per cent, respectively. The MSM Shariah Index closed down by 0.66 per cent at 542.98 points.

Market breadth remained negative as ten companies closed up, while 14 companies closed down. The rest 20 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Al Anwar Investment (5 per cent), Raysut Cement (2.16 per cent), Al Sharqia Investment (1.52 per



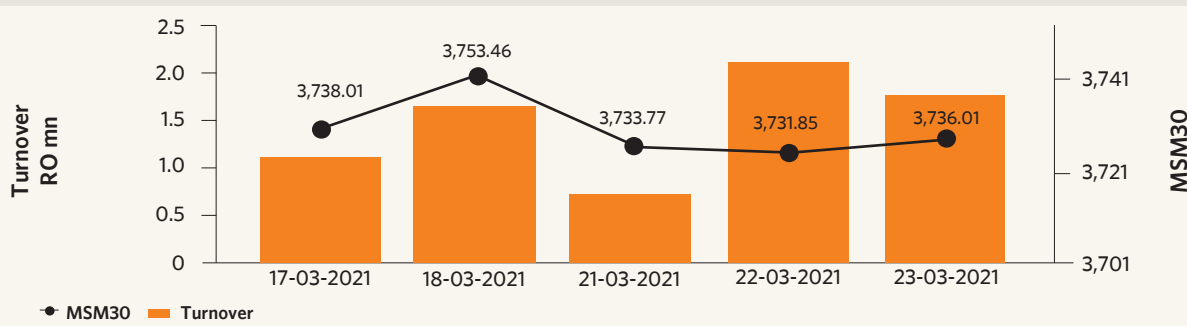
cent) and National Gas (1.5 per cent).

Top losers were Al Maha Ceramics (-6.84 per cent), National Finance (-5.3

per cent), United Finance (-2.27 per cent)

and Galfar Engineering & Contracting (-2.22 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



UAE retail sales forecast to hit \$58bn in 2021

Dubai, UAE - Retail sales in the UAE are expected to rebound and grow by 13 per cent to reach US\$58bn by the end of 2021, supported by pent up consumer demand in the second half of the year, COVID-19 vaccination efforts and Expo 2020 Dubai, new analysis from Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry has projected.

The analysis, based on recent data from Euromonitor, predicted that UAE retail sales are forecast to maintain 6.6 per cent annual growth in the medium term to reach US\$70.5bn by 2025, with store-based retailing growth forecast at a CAGR of 5.7 per cent, while non-store retailing is forecast to grow at a CAGR of 14.8 per cent.

Progress related to the UAE's vaccination campaigns is expected to boost demand in the second half of this year and attract consumers and tourists back to traditional stores. Expo 2020 Dubai, scheduled to kick off in Dubai this October, is expected to be a major catalyst for the recovery of the retail sector, in addition to the support and incentives provided by governments to business sectors at the federal and local levels.

The UAE currently leads the Middle East and North Africa region in terms of household spending on e-commerce at US\$2,554 per household, which is twice the value of the global average of US\$1,156, and four times the value of the average in the MENA region (US\$629).



Expo 2020 Dubai, scheduled to kick off in Dubai this October, is expected to be a major catalyst for the recovery of the retail sector, in addition to the support and incentives provided by governments to business sectors

According to JLL, Dubai saw 110,000 sqm of retail gross leasable area (GLA) completed in 2020, which brings the emirate's total retail stock to 4.2mn sqm.

Meanwhile, Abu Dhabi retail

space stock remained unchanged at 2.8mn sqm. During 2021, Dubai is expected to see 761,000 sqm of retail GLA added to the market, while 293,000 of new retail GLA is expected in Abu Dhabi by the end of the year.

As new retail space in the UAE continues to come online in the short term, the market has become more favourable to tenants, due to expected lower rents and more available options, a trend which should support the recovery of retail businesses.

The analysis added that the COVID-led digital shift has created new growth opportunities for regional expansion for traditional retail and e-commerce companies based in the UAE, especially in markets with large populations, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco.

WAM

Qatar signs LNG supply deal with China

Doha Qatar - Qatar Petroleum on Monday entered into a ten year LNG sale and purchase agreement (SPA) with China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) for the supply of 2mn tonnes per annum of LNG to the People's Republic of China.

The SPA was signed by Saad Sherida al Kaabi, the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, the president and CEO of Qatar Petroleum, and Zhang Yuzhuo, the chairman of Sinopec Group, during a virtual ceremony attended by senior officials from both sides, according to a press release posted on Qatar Petroleum website.

Under the agreement, LNG deliveries will commence in January 2022, and will be delivered to Sinopec's LNG terminals in China. This SPA further demonstrates Qatar's continued commitment to meeting the growing energy demand of its customers globally in the form of reliable long term LNG supplies.

Commenting on this occasion, Kaabi said, "In a step that will further solidify the excellent bilateral relations between the People's Republic of China and



Qatar, we are delighted to enter into this historic long term LNG SPA. We are also proud of the fact that this agreement will be Sinopec's first long term LNG SPA from Qatar, and we are hopeful that it will mark the start of a long and fruitful partnership with Sinopec. Our LNG relationship with China dates back to 2009, when we started supplying LNG through a host of LNG SPAs with a number of our valued Chinese partners. This SPA will further supplement Qatar's contribution in meeting China's growing energy needs and we look forward to commencing deliveries

under the agreement."

"This SPA also illustrates our position in the market as a reliable and trust-worthy LNG supplier, and we are grateful to all our customers around the world who select us as their LNG supplier of choice," Kaabi added.

Yuzhuo said, "Sinopec has been a strong advocate for cleaner and greener development. The signing of the long term LNG SPA with Qatar Petroleum is a further step by Sinopec to deliver its commitment to sustainability while meeting the growing needs of the Chinese market. We believe achieving

carbon emission peak and carbon neutrality are responsibilities of the energy industry and call for transformation. We are proud to team up with Qatar Petroleum, one of the premier suppliers in the industry, to supply cleaner energy to China. We are also excited to begin a new journey of more comprehensive cooperation with Qatar Petroleum in the years to come."

Khalid bin Khalifa al Thani, CEO of Qatargas, said, "This landmark agreement comes as a boost to the existing relationship with our Chinese customers. As the World's Premier LNG Company, Qatargas is committed to meeting the clean energy needs of customers around the globe who depend on reliable LNG deliveries."

Since the first LNG delivery in September 2009 to date, Qatar has supplied China with more than 62mn tonnes of LNG. China is a key and strategic energy partner for Qatar throughout the entire energy value chain. It is also a main driver of the growth in the global LNG market as the government adopts increasingly progressive environmental policies.

Powell sees 'strengthening' US recovery

Washington, US - The US recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic 'looks to be strengthening', US Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell said on Monday, but vowed the central bank would continue its efforts to aid racial minorities and other groups hurt most by the downturn.

In testimony released ahead of his appearance before the House Financial Services Committee, Powell underscored that the central bank would continue policies like zero interest rates that it rolled out to aid the economy as the pandemic hit.

Those measures, together with massive government spending approved by Congress, have helped keep the US economy from an even worse downturn, though fears that an improving economy could cause the Fed to raise rates have hurt Wall Street stocks in recent weeks.

Powell acknowledged that the economic recovery 'has pro-



Jerome Powell

gressed more quickly than generally expected', which he credited to 'unprecedented fiscal and monetary policy actions' that kept businesses afloat.

"However, the sectors of the economy most adversely affected by the resurgence of the virus, and by greater social distancing, remain weak, and the unemployment rate - still elevated at 6.2 per cent - underestimates the shortfall," Powell said.

"We welcome this progress, but will not lose sight of the mil-

lions of Americans who are still hurting, including lower-wage workers in the services sector, African Americans, Hispanics, and other minority groups that have been especially hard hit."

Inflation fears

As the COVID-19 pandemic began, the Fed cut its benchmark lending rate to zero and rolled out trillions of dollars in liquidity measures to keep markets afloat.

Powell noted that many of those programmes have already closed or 'are following suit imminently', while saying one supporting the Paycheck Protection Program of loans and grants to small businesses has been extended for another quarter.

Markets in recent weeks have struggled as traders sold off bonds, sending yields up, amid fears that a US\$1.9tn stimulus plan President Joe Biden signed earlier this month would overheat the economy and cause inflation, making the Fed raise rates.

Bond yields however pulled back on Monday, sending hard-hit tech stocks higher at the close.

In the testimony released after trading finished, Powell signaled no changes to the Fed's policy of letting inflation rise to a sustained 2 per cent level before hiking rates, only reiterating that "We are committed to using our full range of tools to support the economy."

In her released testimony ahead of Tuesday, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said she was 'confident that people will reach the other side of this pandemic with the foundations of their lives intact'.

"And I believe they will be met there by a growing economy. In fact, I think we may see a return to full employment next year."

She said one-in-ten homeowners with a mortgage were behind on their payments, and almost one-in-five renters were behind on their rent.

AFF

Mubadala, Abu Dhabi Catalyst invest \$150mn in Telegram

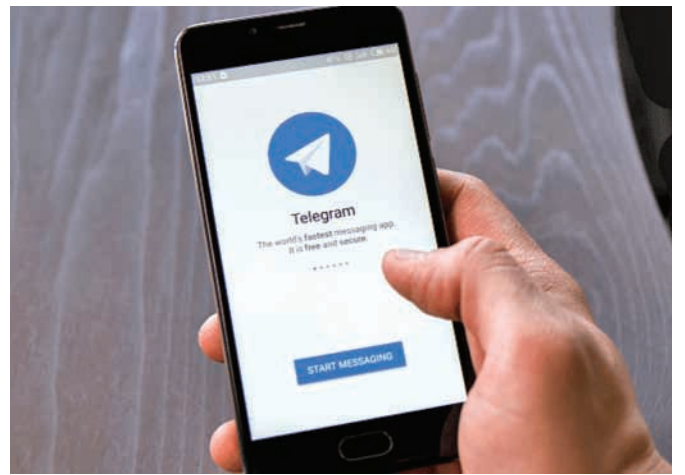
Abu Dhabi, UAE - Mubadala Investment Company, the Abu Dhabi-based sovereign investor, has invested US\$75mn in five year pre-IPO convertible bonds of Telegram, an operator of the self-named security-focused social media platform, with Abu Dhabi Catalyst Partners (ADCP) investing a further US\$75mn.

The strategic partnership between the companies is also expected to create new collaboration opportunities and thereby further advance Abu Dhabi's ecosystem of innovative and tech-enabled companies.

Launched in 2013 by brothers Pavel and Nikolai Durov as a secure messaging app utilising end-to-end encryption, Telegram evolved into a fully-fledged social media platform and has its global headquarters in the UAE. It has become one of the ten most downloaded apps in the world with over 500mn monthly active users.

Faris Sohail Faris al Mazrui, head of Mubadala's Russia and CIS Investment Programme, said, "We recognise and admire Pavel's vision for the company and the team's execution in building an exceptional product and company. His unwavering focus on user experience and privacy, and how it is central to every business decision he makes, is one of the keys to Telegram's popularity and success. Telegram's user base has reached a critical mass that places it amongst global tech giants."

"We believe that Telegram is well-positioned for an inflection point that will transform it into a leading global technology com-



pany. The company represents a very promising investment opportunity for Mubadala and will sit well within our wider portfolio of pioneering companies looking to transform their respective industries. Our investment in Telegram establishes a strategic partnership for us to further strengthen Abu Dhabi's technology ecosystem as well as bring new levels of tech skills and talent to the capital," Mazrui added.

Pavel Durov, founder and CEO of Telegram, added, "We are honoured by the US\$150mn investment into Telegram from Mubadala and Abu Dhabi Catalyst Partners. We look forward to developing this strategic partnership to continue our growth in the MENA region and globally."

James Munce, CFO and COO of Abu Dhabi Catalyst Partners, said, "Over the past seven years, Telegram usage has grown from zero to 500mn monthly active users. This demonstrates the management team's unshakable dedication to building a platform centred around privacy and user experience. We believe this

creates a strong value proposition and will be a focal point for social media platforms and a new era of messaging."

"ADCP strives to partner with businesses that demonstrate strong growth trajectories globally, and that can bolster an evolving technology ecosystem in Abu Dhabi and the ADGM. We aim to use our resources to work hand-in-hand with management teams towards catalysing leading platforms in different industries at the cutting edge. We see a very attractive opportunity to do this with Telegram," Munce said.

In recent years, Mubadala has been expanding its focus on the technology sector through a strategy of direct and fund-of-fund investing from early-stage venture capital to growth.

Over the past 12 months, it has made a number of global technology investments in category leaders including the autonomous driving technology company Waymo, AliExpress and Jio Platforms, to name just a few.

WAM

Double your salary with BankDhofar scheme



Aiming to reward customers transferring their salary to BankDhofar, the bank announced, 'Double Your Salary' scheme. All customers transferring their salary into their savings account or current account from March 1 onwards will be eligible to enter an exclusive prize draw and get a chance to double their salaries to up to RO2,000.

Commenting on the scheme, Dr Tariq Taha, chief retail banking officer at BankDhofar, said, "This scheme translates our endeavour to provide the best services, products and offers to our customers, and to meet their financial needs. Therefore, we intend to reward our customers having a salary transfer by providing them the chance to win back an equivalent salary and hence double their salaries. For instance, if a customer transfers a salary of RO500 and



he wins the draw, he will get back an additional RO500 from the bank. Another customer who has transferred salary of RO1,000, will win back an additional RO1,000 from the bank and so on.

"Double Your Salary scheme will provide the chance for 20 customers per month to double their salaries up to a maximum of RO2000. We are looking forward to welcoming customers

transferring their salary to the bank and this is our way of thanking them."

All customers having a savings or current account and transferring their salary to BankDhofar, starting from March 2021, will be eligible to enter the draws.

BankDhofar will conduct monthly draws where 20 salaried-transferred customers will get the chance to double

their salaries to up to RO2,000 per month. This is in addition to the Savings Account prize draw scheme.

In addition to the Double Your Salary scheme, the bank has launched special Savings Account Scheme for 2021. The Savings Account Scheme 2021 offers guaranteed prizes for every branch, bigger prizes, and more winners. With a total of more than RO2,000,000, BankDhofar will conduct Monthly Guaranteed Prizes for all branches, segments draw including, Children prize draws, Youth prize draws and Amaan Retirees Banking Services' prize draws.

Additionally, the bank will conduct prize draws on special occasions including, Omani Woman's Day Prizes draw, and National Day Prizes draw. As for Al Riadah Priority Banking Services' customers, the scheme will offer exclusive Al Riadah Prestige Monthly Prizes, Mid-Year Grand Prize and Year-End Grand Prizes.

To learn more, check-out BankDhofar pages on social media; Facebook (www.facebook.com/BankDhofar), Twitter (@BankDhofar), Instagram (www.instagram.com/BankDhofar), or visit the official website www.BankDhofar.com or contact the call centre 24/7 on (+968) 24791111 for inquiries.

Bank Muscat Premier cards offer convenience, privileges

In line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to secure and convenient electronic payment options for customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, has encouraged all its valued Premier Banking customers to take full advantage of its wide range of Credit and Debit Cards for their daily needs. Bank Muscat's Premier Banking clientele have the advantage of being able to benefit from differentiated and specialised services across Private Banking, Asalah Priority banking and Al Jawhar Privilege banking.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdulnasser al Raisi, deputy general manager - Premier Banking, said, "The exclusive Bank Muscat Premier Banking experience is based on Recognition, Rewards and Solutions, which helps the bank set benchmarks for personal and relationship-based banking in Oman. We request our valued customers to take full advantage of these innovative services and features, which are available to them through Bank Muscat Premier Banking Credit cards and make the best use of them.

"The bank promises to continue launching new features and innovations in response to customer needs and feedback in line with its customer-centric vision."

The Private Banking Visa Platinum Debit Card features a daily cash withdrawal limit of RO1,500 and daily card purchase limit of RO30,000. It also facilitates ex-



clusive 2-for-1 deals on food, entertainment and shopping in addition to many travel discounts.

Customers can download the 'Visa Offers MENA' app from the App Store or Play Store and register with their Visa Platinum Debit Card or their Visa Infinite Credit Card number. The Private Banking Visa Infinite Credit Card has a high credit limit starting at RO15,000. It provides 1 per cent cash back on purchases as well as a large number of other benefits including a Global Concierge Service and complimentary chauffeur service up to Muscat International Airport six times a year.

The Asalah Priority banking experience is driven by its Platinum Visa Debit Cards with daily ATM withdrawals up to RO1,000. It also provides access to the Asalah Entertainer App with its more than 3,500 'Buy 1, Get 1 Free' offers having a value of over RO48,000 covering dining, family entertainment, hotels and beauty and health in Oman, UAE,

London and other international destinations. Debit card holders are eligible for a number of exclusive discount offers at retail, dining and beauty and fitness outlets.

Asalah Visa Signature Credit Cardholders are eligible for 1 per cent cash back on all credit card transactions, a Global Concierge Service, multi-trip travel insurance, complimentary chauffeur service to and from the new Muscat International Airport, 12 complimentary visits to more than 1,000 airport lounges worldwide in addition to lounge visits at Muscat and Salalah airports, a complimentary Dragon Pass, and access to a collection of over 900 luxury hotels with value-added benefits.

Designed around unique lifestyle and banking requirements, Al Jawhar is a first-of-its-kind privilege banking service in Oman. Al Jawhar customers can also download and activate the 'Visa Offers MENA' app from the App Store or Play Store to enjoy a number of exclusive 2-for-1 deals on food, entertainment and shopping as well as travel discounts using their Al Jawhar Platinum Visa Debit Card. They also enjoy a higher ATM withdrawal limit up to RO800. Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Cardholders will be delighted to know that they will receive 1% cashback as reward on their purchases.

For more details please go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/premierbanking/Pages/default.aspx>.



Oman Cyber Security Conference raises the alarm on digital threats

Under the auspices of H E Dr Said bin Mohammed bin Ahmed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, the first Oman Cyber Security Conference was launched on Monday morning under the title 'Cyber Security Inspired by Oman Vision 2040'

The conference was organised by Al Roya newspaper in partnership with Oman Data Park and the Electronic Defense Center.

The conference aimed to present what looks like a parallel action map for what was disclosed by the goals and priorities of the Oman Vision 2040, by presenting solutions directed to digital work and methodology for

information protection and security, and to formulate unconventional ideas that support comprehensive digital transformation plans, and achieve knowledge empowerment and skills for society. The conference brought together a group of specialists and experts in the field of cybersecurity and information technology, as well as working papers and extensive discussion sessions.

The conference started with a welcoming speech by Hatim bin Hamad al Taie, editor-in-chief of Al Roya newspaper, chairman of the Conference Organising Committee. He highlighted the importance of this conference, in

light of the unprecedented challenges and cyberthreats facing the world. Cybersecurity is no longer just that simple concept of protecting computers from viruses or others, rather, the matter has become a major and integrated security system, no less important than the traditional security system.

Eng Maqbool al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park, delivered the keynote speech for the conference. He said cybersecurity will be the third largest economy in the world after the US and China, and that it will grow by 15 per cent annually over the next five years, to reach US\$10.5tn by 2025.

Zubair SEC takes part in lectures, workshops at Higher College of Technology, Salalah

Zubair Small Enterprises Centre (Zubair SEC) participated in a series of lectures and workshops at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Salalah with an intention to create an entrepreneurial mindset among students and young people.

Zubair SEC, in collaboration with educational institutions and civil bodies, has been providing young people in the county with basic knowledge and experience to increase their awareness of the business world with an intention to nurture a new generation of entrepreneurial thinkers.

Offering a comprehensive entrepreneurship discourse, Adel Hubaishi, executive manager of Zubair SEC, presented a series of lectures explaining the mechanism of using practical tools for innovation.

The first lecture dealt with the design Thinking tool and stressed on the importance of empathy, identification of problems, generation of ideas, design of the prototype and the test. The session deliberated on iden-



tifying the real problems experienced by the targeted group through pattern analysis. In light of this, problems were identified, and ideas were generated, and the product/service mechanism was designed.

The workshops dealt with the business model innovation which is the promotion of unique concepts to support a company's financial viability, mission, and the processes for bringing those concepts to fruition.

The session focused on the business model canvas which is based on nine basic building blocks including customer segments, value propositions, types

of channels, customer relations, sources of income, key resources, key activities, key partnerships and cost structure.

Hubaishi said, "We participate in these lecture and workshops to prepare students to be enterprising individuals who can be inspired to become entrepreneurs. By attending these sessions students can learn in practical way to be entrepreneurial by exploring, questioning assumptions, using imagination and integrating information. We focussed on how businesses interact with their customers, how companies innovate, and on the business models that organisa-

tions are built around."

He also reiterated that incorporating entrepreneurship into the curriculum can develop knowledge, skills and attitudes in students that develop entrepreneurial competency.

Dr Husam bin Ahmed Basid-diq, head of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Department at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Salalah, said, "I am pleased to see that some institutions direct their social responsibilities towards developing entrepreneurs and small enterprises to support government efforts in promoting entrepreneurship and sustainable economic and social development in the sultanate.

The Zubair Corporation through Zubair SEC has not only supported small enterprises but has also extended its contributions and backing to university students. The students at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Salalah has benefited from the number of enriching lectures presented by the Zubair SEC."

Modelcraft completes rebranding to Craft

Modelcraft, a leading experiential event, museum and exhibition design company in Saudi Arabia, announced a rebrand to Craft unveiling its new logo, website and vision that solidifies the company's stance as a major player of innovative, market leading experiential solutions.

Established in Australia in 1989, Craft moved its operations to Saudi Arabia in 2008 to serve local and international clients.

Establishing itself as a major presence in the fast growing and highly demanding experiential Saudi Arabian market, Craft has achieved an enviable reputation by delivering several high-profile permanent and temporary projects including the design and



build of JAXO1, the Riyadh Metro Visitor Centre, the 2019 King Fahad Exhibition and Digital City permanent high-tech lighting display.

Since their establishment in Saudi Arabia over a decade ago,

Craft has strongly prided itself on delivering premium services and being the vanguard of creative solutions for its clients no matter the project scale.

Craft's rapid expansion across all areas of experiential development has led to the company's rebranding to reflect that growth.

Orazio Moretti, CEO / Craft, Saudi Arabia said, "Today we're taking the opportunity to evolve our brand in order to better communicate the breadth of expertise that Craft truly represents and realign with our refined value proposition and vision.

"This strategic rebrand represents a significant transformation in the company's evolution. Our expertise goes far beyond our original design and model-

making roots - we are in the experience industry, bringing to life entertainment, corporate and government initiatives.

Our brand ethos has always been built on trust, credibility and delivering innovative solutions exceeding our clients' expectations, put simply, we go beyond the imaginable to craft unforgettable experiences."

Craft's commitment to local training guarantees a legacy of premium delivery of service through a highly skilled team that can adapt in line with industry standards and today's ever-changing environment.

The company's full-service capabilities cover digital, museums, events, galleries, models, exhibitions, etc.

VAT ANNOUNCEMENT APEX PRESS AND PUBLISHING

In compliance with the Royal Decree 121/2020 of 12 October 2020, we are happy to inform that Apex Press and Publishing is henceforth a VAT registered entity.

Please note our VAT related details for future transactions

LEGAL NAME

Apex Press and Publishing

VATIN

OM1100044223

CR NUMBER

1101277

POSTAL ADDRESS

P O Box 2616, Ruwi 112

TAX CARD NO

8083820

EFFECTIVE DATE

16th April 2021

Al Hail Views by Takween, Tibiaan Properties



Fahad al Ismaili

Universal Construction (Takween) and Tibiaan Properties recently announced the launch of a new project ‘Al Hail Views’ in a premium location on Sultan Qaboos Street. The project is considered as one of the new modern state-of-the-art real estate projects that has unique features making it a new architectural icon.

Al Hail Views consists of a collection of 91 apartments of one and two bedrooms designed with high-quality finishes and several spaces. It also consists of eight shops located on the main road.

Several factors have been taken into consideration in developing the project to provide an exceptional experience to the owners for a modern lifestyle meeting all their needs.

It is located few minutes away from Al Hail beach and close by several commercial malls, schools and private and public establishments.



Saif Sulaiman al Rashdi, CEO of Takween said, “From the start we have believed in delivering a high-end real estate project with

modern designs that take in consideration the beauty aspects, energy consumption and environmental lifestyle. We also en-

sured the project is to be developed in a unique location on Sultan Qaboos Street as an added value to the investors. Our col-

laboration with Tibiaan properties to be the exclusive sales agent comes from creating a valuable customer experience

from what the company has from long market experience and huge data base of clients in the sultanate and abroad.”



Saif Sulaiman al Rashdi

Speaking about the project, Fahad al Ismaili, CEO of Tibiaan Properties, said, “Tibiaan always strives to provide excellent projects to its clients and works in line with the developers in the sultanate to deliver projects that meet with the investors needs.

“Al Hail Views is one of the excellent projects that we are happy to be working with Takween which took the smallest details in ensuring the project delivers a real value to its owner.”

The project is considered to be a golden chance for the investors and those who are looking to own a unique property. The project also provides an attractive payment plan for initial buyers that extends to 24 months.

It is to be highlighted that Al Hail Views contains a distinguished rooftop jogging track that allows its owners the ability to exercises in a safe place which is developed with latest modern finishes.

Sohar International support for documentary series

Reaffirming its commitment towards endorsing the sultanate’s socio-economic activities, Sohar International has sponsored a documentary series that seeks to uncover the sultanate’s diversified wildlife, thereby boosting tourism and conservation activities in the country in line with Oman Vison 2040.

The epic exploration project initiated by Oman in Focus under the title Not Discovered Yet will cover 12 landmark tourist destinations and encompasses a one-hour documentary - *The Shoreline of Oman* and a Blue Chip - two-part documentary series called *Wild Oman*, that will capture the essence of Oman’s beaches, rare land and marine wildlife, carrying the audience on an extraordinary exploration of all corners of our fascinating country, from the top of the desolate escarpment to the bottom of some of world’s richest seas.

Elaborating on Sohar International’s commitment to the nation, Mohammed Mahfoudh al Ardhi, chairman, Sohar International, said, “As a socially responsible bank, it is well within our strategic outlook to sponsor initiatives such as ‘Not Discovered Yet’ initiative that highlights and places this beautiful nation



on the international world map for wild life tourism and conservative efforts.

“With international expertise and a local flavour, the potential outcome of this initiative will not only highlight the diversified abundant wild life Oman has to offer, but will also provide an avenue for young Omanis to pursue their passions in exploration, film-making, conservation, and beyond providing economic impetus to the country.”

In the one-hour, high quality, documentary - *The Shoreline of Oman* - the InFocus team will explore the wonders of the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, its islands and shores, and reveal the story of iconic marine life - turtles, whales, dolphins and sharks.

The two-part *Wild Oman* series, a first-ever showcase of the sultanate’s natural beauty, will be packed with Oman’s impressive habitats and wildlife - unique and vitally important regions, home to hundreds of thousands of marine and terrestrial creatures.

The documentaries are expected to air on two international channels mid of year 2022.

Maissa al Hooti, managing director, Oman InFocus, said, “In collaboration with well-known international channels and support of government and private institutions such as Sohar International, Oman InFocus has embarked on a journey to unravel the diversified beauty of Oman, exploring various local marine life.”

OPAZ introduces programme to promote role of entrepreneurship in free zones

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and the Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development (SMEDA) signed on March 23 a technical cooperation programme aimed to promote the role of entrepreneurship in the special economic zones and free zones. The programme serves as a platform introducing small and medium enterprises to the business opportunities available in these zones.

The programme was signed by Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, deputy chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, and Halima bint Rashid al Zaria, chairperson of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA).

This outstanding programme aims to benefit from the expertise of the Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development as a strategic partner in developing entrepreneurship in the different special economic zones and free zones.

Further, it intends to utilise the powers of OPAZ to overcome the challenges that may come across SMEs in all these zones.

On the other hand, the pro-



gramme plans to establish a platform specialised in creating innovative tasks from large projects.

It also recommends opening a service outlet for the Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development in OPAZ headquarters.

This outlet will mainly serve entrepreneurs to make the most of all the various opportunities offered by the special economic zones and free zones.

Likewise, this cooperation programme endorses conducting a joint study between the two

government bodies on the sultanate’s markets to find out the supply, demand and gaps. Both parties will jointly observe the imported products and materials from overseas, each according to its competences.

Accordingly, the authorities will work on creating investment opportunities that serve SMEs through the establishment of factories in the special economic and free zones in order to produce these imported products and materials. In addition, they will contribute in providing busi-

ness opportunities for projects from construction stage to running operations and working strategically throughout the projects’ phases.

Moreover, the cooperation programme also includes providing consultation, supervision and training services to SMEs.

As well, it allows benefiting from events and exhibitions organised for SMEs in the different governorates around the sultanate, and establishing incubators, accelerators and business centres too.

NU Sohar Campus to get 150-bed premium girls’ dormitory

National University of Science & Technology, a ‘Place to Study, Learn & Grow’, has embarked upon many infrastructure projects to enhance the student experience.

One such project is the 150-bed high-class Premium Studio Rooms for its girl students at the College of Medicine Sohar Campus.

The premium all-girls dormitory aims at integrating learning, community and housing. This will serve as a quality mixed-use housing facility, assuring students of an attractive lifestyle than seamlessly binds communal spaces drawing students out of their rooms and improving the



prospects of new experiences and connections.

The Girls’ Dormitory in Sohar College of Medicine campus provides international and Omani students with state-of-the-art facilities which includes but not limited to the following.

- 150 Premium Studio Rooms
- High-end gym facility
- Collaborative workspaces
- Indoor games
- Two internal courtyard and shaded walkways
- Enhance lifestyle attractive with an amazing ambience

The new facility increases the chances of a student’s well-being and success and is ideally suited for living and learning communi-

ties. The inclusion of creative specialty communal spaces, stimulating circulation and increase student interaction. It enhances both the social and mental well-being of residents, encourages existing students to live on the campus for longer.

Open walkways, the sound of water from a nearby pond and carefully scaled courtyards provide an airy and bright counterpoint to the double-loaded corridors and the inward focusing character of a structure. The on-campus Girls Dormitory blur the lines between a traditional classroom and a traditional residence hall and create a dynamic student experience.

15 killed in Rohingya camp fire

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh - Fifteen people have died and 400 are missing after a huge fire destroyed the shanty homes of tens of thousands of Rohingya in the world's biggest refugee settlement in Bangladesh, the UN said on Tuesday.

Nearly one million of the persecuted Muslim minority - many of whom escaped a 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar that UN investigators concluded was executed with 'genocidal intent' - live in squalid conditions at the network of camps in the southeastern Cox's Bazar district.

The fire broke out on Monday and left at least 50,000 people homeless as it ripped through their flimsy bamboo-and-tarpaulin shelters, according to police and aid groups. Terrified families fled with whatever they could carry, with distraught children separated from their children in the rush.

It was just the latest blaze in recent weeks - and the biggest since 2017. Bangladesh has ordered a probe.

"People ran for their lives as it spread fast. Many were injured and I saw at least four bodies," said Aminul Haq, a refugee.

Johannes Van der Klaauw, the UN Refugee Agency's representative in Bangladesh, said that so far it has confirmed 15 people dead, 560 injured, 400 missing and at least 10,000 shelters destroyed.

"What we have seen in this fire is something we have never seen before in these camps. It is massive. It is devastating," Van



Devastated Rohingya refugee camp after a huge blaze forced around 50,000 people to flee, in Bangladesh's Ukhia on Tuesday (AFP)

der Klaauw told reporters in Geneva via videolink.

Officials said the blaze appeared to have started in one of the 34 camps - which span about 3,200 hectares of land - before spreading rapidly to three other sites despite desperate efforts to put out the flames.

Thick columns of smoke could be seen billowing from blazing shanties in a video shared on social media, as hundreds of firefighters and aid workers pulled refugees to safety.

Firefighters finally brought the blaze under control around midnight.

Unable to flee

Police inspector Gazi Salahuddin said the fire grew after gas cylinders used for cooking exploded.

Mohammad Yasin, a Rohingya helping with the firefight, told AFP the blaze raged for more than 10 hours and was the worst he had seen.

A volunteer for Save the Children, Tayeba Begum, said, "Children were running, crying for their families."

Refugees International said in a statement: 'Many children are missing, and some were unable to flee because of barbed-wire set up in the camps.' This was

echoed by Myo Min Khan, a Rohingya, who wrote on Facebook: 'We were unable to flee because of the fence, my youngest daughter got injured badly'.

Police rejected the accusation, saying only a tiny part of the camp was fenced.

AFP

Unseated Turkey opposition MP appeals to top court

Ankara, Turkey - A Turkish opposition party MP said on Tuesday he had applied to the Constitutional Court to cancel the decision to revoke his seat over a conviction related to a social media post.

Omer Faruk Gergerlioglu was an outspoken rights advocate and MP for the pro-Kurdish leftist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) before he was expelled from parliament last week.

The HDP is Turkey's second-largest opposition party but faces closure since a prosecutor demanded a top court shut down the group last week.

Critics question the judiciary's independence and analysts expect the HDP to either be banned or have its access to state aid as a party blocked by the top court.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has long portrayed the HDP as the political front of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an accusation the party denies.

The PKK, which has been waging an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984, is proscribed a terrorist group by Ankara and its Western allies.

AFP

Junta defends crackdown, vows to stop 'anarchy' in Myanmar

Yangon, Myanmar - Myanmar's junta on Tuesday defended its seven-week crackdown that has left more than 260 democracy protesters dead, insisting it would not tolerate 'anarchy'.

The junta has unleashed deadly violence as it struggles to quell nationwide protests against the February 1 ousting of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

In a news conference in the capital Naypyidaw, junta spokesman Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun put the death toll lower at 164.

"I am sad because these violent terrorist people who died are our nationals," he said.

The streets of towns and cities across the country have seen chaotic scenes for weeks as security forces clash with protesters demanding the restoration of democracy and the release of Suu Kyi.

The authorities have used tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds to disperse protests, prompting a senior UN rights expert to warn they may be



This screengrab shows junta spokesman Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun speaking during a news conference, in Naypyidaw on Tuesday (AFP)

committing 'crimes against humanity'.

But despite widespread international condemnation, Zaw Min Tun defended the response, saying that the security forces were dealing with 'insurgents holding weapons' and five police and four soldiers had been killed.

"We have to crack down on the anarchy. Which countries in the world accept anarchy?" he said.

Despite the bloodshed, protesters took to the streets again on Tuesday, staging dawn demonstrations in parts of the commercial capital Yangon.

As well as breaking up protests, the military has sought to stem the flow of news about the crackdown, banning several local media outlets and arresting dozens of journalists.

Mobile data networks are suspended and Zaw Min Tun said

there were presently no plans to restore them.

Suu Kyi, not seen in public since being detained on February 1, is facing several criminal charges as well as allegations of accepting illegal payments of gold and cash.

Sean Turnell, an Australian advisor to the 75 year old Nobel laureate, is being investigated under immigration and state secrets laws, the junta spokesman announced Tuesday.

Turnell, an economist and university professor, was the first foreign national arrested following the coup.

International pressure is building on the regime, with the European Union on Monday imposing sanctions on junta chief General Min Aung Hlaing and ten other senior officials.

The bloc said that as commander-in-chief, Min Aung Hlaing was 'directly responsible' for 'serious human rights violations' carried out during the crackdown.

AFP

Five dead in stampede while mourning Tanzania's Magufuli

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - A woman and four children were killed in a stampede in Tanzania as crowds rushed to mourn the death of Tanzania's President John Magufuli at the weekend, a relative told AFP on Tuesday.

A second woman was also missing after going to Uhuru Stadium in Dar es Salaam on Sunday, where tens of thousands gathered to mourn Magufuli whose sudden death after a mysterious short illness was announced last week.

"They went to bid farewell at the stadium, but it turned tragic when there was a stampede," Gerald Mtuwa, a relative of the dead woman, told AFP by phone from Dar es Salaam.

The children were aged between five and 12 years old, he said. The woman killed was mother to two of them, while the other two were her nephews.

Mtuwa said the family has checked hospitals and morgues in the financial capital for the missing woman, but she has not been found and the family fear the worst.



Tanzanians mourn during the national funeral of the Late President John Magufuli at Uhuru Stadium, in Dar es Salaam (AFP)

The stampede occurred as mourners crammed the streets around the stadium where Magufuli's casket was in state at the weekend.

The government announced on March 17 that Magufuli (61) had died from a long-running heart condition and declared 21 days of mourning. But the announcement followed a mysterious absence of almost three weeks and questions remain over the true cause of his death, which the opposition has said

was from COVID-19.

Magufuli was a COVID-sceptic, a stance which saw Tanzania refuse to issue data on the disease or take any measures to curb the spread of the virus.

His deputy Samia Suluhu Hassan was sworn in on Friday to become Tanzania's first female president. Magufuli was given a state funeral on Monday in Dodoma at a ceremony attended by African leaders from across the continent.

AFP

'Catastrophic' Australia floods prompt helicopter, jet ski rescues

Windsor, Australia - Military helicopters, jet skis and rubber boats were deployed to rescue people stranded by 'catastrophic' floods along Australia's populous east coast on Tuesday, with thousands of homes damaged.

A relentless week-long downpour has soaked most of New South Wales, causing surging rivers to burst their banks; swallowing homes, roads, bridges and farmland.

Strained emergency services - which just one year ago were battling drought and unprecedented bushfires - used military aircraft and lightweight rubber

dinghies to access cut-off communities.

So far, around 850 people have been winched or ferried to safety, but tens of thousands have been told to flee their homes and wild weather has spread to more inland areas.

In hard-hit Windsor, near Sydney, residents traversed the murky debris-strewn torrent on jet skis and other vessels normally seen off the city's golden beaches.

Some coastal regions have received a metre of water in a week, the equivalent of two-thirds of normal annual rainfall.



Members of the State Emergency Service and police personnel transport medical supplies and relief goods for flood-affected residents during rescue operations in Windsor in northwestern Sydney on Tuesday (AFP)

"We've never seen anything like this ever," said 50 year old Jodie Sallustio, who has been stranded by floodwaters surrounding her partner's Port Macquarie home since Friday.

About 18,000 people have already been evacuated across New South Wales, with state Premier Gladys Berejiklian saying the wild weather was now 'impacting a huge area of the state'.

"It is catastrophic in its dimensions and the impact will be severe, and the fact that 15,000 people may need to be evacuated within the next 24 to 48 hours is a huge concern," she said.

In parts of the state, residents have begun looking to clean-up efforts but meteorologists have warned that flooding will persist for days even though rainfall is forecast to ease on Wednesday.

Thousands remain without power and energy providers warned electricity will not be restored in some areas until later in the week.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the Warragamba Dam, Sydney's main drinking water source, was expected to continue spilling over into already swollen rivers for another week.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Germany to enter strict Easter shutdown amid surging rates

Berlin, Germany - Germany will enter a strict shutdown for five days over Easter amid surging virus rates, Chancellor Angela Merkel and regional leaders agreed on Tuesday as criticism mounted over the government's handling of the pandemic.

As well as extending existing measures including keeping cultural, leisure and sporting facilities shut through to April 18, Merkel and Germany's 16 state premiers ordered a tougher shutdown between April 1 and 5.

Almost all shops will be closed during the five days, and religious services will be moved online over Easter. Only grocers will be allowed to open on Saturday April 3.

"The situation is serious. Case numbers are rising exponentially and intensive care beds are filling up again," said Merkel.

The British variant has become the dominant strain circulating in Germany, she said, noting: "We are in a new pandemic."

"Essentially, we have a new virus... it is much deadlier, much more infectious and infectious for much longer," the veteran leader said.

Vice-chancellor Olaf Scholz told public broadcaster ZDF it was 'right to use the period of Easter to pull on the brakes'.

But patience is running thin in



Armin Laschet, Minister-President of the North Rhine-Westphalia state, addresses the media after Chancellor Merkel's consultations with the state premiers, in North Rhine-Westphalia, Dusseldorf on Tuesday (AFP)

Germany over a sluggish vaccine rollout, a delayed start to mass rapid testing and higher infection numbers despite months of shutdowns, with support for Merkel's Christian Democratic Union party at its lowest level for a year.

Europe's top economy will elect a new government in September, as Merkel is retiring after 16 years in power.

Der Spiegel news magazine called the government's repeated focus on tweaking shutdowns a 'scandal', claiming it had 'completely the wrong priorities' and should instead focus on improving its vaccination campaign and test strategy.

'This three-week lockdown rhythm confirms the suspicion that the federal government and states are simply trying to play

a catch up game they have already lost,' the conservative daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* said.

Dietmar Bartsch, a leading MP from the far-left opposition party Die Linke, said on Tuesday the chancellor and her ministers 'should apologise to citizens' for the missteps.

Germany registered 7,485 new infections in 24 hours on

Tuesday, with 250 new deaths and an incidence rate of 108.1 new cases per 100,000 people over seven days, according to the Robert Koch Institute health agency. The country had begun easing restrictions, first reopening schools in late February, before allowing hairdressers and some shops to resume business in March.

Merkel and regional leaders agreed at the last round of talks in early March that regional authorities would tighten the screws again if their incidence rates struck 100 over three days.

"It is absolutely right that we are hitting the emergency brake," said Merkel.

However, schools will remain partially open and overnight curfews were ruled out, despite being proposed in a draft document before the talks.

On the thorny issue of holidays, some regional leaders had argued it made little sense to allow people to fly out to the Spanish island of Mallorca, which was taken off a risk list, while banning residents from taking overnight stays in their own state.

But finally, the leaders agreed to 'appeal urgently to all citizens to refrain from non-essential travel within the country and also abroad - also with regard to the upcoming Easter holidays'.

AFP



People wait in the observation area after getting inoculated at a vaccination centre, in India's capital New Delhi on Tuesday (AFP)

India opens up vaccination for all over 45 years

New Delhi, India - India announced on Tuesday it will open its vaccination drive to all over 45 years from April 1 in a bid to boost its massive inoculation drive as infections rise.

India has so far vaccinated nearly 50mn people but the programme to inoculate 300mn people by the end of July is behind schedule, experts say.

Until now only 'frontline' workers in healthcare and other areas, together with people over 60 and those over 45 with co-morbidities, have been eligible for either the AstraZeneca vaccine or a homegrown Bharat Biotech shot.

"Following scientific and (COVID-19) task force advice, the Cabinet today decided to open vaccinations

for everyone over 45 years from April 1," Prakash Javadekar, information and broadcast minister, told reporters on Tuesday.

Javadekar also announced that state governments had been directed to provide the second dose four to eight weeks after the first, compared to an earlier regime of four to six weeks.

Experts say that many people are reluctant to get vaccinated for a variety of reasons including safety concerns and apathy about the pandemic after a sharp fall in infections since September.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was vaccinated on March 1, has issued several appeals in recent days asking 'all those who are eligible to take the vaccine'.

AFP

Sombre Britain marks one year since first lockdown in silence

London, UK - Britain on Tuesday marked the anniversary of its first coronavirus lockdown with a minute's silence in tribute to the more than 126,000 people who have died - one of the world's worst tolls.

The 'National Day of Reflection' saw the silence observed in parliament and elsewhere at noon followed by church bells ringing to mourn the dead and honour frontline health workers.

At 8.00pm, members of the public are being encouraged to stand on their doorsteps with lit phones, candles and torches to signify a 'beacon of remembrance'.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered a lockdown on March 23 last year, shutting schools, non-essential shops and services, and banning gatherings of more than two people.

"From this evening, I must give the British people a very simple instruction - you must stay at home," Johnson said a year ago, announcing the most stringent restrictions on public life since World War II.

Initially, the lockdown was meant to last three weeks. A year on, Britain is in its third phase of restrictions but is gradually loosening them thanks to a mass vaccination campaign.



Commuters and employees take part in a minute's silence on the first anniversary of the first national lockdown for the COVID-19 pandemic, at Waterloo Station in central London on Tuesday (AFP)

However, Johnson warned that a third wave was now sweeping across Europe and will inevitably 'wash up on our shores', even as he called for reflection on the losses of the past year.

It has 'taken a huge toll on us all', he said, calling the anniversary 'an opportunity to reflect on the past year - one of the most difficult in our country's history'. "We should also remember the great spirit shown by our nation over this past year," he said.

The death toll in March last year was 335. A year later it stands at 126,172, among the five worst rates in the world per

million people.

The Prime Minister required life-saving treatment in intensive care after catching the virus shortly after announcing the first lockdown.

Prince Charles also had COVID-19 early in the pandemic but was able to recuperate at home on the royal Balmoral estate in northeast Scotland.

"Whatever our faith or philosophy may be, let us take a moment together to remember those who have been lost, to give thanks for their lives, and to acknowledge the inexpressible pain of parting," he said.

AFP

14 extremists sentenced to death over plot to kill Bangladesh PM

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Fourteen extremists were sentenced to death in Bangladesh on Tuesday for attempting to assassinate Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina more than two decades ago, a prosecutor said.

The 2000 bomb plot was one of several attempts on Hasina's life in a wave of violence by Islamic extremists who were angry at her secular stance at the time.

Since then, a major crackdown against homegrown radical groups has seen more than 100 extremists killed in raids by police and more than 1,000 suspected militants arrested.

A fast-track court handed down death sentences to all 14 accused - five of them absconding - after they were found guilty of sedition and criminal conspiracy, prosecutor Abu Abdullah Bhuiyan told AFP.

They planned two bombs in the grounds of a college where Hasina was due to address a rally. The devices were discov-

ered and defused.

"They are extremists belonging to the HuJI (Harkat ul Jihad al Islami) and JMB (Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh)," he said, referring to local extremist outfits blamed for a series of deadly bombings and grenade attacks in the 2010s.

Mufti Abdul Hannan, the Afghan-trained leader of Bangladesh chapter of HuJI, and two of his associates were executed in 2017 for an attempt to kill the British High Commissioner in Dhaka.

Hasina's government also executed five top leaders of Bangladesh's largest Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, between 2013 and 2016 over war crimes during the country's 1971 war of independence against Pakistan.

Prosecutor Bhuiyan said two among the 14 sentenced to death are brothers of HuJI leader Hannan, and another his brother-in-law.

AFP

Blinken offers no decision on Afghanistan

Brussels, Belgium - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged on Tuesday to share Washington's 'initial thinking' on a looming Afghanistan withdrawal deadline, as NATO allies push him for clarity on his first official European trip.

America's top diplomat adopted a positive tone at the start of a two-day meeting of NATO foreign ministers as he looks to rebuild ties strained by former US president Donald Trump.

But high on the agenda for NATO is the future of the alliance's 9,600-strong mission in Afghanistan after Trump struck a deal with the Taliban to withdraw troops by May 1.

Allies are waiting anxiously for new US President Joe Biden to decide whether to stick to that date - but Blinken said the US was still mulling it over.

"We have a review under way in the United States. I'm here today in part to share some of our initial thinking with our NATO allies," Blinken said at the start of talks.

"Maybe even more important,



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg leave the podium after delivering a speech prior to a meeting at the NATO headquarters, in Brussels on Tuesday (AFP)

I'm here to listen and consult because that is what allies do."

Biden said last week that it would be 'tough' for Washington to meet the looming deadline.

That prompted outrage from the Taliban, who warned that the US would be 'responsible for the consequences' if it fails to meet the deadline.

NATO allies have said they are willing to stay in Afghanistan longer if the US remains too, but they are keen for Washington to

make up its mind.

"We don't want to run the risk of the Taliban returning to violence and trying to gain power by military means by withdrawing from Afghanistan too early," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said. "That's why we hope that we can also talk concretely with the United States today about how the next few weeks will shape up."

Trump slashed US troop numbers to 2,500, the lowest level in

two decades, but American support remains vital to keep the NATO mission going.

Last year's deal saw the Taliban commit to peace efforts and cutting violence, but the US has complained that talks have stalled and bloodshed has flared.

Washington is scrambling to inject fresh impetus into the peace process and Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin made an unannounced visit to Kabul on Sunday.

The US and its allies are desperate to avoid seeing Afghanistan slip back into being a haven for terror groups, two decades after they intervened in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

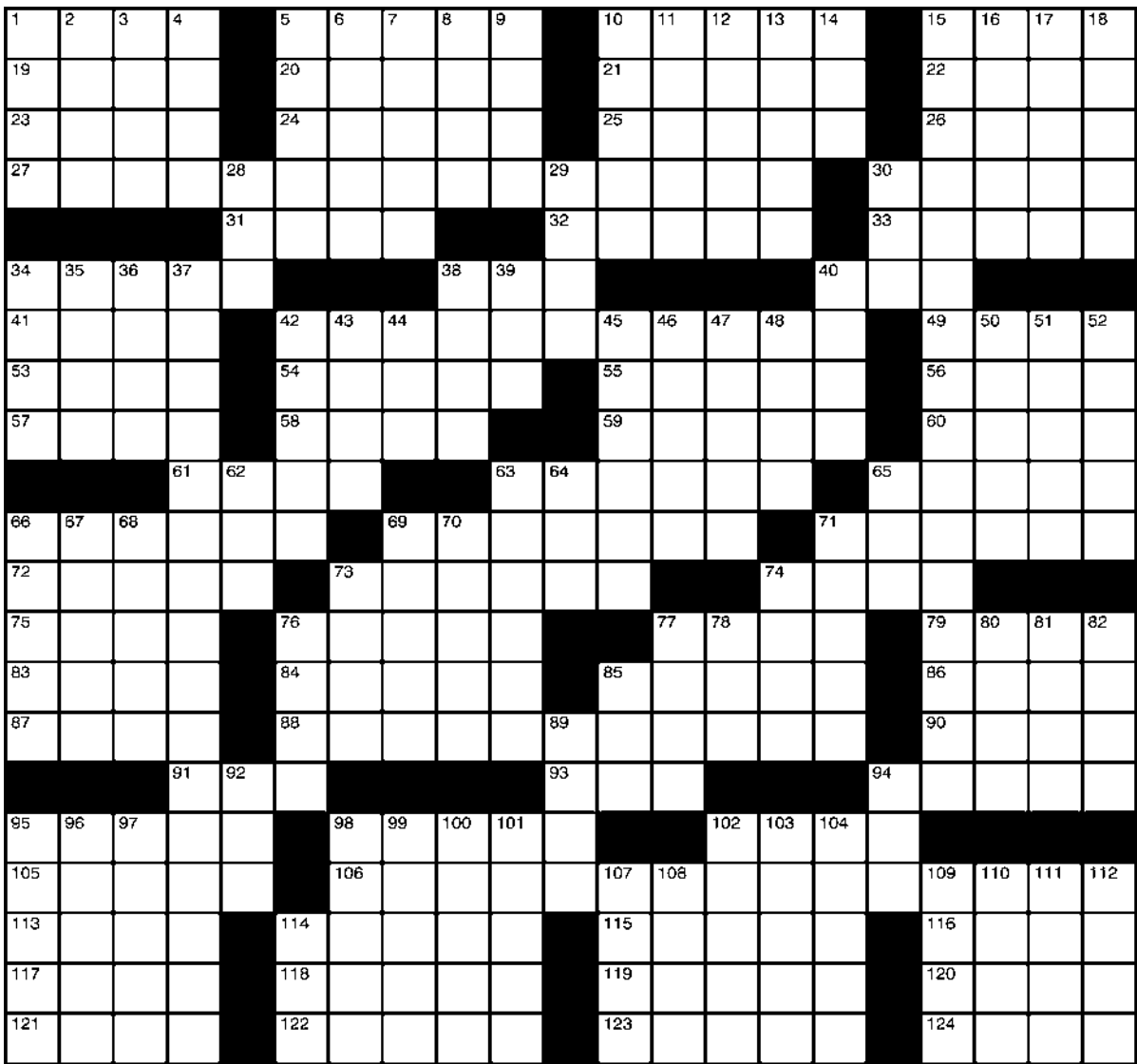
"Are we staying after May 1 or are we leaving?" one European foreign minister asked. "We don't know what we are going to do and that is a problem."

The visit by Blinken, which also includes meetings with top EU officials, aims to make good on Biden's assurances that the US wants to work closely with its allies. "I've come to Brussels because the United States wants to rebuild our partnerships, first and foremost, with our NATO allies," Blinken said.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg is currently hammering out proposals to reform the 72 year old alliance, set to be pitched to leaders including Biden at a summit later this year. NATO is looking to tackle growing threats from Russia and China and emerging security concerns such as cyberattacks and climate change.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



©2020 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All rights reserved

- ACROSS**

1 Mrs. Dick Tracy
5 Partner for billed
10 Committee head
15 Part of a constellation
19 Pizzeria appliance
20 Papal cape
21 "I Am Woman" singer Helen
22 Liter lead-in
23 "La Boheme" heroine
24 French morning
25 Scramble
26 Wading bird
27 Lingual lingerie?
30 Class of plants
31 Positive responses
32 Marshmallow chicks
33 Dry cleaner's focus
34 ___ of the mill
38 "___ loves me"
40 Architect I.M.
41 Plural abbreviation
42 Dressy operetta?
49 Insect eggs
53 Word with rubber
54 Outlandish
55 Walks in water
56 Nuisance insect
57 Sudden insight expressions
58 Feet of ___
59 Old McDonald's
- vowels
60 Start of Hamlet's soliloquy
61 Youngster
63 Coquettes
65 Although
66 Transitions
69 Desert "sights"
71 Antenna
72 Up
73 Exile
74 Pulitzer author Morrison
75 Make a blooper
76 Cotton flowers
77 Rock's Hendrix
79 By a long ___
83 Church area
84 Mexican
85 Fizzy drinks
86 Float through the air
87 Kind of money
88 Decorator's garb?
90 ___ the minute
91 Command in a library
93 Author Fleming
94 In disarray
95 Outta ___!
98 "The ___ is the pudding"
102 Fin. adviser
105 "To ___ human"
106 Clothing in Kiev?
113 Symbol of sadness
- 114 Spring flower
115 Sun-powered
116 Travel
117 Basic component
118 Alpha's complement
119 Furious
120 Sicilian peak
121 Writes
122 Tough question
123 Pierre's gals
124 Bridge option

DOWN

1 Selleck and Stoppard
2 Beelzebub's area
3 Trailer
4 Impertinent one
5 Snuggly
6 Speechify
7 Words for new officials
8 Nobelist Wiesel
9 Impression
10 Skyscraper necessity
11 Bet modifier
12 Accumulate
13 Runs in neutral
14 Pumpnickel ingredient
15 Sartorial evasion?
16 Leg bone
17 Cover story?
18 Long-stemmed blooms, to Hans
- 28 Churl
29 "___ sesame"
30 Mao ___-tung
34 C&W singer McEntire
35 Beehive state
36 Darlings' dog
37 Sartorial museum pieces?
38 Agile
39 Hurry
40 Mexican money
42 Leaves collateral for
43 Stubborn animal
44 Term.
45 "Anchors ___"
46 Laissez ___
47 "Waiting for Lefty" playwright
48 Portuguese money
50 Boiled ___
51 ___ of contents
52 Herd animal
62 To date
63 Gold Rush seaport
64 Sol followers
65 Blemish
66 Long stories
67 Eschew a big wedding
68 Christmas dinner entree
69 Mediterranean republic
70 Cove
- 71 Pass off as genuine
73 Red-haired clown
74 Fed
76 The first musical "B"
77 Red-carpet Rivers
78 ___ Amin
80 Beer ingredient
81 Horse feed
82 Paris's hometown
85 Health haven
89 Entertainer
D'Orsay
92 Aves.
94 Elevs.
95 Frame
96 2011 hurricane
97 Prevailing direction
98 Superb
99 Royal administrations
100 American Indian
101 Felix's roommate
102 Ike's opponent
103 Jalopy
104 Goddess of the harvest
107 Eastern land mass
108 Standard
109 ___ to the rear!
110 Jot
111 Cloistered women
112 Mardi ___
114 Cut off

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Two possible scenarios are on the agenda. First, a wonderfully entertaining individual could charm you right out of your shoes with not much more than a word, a glance, or a gesture you'll find immensely attractive. Second, someone could try to manipulate you into dealing with something that's never been at the top of your favourite list. It's got to be better in the long run.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Being the star of the show isn't just something you're used to. It's something you've learned to expect, and that has nothing to do with being vain either. People love to be entertained, but not all of us are up for the challenge. So when you're in the mood to perform, you're guaranteed an eager audience. This time out, someone you're quite fond of will absolutely be in attendance.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your attention has most definitely shifted from mediation to travel. Yes, given your druthers, as a reward for how good you've been lately, you'd like nothing better than to drop everything and take off for destinations unknown with a certain someone you just know would make the Eiffel Tower look even better if they were standing in front of it with a great big smile.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

The heavens have quite the agenda set up for you, starting bright and early this morning. That arrangement you've been working on almost nonstop for what seems like months will finally start to come together, due in no small part to the fact that you haven't had more than a few hours of sleep at once in at least that long. Still, if anyone can keep their eye on their dream, it's you.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

It's been a long day. The particular project you've been focused on is about to come to a close, and even though it's not your style to congratulate yourself before every last little detail has been tended to, this time it seems to be in order. If a there's a last-minute switch of authority figures or a bit of interoffice personnel juggling, don't worry. It's all part of the master plan.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Your routine, something you're quite attached to, could be disrupted now, but only because of surprise errands or short trips you'll find extremely pleasant. This means that the trouble you dealt with recently will be all but a distant memory by the time your head hits the pillow tonight. In the meantime, don't give it a second thought. Think about what a lovely day you're having.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Still feel like you're spoiling for a fight? Don't let it happen. Not when you're this close to achieving the goal you've been planning out, detail by detail, for longer than you'd care to remember. Besides, that recent power struggle you won bolstered not just your confidence but also your belief that you and you alone are in charge of eliminating anything negative in your life.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

It's going to seem like everyone around you is in the mood to be just as sociable as you try to be every minute of every day. If you have a jealous or even slightly insecure partner in the vicinity when someone attractive, obviously interested, or extremely single starts acting especially friendly, try to tone down your response. Why ruin a perfect evening for a few minutes of flirting?

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Choosing between two attractive offers has never been something that's disturbed you, especially when you've been responsible for arranging each of them. That's what's on your plate, so prepare yourself. Oh, and if someone comes along who seems eager to pretend they're exactly what you're looking for, don't feel obligated to let them know you're on to them.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You need some time alone to rest, recuperate, and get your act together, more together, that is. Take it right now, because over the next few days you'll have your hands full with entertaining both familiar loved ones and extending your hand to amazingly interesting new friends. Even if you don't nap, be sure to at least close your eyes and do some creative visualisation.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Someone has been not so subtly "working" you for reasons you have yet to discern, and that fact alone is making you crazy. Half of you believes they're interested in you for more than professional or platonic reasons, which presents a whole set of problems you're already trying to work out. The other half is wondering what they want. Oh, well. Don't lose any sleep over it.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If anyone knows how it feels to be so darned happy, infatuated, and out of your mind in love, it's you. So when you pass by someone with "that look" on their face, toss them the same look in return or offer up a nod and a toast from across the room. They'll get it. Happiness and love are contagious, and you'll have more amorous offers than you know what to do with.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. When a given amount of air is cooled

a. the amount of moisture it can hold decreases
b. its absolute humidity decreases
c. its relative humidity remains constant
d. its absolute humidity increases

2. When did France became a Republic?

a. 1789 AD
b. 1798 AD
c. 1792 AD
d. 1729 AD

3. What is the purpose of OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development)?

a. Sustained economic growth
b. Employment
c. Higher standards of living
d. All of the above

Answers: 1: a, 2: c, 3: d

KIDS COLOURING

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

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

BOGGLER

M	A	D	E
R	R	S	T
C	B	P	D
A	U	O	T

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (MARCH 23)

P	S	I	C	A	S	C	A	F	I	R	S	T	C	A	P					
O	T	A	G	O	R	T	I	N	A	M	E	E	R	A	S	I	T			
A	L	L	W	O	R	K	A	N	D	O	N	O	P	L	A	Y	S	T	I	O
N	O	T	A	T	E	L	E	T	A	I	O	L	R	I	A	I	P	A		
A	T	T	E	S	H	A	M	R	A	N	A		H	O	S	T	E	O		
D	E	E	M	S		A	W	A	T	C	H	E	D	I	P	O	T			
A	D	R	A		B	U	A		O	E	T	I	L	A	L	L	A	H		
					C	H	A	N	G	E	R		H	E	E	N				
					B	A	I	E	S	T										
					P	E	R	S	I	T										
					L	E	N	A												
					T	I	N	O												
					S	L	O	W	A	N										
					O	R	L	O	S											
					R	A	I	N												
					S	H	R	E	W											
					D	E	A	R	T	I	E	S								
					E	A	T													
					B	A	T													
					B	A	S	I												
					R	E	T	C	H											
					M	I	S	H	A	P										
					O	I	L													
					M	O	T	H												
					E	N	O	I												
					A	F	O	O	L	A	N	D								
					T	E	N	O												
					M	O	R	I	S											
					L	E	T													
					P	R	E	E	N											
					R	A	I													

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

PAN ASIAN

Delights

Friday Brunch at Turbine & Taps



Photos: Syed Fasiuddin

Hubert Vaz

When you descend the flight of stairs that lead you to Turbine & Taps, the exquisite night club at Sheraton Oman, in the afternoon, the fact that the Sun was overhead might make your entry seem quite odd. But as the beckoning ambience within grows on you, you would soon realise that time stands still here and what lies ahead is a feast for the senses!

Turbine & Taps has recently floated a scrumptious menu of Pan Asian delights for its Friday Brunch which has become extremely popular since its opening three weeks ago. With an

exhaustive menu that comprises starters, mains and desserts, served at socially distanced tables to the accompaniment of a live band, the brunch serves as a perfect reason to unwind and enjoy a leisurely weekend afternoon with friends and family.

The atmosphere within the nightclub after noon is cool, yet it brings on waves of warmth as the two-member band takes you on a nostalgic journey of contemporary music, with all-time hits belted out by a versatile crooner. And what's more, if your vocal chords are well oiled and you have it in



you, you can, indeed, join them 'on stage' to celebrate the afternoon with your favourite songs.

Mass appeal

"We have designed this brunch to appeal to varied tastes of guests - not only those from Asian countries but also those from other parts of the world who love Asian food," says manager Yassine, adding, "The atmosphere is suitable for all type of diners, including families, and we are taking great care to ensure that all guests have a safe, hygienic and delightful experience."

He further disclosed that the food served is not in a buffet format to maintain social distancing and hygienic handling of cutlery. Rather, the stewards serve out the courses, from starters to desserts, at the individual tables to suit the convenience of the guests. However, there is an open Sushi bar where guests

can help themselves, as needed.

The menu includes Chinese, Malaysian, Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, an Indian food, besides delicacies from other Asian countries. Also, the menu changes every week so that guests get an opportunity to savour new dishes each time they visit.

Flavour and frills

The emphasis is on flavour as well as presentation. While the Sushi bar has trays loaded with colourful combinations of a variety of Sushi specials, salads for the day are conjured up at each table by stewards who approach the tables with a wheelbarrow loaded with ingredients ready for tossing and dressing.

And, for a special effect at dessert time, you also have an ice-crushing station that comes to each table to prepare icy delights with syrups and toppings.

The menu when we visited included a surprise arrival of Charcoal Chicken Stones, salad cart deliveries of Gado Gado (papaya salad) and Yum Ma-

muang (mango salad) followed by Smoked Hoisin Duck Lilit and Chicken Yakitori. Starters also included duck, chicken and shrimp dumplings, a variety of spring rolls, and a choice of tempuras, accompanied by an assortment of dips and sauces. Don't miss the Singaporean Cereal Prawns or the Soft Shell Crab Tempura!

The mains included Singapore Chilli Crab, Udang Balado (spicy Indonesian shrimp curry), Calicut Beef, Thai Chicken Curry, Garlic Rice and Stir Fry Vegetables, all of which seemed to pack in a punch. You need to have a liking for spicy fare to enjoy the mains - but if you've walked in for Pan Asian delights, then surely spice ranks high on your culinary preferences.

After a delicious offering of spicy food, it's time to cool the flames with a unique mix of desserts. We were lucky to have Sticky Rice with Mango, Japanese Mochi, Banana Fritters and Klepon (sweet rice cake balls). The final salvo (a cool one) was the Malaysian Ice Kachang that came from the ice trolley - a much-in-demand vehicle that keeps gliding up and down towards the fag end of the brunch.



CLASSIFIEDS

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684

Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

أوربت
ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



GET YOUR LATEST NEWS
UPDATES ON WhatsApp

SUBSCRIBE NOW

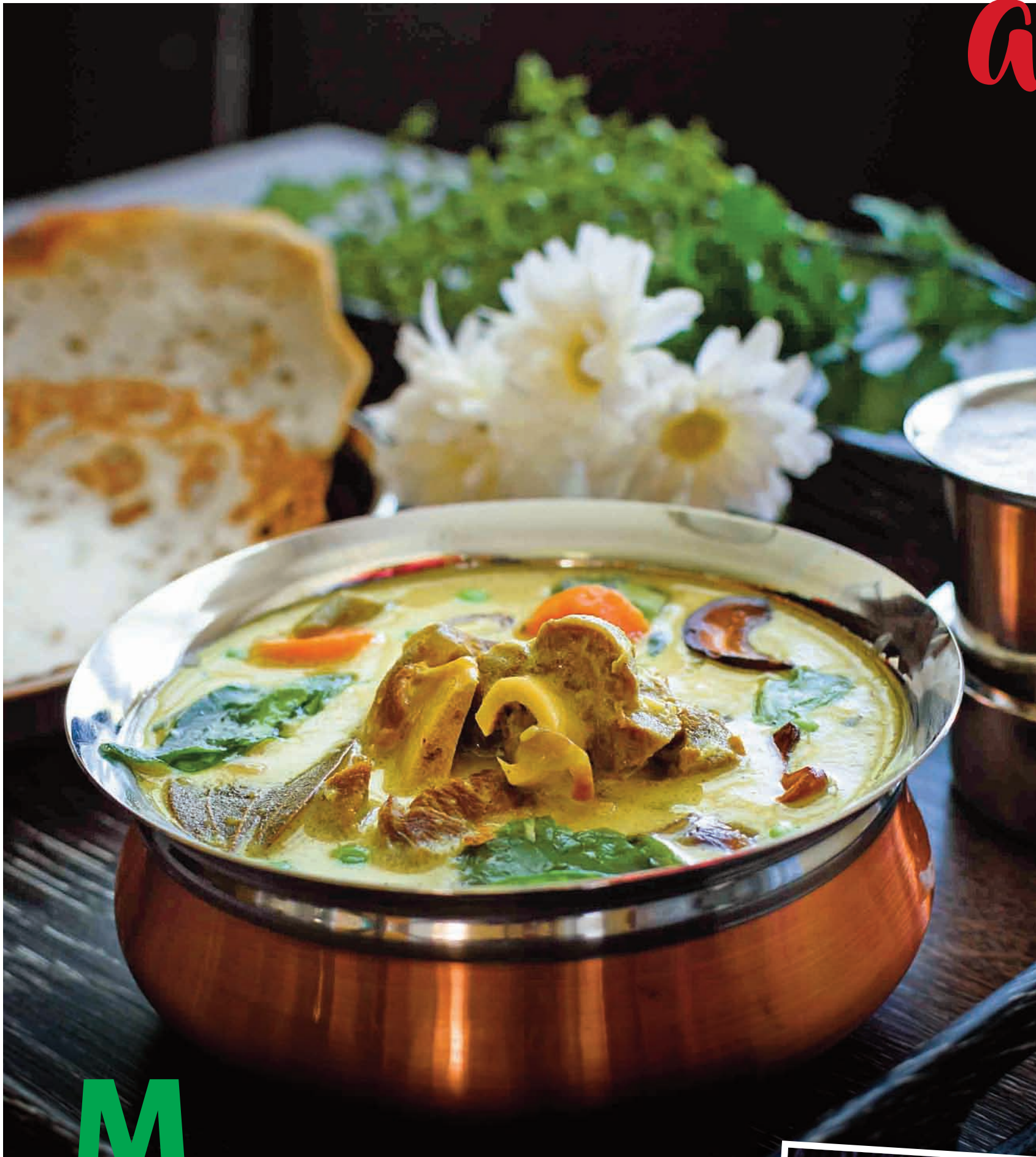
71509370

1. Save this number to your contact list

2. Send "start" to receive news updates

MUTTON

Mild and hot



Mutton dishes are an all-time favourite of many people all through the year. They can be enjoyed on an ordinary weekend at home as well as be part of a festive spread in a banquet. The accompaniments for mutton dishes around the world vary from bread, rotis, appams, and idlis to a variety of rice dishes and even sphagetti. It all depends on how you cook your favourite lamb/goat recipes - with a generous helping of spice or just a dash of it. In both cases, the taste of mutton stands out and overpowers the dish. Here are two versions for cooking mutton - a mild coconut milk based stew which is very popular in Kerala (India) and usually cooked in a mud pot, and a spicy Lahori Mutton Karahi where the flames linger long after the meal.

Kerala Mutton Stew

Ingredients

- 1 kg mutton – cut to small chunks
- 1 cup thick coconut milk
- 1 cup thin coconut milk
- 2 onions – sliced
- 2-3 green chillies – slit
- 1tbsp julienned ginger
- ½tsp freshly cracked blacked pepper
- 4 cardamoms, 4-6 – cloves
- 2 sticks cinnamon
- ¼tsp turmeric (optional)
- 1tbsp cashew paste
- 6-8 cashewnuts - toasted
- 1sprig curry leaves
- 1 cup carrot slices and green beans – boiled
- 2 small potatoes – boiled, quartered
- 1tsp salt (to taste)
- 2tbsp oil

Method

Boil the mutton chunks in a pressure cooker with 4-5 glasses of water, salt, turmeric, cloves, cardamom, and cinnamon till it is nice and tender. Set aside.

In a large pot, preferably a mud pot, heat oil, and add the curry leaves and onions and fry till the onions turn golden. (Remove some of the fried onions and reserve.) Then add 1 cup of the mutton stock, 1 cup of thin coconut milk, cashew paste, green chillies, black pepper and ginger. Mix well and let it boil on medium flame for 5-6 minutes. Now, strain the cooked mutton pieces and add to the gravy along with the boiled vegetables and the thick coconut milk. Lower flame and simmer for 3-4 minutes. Remove from fire and garnish with reserved fried onions and toasted cashew nuts.

Lahori Mutton Karahi

Ingredients

- 1 kg mutton – chopped to chunks
- 3 medium onion - sliced
- 2 tomatoes - chopped
- 2tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1tsp cumin seeds
- 1 bay leaf
- ½tsp turmeric powder
- 1½tsp red chilli powder
- 1tsp roasted cumin powder
- 1tsp coriander powder
- ¼tsp garam masala powder
- 4 green chillies
- ¾ cup hung curd
- ¼ cup oil
- Salt - to salt
- 1tbsp julienned ginger
- 2tbsp chopped green chilies.

Method

In a pressure cooker, heat oil and add bay leaf and cumin seeds, and let it crackle. Add mutton pieces, sliced onion, chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, red chilli powder, salt, and half cup of water. Stir well, close the lid and let it cook on high heat till one whistle. Then lower the heat to simmer and let it cook for 7-8 minutes till the mutton is 90 per cent cooked. Now, transfer the contents of the pressure cooker in a wok and place it on high heat. Stirring continuously, add ginger, cumin powder, coriander powder, slit green chillies, garam masala, and hung curd. Keep stirring and continue cooking on high heat till the oil begins to separate. Add chopped green chillies and coriander leaves and serve hot garnished with julienned ginger along with naan or paratha.



Leverkusen fire Bosz, Wolf takes charge

GERMAN LEAGUE

Berlin, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen on Tuesday sacked head coach Peter Bosz and brought in Hannes Wolf in a bid to stop their slide down the Bundesliga table after having been top in December.

Bosz, 57, has been replaced by former Germany U18 coach Wolf, 39, until the end of the season with Leverkusen currently sixth in Germany's top flight.

Wolf won the second division title with Stuttgart in 2016-17, but was sacked after a season at Hamburg after failing to get them back into the Bundesliga in 2018-19.

"With the new coaching team, we want to turn things around and again take the path to success that we had left," said Leverkusen's sporting director Simon Rolfes.

"Even as a very young coach, Hannes Wolf has impressed with big clubs and was particularly convincing through his promotion to the Bundesliga with VfB Stuttgart."

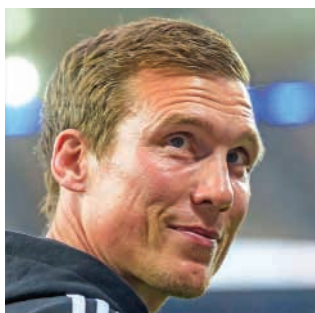
Wolf's opening game will be at bottom club Schalke on April 3, the first of eight league games he will have to bridge the seven-point gap to the Champions League places.

Under Dutch coach Bosz, who took charge in December 2018, Leverkusen have won just three of their 13 league games since they lost to Bayern Munich just before Christmas as then-Bundesliga leaders.

Sunday's 3-0 defeat at struggling Hertha Berlin, who are fighting relegation, was the final straw with Leverkusen now



Peter Bosz (AFP)



Hannes Wolf

seven points from fourth and a Champions League berth next season.

Even as a very young coach, Hannes Wolf has impressed with big clubs

SIMON ROLFES

In total, the 'Werkself' has lost ten of their 17 games in all competitions since the start of 2021.

"We have come to the conclusion that the separation from Peter Bosz can no longer be avoided," said club boss Rudi Voeller.

"The 3-0 defeat at Hertha on Sunday was unfortunately characteristic - our team has recently fallen into the same pattern over and over again.

"We therefore agreed to make a cut, despite the great appreciation for the work of Peter Bosz."

AFP

Lakers legend Baylor dies aged 86: Team

Los Angeles, US - Los Angeles Lakers legend Elgin Baylor, widely regarded as one of the greatest players never to win a championship after playing and losing in eight NBA Finals, died on Monday, the franchise announced. He was 86.

The 11-time Hall-of-Famer, a dominant force for the Lakers during 14 seasons in the league between 1958 and 1971, passed away peacefully surrounded by his wife Elaine and daughter Krystal, the Lakers said.

"Elgin was the love of my life and my best friend," Elaine Baylor said in a statement released by the team.

"And like everyone else, I was in awe of his immense courage, dignity and the time he gave to all fans. At this time we ask that I and our family be allowed to mourn his passing in privacy."

Baylor was chosen with the top pick in the 1958 draft when the Lakers were based in Minneapolis. He made an instant impact, averaging 24.9 points, 15 rebounds and 4.1 assists in his debut season to romp to Rookie of the Year honours.

It marked the beginning of an illustrious playing career with the Lakers which ended after a handful of games in his 14th season in 1971 because of knee problems.

The 6ft 5in small forward finished his career with 23,149 points at an average of 27.4 per game, along with 11,463 rebounds (13.5), and 3,650 assists (4.3).

Yet although he was pivotal in turning the Lakers into a dominant force in the 1960s, he was never able to crown his legacy with a championship.

He reached eight NBA Finals with the Lakers but lost all of them, including three seven-



Elgin Baylor

game series defeats to the Boston Celtics.

Baylor's NBA Finals appearances however did include a memorable 61-point outing against the Celtics in 1962, which remains the record for the highest ever score by an individual in a NBA Finals game.

In a twist of fate, the Lakers finally won a championship in the 1971-1972 season - when Baylor had retired through injury after only nine games.

The Lakers later gave Baylor a championship ring in recognition of his contribution to the team which he sold for US\$132,000 in 2013.

"Elgin was THE superstar of his era - his many accolades speak to that," Lakers Governor Jeanie Buss said in a statement on Monday.

Baylor's retired No 22 jersey hangs in the rafters of the Staples Center and in 2018 a statue of him was unveiled outside the Baylor remained in the NBA after his playing career, coaching the New Orleans Jazz between 1974 and 1979.

In 1986 he joined the Los Angeles Clippers as vice-president of basketball operations, remaining there until his resignation in 2008.

AFP

Maitland dropped from Scotland squad vs France

SIX NATIONS RUGBY

Edinburgh, UK - Sean Maitland has been dropped from the 29-man Scotland squad preparing to face France in Friday's Six Nations finale.

Maitland started last weekend's 52-10 rout of Italy at Murrayfield at full-back in place of Stuart Hogg, with the Scotland captain moving to fly-half after Finn Russell was ruled out with concussion.

Normally a wing, Maitland did not seem to be suffering from serious injury when replaced after 55 minutes by Jaco van der Walt.

But it appears the Saracens star's absence from the France match may in part be a consequence of the agreement brokered between the Scottish Rugby Union and English clubs over player release.

Scotland should have played France in Paris last month, but the match was postponed until Friday - six days after the scheduled end of the Six Nations - be-



Sean Maitland

cause of a coronavirus outbreak in the French camp.

As the fixture is taking place outside of the tournament's agreed window, clubs are no longer obliged to release players as would normally be required under World Rugby regulations covering international matches.

But last weekend a compensation deal was reached between the SRU and Premiership Rugby Limited. And while it is understood Saracens were prepared to release Maitland, the

agreement limited Scotland to a certain number of England-based players.

But Hogg, who plays for English and European champions Exeter, has been included.

Clubmate Jonny Gray has been omitted, however, with the lock not recovering from the shoulder injury that kept him out of the Italy match. Maitland and Gray are among seven English-based players to drop out of the squad announced on Monday.

AFP

Wins for SARCO, ACT

LOCAL CRICKET

Mohammed Sameer's unbeaten 52 led SARCO to a four-wicket win over ARTT in an Oman Cricket A Division T20 League game at Al Amerat on Saturday.

In another game of the same division, opener Hafiz Irfan slammed 76 to guide ACT past Awtad International by five runs for their second successive win.

Also on Saturday, Nishad KS struck 54 to power Zawawi Powertech to a 39-run victory over Ernst and Young (EY).

BRIEF SCORES

ARTT 106-9 (Aqil Khan 31; Dileepa Srilal 2-16, Jeethesha Shridhara 2-18) lost to SARCO 107-6 in 18 overs (Sameer 52 n.o.; Ibn Eameen 3-13, Zeeshan Siddiqui 2-20).
ACT 155-7 (Hafiz Irfan 76, Iftikhar Ahmed 32; Mohammed Irfan 4-23, Sujithkumar Rajagopalan 2-26) beat Awtad International 150-4 (Nidhin Mohan

33, Noorul Riyaz 32; Vikas Sharma 2-22).

Zawawi Powertech 168-7 (Nishad KS 54, Prabhakaran Kannan 47; Rana Zeeshan 2-31, Alkesh Joshi 2-52) beat EY 129-8 (Shrey Wilson 35; Yagnik Ashwin 2-13, Kalairasan Natarajan 2-27).

Basta CT 167-8 (Usman Haider 47, Najeeb Shaheer 36, Malik Ali Khan 31; Khalid al Balushi 2-35) beat OCT Muscat 104-9 (Muzaffar Shiralkal 35; Shahid Mahmood 3-7, Mohammed Abbas 3-19).

Friday's matches:

OCT Muscat 71 in 17.5 overs (Munthir al Balushi 21; Rakesh Patel 6-7, Sameer 2-4) lost to SARCO 72-1 in 8.4 overs (Rangajeeva Perera 29, Rakesh Patel 28).

EY 138-9 (Wilson 43, Shahid Naseem 40; Hafiz Irfan 3-16, Vikas Sharma 2-15, Toseef Ul Hassan 2-31, Rajesh Devashya 2-34) lost to ACT 139-5 in 19 overs (Mohammed Zeeshan 69; Rana Zeeshan 2-28).

oman OASIS immuno

DOUBLE GOODNESS
GAIN HEALTH
WIN PRIZES

Fortified with **Zinc & Copper**
Boost your immune system

SCRATCH REGISTER WIN

Every Immuno shrink pack comes with a scratch coupon inside. Register the hidden number at www.omanoasis.com/immuno and stand to win amazing prizes.

Promotion valid from 25th February 2021 to 24th May 2021. Raffle draws on 25th March, 26th April and 25th May 2021. Three draws in total. Winners will be intimated in 7 days from the draw date. Pictures shown are for illustrative purpose only. Actual may vary. Customers to retain purchase receipts and scratch coupons to claim the gift. OASIS Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Terms and conditions apply.

OASIS WATER COMPANY SAOC
PO Box 87, Rusayl 124,
Sultanate of Oman.
www.omanoasis.com

CALL TOLL-FREE
800 71 222
or GSM: **9275 5522**

Scan QR Code to Register
C.R.No: 1/36545/2 Permit No: P20091

oman OASIS sifr

Sodium Free Drinking Water

OMAN'S ONLY SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER **5 IN GALLON BOTTLE**

The healthy choice

It is beneficial to limit sodium intake if you have blood pressure, diabetes, heart or kidney disease.

Call Toll-Free **800 71 222** or GSM **9275 5522**
f OmanOasis @ OmanOasisOfficial www.omanoasis.com
OASIS WATER COMPANY LLC P.O.Box: 87, PC: 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman.

C.R. No.: 1/36545/2

DEBUTANTS DAZZLE

Prasidh Krishna and Krunal Pandya star in India's 66-run victory



India's players celebrate after winning the first ODI match against England at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune, India, on Tuesday (AFP)

INDIA VS ENGLAND
FIRST ODI
Pune, India - An ODI of fluctuating fortunes eventually went the way of India by a comfortable margin, giving them a 1-0 lead in the three-match series on Tuesday.

The home side were grateful to a pair of fine debuts from Krunal Pandya (58 n.o. off 31 balls) and Prasidh Krishna (4-54), alongside vital contributions from several senior hands, as England collapsed after a dominant start to their chase had seen them reached 135 without loss in the 15th over.

Like Shikhar Dhawan (98) earlier in the day, Jonny Bairstow (94) fell narrowly short of a century - though the openers enjoyed success via starkly different methods.

Dhawan set himself to bat for much of the innings, and helped lay the platform for India in partnership with Virat Kohli (56), although India needed the spark provided by Krunal's 26-ball fifty and an unbroken sixth-wicket stand with KL Rahul that yielded 112 from 57 at the death.

Bairstow and Jason Roy (46) had seemingly broken the chase by the time the first wicket fell, as the openers hared off to post

their 12th century opening stand in ODIs. But England imploded spectacularly in the face of a renewed India bowling effort, led by Krishna and Shardul Thakur.

Krishna's dismissal of Roy triggered a period in which England lost two wickets and scored just two runs from the next 17 balls, with Bairstow starved of the strike.

It would have been worse had Kohli held on to an outside edge coaxed by Krishna from Eoin Morgan's first delivery. It was not to prove costly, as England slumped further when Thakur had Bairstow caught splicing a hook towards the deep-mid-wicket boundary for 94.

Two overs later, Morgan and Jos Buttler were dismissed in the space of four balls from Thakur to leave England 176 for five.

Moeen Ali and Sam Billings patched things up with a stand of 41 before Krishna struck again.

There had been doubts about Billings' continued participation after he left the field with a 'sprained collar bone joint' during the India innings, and although passed fit to bat he was unable to reprise his finisher role from the 2020 summer as he chipped tamely to extra cover.

With night-time dew taking

effect and Moeen finally benefitting from some time in the middle, England were still in contention. But Bhuvneshwar Kumar extracted Moeen with a sharply seaming lifter and Krunal collected a wicket to go with his batting cameo as the tail were rounded up cheaply.

India's chief concern come the end was a shoulder injury suffered in the field by one of their own, as Shreyas Iyer walked off in obvious pain after getting his hand to a powerful Bairstow drive. Rohit Sharma, too, played no part during England's innings, having sustained a blow on the elbow from Mark Wood while batting.

The differences in approach to ODI cricket between these two sides were typified by the opening pairs. Dhawan and Sharma have scored almost 5,000 runs together at the top of the order for India, but their success has been based upon steady accumulation early on before cracking on once set. Here, after being inserted, they settled for a period of reconnaissance against the new ball, with 15 runs coming from the first six overs, and 39 without loss in the powerplay.

By contrast, after allowing a few sighters from Kumar, the

England openers opted for their big spoons. Bairstow was particularly belligerent, accelerating from six off 18 as England plundered the powerplay for 89 runs; he greeted the arrival of Kuldeep Yadav in the 12th over by clubbing him for four and six, raising a 40-ball fifty and England's 100 from consecutive deliveries.

India had reached three figures in the 24th over of their innings, and they pushed a see-sawing innings beyond 300 only thanks to the efforts of Krunal and Rahul, whose unbroken 112-run stand lifted the team from 205 for five in the 41st.

The elder Pandya struck five of his first 14 balls for fours and added a couple of towering sixes for good measure on the way to the joint-fastest fifty on ODI debut - a milestone he celebrated with a thump of the helmet and a look to the skies.

Krunal's cap had been presented before play by Hardik Pandya and the brothers, who lost their father and mentor in January, shared another emotional embrace at the mid-innings interval.

India had seemingly ground their way into the ascendancy at 169 for 1, with Dhawan and Kohli

SCOREBOARD	
INDIA	
Rohit Sharma c Buttler b Stokes	28
S Dhawan c Morgan b Stokes	98
V Kohli c Moeen b Wood	56
S Iyer c sub (L Livingstone) b Wood	6
KL Rahul not out	62
H Pandya c Bairstow b Stokes	1
K Pandya not out	58
Extras: (lb 3, w 5)	8
TOTAL: 317 for five in 50 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-64, 2-169, 3-187, 4-197, 5-205	
Bowling: M Wood 10-1-75-2, S Curran 10-1-48-0, T Curran 10-0-63-0, B Stokes 8-1-34-3, A Rashid 9-0-66-0, Moeen Ali 3-0-28-0	
ENGLAND	
J Roy c sub (SA Yadav) b Krishna	46
J Bairstow c Kuldeep b Thakur	94
B Stokes c sub (S Gill) b Krishna	1
E Morgan c Rahul b Thakur	22
J Buttler lbw b Thakur	2
S Billings c Kohli b Krishna	18
Moeen Ali c Rahul b Kumar	30
S Curran c sub (Gill) b K Pandya	12
T Curran c Kumar b Krishna	11
A Rashid c Rahul b Kumar	0
M Wood not out	2
Extras: (lb 3, w 10)	13
TOTAL: 251 in 42.1 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-135, 2-137, 3-169, 4-175, 5-176, 6-217, 7-237, 8-239, 9-241, 10-251	
Bowling: B Kumar 9-0-30-2, Prasidh Krishna 8.1-1-54-4, S Thakur 6-0-37-3, K Pandya 10-0-59-1, Kuldeep Yadav 9-0-68-0	



Tom Latham

Latham's ton in NZ's facile win

NZ VS BANGLADESH
SECOND ODI
Christchurch, New Zealand - New Zealand secured a series-clinching five-wicket win in the second one-day international (ODI) against Bangladesh on Tuesday after a string of fielding errors dashed the tourists' hopes of victory.

Black Caps skipper Tom Latham scored an unbeaten 110 after being dropped twice with New Zealand chasing 272 at Christchurch's Hagley Oval.

New Zealand batsman Jimmy Neesham was also given a life, with the errors undoing Bangladesh's good work in making 271 for six after losing the toss and being put into bat.

Tamim top-scored for the tourists with 78 and Mohammad Mithun contributed an unbeaten 73 off 57 balls. Latham's 110 came off 108 balls and was his fifth ODI century, while Devon Conway's 72 helped anchor the innings.

The Black Caps reached the target after 48.2 overs, finishing on 275 for five to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match ODI series.

Bangladesh started on a disappointing note as opener Liton Das departed for a duck in the second over. But Tamim and Soumya Sarkar preserved their wickets, grinding out an 81-run partnership.

Soumya was stumped on 32 trying to lift the run rate as Tamim brought up his 50th ODI half-century off 84 balls after surviving two umpiring reviews.

His luck ran out trying to pinch a quick single, when Neesham showed impressive soccer skills to kick the ball into the stumps side-on and dislodge the bails.

Entering the final ten overs at 183 for three, Bangladesh finally

stepped on the gas through Mithun's career-best ODI knock.

New Zealand began briskly in reply despite the early loss of opener Martin Guptill for 20. A double strike from spinner Mahedi Hasan applied the brakes to the run rate, forcing Conway and Latham to rebuild.

NZ call up rookie
Wellington, New Zealand - Big-hitting youngster Finn Allen, 21, was named in a weakened New Zealand squad Tuesday for the upcoming Twenty20 series against Bangladesh.

NZ squad: Tim Southee (capt), Finn Allen, Todd Astle, Hamish Bennett, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Guptill, Adam Milne, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Ish Sodhi, Will Young.

AFP

SCOREBOARD	
BANGLADESH	
T Iqbal run out	78
L Das c Young b Henry	0
S Sarkar st Latham b Santner	32
M Rahim c Nicholls b Santner	34
M Mithun not out	73
Mahmudullah c Guptill b Jamieson	16
M Hasan c Nicholls b Boult	7
M Saifuddin not out	7
Extras: (lb 6, w 17, nb 1)	24
TOTAL: 271 for six in 50 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-85, 3-133, 4-184, 5-247, 6-258	
Bowling: T Boult 10-0-49-1, M Henry 10-3-48-1, K Jamieson 10-2-36-1, J Neesham 9-0-73-0, M Santner 10-0-51-2, D Mitchell 1-0-8-0	
NEW ZEALAND	
M Guptill c & b Rahman	20
H Nicholls b Hasan	13
D Conway run out	72
W Young b Hasan	1
T Latham not out	110
J Neesham c Sarkar b Rahman	30
D Mitchell not out	12
Extras: (lb 4, w 13)	17
TOTAL: 275 for five in 48.2 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-28, 2-43, 3-53, 4-166, 5-242	
Bowling: M Rahman 8.3-0-62-2, T Ahmed 10-0-67-0, M Hasan 10-1-42-2, M Saifuddin 7.2-0-43-0, M Hasan Miraz 10-1-38-0, M Mithun 2-0-12-0, S Sarkar 0.3-0-7-0	

Cornwall, da Silva put WI in command

WEST INDIES VS SRI LANKA
FIRST TEST: DAY TWO
North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda - Rahkeem Cornwall blasted a maiden Test half-century and dominated an eighth-wicket partnership of 90 with Joshua da Silva to lift the West Indies to 268 for eight in their first innings, a lead of 99 runs, at the close of the second day of the first Test at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Monday.

Outstanding seam bowling by Suranga Lakmal, who claimed his fourth five-wicket innings haul in 64 Tests, had restricted the home side to 171 for seven just after tea in reply to the tourists' modest first-day effort of 169.

However the burly Cornwall, selected primarily for his off-spin bowling but also well-known for his powerful hitting in the domestic game, joined wicket-keeper-batsman da Silva in first resisting the best efforts of the Sri Lankan bowlers before opening into an array of expansive strokes upon the arrival of the second new ball.

His unbeaten 60 has come of 79 balls with two sixes and nine fours embellishing an entertaining innings.

Da Silva, who is already build-



Rahkeem Cornwall celebrates after reaching his half-century

ing a reputation in his young international career for featuring in useful lower-order partnerships, was within sight of his second Test half-century when he fell for 46 just minutes before the close of play, caught behind off fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera attempting to ride a lifting delivery over the slip cordon.

Such a healthy advantage seemed out of the realms of possibility with Lakmal in full flow on the way to outstanding figures of five for 45 off 24 accurate overs.

When he dismissed Jason Holder and Alzarri Joseph in quick succession after tea to complete the five-wicket haul, the Sri Lankans may have even

entertained the prospect of erasing a minimal first innings deficit before the end of the day.

But their enthusiasm gradually ebbed away as the runs flowed and they now face a challenging prospect on the third day to mount the sort of second innings rearguard that has been almost non-existent on a miserable run which has seen them lose their last four Test matches.

There were only smiles on the Sri Lankans' faces though at the start of the day when Lakmal priced out West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite without any addition to the overnight total.

He returned on a scorching afternoon to bowl Jermaine

Blackwood cheaply through the gate off the inside-edge and then account for the dangerous Kyle Mayers for 45 via a second slip catch by Dhananjaya de Silva.

Mayers had punctuated long periods of virtual strokelessness with exciting power-hitting, striking six fours and two sixes in his innings before the experienced seamer got the better of him.

John Campbell played an unusually obdurate knock of 42, the left-handed opening batsman occupying 148 deliveries in getting to 42 before becoming Chameera's first wicket of the day.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD	
SRI LANKA 1 ST INNINGS 169	
WEST INDIES 1 ST INNINGS	
K Brathwaite c de Silva b Lakmal	3
J Campbell c Dickwella b Chameera	42
N Bonner lbw Embuldeniya	31
K Mayers c de Silva b Lakmal	45
J Blackwood b Lakmal	2
J Holder b Lakmal	19
J da Silva c Dickwella b Chameera	46
A Joseph c Chandimal b Lakmal	0
R Cornwall not out	60
K Roach not out	4
Extras: (lb 6, nb 9, w 1)	16
TOTAL: 268 for eight in 101 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-69, 3-95, 4-120, 5-133, 6-169, 7-171, 8-261	
Bowling: S Lakmal 24-9-45-5, V Fernando 16-5-52-0, D Chameera 22-1-71-2, L Embuldeniya 28-6-64-1, D de Silva 11-2-30-0	

4K UHD AI P715 LED

Hands-Free voice control TV

Say It, Play It

55" / 65" / 75"

Enjoy 3 Months Sponsored By TCL TV i

vip

androidtv

Google Assistant

FAR FIELD VOICE

HDR

جينتكو Genetco

50 50 years of success

MUSCAT 97693496, 96742452

SALALAH 79011363

C.R. No. 1009680

Available at Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers



H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said

Sayyid Theyazin announces high-performance sports committee

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Tuesday issued a ministerial decision to set up a high-performance sports committee.

H H Sayyid Theyazin will head the eight-member committee, which also includes Oman's football great Ali al Habsi.

Besides Habsi, the Undersecretary for Sports and Youth at the ministry, has been made the deputy chairman of the committee. The other members include the chairman of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), secretary-general of the OOC, minister's advisor for sports planning, director-general of planning, director-general for administrative and financial affairs and sports ministry's director-general of sports activities, who will serve as rapporteur.

The decision envisages a comprehensive development strategy to be carried out within a fixed time frame and to contribute to Oman Vision

2040. The committee aims to create a system to groom the talented athletes, who have the potential to qualify and reach international level and Olympic standards.

The committee will set up policies, programmes and plans to sharpen and nurture skills of high-performance athletes from different sports. The selected athletes will be fully supported to achieve success at international levels.

Following the announcement, Ali al Habsi, Oman's only footballer to play in the highly-competitive English Premier League and former Oman captain, tweeted, "My sincere appreciation and thanks to H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth; for his confidence in appointing me as a member of the high-performance sports committee.

"I pray to God for success, and for us and my brothers who are members of the committee, to serve Oman sports and guide our champions to the highest international level and glory.

Ibrahimovic in tears on return to Sweden side

Stockholm, Sweden - An unusually reserved and humble Zlatan Ibrahimovic had to hold back the tears on Monday as he arrived in Sweden ahead of his return this week to the Swedish national squad after nearly five years away.

Veteran striker Ibrahimovic showed a more sensitive side to his usually brash public persona when he was asked about what his two teenage sons, Maximilian and Vincent, thought of his international comeback.

"It's not a good question you're asking. I had Vincent here, who actually cried when left him. But it's OK, it's OK," he said with tears in his eyes.

Speaking to reporters days ahead of Sweden's 2022 World Cup qualifier against Georgia on Thursday, the often boastful 39 year old acknowledged he was much more 'patient both on and off the field' than when he announced the end of his international career after Euro 2016.

"Right now you're thinking:

'He's much too nice and much too humble,'" Ibrahimovic joked.

Sweden's most successful player, the AC Milan forward retired from international football with 116 caps and 62 goals for his national team. He announced his return to the squad in his usual style last week on Instagram with a picture of himself in the Swedish team kit with the caption 'The return of the God'.

But 'Ibra' said Monday he didn't want to be given a spot on the team for his past achievements but because he 'deserved' it. He is in good form this season for Milan, with 15 goals in as many Serie A games, including the opener in Sunday's 3-2 win at Fiorentina which kept the pressure on league leaders Inter Milan.

He also said he didn't mind no longer being team captain, a role now taken by Alexander Granqvist, who plays for Swedish club Helsingborgs. In another sign of a 'new chapter', Ibrahimovic said he had asked to don



Zlatan Ibrahimovic

the No 11 on his jersey rather than the ten he used to sport.

"I asked nicely if I could have

the 11," he said, adding that teammate and Real Sociedad forward Alexander Isak had gra-

ciously agreed to give up the number.

'Best in the world'

Ibrahimovic and Sweden's head coach Janne Andersson, who also attended the press conference, have had public arguments in the past but both of them insisted repeatedly those disagreements were now behind them.

Andersson travelled to meet Zlatan in Milan in November last year after the star attacker had said in an interview that he missed playing for Sweden.

"When we parted we had put everything that happened before behind us," Andersson said.

Glimpses of the old Ibrahimovic did however make an appearance.

"If you ask me I'm the best in the world," Zlatan said as he broke into laughter.

He also said he had promised Andersson he would 'decide matches'. "I have my experience, I know what I'm good at."

AFP

Former England striker Worthington dies at 72

London, UK - Former England international striker Frank Worthington, one of the great showmen of English football, has died aged 72 after a long illness, his family announced on Tuesday.

Worthington, described by one of his former managers as 'the working man's George Best' won all of his eight caps in 1974 scoring two goals. "Frank brought joy to so many people throughout his career and in his private life," said his widow



Frank Worthington

Carol Worthington, in a statement to the PA. "He will be greatly missed by everyone who

loved him so much."

Worthington, who died on Monday, played in 22 consecutive Football League seasons from 1966-67, scoring 266 goals in 882 appearances in all competitions.

In 14 of those seasons he played in the top division, getting 150 goals in 466 matches, and won the Golden Boot as the leading scorer playing for Bolton in 1978-79 ahead of Kenny Dalglish and Frank Stapleton.

Sporting the long hair fashionable at the time, the striker's most productive spell was the five years he spent at Leicester City.

Despite that era being full of renowned hardmen defenders, Worthington eschewed playing with shin guards and often had his socks rolled down to his ankles.

He was also a member of the Southampton side that finished title runners-up in the 1983-84

campaign, finishing just three points adrift of the great Liverpool side.

Worthington was one of a generation of entertaining maverick showmen such as Tony Currie, Charlie George, Stan Bowles and Rodney Marsh.

He was renowned for his colourful life off the pitch and was a frequent visitor to night-clubs, sometimes crooning his favourite Elvis songs on stage.

AFP



GAME ON

NOW'S THE TIME | GRAB YOUR CHANCE TO OWN A DODGE



DODGE CHARGER SXT

RO 9,990

EMI RO 118*

AFTER CASH GIFT OF

RO 4,010

**FREE REGISTRATION,
5 YEARS WARRANTY,
5 YEARS ROAD SIDE ASSISTANCE**

BOOK NOW

Terms & conditions apply.

DODGE

dhofar ظفار
AUTOMOTIVE للسيارات

Wattayah, Athaiba, Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah

For corporate enquiries **982 961 43** | For more information **245 845 30** | info@da-oman.com | www.dhofarautomotive.com