

IN 2021-2022

91.2%
increase in
non-oil exports

He reiterated that the ministry seeks to strengthen partnerships between the public and private sectors.



Royal Navy of Oman's *Shabab Oman II* set sail for Europe on Monday. A Royal Navy of Oman statement said, '*Shabab Oman II* begins its sixth international voyage - Oman, the Land of Peace - heading to the European continent.' H E Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busradi, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, was chief patron of the farewell ceremony held at Said bin Sultan Naval Base (ONA)

On the pandemic and its impact on government companies, he said, "Within its companies, the authority has launched several initiatives to rationalise consumption and coordination between these for optimal performance. The authority has prepared a plan to help financially distressed companies."

Schools to teach peaceful nuclear science

Muscat - The Ministry of Education (MoE) signed an agreement with Al Batinah Energy Company and Al Suwadi Energy Company on Monday, to finance a peaceful nuclear sciences teaching programme in the sultanate's schools.

The signing ceremony was attended by H E Prof Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-secretary for Education in MoE, Mohammed bin Ali al Rawahi, CEO of Al Batinah Energy Company, and Abdullah bin Muhammad al Rawahi, CEO of Al Suwadi Energy. The signing took place at the ministry's headquarters.

On the occasion, H E Prof Ambusaidi said, "This agreement will enhance the presence of these activities (nuclear energy for peaceful use) in all educational levels to enlighten students about the importance of the role of nuclear energy in various peaceful fields, whether in the field of electricity generation or its medical aspect."

Rawahi said, "The partnership



This programme will raise students' awareness on nuclear science and change the negative view that revolves around it

MOHAMMED AL RAWAHI

between the Ministry of Education and both Al Batinah Energy Company and Al Suwadi Energy Company stems from the two companies' belief in the importance of education, especially in the field of modern technologies, innovation and renewable energy, and that nuclear energy has positive aspects that serve humanity and will facilitate many aspects of human lives

such as in the fields of medicine, industry, agriculture and food. This programme will have a great resonance in the hearts of our students, raise their level of awareness about this science and change the negative view that revolves around it, and we hope to have many nuclear scientists among our children in the future."

The programme aims to develop knowledge of students, teachers and educational supervisors in the field of nuclear science and technology, which the ministry seeks to achieve through cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in regional projects concerned with teaching nuclear science and technology to school students. This is being done by presenting the subject matter in an appropriate way through innovative atypical training of teachers, curriculum developers and supervisors.

The programme includes national workshops on 'Innovative Methods for Teaching Peaceful Nuclear Science and Technology to School Students' in cooperation with IAEA and the Office of Peaceful Nuclear Technology in the Foreign Ministry.

The workshops are part of a national programme within the regional project RAS0079 in teaching peaceful nuclear science and technology to students in secondary schools and teacher training, which is adopted by IAEA. A number of member states of the agency, including the sultanate, participate in it, in addition to the national workshop for teaching nuclear sciences.

The programme contains a set of different activities, including a variety of competitions and events for students, teachers, as well as the local community, with the aim of raising the level of awareness and knowledge of nuclear sciences among the various segments of society.

Oman mourns death of eminent oncologist Dr Abdulaziz al Farsi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dr Abdulaziz al Farsi, senior consultant and head of adult oncology at The Royal Hospital passed away after a long battle with illness. He was also a well-known novelist and a storyteller.

The Ministry of Health issued a statement on Monday, saying, "The minister and all health workers in the sultanate extend their sincere condolences to the family of Dr Abdulaziz al Farsi after his death on Sunday."

His acquaintances and admirers posted heartfelt messages on social media condoling his death. They prayed to God to show His mercy and benevolence on Dr Farsi's soul and to give solace to his family.

Aziza al Taie tweeted, "Oman



lost a great doctor and writer today. I loved the pen of Dr Abdulaziz al Farsi: A storyteller and a novelist before I met and got to know him as a doctor. He was a humble person."

Adel al Mujaini tweeted, "I did not know Dr Abdulaziz al Farsi personally, but I could not open a single social networking site

without finding praise for Dr Farsi. May God have mercy on him."

Hashar al Mandhari said, "With a heart that believes in the cause of God, I mourn the friend, the writer, the doctor and the human being Dr Abdulaziz al Farsi. I can't find the right words because Dr Farsi was a beautiful soul. He encouraged me when I took the pen and supported me when my daughter was ill. Many people love him and are saddened by his absence. God have mercy on Dr Farsi."

"Our deep condolences to the bereaved family. Thoughts and prayers on the passing of Oman's novelist, storyteller and physician Dr Abdulaziz al Farsi due to a long battle with illness. May his soul rest in peace," tweeted Laith al Ghafri.

EA to fight invasive bird species

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to combat invasive birds in Oman, the Environment Authority (EA) has set an integrated plan and hired an international expert.

Sulaiman Nasser al Akhزامi, director general of nature conservation in EA, said that invasive birds such as the Indian jungle crow and the mynah are increasing in numbers in Oman.

"The authority formed a team to prepare a study to check the spread of these birds and develop a national strategy. The authority has on-boarded an international ornithologist and prepared an integrated plan to confront invasive birds," said Akhزامi.

Mynah birds, which come from India, China, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and western Indone-



sia, belong to the starling family. These birds are 22-25cm long and wings extend to 36.5cm when flying. These are medium-sized birds with a black head and yellow feet.

Mynahs affect the food chain in the areas of their existence and attack other birds' nests,

Mynahs belong to the starling family. These birds affect the food chain in the areas of their existence and attack other birds' nests, killing the young ones

ENVIRONMENT
AUTHORITY

killing the young ones. In 2000, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) declared the bird among '100 of the World's Most Invasive Species'.

These birds cause a lot of damage by destroying crops, eating bees and transmitting dis-

eases, parasites and fleas to humans as well as animals.

The Indian jungle crow (*Corvus culminatus*) is a species of crow found across the Indian subcontinent south of the Himalayas.

It is an opportunist and generalist omnivore. It softens its food by dropping it in water and has also been observed to eat sand after feeding on meat from a carcass. These birds have a range of cawing vocalisations. These sometimes fly with special flight styles.

Among the most important stopovers for birds in Oman is Barr al Hikman in Al Wusta. In 2017, a team from Wetlands International found more than half a million birds wintering in Barr al Hikman, and recorded a total of 63 waterbird species at the site during 2017-2019 period.

Ministry declares formation of Omani-Bahraini association

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, has issued Ministerial Decision No 91/2022 declaring the formation of Omani-Bahraini Friendship Association.

The decision stipulated that the Omani-Bahraini Friendship Association will be publicised and its statutes will be registered in the ministry.

The decision was issued on March 24, 2022, and will be effective from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette .

MHT to give management of Al Hazm Castle to private sector

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has initiated a plan to develop the Al Hazm Castle in its efforts to stimulate tourism in the wilayat of Rustaq. The ministry is looking to partner with the private sector for managing and developing the castle.

The ministry said that Al Hazm Castle is one of the most magnificent castles in Oman and was built in 1708, towards the end of the reign of Al Yarubi tribe when they made Rustaq their capital. It is about 160km away from Muscat and has found a place on Unesco's tentative list for inclusion as a World Heritage



Site.

An MHT official said, "As part of our efforts to support the na-

tional economy and benefit from the presence of historical structures in the country, the ministry

has floated a tender for management and development of Al Hazm Castle."

The ministry confirmed that the competing companies must submit a study that includes marketing the castle commercially and culturally, holding cultural workshops, organising artistic and cultural events, and introducing various activities to revive the castle. Competing companies must highlight the architectural uniqueness of the castle and involve the local community in various cultural and social events.

Al Hazm Castle was designed primarily for defence and security purposes and features delicate artistic architectural elements. The most important feature of the main building of the castle is its intricate Indian

wooden door. The castle also has a prison, mosque and a religious classroom. There a falaj that runs underneath the castle which provides water to many date trees and other agricultural treasures in the area. Al Hazm Castle stands as a solid reminder of Oman's proud history and enduring heritage.

There were 366,360 visitors to castles and forts in Oman in 2018. In 2020, 133,464 people visited castles and forts compared to 426,525 in 2019, a decrease of 68.6 per cent.

The ministry is currently working to establish numerous projects to attract tourists to achieve the strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040.

WEATHER WATCH		
	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	36	23
Doha	34	24
Kuwait City	31	22
Manama	34	24
Muscat	38	26
Riyadh	39	24

SEND YOUR
COMMENTS TO
**muscatdaily@
apexmedia.co.om**

Registration for Pluralsight programme open

Pluralsight is a training platform that includes various courses in IT, software development and data management

Muscat - With the aim of reinforcing existing skills and upskilling competencies to keep pace with the developments of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Internet of Things (IoT), doors for registration for Pluralsight programme is still open. It

is one of the programmes of the Centre of Excellence for Advanced Telecommunications Technology and IoT at Innovation Park Muscat.

Pluralsight is an online training platform that includes various up-to-date technical

courses in information technology, software development and data management. It aims to support and equip Omani youth with technical skills and knowledge that empower them to improve job-related skills and become leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators.

Some of the learning pathways that Pluralsight covers include Microsoft Office, basic software development, programming fundamentals, networking fundamentals, IoT, agile

project management, machine learning with Python, design basics, network security, digital tools and 7,000 other online training courses. It targets all school students of both genders, aged 16 years and above, university and college students, professionals as well as those interested in technical fields.

What makes Pluralsight standout from other training platforms is that its courses are conducted by more than 1,500 experts from all around the

world.

Participants can assess their abilities through Skill IQ to identify knowledge gaps and strengths. The results provide a start within a learning pathway and save time on what has been established. In addition to many more features on the platform, participants receive a yearly licence and can apply for certificates of attendance.

To register, applicants can visit the Centre of Excellence's website <https://coe.ipm.om> and

then select Digital Skills Programme in which Pluralsight is available for registration. Applicants can then fill out a form and select the learning pathway of their interest. An activation email will be sent to the user account to start the learning pathway.

The Centre of Excellence for Advanced Telecommunications Technology and IoT is one of the offset projects of Ministry of Finance currently conducted at Innovation Park Muscat.

MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,241.19
Sensex	58,964.57

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	197.06
Pakistani Rs	475.41
Bangladesh taka	224.18
Philippines peso	135.27
Sri Lankan Rs	831.98

*Rates as on April 11
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Ericsson suspends all Russia operations

Swedish network equipment maker Ericsson said on Monday that it was suspending all of its Russian operations over the war in Ukraine for the foreseeable future.

The telecom giant already announced in late February that it would stop all deliveries to Russia following Moscow's February 24 invasion of Ukraine.

"In the light of recent events and of European Union sanctions, the company will now suspend its affected business with customers in Russia indefinitely," Ericsson said in a statement, as report by AFP. The company added that it was "engaging with customers and partners regarding the indefinite suspension of the affected business." "The priority is to focus on the safety and well-being of Ericsson employees in Russia and they will be placed on paid leave," it said.

Hundreds of Western firms ranging from Ikea to Coca-Cola, Goldman Sachs and McDonald's have stopped operations in the country since the invasion, with French banking group Societe Generale announcing Monday it was selling its stake in Russia's Rosbank.

Ericsson has around 600 employees in Russia, and is a "major supplier to the largest operator MTS.

Oman's inflation eases for second straight month

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's annual inflation rate eased for the second straight month in March, mainly due to a sharp drop in the prices of fish and seafood products.

Inflation - as measured by the sultanate's consumer price index - decreased to 3.6 per cent in March 2022 compared with 4.0 per cent recorded in February and 4.4 per cent in January this year, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on Monday.

The consumer price index (CPI) for food and non-alcoholic beverages items, which have nearly 24 per cent weight in Oman's CPI, rose by 4.9 per cent in March compared to the same month of the previous year.

Within the food items, fish and seafood recorded a remarkable 9.6 per cent drop in March prices compared to the previous month, while prices of most other food items increased during the month.

Among food items, the biggest price rise was recorded in cooking oil and fats which registered a 15 per cent year-on-



year increase in March. Cooking oil and fats recorded 10.6 per cent increase in March prices compared to the previous month.

cent in March compared to the same month a year ago.

Oman's annual inflation rate has remained above three per cent level since October last

Within the food items, fish and seafood recorded a remarkable 9.6 per cent drop in March prices compared to the previous month, while prices for most other food items increased during last month

Prices for vegetables rose 10.7 per cent on year-on-year basis in March, while prices for fruits also increased by 6.1 per cent.

On the other hand, prices in transport group - which has more than 19 per cent weight in the CPI - increased by 6.6 per

cent. The sultanate's inflation averaged under one per cent over the six years to 2019 and remained negative during 2020. The inflation rate returned to positive territory in April 2021 after remaining negative for more than a year.

An increase in Oman's inflation was expected last year following the implementation of value-added tax (VAT) in April 2021. Sharp price increases in transport group, fish and seafood, vegetables and tobacco products largely contributed to the overall inflation growth during 2021. International institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and global credit ratings agencies expect Oman's inflation to remain above three per cent level this year.

S&P Global Ratings expects inflationary pressure in Oman to rise moderately to 4.3 per cent in 2022 due to higher commodity prices from Russia-Ukraine conflict.



Oman-India fund to invest nearly \$10mn in Senco Gold

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman-India Joint Investment Fund II (OIJIF II) has invested ₹750mn (approximately US\$9.9mn) in Kolkata-based jewellery retailer Senco Gold Ltd, according to Indian media reports. OIJIF is a joint private equity investment fund between Oman Investment Authority and State Bank of India, India's largest public sector bank.

The investment by Oman India Joint Investment Fund II in Senco Gold will be through equity for a minority stake, according to a statement quoted by media.

The funds raised will be utilised to make Senco Gold an omni-channel jewellery brand of national level. This is part of Senco Gold's pre-IPO plans, and the company is planning to file its initial public offering documents

soon, a PTI report said.

Senco Gold, which operates 127 showrooms across the country, is one of the largest organised jewellery retailer in eastern India.

In a report published by The Hindu, Srinath S, CEO of OIJIF MC, said, "Senco Gold has a brand presence in its home markets and growing in the rest of the country. It figures amongst the few jewellery chains to have successfully established a franchisee showroom network. It is also leveraging e-commerce to build a strong direct-to-consumer retail presence for its lightweight and modern jewellery range - Everlite."

Suvankar Sen, managing director and CEO of Senco Gold, said, "With the pandemic now receding, the company is well positioned for an expansion of its showroom network as well as building its digital presence."

Investcorp launches first global blockchain fund in GCC

Manama, Bahrain - Investcorp, a leading global alternative investments firm, on Monday announced the launch of eLydian Lion, the first dedicated institutional blockchain fund based in the GCC, with a global investment mandate.

The fund - which will be led from Investcorp's Abu Dhabi office - will be deployed globally and will focus on investments in companies leading

the next digital evolution driven by blockchain technology. The fund will enable investors to gain early exposure to the rapid growth of the blockchain ecosystem, which is at the forefront of the digital transformation of the economy.

It will mainly invest in early-stage companies operating in areas within the blockchain ecosystem such as blockchain



Hazem Ben-Gacem

infrastructure, platforms and exchanges, decentralised finance, and data analytics.

Hazem Ben-Gacem, co-chief executive officer at Investcorp, said, "Offering our clients innovative and bold investment ideas, backed by our disciplined and proven approach, has been a key element of our success over the last four decades.

We have a strong track

record in technology investment and will bring our institutional expertise and global reach to bear on this fast-growing area of technology."

Gilbert Kamieniecky, head of Investcorp's technology private equity business, said, "We believe that blockchain technology and the ecosystem around it, will transform every facet of our economy much like the internet did in the 2000s.

This new fund will support the most innovative entrepreneurs from around the world who are developing the blockchain ecosystem and defining what the future digital economy will be." The new fund is independent of and complementary to Investcorp Technology Partners, Investcorp's leading investment strategy focused on lower mid-market technology opportunities.

Oil prices sink on China demand fears

London, UK - Oil sank Monday on Chinese demand fears, the recent release of strategic reserves, and dimming hope of a European embargo on Russian supplies in the wake of the Ukraine war.

In afternoon deals, US benchmark oil West Texas Intermediate dived as low as US\$92.93 per barrel and European Brent hit US\$97.57.

"It is above all the bad news from China that is weighing on prices, as the number of COVID cases continues to surge," said Commerzbank analyst Barbara Lambrecht.

"The lockdowns that are slowing oil demand in the world's second-largest consumer country threaten to persist for even longer."

Shanghai eased restrictions on some neighbourhoods on Monday after mounting outcry over China's inflexible COVID-19 rules that locked down 25mn people and sparked fears over energy demand.

Rich countries will meanwhile tap an additional 120mn barrels of oil from emergency reserves in a bid to calm prices that had soared on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the International Energy Agency said last week.

The move included Washington's recent announcement of the release of 60mn barrels.

"Oil prices are heading lower as traders continue weighing up the strategic reserves releases and cooling demand in China," added City Index Fiona Cincotta



on Monday.

"The steady drip of ... reserves is going some way to calming supply fears and plugging some of the Russian supply absent from the market."

Kyiv wants the European Union to agree sanctions on Russian oil and gas in retaliation for Moscow's attack on Ukraine.

Such a move could send prices rebounding higher from current price levels, analysts warn.

"Oil is likely to settle around these levels, unless of course the EU decides to ban Russian oil imports," Cincotta told AFP.

"That would be catalyst to send oil prices higher soaring once again."

Oil had rocketed close to US\$140 per barrel in early March following Moscow's assault on Ukraine.

Russia is a major crude supplier and a key member of the OPEC+ grouping of global producers.

Oil prices tumbled more than five percent at one point on Chinese demand fears arising from COVID lockdowns, and on dimming hope of a European embargo on Russian crude, dealers said.

"It is above all the bad news from China that is weighing on prices, as the number of COVID cases continues to surge," said Commerzbank analyst Barbara Lambrecht.

Shanghai eased restrictions on some neighbourhoods on Monday after mounting outcry over China's inflexible COVID-19 rules, which locked down 25mn people.

"The lockdowns that are slowing oil demand in the world's second-largest consumer country threaten to persist for even longer," added Lambrecht.

AFP

THE LARGEST AIR CONDITIONER MANUFACTURER IN THE WORLD.

BIG COMPRESSOR, BIGGER COOLING.

- Heavy duty reciprocating compressor
- High power saving
- Turbo cooling
- Auto restart
- 4-Way air outlet
- Gold Fin

BIG BIGGER BIGGER

51 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

MUSCAT
97693496, 96742452
Available at
Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

C.R. No. 1007680
SALALAH
79011363

www.genetco.net
@GenetcoOman
Genetco Oman

Ukraine economy to contract 45%, Russia 11%: World Bank

Washington, US – The World Bank issued dire forecasts for Ukraine as Russia's invasion impacts both the country and its neighbours, warning in a report released Sunday of an even bleaker economic outlook if the conflict drags on.

Ukraine's economy will collapse by 45.1 per cent this year, the bank predicted, far worse than the 10 per cent to 35 per cent downturn the IMF projected last month.

Russia will see an 11.2 per cent decline in GDP, and the World Bank said the entire region is suffering economic consequences from the war, which began in late February and has caused more than four million Ukrainians to flee to Poland, Romania and Moldova.

The conflict also has caused prices of grains and energy to soar.

"The results of our analysis are very sobering. Our forecasts show that the Russian invasion in Ukraine has reversed the region's recovery from the pandemic," said Anna Bjerde, World Bank vice president for Europe and Central Asia.

"This is the second major shock to hit the regional economy in two years and comes at



A convoy of cars evacuating civilians passes a destroyed Russian tank on the outskirts of Buzova village, Kyiv region on Sunday (AFP)

a very precarious time for the region, as many economies were still struggling to recover from the pandemic," she told reporters.

The Washington-based institutions expect emerging and developing countries in the Europe and Central Asia region to contract by 4.1 per cent this year, a sharp reversal from the three percent growth projected before the war, and twice as bad as the pandemic-induced recession in 2020.

Worse-case scenario

Ukraine faces the starkest outlook, with its economy under "severe strain" from shrunken government revenues, businesses that have closed or are only partially operational and trade in goods that is severely disrupted.

Grain exports and other economic activity have "become impossible in large swaths of the country due to heavy damage to infrastructure," Bjerde said.

The bank's forecasts assumed the war would continue for a few more months, but cautioned that they "are subject to significant uncertainty."

In a more pessimistic scenario, which reflects an escalation of the conflict, there would be a larger negative impact on the euro area, increased Western sanctions and a financial shock due to eroding confidence.

The region's economy would contract by nearly nine per cent

– worse than the 2008 global financial crisis – with a 20 per cent decline for Russia and a 75 per cent collapse for Ukraine, the report said. Another cause for concern is a projected increase in poverty in Ukraine.

The proportion of the population living on US\$5.50 a day is expected to rise to 19.8 per cent this year from just 1.8 per cent in 2021, according to the World Bank.

Collateral damage

Even if the region avoids the worst case scenario, Eastern Europe alone is expected to see its GDP plummet by 30.7 per cent rather than grow by 1.4 per cent, as projected before the invasion.

The region also has been impacted by the sanctions imposed on Russian ally Belarus for its role in the war.

The report warns that Moldova is likely to be one of the countries hardest hit by the conflict, not only because of its geographic proximity to the war, but also its inherent vulnerability as a small economy closely linked to Ukraine and Russia.

In addition, this part of Europe is dependent on natural gas to meet its energy needs.

AFP



A file photo shows employees working on an assembly line producing speakers at a factory in Fuyang, China (AFP)

China factory inflation rises as oil prices bite

Beijing, China – China's factory-gate inflation was higher than expected in March, official data showed on Monday, as Russia's war on Ukraine pushes up oil prices while a domestic COVID-19 resurgence strains food supplies and consumer costs.

The producer price index (PPI) – measuring the cost of goods at the factory gate – grew 8.3 per cent on-year, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) figures showed.

This was slightly more than a Bloomberg poll of economists expected, while PPI also rose on-month. "Geopolitical and other factors have pushed global commodity prices to continue increasing, driving the prices of oil, non-ferrous metals and other re-

lated industries to rise further domestically," NBS senior statistician Dong Lijuan said in a statement. China's consumer price index (CPI), a key gauge of retail inflation, rose more than expected as well, by 1.5 per cent on-year in March, the NBS said.

Although consumer demand eased after festive periods earlier in the year, some food prices have picked up due to "rising international prices of wheat, corn and soybeans" and domestic COVID-19 outbreaks, Dong said.

This comes as world food prices hit an all-time high in March following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, an agricultural powerhouse, according to a UN agency.

AFP

US recession fears grow amid Fed's aggressive fight against inflation

Washington, US – The Federal Reserve has made clear it will come out guns blazing to battle the highest inflation rate in four decades, but that has sparked increasing fears their campaign will plunge the world's largest economy into recession.

The US central bank is facing a daunting task as it tries to engineer a "soft landing" that preserves growth while tamping down worrying price pressures against an uncertain global backdrop.

It will require "exquisite calibration," longtime Fed watcher David Wessel told AFP.

The United States has roared back from the COVID-19 pandemic, posting solid growth and record job gains thanks to massive government aid and aggressive stimulus from the Fed, which cut the benchmark lending rate to zero in March 2020.

But the rebound has hit multiple stumbling blocks, including renewed waves of the virus and shortages of key supplies and workers that sent prices surging. It must also now navigate the fallout from the war in Ukraine, which has caused a jump in oil prices. The Fed last month raised interest rates by a quarter point in the first of a series of increases, and since then a chorus of officials – including Fed Chair Jerome Powell and Governor Lael Brainard – have signaled their openness to half-point rate increases, a more aggressive measure.

Wessel, director of the Hutchins Center on Fiscal and Monetary Policy at the Brookings Institution, cautioned that the Fed's tough stance means policymakers are "more likely to overdo it than under do it."

The Fed was caught by surprise at the speed with which inflation spiked late last year, initially driven by prices for cars and housing before spreading into other categories.

Consumer prices jumped 7.9 per cent in February, the highest annual increase since 1982, but spending has nonetheless remained robust even amid new



In this photo taken on April 7, 2022 cars are seen on the assembly line at the Tesla Giga manufacturing facility in Austin, Texas (AFP)

coronavirus variants.

Higher borrowing costs work by dampening consumer and business spending, bringing demand more in line with supply to lower prices.

Red-hot housing demand has already cooled as mortgage rates rose in anticipation of the Fed hikes, and data this week from the Mortgage Bankers Association indicate lenders are tightening credit availability.

The situation raises the specter of the 1980s, when a wage and price spiral and oil embargo from OPEC member states prompted then-Fed chief Paul Volcker to crank up interest rates, which ground down inflation but caused a recession.

But Dana Peterson, chief economist at The Conference Board, said the current situation is "very different," notably because the economy and labor

power, not to 'go too far.'

Offloading bond holdings

Economists are expecting several rate hikes this year and next, including multiple half-point increases, with the first of those likely coming in early May when the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) next meets.

The Fed also has another tool to deploy this time, which is to reduce their massive bond holdings built up during the pandemic that were meant to ensure financial markets had ample cash to support the economy.

The minutes of last month's FOMC meeting released Wednesday indicated the US\$9tn balance sheet could be reduced by US\$95bn a month, a much faster pace than in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. But as an untested policy tool, it is unclear how that will interact with rate hikes.

"It's tricky," Wessel said, but given the strength of the economy "a mild and short recession... might be a tradeoff that policymakers are willing to make" to vanquish inflation.

AFP

Singapore-based BOC Aviation places order for 80 Airbus planes

Paris, France – Singapore-based BOC Aviation has ordered 80 A320neo family planes from Airbus, the European manufacturer said on Monday, a contract estimated on paper to be worth nearly US\$10bn.

"Global aircraft operating lessor BOC Aviation... has signed a firm order for 80 A320neo Family aircraft comprising 10 A321XLR, 50 A321neo and 20 A320neo," Airbus said.

According to the latest available catalogue prices, the deal is worth nearly US\$10bn, although such deals are usually subject to discounts. BOC Aviation said it expected the aircraft to be delivered between 2027 and 2029.

CEO Robert Martin said this was "the largest single order" BOC Aviation had ever placed.

It takes to 546 the number of



Airbus planes purchased by the company since it started operating, Martin said. BOC Aviation, which is listed on the Hong Kong stock market, says it currently owns 530 planes, which it leases to 73 airlines across 36 countries and regions.

Its deal with Airbus enables the latter to almost double its net orders since the start of 2022.

These stood at 83 planes as of end-March, according to the lat-

est figures from Airbus, which hopes to deliver 720 in 2022, against 611 last year.

Airbus said in total it had clinched more than 7,900 orders from over 120 customers for its A320neo family planes, which rival Boeing's 737 MAX.

The company said it had delivered more than 2,100 A320neos since the aircraft entered into service six years ago.

AFP

PAKISTAN
International Airlines
Great People to Fly With

GROUND HANDLING REQUIRED FOR PIA FLIGHTS at Muscat International Airport (MCT) in Sultanate of Oman.

Competitive offers are invited from authorized Ground Handlers for complete Ground Handling Services of flights at MCT in Sultanate of Oman.

Required detailed specifications can be downloaded from PIA website: <https://www.piac.com.pk/corporate/sales-procurement/tenders> or PPRA website: www.ppra.org.pk.

Sealed offers should be submitted on or before 12th May 2022 by 1300 Hrs LT in the manner prescribed in the document at the following address:

No offer will be entertained after expiry of specified date/time. PIA will not be responsible for any postal delays.

Country Manager Office
Pakistan International Airlines
Building No.54,Block 127,Ground Floor,
Al Markazi Street,Ruwi ,CBD Area,
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.
Office Contact No: **00968-24792471**

Bank Muscat Contact Centre enhances customer experience

In line with its customer-centric vision of 'Serving you better, every day', Bank Muscat offers a large range of services through its Contact Centre, which is an important channel of communication for customers to get in touch with the bank whenever the need arises. As part of its customer-centric strategy, Bank Muscat operates the largest Contact Centre in the banking sector in the sultanate, which is manned by a team of competent and highly-trained Omani phone bankers 24/7 throughout the year. The Contact Centre uses an intuitive Integrated Voice Response (IVR) system to respond to about 64 per cent of the incoming calls, with phone bankers handling more complex queries and providing detailed clarifications to customers.

Talal Abdul Hameed al Zadjali, deputy general manager – operations, Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat's Contact Centre is a vital link between our valued customers and the bank and provides various banking services around the clock, seven days a week, and with a minimal waiting period. It is one of the most important Contact Centres in the sultanate's banking sector, and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all the Contact Centre employees for their dedication and efforts to ensure the continuation of the bank's customer-centric vision. This is especially important at a time when Contact Centre services



Talal Abdul Hameed al Zadjali

and other digital channels are playing a major role in helping ensure business continuity and provide a convenient and alternate banking channel for all."

Zadjali added that the bank would keep on enhancing the role of the centre by attracting qualified and talented Omani cadres, and by continually upgrading it with the latest equipment and advanced technologies in the future too. This will help Bank Muscat keep pace with all

the latest telecommunications developments and further enhance the quality of services provided.

The language options available for customers include Arabic, English and Hindi. It is a matter of great pride that the Contact Centre provides services with minimal waiting time even though it handles as many as 5.45mn calls annually. More than 85 per cent of the calls are answered within 30 seconds and all calls are recorded for Quality and Training purposes. The Contact Centre, which has 160 team members, has achieved 99 per cent Omanisation with a 65:35 male to female ratio. It must also be noted that the Contact Centre (+968-24795555) is accessible from all across the world, providing a communication channel for customers who are travelling internally and have to contact the bank urgently.

The IVR at the Contact Centre offers a number of services including funds transfers, bill payments, credit card payments, mobile top ups, balance inquiry, statement details, blocking of lost cards, foreign exchange and FD rate calculators. The IVR also provides links to instant educational videos through Push SMS services. The Contact Centre is also an important touchpoint that helps the bank listen to its customers and offer them the services that they need 24/7.

Apart from incoming phone calls, the Contact Centre can be also be reached through WhatsApp. To begin using the service, customers have to save the bank's contact centre number (24795555) in their contacts list. The number then automatically appears within WhatsApp as the verified official account of Bank Muscat. Agent assisted services are available 7 days a week.



New Mitsubishi Outlander 2022 launched in Oman

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official dealership for Mitsubishi vehicles in Oman, launched the all-new flagship 2022 Mitsubishi Outlander crossover SUV at a recent customer event organised by the Zubair Automotive Group (ZAG). All-new from the wheels up, the Outlander has been reimagined and reinvented in every way. Not only does it feature a new design direction for both this vehicle and the brand but is also the best-equipped and most technologically advanced vehicle the company has ever sold in the region.

The customer event was held on March 30 at the Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa, Muscat. In attendance were the members of the board of directors of ZAG, the chief operating officer – Mohammad al Farei, and members of the senior management of ZAG and its Group companies. Also present at the event were representatives from various private and government sector institutions and prominent businessmen from various sectors who are partnered with ZAG.

Commenting on the launch of the all-new Outlander, Farei said, "Compact SUVs and crossover SUVs are some of the most popular and fastest-growing segments in the market due in part to their practicality, fuel efficiency, and affordability. As a rare three-row vehicle in this space, swathed with a high-quality interior, a bold exterior, competitive pricing, and a solid driveline, the 2022 Mitsubishi Outlander is well geared to have a large impact on the local market. It's not surprising then that the 2022 Mitsubishi Outlander has been one of our most highly anticipated Mitsubishi models ever. It, therefore, brings me great pleasure to finally welcome it to our model line-up here in Oman."

The 2022 Outlander was

crafted under the design language of 'I-Fu-Do-Do', which means 'authentic and majestic' in Japanese. This design ethos is reflected in the vehicle's bold proportions, muscular fenders, and the chiselled lines of the next generation 'Dynamic Shield' grille. Standard 18-inch wheels and available 20-inch wheels add a robust presence that emphasises strength and security.

Inside, the Outlander is a quiet and serene space, showcasing quality and convenience through class-above materials and placing a premium on comfort and convenience. It also features seating for seven with the segment's only standard-equipment third-row seats, together with myriad storage locations and both USB-A and USB-C charge ports.

Offering more technology and connectivity than any previous Mitsubishi model, the 2022 Outlander features an available 12.3-inch, full-colour LCD digital driver display, a first for Mitsubishi Motors. Also available on select trims is a 9-inch SDA centre touchscreen with a built-in navigation system, 10-speaker BOSE audio system, and a 10.8-inch full-colour head-up display.

Also new is the engineering underpinnings of the 2022 Outlander. The new model now rides on a next-generation platform developed through its partnership in the Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi Alliance. The newly engineered platform offers a stable foundation for a more confident and comfortable driving experience. With hot-stamped ultra-high tensile-strength steel used in key areas, torsional rigidity is increased by 33 per cent over the previous model. Powering the all-new Outlander is a newly developed 2.5-litre, four-cylinder gasoline engine producing 184PS@6000rpm and 245Nm@3600rpm mated to an eight-speed continuously variable transmission (CVT) with

Sport mode.

Mitsubishi's motorsport-derived Super All-Wheel Control (S-AWC) all-wheel-drive system is available on higher-trim models, offering unmatched confidence for drivers in all environments. This optional system features a newly developed drive mode selector which allows performance and grip to be tailored to the current driving conditions through six distinct settings, increasing on-road and off-pavement performance. Even two-wheel-drive models are fitted with the drive-mode selector, offering five distinct modes in this setup, to help drivers feel more confident in all driving conditions.

As the best-equipped Mitsubishi ever sold in Oman, the all-new Outlander also offers an impressive array of standard and available advanced driver assistance systems to increase driver convenience, confidence, and safety. Depending on trim level, the all-new Outlander offers seven airbags, Forward Collision Mitigation, Blind Spot Warning, Rear Automatic Emergency Braking, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Hill Descent Control, and a Multi-Around Monitor System.

"As Mitsubishi's new flagship model, the 2022 Outlander offers upscale styling, premium quality, rugged performance, innovative technology, and seven-seat practicality, yet it costs about the same as most of its five-seat competition. With the proven reliability of the brand and the aftersales support offered by GAC, the new model will no doubt be very popular amongst families here in the Sultanate," added Manoj Ranade – general manager, GAC.

The all-new 2022 Mitsubishi Outlander is now available for pre-order from Mitsubishi showrooms across the country. The model is also available for viewing at the Azaiba showroom.

AJIA rings in Ramadan with MINI offers

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC (AJIA), the official importer of BMW Group in Oman, has announced its all-new Ramadan offerings across its MINI model lines for 2022 to begin the celebrations in the holy month.

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles also announced exclusive offers to mark the Ramadan celebrations in Oman with, new car buyers being able to receive the MINI Repair Inclusive package valid up to five years or 200,000km, and the MINI Service Inclusive package, valid for up to five years or 100,000km with any purchases made during the month.

New MINI owners will also receive free window tinting from Auto Spa and complimentary vehicle registration for the first year, as well as an free original lifestyle accessory.



Muna al Busaidi, brand manager of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC, said, "With the start of the holy month of Ramadan, MINI Oman is proud to reveal our limited-time offers to the nation as Oman begins to

mark the season of giving by providing new buyers with confidence and additional benefits this month."

"At Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, it is a priority for us to bring the highest level

of service to our customers across Oman, and we are looking forward to seeing the smiling faces of the new car owners leaving our showrooms with one of our iconic models this Ramadan."

Alila Hinu Bay adds a list of new adventures to its portfolio

Discover unique and awakening experiences at Alila Hinu Bay this month as the luxury boutique resort unveils its new portfolio of authentic journeys to be discovered.

Located in Mirbat, Salalah, nestled gracefully between miles of untouched sea life and breathtaking mountain landscape, Alila Hinu Bay enriches guests to reconnect with nature in the most incredible ways. The new portfolio features bespoke and tailored experiences to accommodate to each guest's desires, whether through land or sea, culture and cuisine, there is much to be discovered.

"Alila Hinu Bay is a launchpad for discovery and there are many hidden treasures in this region of Oman. We are on a continuous mission to craft true Alila experiences across every touchpoint of the resort," said Juan Paolo Alfonso, general manager, Alila Hinu Bay.

Guests can explore the beauty of the Dhofar region with the warm assistance of the Alila Leisure Concierge team and experience customised activities designed to integrate indigenous nature, traditional culture and the local community.

The new portfolio of experiences includes:

Journey of discovery in the world of tea

Evoke your senses and embark on a journey of discovery in the world of tea. Enjoy flavours, hear the fascinating stories behind each tea and meet our tea sommelier to create your own unique scented cup of tea, infused with natural essential herbs harvested from Jabal Sahhan.

Journey for two to a thousand stars

Embark on a culinary journey tailored to your desires at Sea Salt Beach or our Yoga View Point.



Indulge in a romantic dining experience under the starlit sky with mouthwatering Omani, Asian, or International dishes, specially selected by our executive chef. Cherish side-by-side

intimacy and commence your evening of romance with a 30-minute Jacuzzi experience followed by a relaxing 60-minute couples massage using a special blend body oil at Spa Alila.

Journey to discover the coastline of Dhofar

Embark on a snorkeling journey and discover a paradise for wildlife, a breeding ground for

dolphins and a stopping-off point for migrating whales. Meet turtles and discover the seabed of Oman that offers a magical show of coral reefs and multi-coloured fish. Enjoy the white sand coastline and indulge in a beach picnic.

Journey to explore the deep wonders of the Arabian Sea

Enjoy a tailored diving trip in Oman's nutrient-rich waters and visit the ocean's spectacular underwater creatures, with a private 1on1 Scuba lesson. Head back to the resort and unwind with a nourishing body wrap and facial cleanse to bring your body back to balance.

Awaken to the colour of the sky and sea

Watch as the sun slowly rises from afar while sipping on a cup of coffee. Taste a delicious yet healthy breakfast that will make your morning even more memo-

orable. Enjoy a wonderful picnic basket filled with international and Omani delicacies, as well as freshly fallen coconuts or a warm cup of our signature tea or Arabic coffee. Grasp the opportunity to treat yourself with care and love whilst you enhance your wellbeing during a yoga session.

An Alila adventure trek to Wadi Darbat

Discover Oman's natural beauty at Wadi Darbat, located at the ancient capital of Dhofar and the most beautiful wadi. Trek through a hiking trail and connect with nature, as you swim in one of the beautiful waterfalls.

Journey above the clouds to Tawi Ateer and Jabal Samhan

Enjoy the splendor of the great outdoors and escape via winding roads, greenery and rugged hills to Tawi Ateer, one of the largest solvent sinkholes in the world.

Foton Oman announces Ramadan offers

Gulf Great Sands LLC, the exclusive importer of Foton vehicles in Oman, has announced a 'Reward Your Business With More' offer on Foton range of vehicles as part of its exclusive Ramadan promotion.

Foton's Ramadan scheme which will go on till May 20, offers free periodic maintenance service, free insurance, free registration, assured fuel card, and Lulu gift Voucher. The Ramadan offer is available on models including Foton Tunland Pickup 2.4L Single Cab, 134hp, 2WD, Foton Tunland Pickup 2.4L Double Cab, 134hp, 2WD, Foton View CS, CS2 Mini Bus 2.7L Engine, 147hp, Foton Aumark S Light Truck (3.8L Turbo Engine, 140 hp) and Foton Auman Medium Duty Truck 6.7L Engine, 245 hp.

Partnering with Foton Motor Group, one of the world's largest manufacturers of commercial vehicles, Gulf Great Sands LLC (GGS) had launched a full range of commercial vehicles in Oman. Through this exclusive distribution partnership, Gulf Great Sands LLC has commenced the supply of a range of Foton's commercial vehicles in Oman which includes Heavy Duty Trucks, Medium Duty Trucks, Light Duty Trucks, Pickups, Mini buses, Panel vans, and SUVs.

A GGS LLC spokesperson, said, "The 'Reward Your Business With More' extends a host of incentives for Foton customers this Ramadan. We are certain our customers will benefit immensely from it."

"All Foton vehicles boast highest levels of quality and design, due to its partnership with leading names like Daimler, Cummins, and others. Foton invests heavily in research, development, and state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities. This ensures all Foton vehicles are created with current as well as emerging technologies. This is a great time to buy Foton vehicles."

Foton Oman: Ramadan offer



tomers this Ramadan. We are certain our customers will benefit immensely from it."

"All Foton vehicles boast highest levels of quality and design, due to its partnership with leading names like Daimler, Cummins, and others. Foton invests heavily in research, development, and state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities. This ensures all Foton vehicles are created with current as well as emerging technologies. This is a great time to buy Foton vehicles."

Foton Oman: Ramadan offer

Free registration: All customers purchasing FotonTunland (Pickups) and Foton View (Vans) during this scheme period will be eligible for free 1st year vehicle registration only.

Free insurance: All customers purchasing FotonTunland Pickups and Foton View Vans during this Scheme period will be eligible for free 1st year vehicle Insurance. (Oman and UAE) for private registration only.

Free service package Assured Free Service Pack on FotonCommercial vehicles model purchase. No wear and tear parts covered.

►Customer of Foton Tunland Pickup model variants to get assured 1year or 10,000km service. (Periodic Maintenance Service Only).

►Customer of Foton View Minibus and Panel vans model variants to get assured 2-year or 20,000km service. (Periodic Maintenance Service Only).

►Customer of Foton Aumark

Light Duty Truck model variants to get assured 1 year or 20,000km service. (periodic maintenance service only).

►Customer of Foton Auman Medium Duty Truck model variants to get assured 1 year or 20,000km service. (Periodic Maintenance Service Only).

Assured free gift on every purchase During the Ramadan offer period, we will provide assured gift as Fuel Card on all FotonCommercial vehicles

model/variant purchase as below:

►Customer of Foton Tunland Pickups model variants to get assured RO50 Fuel card.

►Customer of Foton View Minibus and panel van model variants to get assured RO50 Fuel card.

►Customer of Foton Aumark Light Duty Truck model variants to get assured RO100 Fuel card.

►Customer of Foton Auman Medium Duty Truck model variants to get assured

RO100 Fuel card.

Assured Free LuLu gift voucher on every purchase During the Ramadan offer period, we plan to share LuLu gift voucher on all FotonCommercial vehicles model/variant purchase as below:

►Customer of Foton Tunland Pickup model variants to get assured RO100 value vouchers.

►Customer of Foton View Minibus and panel van model variants to get assured RO100 value vouchers.

►Customer of Foton Aumark Light Duty Truck model variants to get assured RO200 value vouchers.

►Customer of Foton Auman Medium Duty Truck model variants to get assured RO200 value vouchers.

Manufacturer's warranty All customers purchasing FotonRange of commercial vehicles will be eligible for three years /100,000km manufacturer's warranty during the above said period.

Gulf Great Sands has a state-of-art service centre in Ghalha, Muscat, spread over more than 2900 sqm to provide aftersales services to customers. GGS has already tied up for periodic maintenance services in key cities including Salalah and Sohar.

Get 15% reward on salary transfer to ahli islamic during Ramadan

Adhering to its commitment to enhance the spirit of Ramadan with valuable and relevant rewards for customers, ahli islamic has announced an increase in its one-time cash reward on salary transfers. Customers can now expect to get as much as 15 per cent of the monthly pay, when transferring their salaries to the bank.

Designed to help patrons realise their dreams and to exceed their expectations with enriching experiences, the cash reward scheme, which will run all through the holy month of Ramadhan, will provide a maximum amount that will not exceed RO500. It will be offered in accordance with the bank's terms and conditions.

Highlighting the features of instant cash reward, Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, deputy general manager and head of ahli islamic, said, "The blessed month of Ramadan reflects the spirit of generosity and kindness, which is what we want to spread through our offer. With the launch of this offer during this auspicious occasion we want to demonstrate our keenness to provide innovative banking solutions that suit the changing needs of our customers. We believe in providing initiatives that add value to our customers' banking experiences, and, towards this end, we have amplified the offer of cash reward when transferring salary. We expect this special offer to strengthen and support our relationship with existing customers, and help us forge stronger bonds with new customers. Our

mission to provide exclusive and diverse promotions that support our customers' lifestyles - while helping them keep pace with global trends - is ongoing."

As per the reward scheme, the ahli islamic will offer both Omani and expatriate salary transfer customers the opportunity to enjoy gainful benefits. It will be available for all customers who transfer their monthly salaries - minimum RO1,000 - to the bank.

Pointing out that the new offer is a strategic move to foster savings culture among customers, Rawahi added, "We want to encourage our customers to adopt best practices, which have a long-term impact on their lives. Accordingly, our cash reward offer is structured to instill a sense of security among our customers and also reflect the bank's desire to boost their economic and social statuses. It also sheds the spotlight on our policy of financial inclusion and our ongoing efforts to establish financial stability for individuals and the society at large."

In tandem with the changes in the local labour market and in tune with the trends in the global market, ahli islamic has personalised its approach to customer service with innovative products and services and continues to bolster its portfolio with offers and schemes that resonate with the customers. ahli islamic continues to invest in advanced Islamic banking solutions and latest innovations to fulfill the needs of its growing customer base.

Indian Community cleans five beaches



A Beach clean up campaign was organised simultaneously at five different beaches across four different cities in Oman on April 8 as part of Sewa Utsav. It saw enthusiastic participation from Indian Social Club (ISC) members, Indian School students and other Indian community members.

The beaches in Azaiba and



Shatti were cleaned in Muscat with participation of more than 150 volunteers each at both the locations.

In Sohar ISC branch organised the cleaning of Sallan beach. In Sur, ISC organised cleaning of the iconic Ajyah hanging bridge and in Salalah, Dahriz beach was cleaned.

The beach cleaning activity

was organised with the support of local municipal authorities and contributed to their efforts in enhancing the awareness and sensitivity towards cleanliness and environment protection.

All the participants were sensitised on the importance of not littering in public places and protection of environment. All the participants pledged to continue to work together for environment and climate awareness and maintaining the pristine beauty of beaches in Oman.

H E Amit Narang, India's Ambassador to the sultanate commended the efforts of the Indian community and thanked the Oman government for their support. He, said, "Both the countries play an important role in

climate advocacy and protection of environment and this initiative has the potential to become a joint movement between citizens of India and Oman to raise consciousness for environment preservation".

This was a collective initiative of Indian community to contribute to cleaner and greener Oman.



AJIA announces BMW offers

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC (AJIA), the official importer of BMW Group in Oman, has revealed its exclusive Ramadan offers to the nation across its BMW model lines for 2022, including the chance to win a new BMW 120i vehicle or the BMW R18 motorbike.

To mark the holy month of Ramadan, AJIA have announced that all new car buyers during the month will revive a complimentary ticket for the chance to win a brand-new BMW 120i vehicle or BMW R18 Motorbike.

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles have also revealed exclusive offers across their model range, with BMW Service Inclusive package, valid up to five years or 100,000km, and the BMW Repair Inclusive package, valid for up to five years or 200,000km with any new car purchases made during the month.

Customers can also enjoy free window tinting from Auto



Spa and complimentary vehicle registration for the first year during the month of Ramadan, in addition to an exclusive, free original lifestyle accessory from BMW.

Jatin Dhawan, sales manager of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC said, "We are delighted to announce our exclusive Ramadan offering, and bring forward some remarkable

deals to our customers in Oman to celebrate the month of Ramadan."

"Al Jenaibi International Automobiles is proud to provide our customers with the security and confidence throughout their ownership journey, and the opportunity to own one of the world's best-loved vehicle marques through our exclusive offers this Ramadan."



Ooredoo Ramadan Football Tournament kicks off in Salalah

After two years on the sidelines, the Ooredoo Ramadan Football Tournament Salalah is back. Kicking off at Salalah Football Club on April 5 with 32 teams beginning their quest for the trophy, competition will be fierce every night until the grand final on April 28.

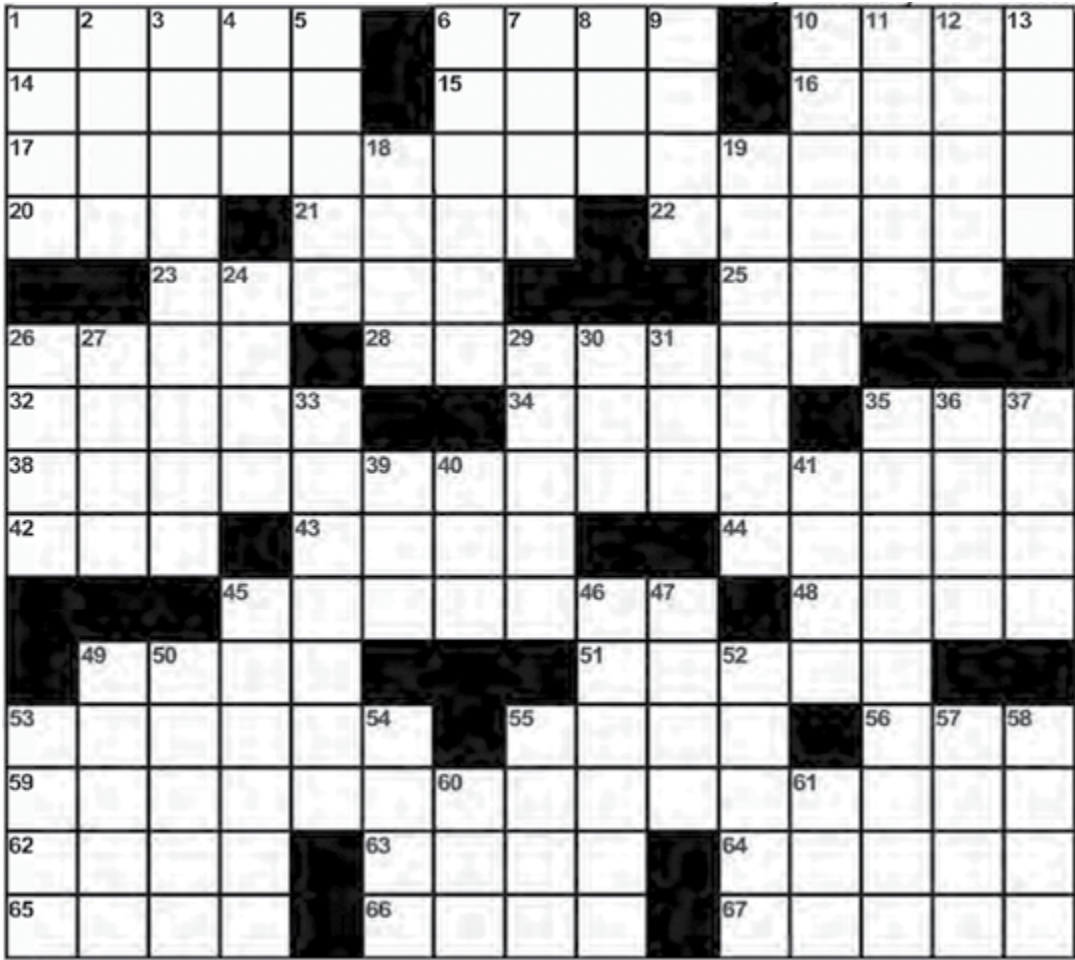
The Ooredoo Ramadan Football Tournament Salalah attracts the very best players from across Dhofar, including former national team members and players from the Oman Professional League,

as well as local clubs looking to impress.

The first game kicks off each night at 9:30pm and the tournament is free to watch. Get involved and cheer on your team!

Ooredoo is a passionate supporter of football in communities all across Oman and the GCC and will be launching official Fan Zones during the upcoming Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup for fans to enjoy all the action and experience the atmosphere of the festival of football.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Opening for an anchor cable
6) Cheater's sound at test time
10) Witchy crones
14) Enlightened Buddhist
15) Animal's abode
16) Parting notice, briefly
17) Two light chasers
20) Settled on a sofa
21) Abominable Himalayan
22) Hair slickener
23) Ceremonial elegance
25) Jeweler's collection
26) Diamond Head's locale
28) Makes operable again
32) Type of salad or tragedy
34) Collection of miscellaneous pieces
35) Beatty of TV and film
38) Three light chasers
42) Suffix for extremists
43) Part of a sacrifice, sometimes

44) Swiss border lake
45) Less acute
48) _-bodied
49) Amos or Spelling
51) Titled peer of the realm
53) Does an IRS job
55) Itty-bitty bit
56) Be remorseful
59) Three light chasers
62) Black, in poetry
63) Utilized a doorbell
64) Bit of color
65) "Stop!"
66) "Cut bait" alternative
67) War horse

DOWN

1) Makes hesitant sounds
2) Length x width, for a rectangle
3) James Cagney film classic
4) Succumb to gravity
5) Alcohol type
6) River to the Mississippi
7) It's wrapped in India
8) Be in session
9) Excursion
10) Classic literary

detective
11) Crosswise, on a ship
12) Encircles or fortifies
13) Eyelid affliction
18) Eye drop
19) Act of political backscratching
24) Signaled an actor
26) Shrek, e.g.
27) "Iliad" warrior god
29) Coastal cities
30) In the manner of
31) Due east on a grandfather clock
33) Make unwanted comments (var.)
35) Whom all contenders are chasing
36) And others, for short
37) Fraction of a newton
39) Cashew, e.g.
40) African antelope
41) Distribute cards
45) Familiarize
46) Just the right amount
47) Campus military org.
49) Engine supercharger
50) Ancient Greek theater
52) Thai bills

53) Lying under covers
54) Bondman of old
55) Charged particles
57) Encourage

58) _ out a living (just got by)
60) _ chi (martial art)
61) Punster's skill

NOTE PAD

SAMOA SHOOTERS
UNAPT OAKUM AAH
EARTHENWARE RNA
LANKY LENIN
SLAVERY STREAK
CIVETS DONEES
ATONE TAPIR TSP
DUCT MOTET ONTO
SPA COOED CREAK
DWELLS FOCSE
ABOARD DAMASKS
COPSE NIECE
TIE BRINGTOBEAR
USA RASTA FATTY
PER ADIOS FRAME

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You're ordinarily pretty impulsive and positive, but you might run into a few obstacles today, not literally, more like emotional roadblocks. It could be anything, but it's likely to be something from your past. Whatever it is, it's tugging at your sleeve and trying to tell you something. Take the opportunity to look at whatever has been going on lately and figure it out. You might get answers that move you in the right direction.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Try something different now, or at least different from how the world sees you. While you might have a reputation for serious diva potential, you also have a gentler, humbler side that shines bright on days like today. Go right ahead and take it down a notch while you think about everyone else first. It's great to realize just how well rounded you can be when it comes to the full range of human expression.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your gut is smarter than your mind right now, so follow its lead when it comes to dealing with that vital relationship, especially if it's shaky or just hitting a rough patch for the time being. Look for the deeper causes underlying any big issues instead of coming up with some superficial answer that doesn't really help in the long run. Set a date to sit down and talk things over if today isn't the best time for everyone.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

A shockingly positive response could come your way if you make yourself available. It's essential to take a hard look at your motivation before speaking. Are you just giving voice to feelings that satisfy your immediate desires, or are you thinking long term? Are you only considering smallish ego concerns, or are you thoughtfully weighing the benefits to all parties? When you speak from the heart, you get the right kind of feedback.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You sometimes need to have things settled before they're ready, and if there's squabbling going on between your people, it's even more important. Try a little diplomacy, because your calm demeanor can help everyone else chill out and see the matter at hand without the blinders of ego, but only when they're ready. Working toward a solution as a group should work, if everyone is concentrating on what's best for the group.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You, of all people, are the least likely to shy away from responsibility, except today, when a deeply personal issue could arise and force its way into your attention. Before you sit down and dream up a way to avoid this problem, why not roll up your sleeves and dive right in to solve it? Not only is it not as bad as you fear, but it should take considerably less energy than blowing it off.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Getting things done is what it's all about, and your energy gives you twice your usual impact, particularly when you're dealing with personal finances. If you're working on a goal like paying down debt or saving for retirement, you should be able to lay down some serious plans and take bold steps toward getting there. It can all come together sooner than you think, especially if you take things slowly.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Someone could be picking up on your subliminal distress signals that you've been giving off without realizing it. When they reach out, try to let them know how you're really feeling instead of shutting them down. You usually love being in the thick of things, but if you're around too many people, you might be more tense than joyous thanks to deep feelings that demand expression. It's good you have people who are so sharp!

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You held your tongue the first time because you were positive that it couldn't happen again. You held it the second time when it did happen again, but you were unsure how to bring it up. Don't hold it again. You can't stand that much stress, and (more importantly) neither can your tongue! If someone close is doing something thoughtless or just plain rude, speak up quickly before it happens again.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Financial issues have to take precedence today. Go right ahead and devote your spare moments to taking another look and deciding if there are any other ways to save. You might actually enjoy this kind of thing today, but you're also perfectly suited for it now. Your people might envy your newfound ways. Just make sure to pay attention to them when they ask for your company. You can't spend all day staring at a spreadsheet!

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You know you can't control how you feel, but you can certainly control how you behave. If you feel like you're spinning because of some recent trauma, just go ahead and spin instead of trying to fix it. If you let yourself see things as they really are, you might finally begin to enjoy yourself a little more. Learn to give up that sense of control and you can gain a heart filled with peace.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You can have a good time almost anywhere and under any circumstances. And if the situation is already pleasant, relaxed, and fun, then people should watch out for the party train! Your energy provides just such an awesome scenario, so don your party clothes, call up your best friends, and get ready to go out. How often does an opportunity like this come your way?

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. In various English-speaking countries, a flag is flown at what is said to be half mast as a mark of respect or mourning; in the US (on land) the gesture is known as half what?
A. Trunk
B. Pole
C. Pile
D. Staff

2. What was the first of a succession of Soviet state security organisations, created by a decree issued on 20 December 1917 by Vladimir Lenin and subsequently led by Felix Dzerzhinsky?
A. The Cheka
B. SPECTRE
C. SMERSH
D. Tass

3. Which of these sports has an event called the 'omnium'?
A. Shooting
B. Fencing
C. Cycling
D. Swimming

Answers: 1.D 2.A 3.C

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

A	S	D	E
A	A	K	E
O	N	H	N
M	Y	S	E

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Ukraine says Russian attack in the east ‘will begin soon’

Putin is counting on a victory ahead of the annual May 9 parade in Moscow marking Soviet defeat of the Nazis

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine is expecting Russia to launch a major offensive in the east 'soon', defence ministry spokesman Oleksandr Motuzyanyk told a briefing on Monday.

"The enemy has almost finished preparation for assault on the east, the attack will begin soon," he said.

"We don't know precisely when, but the preparation is almost over."

After rebuffing a Russian offensive on Kyiv, Ukraine has for days said a renewed Moscow attack on its east and south is looming.

"We are predicting that intense fighting will take place in these territories in the near future," Motuzyanyk said.

"We cannot predict exactly when this will happen, these are sources from Western intelligence," he said.

"The Ukrainian army is ready." The military official said he believed Moscow planned to create a 'land corridor' to the Kherson region, north of Crimea, which it controls.

He also said that a renewed Russian attack on Kyiv 'depends



Residents look at a destroyed Russian tank on the outskirts of Buzova village, west of Kyiv, on Sunday (AFP)

The enemy has almost finished preparation for assault on the east, the attack will begin soon. We don't know precisely when, but the preparation is almost over.

OLEKSANDR MOTUZYANYK

on fighting' in the eastern regions. Some analysts have said that Russian President Vladimir Putin is counting on a victory ahead of the annual May 9 parade in Moscow that commemorates that Soviet defeat of the Nazis.

Over the last week Kyiv has urged residents of eastern regions to leave their homes before the Russian attack.

At least 57 people died as a

result of the shelling of a train station in the eastern city of Kramatorsk last week, where many awaited evacuation.

Ukraine said that Russian shelling in the eastern Kharkiv region killed at least 11 civilians over the weekend. Ukrainian authorities say over 1,200 bodies have been found in the area so far and they are weighing cases against '500 suspects', including Putin and other top Russian officials.

Russian forces are now turning

their focus to the Donbas region in the east, where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russian troops were preparing 'even larger operations'.

Russia is believed to be seeking a link between occupied Crimea and Moscow-backed separatist territories Donetsk and Lugansk in Donbas.

"They can use even more missiles against us... But we are preparing for their actions. We will answer," Zelensky said.

Lugansk governor Sergiy Gaid

day warned that the region could suffer as badly as Mariupol, a besieged port city that even pro-Russian authorities say has been 70 per cent ruined by fighting.

Marines in Mariupol warned on Monday that Ukrainian forces were preparing for a final stand to control the southern port.

"Today will probably be the last battle, as the ammunition is running out," the 36th marine brigade of the Ukrainian armed forces said on Facebook.

AFP

UN envoy makes first trip to Yemen after ceasefire

Sanaa, Yemen - UN special envoy Hans Grundberg started his first visit to Yemen's rebel-held capital on Monday, following an April 2 ceasefire that the country's warring parties have accused each other of violating.

The Swedish diplomat is scheduled to meet Houthi rebel officials during his first Sanaa visit since taking office in September.

"He is looking forward to engaging with Ansar Allah (Houthi) leadership on implementing and strengthening the truce and discussing the way forward," Grundberg's office said in a tweet announcing his arrival.

The Iran-backed Houthi insurgents took control of Sanaa in 2014, prompting a Saudi-led coalition's military intervention the following year and triggering what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The two-month ceasefire declared at the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan has largely held.

"Since the start of the truce, we have seen a significant reduction of violence," Grundberg told a virtual press conference last week.

However, both sides have traded blame over violations, with the government accusing the rebels of military deployments and drone attacks while the insurgents say they 'repelled an advance' by loyalists.

A Yemeni military source also told AFP on Friday that loyalist forces had 'repelled a Houthi attack' in southern Marib.

AFP

IS 'lone-wolf' found guilty of murdering British MP

London, UK - A London jury on Monday unanimously found Islamic State follower Ali Harbi Ali guilty of murdering UK lawmaker David Amess in a ferocious knife attack in October last year.

"It cannot have been easy to listen to the evidence you have listened to," judge Nigel Sweeney told jurors, saying he would sentence Ali, 26, on Wednesday.

Ali had told the trial that he had no regrets about murdering father-of-five Amess after he voted in parliament for air strikes in Syria in 2014.

The court at London's Old Bailey heard that Ali stabbed Amess more than 20 times with a foot-long carving knife in Leigh-on-Sea, southeast England.

Members of Amess's family were in court as the verdict was read out, during which Ali refused to stand on religious grounds.

Ali, from north London, arranged an appointment with Amess, 69, by telling the politician's office that he was a healthcare worker and wished to talk about local issues.

Knife-wielding Ali was apprehended at the scene of the murder in a church by two police officers armed only with batons and spray. He had sent a manifesto to family and friends to try to justify his actions around the time of the attack.

'Self-satisfied'

The court heard that Ali said 'sorry' to Amess before killing him, after which his assistant Julie Cushion said he appeared 'self-satisfied'.

During police interviews, Ali



David Amess (AFP)

had told police that Amess suspected a 'sting', having been duped in the 1990s into talking about a made-up drug 'cake' during a satirical television series.

Director of Public Prosecutions Max Hill said the murder was 'the most appalling tragedy' for the family and an 'attack on democracy'.

The court heard how Ali had become self-radicalised in 2014, going on to drop out of university, abandoning ambitions for a career in medicine.

Ali, who came from a Somali family and said he had a childhood 'full of love and care', considered travelling to Syria to fight but opted instead for an attack in Britain. He bought a knife six years ago which he carried in his bag throughout the summer of 2021 as he 'scoped out' possible targets, jurors heard.

He carried out reconnaissance on parliament but found police there 'armed to the teeth', the court heard.

Ali carried out online research on MPs including Labour leader Keir Starmer, deputy prime minister Dominic Raab and Defence Secretary Ben Wallace.

AFP

'Anti-migrant attacks akin to apartheid actions'

Johannesburg, South Africa - President Cyril Ramaphosa on Monday blasted vigilante groups for harassing migrants in South Africa, likening their behaviour to strategies adopted by the apartheid regime to target blacks.

Scores of people have been staging demonstrations in recent months against the proliferation of undocumented migrants in the country. Last week a Zimbabwean man was killed in an apparent mob attack in Johannesburg township of Diepsloot.

A small group of vigilantes had gone door-to-door demanding to see people's identity documents



A man is seen behind burning tyres as community members protest against the rise of crime in Diepsloot in South Africa on April 6 (AFP)

Under apartheid, black people were deemed suspects by default and stopped by police when found in so-called white areas

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

uments after seven people in the township had been murdered the previous weekend. Angry residents complained that police were not doing enough to stem crime. "We have seen people

being stopped on the street by private citizens and being forced to produce identification to verify their immigration status," Ramaphosa said in his weekly newsletter. "This was how the apartheid oppressors operated."

"Under apartheid, black people were deemed suspects by default and stopped by police when found in so-called white areas," he said.

Blacks 'were forced to produce a dompas (a passport-like document) and if they could not do so, they were jailed.'

"We cannot allow such injustices to happen again."

AFP

Pakistan lawmakers elect Sharif as new PM

Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistan lawmakers on Monday elected Shehbaz Sharif as the country's new prime minister following the weekend ouster of Imran Khan, who resigned his national assembly seat - along with most of his party members - ahead of the vote.

Khan was dismissed on Sunday after losing a no-confidence vote, paving the way for an unlikely alliance that faces the same issues which bedevilled the cricket star-turned-politician.

Sharif, leader of the centrist Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) was the only candidate after Khan loyalist Shah Mahmood Qureshi, the former foreign minister, withdrew his candidacy and resigned his seat.

"It's a victory of righteousness, and evil has been de-



A PML-N supporter holds a party flag with images of Shehbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif, in Islamabad on Monday (AFP)

feated," Sharif said to cheers from lawmakers. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party had

155 lawmakers in the 342-seat chamber before the mass resignations, and Sharif was elected

with 174 votes.

His first task will be to form a cabinet that will also draw heav-

ily from the centre-left Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), as well as find space for the smaller conservative Jamiat-ulema-e-Islam-F (JUI-F) group.

Bitter rivals

The PPP and PML-N are dynastic parties that have dominated Pakistani politics for decades - usually as bitter rivals - but their relations are sure to fray in the lead-up to the next election, which must be held by October 2023.

They need to tackle soaring inflation, a feeble rupee and crippling debt, while militancy is also on the rise - with Pakistan's Taliban emboldened by the return to power last year of the hardline Islamist group in neighbouring Afghanistan.

AFP

Israel army launches operations around flashpoint West Bank city

Jenin, Palestinian Territories - Israeli forces launched a third day of operations on Monday around the flashpoint West Bank city of Jenin following heavy gun battles in recent days and 20 arrests overnight, the army said.

Tensions have soared since a spree of attacks in Israel left 14 people dead in the past three weeks, with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett warning the Jewish state is now 'on the offensive'.

Four Palestinians were killed in separate incidents across the occupied territory on Sunday, and fighter groups in Jenin braced for more battles.

The city as well as Bethlehem declared general strikes.

Thousands of mourners flooded the streets of Jenin on Monday for the funerals of those killed, many carrying Palestinian flags or rifles.

Abu Muadh, military spokesman of the armed factions in Jenin's refugee camp, late on Sunday called for 'general mobilisation of our fighters to



A Palestinian man hurls stones from behind an Israeli security armoured vehicle during a raid to look for wanted Palestinians in Nablus city in the occupied West Bank, on Monday (AFP)

confront any incursion by the Zionist enemy'.

Israeli troops were targeting relatives of Raad Hazem, the

28-year-old man from Jenin who last Thursday killed three Israeli civilians and wounded 12 at a Tel Aviv bar before he was

shot dead following a massive manhunt.

Israeli soldiers on Sunday engaged in an exchange of gunfire

involving Raad Hazem's brothers and also demanded the father hand himself in, ahead of the planned demolition of the

family home.

A teen on a motorcycle who opened fire on the Israeli officers in that exchange, Mohamed Zakarneh, 17, was the latest fatality, succumbing to gunshot wounds overnight, the Wafa news agency said. Another Palestinian from the Bethlehem area was shot dead on Sunday after hurling a Molotov cocktail at Israeli troops, the army told AFP.

The tensions have surged during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, nearly a year after violence flared in the other Palestinian territory, the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, leading to 11 days of devastating conflict.

A total of 14 people in Israel have been killed in four attacks since March 22, including a shooting spree in Bnei Brak, an Orthodox Jewish city in greater Tel Aviv, carried out by a Palestinian from Jenin.

Over the same period, at least 14 Palestinians have been killed, including assailants, according to a count by AFP.

AFP

'Detained' Egyptian economist dies: Kin

Cairo, Egypt - Egyptian economist Ayman Hadhoud, who was allegedly detained in early February, has died, his brother told AFP on Sunday, as police denied 'forcibly disappearing' him.

"According to official records in the prosecution, (Ayman) died on March 5," his brother Omar Hadhoud, a lawyer, told AFP. "We got a call last night to retrieve the body from the Abbasiya" mental health facility.

The interior ministry meanwhile said on Sunday that Hadhoud was placed in a psychiatric facility on February 6, following reports he attempted to break into an apartment in central Cairo.

But his brother disputed this account of events, saying: "If he was breaking and entering, there would have been a court case.

"He disappeared on February 5. On February 8, a policeman from Al-Amiriya police station told us to come collect Ayman," Omar Hadhoud said.

"The truth was they wanted to interrogate us," he continued, adding that when his older brother Adel went to collect him, he was told Ayman would be held for a few more days.

"And then they completely denied detaining him."

In the following weeks, the family received contradictory information from officials, before being notified unofficially in early April that Ayman was in the Abbasiya mental health facility in eastern Cairo. Ayman Hadhoud was a member of the liberal Reform and Development Party

AFP

Iran questions US will to restore 2015 nuclear agreement

Tehran, Iran - Tehran on Monday questioned Washington's will in reaching an agreement to restore the 2015 nuclear agreement, with key sticking points unresolved after talks halted last month.

Iran has been engaged for a year in negotiations with France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China directly, and the United States indirectly to revive the deal, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Negotiations in the Austrian capital Vienna aim to return the United States to the nuclear deal, including through the lifting of sanctions on Iran, and to

ensure Tehran's full compliance with its commitments.

"We really don't know if we'll get a deal or not, because the United States hasn't shown the necessary will to reach an agreement," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said.

"What remains are the decisions of Washington," Khatibzadeh added.

Earlier this month, Khatibzadeh's counterpart in the State Department Ned Price said it was Tehran that was not giving way to make an agreement possible, but that Washington still believed there was 'opportunity to overcome our



Saeed Khatibzadeh speaks to media in Tehran, on Monday (AFP)

remaining differences'.

The 2015 agreement gave Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme to guarantee that Tehran could not develop a nuclear weapon - something Iran has always denied wanting to do.

But the US unilateral withdrawal from the accord in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump and the reimposition of biting economic sanctions under a 'maximum pressure' campaign prompted Iran to begin rolling back on its own commitments.

"All components of maximum pressure must be re-

moved," Khatibzadeh said.

"Unfortunately, the United States is trying to maintain some of the elements of maximum pressure," he added.

The talks have been paused since March 11 after Russia demanded guarantees that Western sanctions imposed following its February 24 invasion of Ukraine would not damage its trade with Iran.

Days later, Moscow said it had received the necessary guarantees.

The negotiations had progressed most of the way toward reviving the deal, with different parties pointing to the 'final phase', but pending issues are

still unresolved.

"More than one issue is remaining between us and the United States," Khatibzadeh added.

Among the key sticking points is Tehran's demand to delist the Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of Iran's military, from a US terror list.

Last month, US negotiator Rob Malley said the Guards would remain 'sanctioned by American law' even in the event of an agreement.

"What is important to us is the certain benefit of the Iranian people from the lifting of the sanctions," Khatibzadeh said.

AFP

More support for condemned US mother

Washington, US - The looming execution of a US mother-of-14 - sentenced to death in a controversial case for the murder of her toddler daughter - has provoked backlash from celebrities like Kim Kardashian and a growing movement that reaches well beyond US borders.

Melissa Lucio is to be put to death on April 27 for the 2007 murder of her two-year-old daughter Mariah, whose body was found at the family home covered in bruises, days after falling down stairs. Pregnant with twins at the time, Lucio's life had been marred by both physical and sexual assault, drug addiction and financial insecurity. She was immediately suspected by police of having hit her daughter and questioned at length, just hours after the death.

After saying 'that she hadn't done it nearly a hundred times', at 3am she made a 'completely extorted' confession, according to Sabrina Van Tassel, director of the hit documentary *The State of Texas vs. Melissa*, which came out in 2020. "I guess I did it," Lucio eventually told her interrogators when questioned about the presence of the bruises.

That confession was 'the only thing they had against her', said Van Tassel, convinced that 'there is nothing that connects Melissa Lucio to the death of this child, there is no DNA, no witness'.

During the trial, a doctor said it was the 'absolute worst' case of child abuse he had seen.



Melissa Lucio (centre) bowing her head in prayer during a meeting with a bipartisan group of Texas lawmakers at Gatesville Correctional Facility, Texas, on April, 6 (AFP)

But Mariah had a physical disability which made her unsteady while walking, according to Lucio's defense - and which could have explained her fall.

The defense also argued that the bruises could have been caused by a blood circulation disorder. None of Melissa's children had accused her of being violent. As for the prosecution, he was later sentenced to prison for corruption and extortion.

'Miscarriage of justice'

Now the documentary has sparked widespread interest, causing a whole movement to coalesce around Lucio.

Reality star Kim Kardashian tweeted to her tens of millions of followers on Wednesday that there were 'so many unresolved

questions surrounding this case and the evidence that was used to convict her'.

And Lucio's story has ignited media in Latin America, fascinated by the tale of the first Hispanic woman to be sentenced to death in Texas - the US state that has executed the most people in the 21st century.

In France, former presidential candidate Christiane Taubira said Lucio is probably a 'victim of a miscarriage of justice'.

Even one of the jurors who sentenced her expressed his 'deep regret' in an editorial published on Sunday. Lucio is also winning support from US Republicans, traditionally defenders of capital punishment.

About 80 Texas lawmakers from both parties have demanded authorities call off the

execution. Several have been to visit her in prison. "As a conservative Republican myself who has long been a supporter of the death penalty... I have never seen a more troubling case than the case of Melissa Lucio," said one of them, Jeff Leach.

'A shock'

The flood has come as a 'shock' for the death row inmate, her son John Lucio told AFP.

When he showed her the messages from celebrities like Kardashian, 'she couldn't believe it'. The last 15 years have been 'very difficult', said Lucio, who was a teenager at the time of the tragedy and had 'to cope with it, knowing that I lost my sister and then my mother being charged for it'.

AFP

Mexican president wins recall vote marked by low turnout

Mexico City, Mexico - Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on Sunday easily won a divisive referendum he promoted on whether he should step down or complete his term - a vote marked by low turnout.

With an approval rating of nearly 60 per cent, Lopez Obrador's presidency had never appeared seriously at risk, and the left-wing populist was himself one of the vote's biggest cheerleaders.

The 68-year-old president, elected in 2018 for a six-year term, won slightly more than 90 per cent of votes in favour of his staying in office until 2024, according to an official initial count.

But the turnout rate was estimated to be no more than around 18 per cent, well below the 40-per cent level needed for the poll to be legally binding.

That means that even if Lopez Obrador had lost, he would not have been obliged to step down.

Lopez Obrador ruled out using the result to pursue a constitutional reform allowing him to seek another term, as some critics have accused him of planning to do. "I'm going to continue serving until the last day of my term. I'm not going to go past that because I'm a democrat and I'm not in favour of re-election," he said in a video message.

Supporters of the referendum - the first of its kind in Mexico -



Andres Obrador casting his vote in Mexico City, on Sunday (AFP)

said it was a way of increasing democratic accountability, giving voters the opportunity to remove the president due to loss of confidence. "Now we have the chance to change what's not right. There have been presidents who, after being elected by the people, ended up serving other interests," Benigno Gasca, a 57-year-old mathematician and musician, told AFP.

'Useless exercise'

But critics saw the referendum as expensive propaganda and an unnecessary distraction from the many challenges facing the country, including drug-related violence, poverty and the rising cost of living. "It's a useless exercise - money thrown away," said Laura Gonzalez, a 62-year-old retired teacher.

Mario Delgado, leader of the

ruling party Morena, said voters had recognised Lopez Obrador's 'dedication to the most needy and the enormous moral authority with which he governs.

"Only an indomitable, unwavering democrat like him can subject himself to a recall process," he added.

But Marko Cortes, of the conservative opposition party PAN, said the vote was marked 'by illegality, lies, manipulation and the diversion of public resources'. Alejandro Moreno of the PRI, which ruled Mexico for seven decades until 2000, tweeted that Morena had turned the referendum into a 'mockery' to 'satisfy its own ego and continue deceiving Mexicans'.

'Political muscle'

Some 93mn voters were eligible to participate in the midterm referendum, which was incorporated into Mexico's constitution in 2019 at Lopez Obrador's initiative. Most of the signatures that were collected in order for the vote to happen came from his supporters.

Experts had predicted that a win could give impetus to Lopez Obrador's policy agenda, such as controversial energy reforms.

The president also has his eye on the 2024 elections and the prospects for his party and possible successors, including Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum.

AFP

Macron-Le Pen: A 'scary' Act II

Paris, France - French President Emmanuel Macron and far-right rival Marine Le Pen Monday embarked on a final fortnight of bruising campaigning for a French presidential election run-off whose outcome is far more uncertain than their encounter five years ago.

With 97 per cent votes counted, Macron came in first in Sunday's first round of voting with 27.6 per cent of the vote. Le Pen was second with 23.4 per cent. As the top two finishers, they advance to a second round on April 24.

Far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon came close to beating Le Pen for the second spot, after a late surge gave him a score of just under 22 per cent.

The duel between Macron and Le Pen is a re-run of the 2017 election final from which Macron emerged victorious with 66 per cent. But this time polls predict a closer contest which will crucially hinge on voters who backed other candidates in the first round.

"Make no mistake: nothing is decided," Macron told cheering supporters at his campaign headquarters on Sunday night.

Le Monde daily headlined: 'Macron-Le Pen - A more uncertain Act II'.

'Really scary'

Macron said he would on Monday be campaigning in northern France, while Le Pen is set to meet her campaign team before resuming her months-long grassroots efforts in small towns and rural France later in the week.

"A sad repetition," left-leaning daily Liberation called the Macron-Le Pen duel on Monday,



This file photo shows French President Emmanuel Macron visiting France Inter's office, next to a TV screen displaying French far-right party Rassemblement National (RN) presidential candidate Marine Le Pen at the Maison de la Radio in Paris on April 4 (AFP)

adding: "This time it's really scary."

Polls gauging second-round voting intentions mostly point to around 53 per cent for Macron and 47 per cent for Le Pen. One poll, however, by the Ifop-Fiducial group suggested Macron could have only a razor-thin win with 51 per cent versus 49 per cent.

"The second round is the hardest one," said Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire on RTL radio.

"Everything begins again with a new campaign."

As well as campaigning on the merits of their respective programmes, both candidates will also scramble to woo voters of their defeated first-round rivals.

"We're going to have to win over the French people who didn't vote for Emmanuel Macron in the first round," government spokesman Gabriel Attal told the France Inter broadcaster on Monday.

"We're going to have to fight for this election."

'Not us'

In an early boost for the president, Communist Party candidate Fabien Roussel, Socialist Anne Hidalgo, Yannick Jadot of the Greens and right-wing Republicans candidate Valerie Pécresse said they would vote for him to prevent the far-right leader coming to power.

Without directly backing Macron, Melenchon in a crucial move also told his supporters not to give a 'single vote' to Le Pen.

Meanwhile Le Pen's far-right rival Eric Zemmour, who garnered just over seven per cent on Sunday, threw his weight behind her. Le Pen, 53, said the run-off would present 'a fundamental

choice between two visions'.

A pivotal moment in the next stage of the campaign will come on April 20 when the two candidates are set to take part in a TV debate broadcast live on national television. Part of the battle will be to mobilise the 25 per cent of registered voters who abstained in the first round.

The candidates from France's traditional parties of government - the Socialists and the Republicans - suffered humiliating defeats.

Sunday's vote spelled humiliation for Socialist Hidalgo, the mayor of Paris, who won only 1.7 per cent, a historic low for the party which only a decade ago won the presidency.

The vote for the right-wing Republicans party, headed by nominee Valerie Pécresse, collapsed to 4.8 per cent from 20 per cent in 2017.

On Monday, Pécresse confessed her campaign finances, which included €5mn (US\$5.5mn) of her own money, were in a 'critical' state, and called for donations from her supporters.

The election has been overshadowed by the war in Ukraine, with surging prices of everyday goods making the cost of living a key issue.

The vote could have major implications for the European Union, which Le Pen says she wants to radically reform. She has also said she wants to pull out of NATO's joint military command.

Macron countered on Sunday that he did not want a France which 'once out of Europe, would only have the international alliance of populists and xenophobes as allies'. "That's not us." AFP



EU's fishing commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius (right) is seen with Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Strasbourg, on April 5 (AFP)

UK-France fishing dispute nearly resolved: EU official

Brussels, Belgium - A post-Brexit row between France and Britain over fishing rights for French boats is nearing resolution after months of negotiations, the EU's fishing commissioner said in an interview on Sunday.

"We managed to achieve most of the licences that have been requested" by the owners of the French vessels to fish in British waters, with only 70 licences outstanding, commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius told the Financial Times.

He said the commission, which had backed France in the dispute, 'fully intends to continue building a successful and constructive relationship with the UK'. Contacted by AFP, the European Commission did not immediately confirm the information nor provide further details.

But a spokesperson at France's ministry of the sea told AFP that 'there isn't any particular update on the issue' to give.

As part of the Brexit deal setting out EU-British relations following Britain's departure from the European Union two years ago, the UK agreed to allow French vessels to continue to operate in British and Channel Island waters they had fished for centuries. While Britain granted nearly 1,700 licences to EU boats to fish in waters 12-200 nautical miles from the coast, it imposed what France said was an impractical burden of proof for French vessels seeking to operate in the fish-rich zone 6-12 nautical miles offshore.

Licence applications for 150 vessels were initially rejected for waters around Britain and Jersey.

The commission lent its legal service's weight to the French application service, while French fishermen threatened to blockade French ports and the Channel Tunnel if they did not get more licences.

In December, France said there were 80 licence applications outstanding and it was going to ask Brussels to open litigation proceedings against Britain if they were not granted. AFP



Staff at The Royal London Hospital in east London attend a video call with Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, in residence at Windsor Castle, to mark the official opening of the hospital's Queen Elizabeth Unit (AFP)

Queen Elizabeth felt exhausted from COVID

London, UK - Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, who turns 96 soon, has spoken of serious fatigue after she contracted COVID-19 in February despite aides downplaying her illness.

At the time, Buckingham Palace said the vaccinated monarch had 'mild, cold-like symptoms'.

But she was forced to cancel a series of appointments with foreign diplomats, at the start of her record-breaking 70th year on the throne.

Queen Elizabeth recalled her experience on Wednesday when she spoke to staff and patients by video-link to mark the opening of a hospital unit named in her honour in east London.

Speaking to one former COVID patient who required ventilation, the queen said about the virus: "It does leave one very tired and exhausted, doesn't it?"

"This horrible pandemic. It's not a nice result," she said, according to footage released by the palace on Sunday.

The unit at the Royal London Hospital was built in record time to cope with an influx of Covid sufferers.

The construction team hailed the "Dunkirk spirit" that inspired them, referring to the World War II retreat of British and allied forces from northern France, in the face of a Nazi on-

It (COVID-19) does leave one very tired and exhausted, doesn't it? This is horrible pandemic. It's not a nice result

QUEEN ELIZABETH

slaught.

"Thank goodness it still exists," the queen replied.

"It is very interesting, isn't it, when there is some very vital thing, how everybody works together and pulls together -- marvellous, isn't it?"

Fears for the queen's health have lingered since she had an unscheduled overnight stay in hospital last October, which was only revealed by the palace later. Her public appearances have become rarer since, and she has complained of mobility problems, as her 96th birthday approaches on April 21.

She is to miss a religious service on Maundy Thursday this week and will be represented by her eldest son and heir, Prince Charles.

The service marks the start of Easter weekend, and is normally a fixture in her calendar. AFP

Nigeria's VP announces run for president

Lagos, Nigeria - Nigerian Vice President Yemi Osinbajo on Monday declared he would run for the nation's top job next year when incumbent Muhammadu Buhari is scheduled to step down.

He becomes the latest figure from the two main parties to join the race to lead Africa's most populous country and biggest economy.

First elected as Buhari's deputy in 2015, Osinbajo made the announcement after months of speculation on whether he planned to succeed his boss.

In a statement, the 65-year-old senior lawyer and former university teacher said his years of stewardship under Buhari

had made him the best man for the job.

"Which is why I am today, with utmost humility, formally declaring my intention to run for the office of the President... on the platform of our great party, the All Progressives Congress," Osinbajo said.

He promised to continue with Buhari's policies and pro-

grammes, including huge projects of new roads and railways.

A key issue ahead of the February 2023 election is security, with Nigeria's armed forces battling a militant insurgency in the northeast, violent criminal gangs in the northwest and separatist tensions in the southeast. AFP

UK finance minister requests ethics review amid wife's tax controversy

London, UK - Britain's embattled finance minister, Rishi Sunak, has asked the government's ethics advisor to review whether he followed all the rules after revelations about his family's financial affairs stoked political controversy.

In a letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson - disclosed late on Sunday - Sunak requested that the government's advisor on ministerial standards, Christopher Geidt, assess his declarations of interest since he first became a minister in 2018.

It follows a leak last week revealing that his wealthy Indian wife has benefited from 'non-domicile' tax status in the UK, shielding her overseas income from taxes at a time when they are rising for most Britons.

After initially claiming his spouse Akshata Murty - whose father co-founded the Indian IT behemoth Infosys - was the victim of a smear campaign, the couple U-turned last Friday and vowed she would now pay British taxes on all her global income.

But it has failed to quell accusations of hypocrisy for raising



This file photo shows Rishi Sunak posing with his wife Akshata Murty during a reception to celebrate the British Asian Trust in London on February 9 (AFP)

taxes on Britons in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, while his own family has seen millions of pounds in Infosys dividends shielded from his own ministry.

Sunak is believed to be Britain's richest member of parliament. He has also faced criticism for a lack of transparency, after admitting to holding a 'Green Card' for US permanent

residents until last year.

Possession of the card would enable him to keep the United States as his long-term home and pay US taxes, despite serving as Britain's second-most powerful politician with designs on Johnson's job.

Meanwhile, other claims have also emerged in recent days, including that he was

listed as the beneficiary of off-shore trusts set up in so-called tax havens to help manage his wife's business affairs.

In his letter to Johnson asking for Geidt's review, Sunak insisted he had acted appropriately at all times but his 'overriding concern' was that the public should have confidence in the answers.

"I am confident that such a review of my declarations will find all relevant information was appropriately declared," he added.

However, the main opposition Labour party has said his situation raised potential conflicts of interest, and its deputy leader Angela Rayner has also written to both Johnson and Geidt requesting answers.

"A fish rots from the head. It is the prime minister's responsibility to bring this debacle to a close by ensuring that standards are upheld across his cabinet," she said. Once a leading contender to succeed Johnson as the British leader struggled with his own series of scandals, Sunak has seen his popularity plummet in recent weeks amid the cost-of-living crisis and the revelations. AFP



Indigenous woman Luana Melgueiro da Silva, of the Baré tribe, poses for a photo during a fashion event in Manaus, Amazonas state, Brazil,

INDIGENOUS FASHION



ATTIRE SATIRE

BRAZIL'S FIRST INDIGENOUS FASHION SHOW HELD TO OVERCOME STEROTYPES

Proudly donning majestic feathered headdresses, models sing an ode to the rain while a makeup artist draws geometric patterns on their faces, arms and thighs in preparation for Brazil's first-ever indigenous fashion show.

"It is a feeling of happiness and pride," 19-year-old model Moan Munduruku said ahead of his turn on the catwalk in Manaus in the Brazilian Amazon. "We are very eager to show our talent, in sewing, in crafts. To show the world that indigenous people can also succeed" in fashion, he said.

Moan is one of 37 models - women and men - representing 15 indigenous groups of Brazil to take part in the month-long Intercultural Exhibition of Indigenous Fashion in the Brazilian Amazon's largest city. For the entire month of April, the catwalk is to host the creations of 29 indigenous designers.

"It's a form of resistance, a way to overcome stereotypes," event organiser Reby Ferreira, 27, said. "Here in Manaus, unfortunately, many people are ashamed or even afraid to recognise that they have indigenous blood. Our goal is for everyone to feel included and to show our culture to



everyone through these clothes."

The designers use natural elements in their creations, including the spearlike teeth of the peccary - an Amazonian boar - the red guarana fruit, acai seeds and coconut shells.

The same geometric patterns sported by the models are repeated in the fabrics that envelop them.

"My outfit evokes the (coming-of-age) ritual of the Ticuna girl," said Kimpuramana, a 17-year-old model sporting a white dress adorned with black diagonal stripes.

On the fashion runway, a presenter announces the ethnicity of each model and explains the symbolism behind the traditional clothes and the accessories that they wear. Saturday's show was hosted at the Rio Negro Palace, an early 20th century building

that now serves as a cultural center. "I feel privileged to have been able to attend such an event in this place. We are generally excluded from such sites. Today I can see my people telling their story through fashion," said participant Bianca Mura, 24.

As the models walked down the catwalk to appreciative applause, thousands of indigenous Brazilians gathered in the capital Brasilia some 3,500km away, for an annual mass camping event called Terra Livre

(Free Land).

The gathering is both a rally for indigenous rights and a protest against the government of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who is in favour of opening indigenous reserves - already hard hit by deforestation - to mining and farming companies.

AFP



CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Indian male (34 years), MBA-Marketing with 11 years Oman experience in sales and operations with a valid Omani Driving Licence. Call: 98469481

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories: **Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)** Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346

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

- 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



AUDIT, VAT, TAXATION

Accounting, Auditing, Vat Services, Taxation

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit Chartered Accountants

Contact: 92469602/93949235

Offices at Muscat, Salalah, Sohar & Sur
Email: kumar@gccaoman.com

INSTRUMENT OF YORE



Zohaib Hassan (centre) teaches his students to play sarangi at his academy in Lahore

SOUND OF THE sarangi

The Mughal-era 'sarangi' – a stringed musical instrument – is slipping into oblivion in Pakistan

In the shadow of Lahore's centuries-old Badshahi Mosque, Zohaib Hassan plucks at the strings of a sarangi, filling the streets with a melodious hum and cry. Remarkable for its resemblance to the human voice, the classical instrument is fading from Pakistan's music scene - except for a few players dedicated to preserving its place.

Difficult to master, expensive to repair, and with little financial reward for professionals, the sarangi's decline has been difficult to halt, Hassan disclosed.

"We are trying to keep the instrument alive, not even taking into account our miserable financial condition," he said.

For seven generations, his family has mastered the bowed, short-necked instrument and Hassan is well-respected across Pakistan for his abilities, regularly appearing on television, radio and at private parties.

"My family's craze for the instrument forced me to pursue a career as a sarangi player, leaving my education incomplete," he said. "I live a hand-to-mouth existence as a majority of directors arrange musical programmes with the latest orchestras and pop bands. No one is interested in listening to the sarangi."

Traditional instruments are competing with a booming R&B and pop scene in a country where more than 60 per cent of the population

Platforms have been given to other disciplines like pop music, but it has been missing in the case of classical music. The sarangi, being a very difficult instrument, has not been given due importance in Pakistan, leading to its gradual demise

SARA ZAMAN

is aged under 30.

Sara Zaman, a classical music teacher at the National Council of Arts in Lahore, said alongside the sarangi, other traditional instruments such as the sitar, santoor, and tanpura are also dying out.

"Platforms have been given to other disci-

plines like pop music, but it has been missing in the case of classical music," she said. "The sarangi, being a very difficult instrument, has not been given due importance in Pakistan, leading to its gradual demise."

The slow decline

The old-fashioned sarangi gained prominence in Indian classical music in the 17th century, during the reign of the Mughals in the sub-continent.

Its decline began in the 1980s after the death of several master players and classical singers in the country, said Khwaja Najam ul Hassan, a television director who has created an archive of Pakistan's leading musicians.

"The instrument was close to the hearts of the top internationally acclaimed male and female classical singers, but it began to fade away after they died," he said.

Ustad Allah Rakha, one of Pakistan's most globally acclaimed sarangi players, died in 2015 after a career that saw him perform with orchestras around the world. Now, players say they struggle to survive on performance fees alone, often much smaller than those paid to modern guitarists, pianists or violinists.

Carved by hand from a single block of cedar native to parts of Pakistan, the sarangi's primary strings are made of goat gut while the seventeen sympathetic strings - a common feature on sub-continent folk instruments - are steel.



Muhammad Tahir repairs a musical instrument at his shop in Lahore

Price of parts

The instrument costs around 120,000 Pakistani rupees (US\$625) and most of its parts are imported from neighbouring India, where it remains a principal part of the canon.

"The price has gone up as there is a ban on imports from India," said Muhammad Tahir, the owner of one of only two repair shops in Lahore. Pakistan has stopped bilateral trade with India over its decision in 2019 to revoke autonomy for the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region.

Tahir, who spends around two months carefully restoring a single worn-out sarangi, said no one in Pakistan manufactures the special steel strings because of the lack of demand. "There is no admiration for sarangi players and the few people who are repairing this wonderful instrument," said Ustad Ziauddin, the owner of the other Lahore repair shop, which has existed in some form for 200 years. Efforts to adapt to the modern music scene have, however, shown pockets of promise.

"We have invented new ways of playing, including making the sarangi semi-electric to enhance the sound during performances with modern musical instruments," said Hassan of the academy he runs in Lahore.

He has now performed several times with the adapted instrument, and says the reception has been positive.

One of the few students is 14-year-old musician Mohsin Muddasir, who has shunned instruments such as the guitar to take on the sarangi. "I am learning this instrument because it plays with the strings of my heart," he said.

AFP



A shop selling musical instruments in Lahore



Ustad Ziauddin repairs a traditional sarangi at his shop in Lahore



Belinda Bencic celebrates after her victory against Ons Jabeur (AFP)

Bencic downs Jabeur to win first clay title in Charleston

Charleston, United States - Belinda Bencic beat Ons Jabeur to claim the first clay court title of her career on Sunday with victory at the WTA Charleston Open in South Carolina.

Tenth seed Bencic, the reigning Olympic champion from Switzerland, dug deep to overcome Tunisian fourth seed Jabeur 6-1, 5-7, 6-4 in 2hr 35min.

Bencic looked to be on course for a brisk victory after racing through the first set against an out-of-sorts Jabeur.

But world number 10 Jabeur found her range in the second set to force a decider.

Bencic however got back on

track in the third, dramatically improving her first-serve percentage to put Jabeur on the defensive and wrap up victory.

Jabeur shed tears after the game as she digested another defeat in a final. The Tunisian has lost four out of her five WTA finals.

"I told myself not to cry but it's very tough," Jabeur said. "Many finals we lost now but hopefully it's going to come soon."

Bencic paid tribute to Jabeur after the win.

"You took everything out of me today," Bencic said. "This tournament deserved two winners."

South Africa spinners wrap up crushing win over Bangladesh

Gqeberha, South Africa - South African captain Dean Elgar hailed the performance of a below-strength team after they completed a crushing 332-run win on the fourth day of the second Test against Bangladesh at St George's Park on Monday.

Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque, meanwhile, bemoaned the failure of his players to perform with both bat and ball.

Keshav Maharaj and Simon Harmer bowled South Africa to victory for the second week in a row.

Bangladesh were bowled out for 80, losing their remaining seven wickets inside an hour.

Left-arm spinner Maharaj took seven for 40 and off-spinner Harmer claimed three for 34.

It was the second successive match in which the two spinners bowled unchanged through the fourth innings. It was also Maharaj's second seven-wicket haul in successive matches after he took seven for 32 in South Africa's 220-run win in the first



South Africa's captain Dean Elgar poses with the trophy (AFP)

Test in Durban.

Maharaj, who top-scored with 84 in South Africa's first innings, was named player of the match and player of the series.

South Africa shrugged off the loss of five leading players, including their full first-choice fast bowling line-up, to the Indian Premier League.

AFP



Scottie Scheffler basks in glory as he poses with the trophy after winning the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on Sunday (AFP)

Masterful Scheffler wins first major title

World No1 reigns supeme as Woods completes comeback from severe leg injuries

Augusta, United States - Top-ranked Scottie Scheffler captured his first major title on Sunday by winning the Masters in dominating fashion, holding firm down the stretch to seize the green jacket after Tiger Woods completed his comeback from severe leg injuries.

Scheffler fired a final-round one-under-par 71 to finish 72 holes on 10-under 278 and defeat four-time major winner Rory McIlroy by three strokes with Australian Cameron Smith and Ireland's Shane Lowry sharing third on 283.

"It was a long day, a tough day for me," Scheffler said. "I just tried to keep my head down and execute my shots."

Scheffler, who only won his

The minute I did was on 18 green when I finally got on there and I had a five-shot lead and was like, 'All right, now I can enjoy this.' And you saw the results of that.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER



first PGA title in February, holed a spectacular chip-in birdie from 87 feet at the par-4 third to blunt an early charge by Smith, last month's Players Championship winner.

"It was not a shot I expected to see go in but it got things off and rolling for me," Scheffler said.

He also birdied the 14th and sank a 14-foot birdie putt at the par-5 15th to signal there would

be no collapse to open a door for McIlroy, chasing an Augusta National win to complete a career Grand Slam.

Scheffler endured an agonizing double bogey at the 18th hole, needing three putts from inside five feet before finally sinking the putt to secure his breakthrough major triumph.

"I didn't want to break my concentration," Scheffler said.

"The minute I did was on 18 green when I finally got on there and I had a five-shot lead and was like, 'All right, now I can enjoy this.' And you saw the results of that."

The 25-year-old American took a \$2.7 million top prize from a \$15 million purse and joined 1991 Masters champion Ian Woosnam as the only players to win majors in their debut events as world number one.

Scheffler is only the fifth player to win the Masters while atop the rankings, joining Welshman Woosnam and Americans Fred Couples, Dustin Johnson and Woods, whose epic injury fightback dominated attention.

Spectators gave Woods a standing ovation at the 18th

green for his astonishing return to golf 14 months after a car crash that left him hospitalized for weeks and unable to walk for months. "I wasn't playing my best but to have their support out there, I don't think words can describe it," Woods said.

The 15-time major winner fired weekend 78s, his worst Masters rounds, to finish with his highest Augusta National 72-hole score of 301 and in a worst-ever 47th place.

But the fact Woods was able to walk the course and play at all was nothing short of incredible given the 46-year-old medical marvel had not played a top event for 17 months and feared amputation of a right leg.

AFP

Oman go down fighting to Scotland in their tri-series opener



Ayaan Khan made a fine 68 but just fell short of winning it for Oman

Dubai, UAE - Oman lost to Scotland by four runs in their opening match at the double round-robin tri-series of the ICC Men's CWC League 2 on Sunday

Batting first after winning the toss at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, Scotland were all out for 215 in the 49th over. George Munsey was their main contributor, scoring 62 runs from 74 balls.

Matthew Cross made 33 while Safyaan Sharif chipped in with a valuable 19 runs.

For Oman, Fayyaz Butt finished with three for 48. Bilal Khan and Kaleemullah picked up two wickets apiece.

In response, Oman started well. Jatinder Singh picked up where he left off against Namibia at the same venue, a month earlier and dazzled on his way to a half-century.

Kashyap Prajapati, Shoaib Khan and Khawar Ali missed out, but Zeeshan Maqsood and Ayaan Khan erected a 65-run stand to keep the run-chase on

track. It was the former's run-out, on 46, that brought Scotland back into the game.

Adrian Neill, playing in just his third ODI, sent Sandeep Goud and Naseem Khushi back and even though Ayaan continued to hold one end up, regular wickets at the other end proved costly for Oman.

They still were in the match till the very end but Mark Watt bowled a fantastic penultimate over, taking two wickets for one run to make it tough for Oman.

And with six runs needed off the final over and just one wicket left in the bank, Adrian Neill and Hamza Tahir combined to dismiss Ayaan for a magnificent 72-ball 68.

Oman Captain Zeeshan Maqsood praised his bowlers and two key batters and was optimistic of a better showing.

"The way the bowlers bowled was great. 215 was a chasable total on that track. Jatti (Jatinder Singh) played well, Ayaan Khan batted very well but

we just couldn't make it in the end. Scotland came back very strongly too. We had some good performances in that game so we will take those positives into the next one," he said.

BRIEF SCORES:

Scotland 215 all out in 49.4 overs (George Munsey 62(74) 6x4; Fayyaz Butt 3 for 48) beat Oman 211 all out in 49.4 overs (Ayaan Khan 68(72) 6x4, 1x6, Jatinder Singh 53(71) 7x4; Adrian Neill 3 for 32) by 4 runs.

Sweet is allowed
NOW ..

Distributed by
CATERING SOLUTIONS TRADING LLC
Please contact +968 22060236/237



GT V SRH

Williamson, Pooran fashion Sunrisers' convincing win



BRIEF SCORES:
Gujarat Titans 162 for 7 in 20 overs (Hardik Pandya 50 (42) 4x4, 1x6, Abhinav Manohar 36 (21) 36 (215x4, 1x6; T. Natarajan 2 for 32 lost to Sunrisers Hyderabad 168 for 2 in 19.1 overs (Abhishek Sharma 42 (32) 6x4, Kane Williamson 57 (46) 2x4, 4x6, Nicholas Pooran 32 (18) 2x4, 2x6) by 8 wickets

TODAY'S MATCH (6PM)
 **VS** 
CHENNAI SUPER KINGS ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE

Ashwin first batter to be retired out in IPL

Mumbai, India - India's Ravichandran Ashwin on Sunday became the first batter in Indian Premier League history to be retired out after he walked off following his 28 for Rajasthan Royals.

Ashwin opted to bring his 23-ball knock to an end in 18.2 overs of the Royals innings against Lucknow Super Giants, to allow Riyan Parag join the big-hitting Shimron Hetmyer.

Royals skipper Sanju Samson said Ashwin's stunning act was a "team decision".

"It's about being Rajasthan Royals (Ashwin's retired out). We keep trying different things," Samson said after his team's three-run win. Have been talking about it before the season. We thought that if some situation occurs, we can use it. It was a team decision."

The left-handed Hetmyer smashed an unbeaten 59 off 36 deliveries including six sixes and Parag also got one hit over the fence in his four-ball stay as Royals finished on 165-6.

"I had no idea about it (Ashwin's retirement) - he was also a



Ashwin was on 28 from 23 balls when he retired out to give better hitters a chance in the middle

bit tired," Hetmyer said of Ashwin's rare form of departure.

"It was a good decision, as the kid (Parag) hit a six for us."

West Indies' cricketer-turned-commentator Ian Bishop tweeted: "Ashwin retired out is

fascinating T20 tactics. T20 is causing us to rethink the way we conceive the game in the 21st century."

Batters are allowed to retire at any time of the innings when the ball is dead after informing the

umpires, according to cricket rules. Once retired out, a batter cannot come back to take the crease, unlike retired hurt, where a batter can return to finish off his/her innings.

AFP

Harshal Patel leaves RCB bubble after sister's death

Mumbai, India - Royal Challengers Bangalore fast bowler Harshal Patel has left the IPL bio-bubble following the death of his sister.

Harshal exited the bubble on Sunday after Saturday's game against Mumbai Indians in Pune.

It is not clear yet for how long Harshal will remain unavailable for his team and he will miss at least one game, against Chennai Super Kings at the DY Patil Stadium on Tuesday. To re-enter the IPL bubble, he will need to undergo quarantine for a minimum of three days.

Harshal has been a standout player for Royal Challengers over the past couple of seasons and he took 2 for 23 on Saturday in the team's seven-wicket win over Mumbai Indians. He is their second-highest wicket-taker so far with his tally of six wickets, behind Wanindu Hasaranga's eight. Overall, he has picked up 84 wickets in the 67 IPL matches since debuting in 2012.

ESPNcricinfo



sifra
SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER

Ramadan & Eid Offer

30 REFILL COUPONS RO 50 ONLY

12 REFILL COUPONS RO 20 ONLY

- Hot & Cold Dispenser
- White Tap Dispenser/ Tap Dispenser/ Manual Water Pump/ Cradle with Tap
- 2 Full Bottles

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

OASIS WATER COMPANY SAOC
P.O.Box: 87, Rusayl 124, Sultanate of Oman.

Offer valid from 1st April to 30th June 2022

MM No.: 07/302/2022 C.R.No.: 1355452





mai alkaline

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing

Toll-free 800 71 222 or 9275 5522



Subscribe to Muscat Daily

WIN EVERYDAY

ONE NIGHT STAY WITH BREAKFAST FOR TWO

RO27 1 YEAR

RO24 1 YEAR

APRIL 11 WINNER

Subscription No: 71041

Shanghai out of Asian Champions League after virus lockdown

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Brazilian star Oscar's Shanghai Port have withdrawn from the Asian Champions League because of a tough lockdown imposed on the Chinese city to fight a coronavirus surge, officials said Monday.

The semi-finalists in Asia's top club competition in 2017 were due to play group-stage matches at a centralised venue in Thailand starting on Saturday.

But governing body the Asian Football Confederation said the

Shanghai and its 25 million people have been locked down in phases since late March

team had pulled out, and cited "travel restrictions... as a result of the recent lockdown measures enforced in Shanghai".

The former Chinese Super League champions, whose players include ex-Chelsea attacking midfielder Oscar, will not be replaced in Group J and their matches will be cancelled.

The group will now consist of three teams, Chiangrai United from Thailand, Hong Kong's Kitchee and Andres Iniesta's Vissel Kobe from Japan.

Shanghai and its 25 million people have been locked down in phases since late March.

AFP



Man City and Liverpool seek perfection in push for glory

Pep Guardiola's City has the edge in the title race after Sunday's thrilling 2-2 draw at Etihad

Manchester, United Kingdom - Pep Guardiola is demanding perfection from his Manchester City side to keep Liverpool at bay after a pulsating match between the Premier League title challengers finished all square.

Sunday's 2-2 draw at the Etihad between the two outstanding sides of the current era was billed as a potential title decider even though each have seven matches still to play.

The expectant crowd was treated to a feast of attacking football in Manchester but at the end of it nothing much had changed.

Defending champions City remain just one point ahead of their rivals, who were 14 points off the pace in January.

City were twice pegged back after goals from Kevin De Bruyne and Gabriel Jesus were cancelled out by Diogo Jota and Sadio Mane.

Guardiola's men were the better side in the first half, putting Liverpool's defence under intense pressure, but the visitors were revitalised after the break.

The City boss said he had a nagging feeling that his side had let Liverpool off the hook when they were on top -- they could even have won the match in the dying seconds but Riyad Mahrez lifted his shot over the bar.

"It was a fantastic game from both sides and both sides try to win every game in all competitions," he said. "I had the feeling that with this result we missed an opportunity, a feeling we leave them alive."

Although the draw suits City



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (ight) battles with Manchester City's Aymeric Laporte during their Premier League match at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester on Sunday (AFP)

more than Liverpool, Guardiola said his team would have to win all seven of their remaining games to be crowned Premier League winners.

"We know that right now that one game dropped we will not be champion," he said.

City, chasing a fourth Premier

League title in five years, appear to have the easier run-in, with Liverpool still to face Manchester United, Everton and Tottenham.

Winning run

But Klopp's team have shown that -- City apart -- they are a cut above the rest of the teams in the

league, as shown by their 10-match winning run before Sunday's game.

"Nothing's changed really," said the Liverpool boss. "So you play 95 minutes of incredibly intense football and you are as smart as before but that's actually pretty good news."

He compared the two teams to heavyweight boxers.

"The moment you put your arms down you get such a knock in the middle of your face and then you have to get up again and you have to try to get control again."

Klopp agreed with Guardiola's

assessment that nothing short of perfection would do if his side were to stand any chance of winning a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title.

"We have to be pretty much as close to perfection as possible to win every game," he said.

AFP



Julian Nagelsmann

Bayern look to 'punish' Villarreal for missed chances

Munich, Germany - Bayern Munich will look to "punish" Villarreal for their missed chances in the first leg and produce a "brilliant" display in the return at home on Tuesday to turn around their quarter-final.

By their own admission, Bayern were lucky to only lose 1-0 last week away to Villarreal as Francis Coquelin had a goal disallowed and Gerard Moreno hit the post for the Spaniards.

Moreno also curled agonisingly wide from inside his own half after Bayern goalkeeper and captain Manuel Neuer miscued a clearance, briefly leaving his own net gaping.

"We made a lot of mistakes in the away game, they made one which allowed us to survive - and we should punish that," Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann said.

Bayern have scored 20 goals in their last six home games, but are under pressure to avoid exiting the Champions League in the quarters for the second straight year.

"As we all know, diamonds are made under high pressure," said Nagelsmann. "Hopefully we will produce a brilliant performance tomorrow."

Neuer insisted Bayern have the experience to cope with losing the first leg. "The good thing is that we still hold our fate in our own hands," he said.

AFP

De Jong's stoppage time header gives Barcelona thrilling victory over Levante

Madrid, Spain - Luuk de Jong headed in a 92nd-minute winner on Sunday as Barcelona prevailed in a five-goal thriller against Levante to return to second in La Liga.

De Jong's late goal, his sixth in the league for Barca, proved the decisive moment in a 3-2 victory in Valencia but it was the introduction of the 19-year-old Pedri off the bench that turned the momentum of the contest.

Asked if the team are too reliant on Pedri, Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez said: "I wouldn't put it like that but he is an extraordinary player. I don't hold back any praise, he is a player who excites people and makes a difference."

A frantic 11 minutes early in the second half saw Levante score one penalty in the 52nd



Barcelona's Luuk de Jong came up with the winner in the 92nd minute

minute through Jose Luis Morales before missing a second in the 55th, this time Roger Marti stepping up, only to be denied by Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

Pedri came off the bench in the 56th minute and three minutes later Barcelona equalised,

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang heading in Ousmane Dembele's cross to score his 10th goal for his new club.

Then in the 63rd minute, Pedri fired Barca in front with a first-time finish into the corner, only for Levante to level again after

being awarded a third penalty, Gonzalo Melero this time making no mistake.

Levante looked set to claim a point but De Jong snatched the win, meeting Jordi Alba's cross and heading in at the near post.

Barca climb back above Sevilla into second, still 12 points behind Real Madrid, who eased to a 2-0 victory over Getafe on Saturday. Xavi's side have a game in hand over Real Madrid, Sevilla and Atletico Madrid, with Atletico three points behind in fourth after losing on Saturday away at Mallorca.

Pedri scored a brilliant winner against Sevilla last weekend and while the midfielder was initially rested against Levante, Barcelona were transformed after he came on.

AFP

Ancelotti: Real Madrid will not underestimate Chelsea

Madrid, Spain - Carlo Ancelotti said on Monday Real Madrid will not underestimate Chelsea in the second leg of their Champions League quarter-final and dismissed Thomas Tuchel's suggestion the tie is over.

After Madrid's 3-1 victory against the defending champions at Stamford Bridge last week, a furious Tuchel said "no, not at the moment" when asked if the tie was still alive, although the German was more optimistic on Monday.

But Ancelotti insisted Madrid will be taking nothing for granted at the Santiago Bernabeu on Tuesday against his former club as they try to finish the job and reach the semi-finals.



Carlo Ancelotti

"Chelsea are here to bring the fight to us. It will be tough for them of course but they will try. Good teams never give up," Ancelotti said in a press conference.

Chelsea delivered the perfect response last weekend by thrashing Southampton 6-0 in the Premier League and might

take encouragement from Barcelona thrashing Madrid 4-0 only three weeks ago.

"I know my players very well," said Ancelotti. "They are well aware of what happened a few weeks ago (against Barca) and what is required tomorrow. We won't be under-estimating anyone."

This is a great opportunity to reach the semis but Chelsea are a very good team. We have to respect them," he said.

"It's the only way we can prepare for this game, thinking that Chelsea will be better tomorrow and be ready. There is no other way. We are ready. We know we will have to suffer and we are ready to suffer," Ancelotti added.

AFP

THE LEGACY THAT KEEPS GIVING



Starts from
RO 196 Per month

THE JEEP® WRANGLER RANGE

FREE FIRST YEAR REGISTRATION

3 YEARS / 60,000 KM SERVICE

5 YEARS WARRANTY

5 YEARS ROADSIDE ASSIST

BOOK NOW

Jeep
THERE'S ONLY ONE

Terms and conditions apply. Vehicle image shown is for illustrative purposes only and accessories shown might not be part of the standard model. ©2022 FCA US LLC. All Rights Reserved. Jeep® is a registered trademark of FCA US LLC. Offer valid from 1st April to 30th May, 2022

RENAULT KOLEOS

conquer everything
bring home more joy this Ramadan



EMI starting from
OMR 173*
free service 5 years/100,000 kms[#]
free insurance for 1st year only[@]
free registration for 1st year only[^]
additional benefits on purchase
of 2nd Renault vehicle in the family^{*@}



enquire now

Offer valid from 20th March to 19th May 2022 on applicable models purchased for personal use. Offer not available for vehicles purchased for Commercial use, Rent-a-car, Fleet, Taxi, Government and Driving School. # Whichever is earlier. Periodic Maintenance Service only. Offer includes 10,000 kms Service Intervals. @ For 1st year Oman and UAE only. ^ For 1st year only. * & ^ Applicable for private registrations only. For Commercial registrations additional amount needs to be borne by the customer. *@ Additional PMS Service for new car, Special In-House Finance rate & trade-in benefits. Second car purchase should be either in the name of existing Renault owner or his/her immediate family member (wife/husband/son/daughter/brother/sister) to avail additional benefits under the scheme. Conditions apply. Social media users who will participate in different digital promotional campaigns and online challenges on the Renaultoman Instagram will get a fuel voucher worth OMR 50 (3 nos.) / Renault branded UV Sterilizer cum wireless charger (2 nos.). Accessories and equipment shown in the car are not part of standard features. * EMI shown is calculated on the price of the base model variant with 20% down payment for 6 years loan tenure. Subject to credit approvals. Terms & Conditions apply.

Bahwan International Group  **مجموعة
بهموان
العالمية**

**Suhail Bahwan
Automobiles LLC**

  RenaultOman  www.renault.com.om
C.R. No. 1/71955/6

Showrooms · Qurum · Barka · Buraimi · Ibra · Ibri · Mabella · Nizwa · Salalah · Sohar
For Company Enquiries : 96581559 / 96791427 E-mail us at : customerfirst@sbigh.com

 TOLL FREE
800 50011