

P10

OMAN STALLIONS EMERGE PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPIONS



P13

OIA STRENGTHENS OMAN'S FOOD SECURITY AMBITIONS



P20

DOMES ROOMS OF BIDIYA ALLOW FOR A MILLION-STARS EXPERIENCE IN DESERT



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO SENEGAL PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Macky Sall of the Republic of Senegal on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and his best wishes of good health and happiness to President Sall and the people of Senegal further progress and prosperity. — ONA

HM THANKED BY GREECE PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Katerina Sakellaropoulou of the Republic of Greece in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable on the death of Karolos Papoulias, former president of Greece. In her cable, President Sakellaropoulou expressed her utmost appreciation for His Majesty's heartfelt sentiments and sympathy. — ONA



2

RAMADHAN 1443 AH

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR	DHUHR
04:40 AM	12:15 PM
ASH	MAGRIB
03:42 PM	06:28 PM
ISHA	
07:40 PM	

SURVEY OF ENDANGERED STEPPE EAGLE



The Office for Environmental Conservation at the Environment Authority (EA) in Dhofar Governorate has completed the annual field survey for the enumeration of steppe eagle in the Wilayat of Thamrait. The steppe eagle is a migratory bird of prey which is threatened with extinction according to the Foundation for Environmental Conservation. The survey results showed that the highest number of steppe eagles was registered on January 25 this year near Al Safaa Farm where 550 steppe eagles were spotted.

DETAILS ON P3

Half a million return to Ukraine

KYIV: More than half a million people have returned to Ukraine since the start of Russia's war in February, the Ukrainian interior ministry said on Sunday.

“During the past week, 144,000 people left Ukraine and 88,000 arrived. In total... around 537,000 of our compatriots have returned to Ukraine”, the ministry said, citing data from

the national border service.

The High Commissioner for Refugees on Saturday said 4,176,401 Ukrainians have left their country since Russia launched its war on February 24. Tens of thousands have been leaving Ukraine daily since the start of the war in what has become Europe's worst refugee crisis since World War II.

The UN's International Organization for Migration said around 205,000 non-Ukrainians have also fled the country.

In total, more than 10 million people have either left their homes, either to neighbouring countries or being displaced within Ukraine. Before the war, 37 million people lived in territories controlled by Kyiv.

SEE ALSO P7

Individuals and firms can market investment plans

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), has issued a decision allowing individuals or institutions from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad to play a role in marketing investment opportunities. Prior to Sunday's decision, this role was limited to ministry's employees.

The decision amended some provisions of the executive regulations of the Foreign Capital Investment Law.

The first article of the decision stipulated replacing the two texts of Articles 5 and 7 of the executive regulations of the Foreign Capital Investment Law, which was issued by Royal Decree No 50/2019 and executive regulations of the Foreign Capital Investment Law issued by Ministerial Resolution No 72/2020.

“

The ministry might grant licence to individuals, institutions and companies to market investment opportunities, attract investors and encourage them to invest in the country

MINISTRY'S DECISION

The article stated that the ministry might grant licence to individuals, institutions and companies in the Sultanate of Oman and abroad to market investment opportunities, attract investors and encourage them to invest in the country in accordance with the rules to be determined by a decision of the minister.

TURN TO P5



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Initiative to provide 2,216 job opportunities



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Sunday rolled out an initiative dubbed Sahim which aims to provide 2,216

job opportunities on temporary contract basis in the public sector in different governorates. By rolling out the initiative,

the ministry seeks to enhance the decentralisation principle and enable national job-seekers to contribute to the development

process in the governorates. The job opportunities cover various disciplines from GED to bachelor's degree. A total of

2,130 vacancies for holders of bachelor's degree and post-GED qualification and 86 jobs for job-seekers with GED qualification.

The ministry will open the registration for the announced jobs for four weeks from the date of announcement. — ONA



Donations for OCO's Iftar programme begin

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Oman Charitable Organisation has announced receiving donations for Ramadhan 2020 Iftar Programme in the Sultanate of Oman. The organisation has given two bank accounts, one of the National Bank of Oman and another of Bank Dhofar, for the people to make donations. Another option for donation is via mobile. Omantel users can send SMS via 90022 and Ooredoo users 90909 to make donations. The electronic donations portal is another popular method

for the donors to reach www.donate.om and donate. The portal so far has raised this year RO 652,145. 50 for different charity organisations registered at donate.om. Under the category of 'Total Amount raised per Charity,' Oman Charitable Organization had 178,819 donors contributing and totalling up to RO 3, 254, 707. 81. Headquartered in Muscat Governorate at Al Khuwair 33, next to Sultan Said bin Taimour Mosque, the Oman Charitable Organisation has branches in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, North Al Batinah Governorate, Musandam Governorate and Dhofar Governorate.

Help someone dream of iftar with family

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Backed by a strong history of securing the release of thousands of people who were inadvertently involved in minor financial offences, the Fak Khorba Initiative by the Oman Lawyers Association (OLA), has urged all to support this move so that many who are deprived of fasting with their families can dream of the same, according to the OLA. "This initiative of Fak Khorba is a true reflection of the role of the society and its solidarity in promoting human values and every citizen and expatriate can take part in this," said Dr Mohammed al Zadjali, Chairman of Omani Lawyers Association and member of Majlis Ash'shura. His Eminence Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Khalili, Grand Mufti, has hailed the move calling it a 'true humanitarian' initiative. "Fak Kurbah is an Islamic humanitarian initiative that will fetch rewards to the donors in this world and the hereafter," His Eminence added. His Eminence called every member of the society to participate in this initiative and contribute to relieving the hardships of those in need, as Allah Almighty will double their rewards in this world and the



hereafter. This year, the organisers have introduced an online platform to help the public donate to help the cases and to secure the release of people currently inside the jails. One can log on to: <http://fakkrba.om> to make donations. The initiative aims at collecting financial donations to release those who have been imprisoned due to financial, civil, commercial, or labour claims. There are a number of criteria that must be met to be eligible for the help. This includes that the insolvent must be imprisoned or about to be imprisoned, as well as not being a previous beneficiary of

the initiative, and the amount shall be related to a civil, commercial, Sharia or labour case, with a maximum of RO 2,000. Priority will be given to those who have less claims, bearing in mind that the selection of cases that meet the conditions is made by the Directorate General of Execution Affairs in the Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary Council. Requests shall not be directly addressed to the initiative, but through the above Directorate General. "We are keen to develop the initiative and its tools," Dr Mohammed al Zadjali added. Currently, in its 9th edition,

the Fak Khorba initiative has, over the past years, helped nearly 4,000 insolvent persons who were imprisoned or were about to be imprisoned. Nearly 100 male and female lawyers were part of this mega release campaign that had won second place in the Sultan Qaboos Voluntary Work Awards, as it aims to highlight the role of lawyers in volunteer work and activate their participation in social responsibility thanks to the community solidarity and humanity. "Because we believe that everyone deserves a second chance," adds Dr Al Zadjali.

GCC environment committee meets



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, on Sunday took part in the 24th meeting of the GCC Committee of Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was led in the meeting, held via video-conferencing, by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority. The meeting reviewed a memorandum of the GCC

Secretariat-General on the communique and Riyadh Declaration of the 24th GCC Summit. The meeting also discussed non-tariff restrictions on environment, the GCC environment e-Portal

and cooperation with the programme of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as the proposal study of the Kingdom of Bahrain to reduce plastic pollution. — ONA

Authority intensifies market inspections

The municipal affairs department Wilayat of Saham carried out an inspection campaign at commercial stores to ensure the validity of food commodities. Besides, the department follows up abattoirs to ensure the operating company's abidance by the health standards.





Wadi Al Khoudh: A natural and archaeological oasis

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

There is a general belief that the natural beauty of the Al Khoudh village is limited only to the water that flows here throughout the year. That's true, but the landscape of Al Khoudhh attracts a large number of tourists, and it becomes a hub of visitors during the public holidays. Samayil and Fanja feed Al Khoudhh with water which travels some 10 km before reaching the village. The high accumulation of water gave reason to the authorities to set up a dam with a capacity of 11 million cubic metres at Wadi al Khoudh in 1985.

With its modern design and technical specifications, the dam protects the residential and commercial neighbourhoods surrounding the valley from the damage of floods, especially during the exceptional climatic conditions that the Sultanate witnessed from time to time.

The dam also recharges the village's groundwater. There are many artesian wells and aflaj that get fed on from this dam.

Another project that contributes to conserving the environment is the 'Omani trees and plants garden project'. This project, spread over 425 hectares, takes care of rare native plants.

This garden has all the Omani plants displayed professionally in a natural environment with segregations like an arid, humid, desert, and or autumnal weather plants.

This small village in the Wilayat of Seeb embraces the heights of adjoining mountains and the course of its valleys has several archaeological sites ranging from tower tombs, castles, forts and ancient walls.

These all give the tourists reasons to visit Al Khoudh. The Al Khoudh



Castle, located on the eastern bank of the valley, represents a historical symbol that the people of this village can be proud of.

Not far from this castle is another historical landmark (Bait Al Oud), which is a fortified house built around 200 years. It consists of two floors and contains rooms, halls and stores for dates and honey.

Sources indicate that Omani, French and Dutch researchers have recently found a collection of dinosaur bones in this village, as these bones are the first evidence of the bones of the dinosaur 'Hadrosaurus' in the Arabian Peninsula.

The finding of this type of dinosaur is surprising, as Hadrosaurus dinosaurs, according to scientific studies, were confined to the northern continents (North America, Europe and Asia). Therefore, their presence in the Arabian Peninsula or Africa was not known before.

The bones were found in the vicinity of the village of Al Khoudh. It was concluded that the village where dinosaurs lived about 70 million years ago was a natural oasis filled with rivers and trees.

"This village is full of rare antiquities. Today, one can see many archaeological sites that are only metres away from some of the houses built during the last ten years. All geological studies and research confirm its importance as an ancient human settlement. Finding dinosaur bones requires further research to find out the origin of their spread," an Omani geologist told the Observer.

The residents of this village still practise agriculture, sheep herding and camel breeding and the majority of them feel happy and welcome the visitors with open arms. However, they lament about the lack of basic facilities such as toilets and no shelters, cafes, or restaurants for them.

Mosquito control drive: Nearly 1,700 houses sprayed in first week

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

The Ministry of Health's General Directorate for Disease Surveillance and Control launched a campaign to combat the Aedes mosquitos in association with the Muscat Municipality. The campaign is covering areas like Al Ghubra, Al Ansab, and South of Al Hail in the Muscat Governorate.

Aedes mosquitoes cause dengue fever. The campaign began on March 27 to improve environmental sanitation and combat the spread of the 'Aedes aegypti' mosquitoes in vulnerable areas.

The number of houses covered under the campaign reached 1,690 in the first week of the campaign. The campaign sites included Al Ghubra, Al Ansab, and South of Al Hail. In Wilayat Al Ghubra, about 1,231 houses were covered, in Al Ansab, about 245, and in South of Al Hail about 205.

The campaign consists of two teams, the first to investigate the disease and places where this type of insect spread, and is affiliated with the Ministry of Health. The second is to get rid of the insect permanently by spraying pesticides and filling swamps and ponds, which are breeding



grounds for the insect.

Dengue fever is a viral disease transmitted by the bite of the Aedes aegypti mosquito. Symptoms of dengue fever include fever, headache, general fatigue, joint pain, skin rash, and digestive upset.

People who get the symptoms of dengue should immediately go to the nearest health institution and start treatment as per the doctor's advice.

On March 29, at the MoH press conference, Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, said: "In order not to create the appropriate environment for the spread of

the Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, we appeal to citizens and residents to get rid of the places where there is an accumulation of water near their homes. In the last update, the number of registered cases of dengue fever reached 17 in the Wilayat of Bausher, 7 in the Wilayat of Seeb, and two in the Wilayat of Al Amerat."

Muscat Municipality told people to adopt precautions like avoiding exposure to mosquito bites, wearing long-sleeved clothes, covering the body, using mosquito repellent on the exposed body parts and covering windows with nets to protect against mosquitoes.

Annual survey to register steppe eagles in Dhofar concludes

SALALAH: The Office for Environmental Conservation at the Environment Authority (EA) in Dhofar Governorate has completed the annual field survey for the enumeration of steppe eagles in the Wilayat of Thamrait.

The steppe eagle is a migratory bird of prey which is threatened with extinction according to the Foundation for Environmental Conservation (FEC).

Dr Had bin Musalam al Hakmani, Director of Environmental Affairs Department in Salalah, said that the survey results showed that the highest number of steppe eagles was registered on January 25 this year near Al Safaa Farm where 550 steppe eagles were spotted.

The survey team conducted 84 field visits between October 1, 2021 and March 22, 2022 at two sites near Al Safaa Farm and Habkait landfill. The highest number of steppe eagles at Habkait landfill was 142 and was registered on February 8.

The official pointed out that the steppe eagles usually visit the south of the Arabian Peninsula during winter and its numbers began to decline in the two sites coinciding with the beginning of the summer migration season which usually begins at the end of March when the plains eagle leaves the Arabian Peninsula and



returns to the nesting areas in central Asia.

The steppe eagle study project has been implemented by the Office for Environmental

Conservation in Dhofar Governorate since 2018, in cooperation with ornithologists from Austria and Germany with the support of the Anglo-Omani Society in London. At the beginning of the project, a number of satellite tracking devices were installed to study the behaviour and paths of this migratory bird of prey in order to obtain accurate scientific data that will help the competent authorities to take appropriate environmental measures to protect and preserve it from extinction. — **ONA**

WANT TO
LOSE
WEIGHT IN
RAMADHAN?
DO THIS



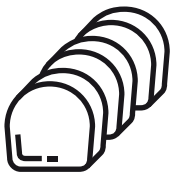
AN
OPPORTUNITY
TO FOLLOW
CORRECT
EATING HABITS
THAT CAN BE
EXTENDED AS A
LIFESTYLE



LET THE
MONTH BE THE
BEGINNING
OF LEAVING
SUGAR AND
FRIED FOOD



TRY TO
AVOID
SUGARS,
SWEETS
AND
PASTRIES



REDUCE
RICE AND
BREAD
UNTIL THE
MONTH
ENDS



BALANCE
PROTEIN
MEALS AND
FRUITS AND
VEGETABLES

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

Ramadhan is an opportunity for those who want to lose weight because it is based on the principle of reducing food and selecting meals that help prevent feelings of thirst and hunger, especially in hot weather.

Therefore, it is an opportunity to follow correct eating habits that can be extended as a lifestyle, for determiners, after the end of the month and as soon as normal life returns.

According to Imad al Salti, a fitness and strength coach and founder of the Green Apple Health Newsletter, some pieces of advice may help in this regard.

About the right time to exercise, Al Salti said one must be aware of his/her health condition. “If you suffer from a chronic disease, consult your doctor. If you do not suffer from any problem, do some moderate-strength aerobic exercises an hour before Iftar. No to jogging. No weightlifting. Walk for 30 minutes. Do some resistance exercises using your body weight”, he explained.

After iftar, the coach stressed, “Don’t eat what you like and remember the wisdom of fasting. Let the month be the beginning of leaving sugar and fried food. Instead, reduce rice and bread until the month ends, and you are off with 50 per cent of the usual quantities”

Al Salti also mentioned that one shouldn’t

overeate and gradually, the body will get used to the new shortlisted quantities. He also said it is important to balance protein meals and fruits and vegetables. Overeating and messing up portions spoil the benefits of fasting.

For Suhoor, Imad al Salti said: “If you eat carbs, you will be hungry very fast. You should have lots of protein, more water, try to avoid sugars, sweets and pastries”.

He added, “It is necessary to reflect on the goal of fasting, take advantage of the time in worship, collect good deeds through prayer, seek forgiveness and charity. Remember, there is a reward for those who fast, the Eid that comes after Ramadhan, a reward from God for Muslims”.



NO TO
WEIGHTLIFTING



NO TO
JOGGING.
WALK FOR
30 MINUTES



DO SOME
RESISTANCE
EXERCISES
USING YOUR
BODY WEIGHT

WEIGHT



Private sector expected to witness growth in the aftermath of Covid

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic thousands of workers were laid off from their jobs in the private sector during 2020-2021 in the Sultanate of Oman.

According to Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, low demand and other reasons led to the loss of jobs and the exit of thousands of expatriate workers from the country.

"The years 2020 and 2021 are not a measure of the performance of the private sector due to the pandemic and the impact of that level was not expected by anyone in the world. The economy was affected, especially the private sector," said the minister in an interview on Oman TV.

While talking in a

programme "With the Youth", Al Saqri said that the private sector is expected to witness major growth in the coming years.

"It will contribute to the development and performance of the various economic sectors and the growth in the gross domestic product (GDP). This will become an attractive sector for Omani job-seekers, indicating that the private sector is the largest employer for Omanis compared to the government sector," he said.

He said that the government is working on several programmes, including adding more in-country value with an aim to enhance the role of small and medium enterprises to benefit from the government projects.

The minister said that the government has recently issued a set of laws needed by

The years 2020 and 2021 are not a measure of the performance of the private sector due to the pandemic and the impact of that level was not expected by anyone in the world

DR SAID BIN MOHAMMED AL SAQRI
Minister of Economy

the private sector, including the public-private partnership laws, privatisation and bankruptcy, and the new commercial law.

"The government is in the

process of issuing a labour law. The incentives and facilities provided by the special economic zones and free zones will enable the sector to play its role in the next stage," he said.

The minister said that the volume of foreign investment in the country would increase in 2022.

"This confirms the interest of foreign companies to invest in the various sectors in the Sultanate of Oman and the favourable local investment environment," he said.

Al Saqri said that the development of the governorates is one of the priorities and strategic objectives of the tenth five-year plan, strengthening its role and supporting decentralisation. An amount of RO 20 million has been allocated to each governorate to be spent during the years of the plan.

■ TREE PLANTATION DRIVE



A tree plantation drive was organised by the Embassy of India in association with Environment Authority last week in Al Rustaq as a part of Community Service Fortnight or Sewa Utsav. The Sewa Utsav is being organised under 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' to celebrate 75 glorious years of India's independence in a unique way and serve the local community. Embassy officials, Environment Authority officials, volunteers from Indian Social Club and teachers and students from Indian Schools in the Sultanate of Oman participated with great enthusiasm in the drive.

Muscat Gujarati Samaj celebrates 45th anniversary

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Muscat Gujarati Samaj, the Gujarati Wing of Indian Social Club Oman recently celebrated its 45th Anniversary at a glittering function.

The Celebrations marked an evening of extravagance that witnessed one of the most popular singers from Gujarat, Osman Mir, Live-In-Concert with this troupe of performing artists, enthralled the entire audience at a hall brimming full of socially distanced members, sponsors and patrons, strictly adhering to Covid Appropriate Behaviour.

The voice, melody, pitch and throw of Osman Mir's voice mesmerized the audience completely spellbound. The musical concert of Osman Mir was interspersed with felicitation speeches, firstly by the Guest of Honour, Amit Narang, Ambassador of India



to the Sultanate of Oman.

Also present on the occasion were Kiran Ashar, Founder, Al Ansari Group, Dr Sathish Nambiar, Chairman on Indian Social Club, Convener of Muscat Gujarati Samaj Chandrakant Chothani, visiting dignitaries Mayank Gandhi, P P Patel and Kavi Gordhan Patel.

The Samaj, which is characterised by its unique distinction of being the oldest linguistic wing ever

established in the Sultanate of Oman, has its roots even prior to the formation of Indian Social Club itself. Established way back in 1975 as Muscat Sankrutik Samaj, it has grown phenomenally over the years scaling newer heights with each passing year.

As a part of its huge community service activities, the Samaj holds Blood Donation Camps every year since its inception, and played an impeccable role in providing

relief measures to the Indian diaspora during Covid times in addition to being one of the most socially responsible organisation from day one.

Over the years, it has organised many social, cultural, entertaining, sporting and education programmes for its members and beyond, making it one of the most loved, admired and respected linguistic wing in ISC.

Marking the special occasion of the 45th Anniversary Celebrations, Muscat Gujarati Samaj took the opportunity to release a special designed Souvenir which covered a brief synopsis and glimpses of all its exciting activities and events undertaken during the last five years (from 40th to 45th Anniversary) and also covered the unique online/virtual events organised during the last 2 years of Covid-19 pandemic.

Individuals, firms can market investment opportunities

The amended text of Article 7 stated that the foreign investor or his representative might entrust one of the offices licensed by the ministry to examine the investment licence application and request obtaining approvals, permits, or licenses necessary to establish the investment project to indicate the extent to which they meet all the conditions and requirements of the issued certificates established by law.

A decision of the minister shall

specify the conditions and procedures for licensing these applications for setting up these offices and their mechanism of work, determining their obligations, in particular obligations related to due diligence in the exercise of their work, verifying the accuracy and validity of data, information and documents submitted, completing the examination of applications in a timely manner, maintaining confidentiality data, information and documents related to it.



Invitation to Attend Annual Ordinary General Meeting (AGM) of Unitholders for OMAN REIT FUND

Oman Real Estate Fund (the Fund) is pleased to invite the unit holders to attend the fund's annual ordinary general meeting, which is scheduled to be held on Sunday 17/04/2022 at 3pm at the board room of United Securities in Ghala and via the online platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company – www.mcd.gov.om. if the quorum is not satisfied, the meeting will be held for the second time on Tuesday 19/04/2022 at the same time to discuss the following agenda.

Annual Ordinary General Meeting (AGM) Agenda:

1. To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors of the Fund for the year ended 31.12.2021.
2. To consider and approve the auditors' report on the audited financial statements of the Fund for the year ended 31.12.2021.
3. To approve the sitting fees for the Board of Directors and their committees for the financial year ended on 31.12.2021 and approve the proposed sitting fees for the coming year ending 31.12.2022. (as attached)
4. Appointment of the auditors for the Fund for the financial year ending 31.12.2022 and their fees.

According to the articles of association and general assembly procedures, through electronic means issued by the authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- (A) Juristic person, exclusively, have the right to appoint a proxy to attend the general meeting and vote on their behalf through electronic means, provided that this natural person has an investor number with Muscat Clearing & Depository SAOC.
- (B) Voting on any of the items on the agenda starting from three (3) days before the date of the general meeting until the end of voting on the item presented in the meeting day.

Please come to the meeting location at least half an hour before the scheduled time.

In case of any query about the AGM, please contact Ms. Amal Yousuf, amal@athiqa.om
Telephone No.: 24594695

CHAIRMAN

AUDITORS

LEGAL ADVISOR



Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender No.	7/2022	Tender Name	Supply and installation of trekking path sign board.
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		25 O.R	
Tender Document Sales End Date		24/04/2022	
Last Date for Bid Submission		18/05/2022	
Grade		Excellent, First	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Bids are submitted that fulfill the technical conditions and specifications, accompanied by a tender bond from a local bank not less than (1%) of the bid value, valid for (90) days from the date of its submission online.
 - Any bid that does not meet the required tender bond will not be considered
 - The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ita.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : solic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085



Pakistan to go to polls after PM foils opposition’s move



Supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party shout slogans outside the Parliament House building in Islamabad. — AFP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan foiled an attempt to boot him from office on Sunday by getting the president to dissolve the national assembly, meaning fresh elections must be held within three months.

On a day of high drama, the assembly deputy speaker refused to accept a motion of no confidence in the government, as Khan simultaneously appeared on TV to say there had been “foreign interference” in Pakistan’s democratic institutions.

“I have sent advice to the president to dissolve the assemblies. We will go to the public and hold elections, and let the nation decide,” he said.

The presidency — a largely ceremonial office — acceded hours later. No Pakistan prime minister has ever completed a full term, and Khan was facing the biggest challenge to his rule

since being elected in 2018, with opponents accusing him of economic mismanagement and bungling foreign policy.

On Sunday parliament was due to debate a no-confidence motion that looked certain to succeed, but the deputy speaker — a Khan loyalist — refused to accept it, causing uproar in the chamber.

But there was calm on the streets on the first day of the fasting month of Ramadhan, with a huge security presence in the capital.

Khan, an ex-international cricket star who in 1992 captained Pakistan to their only World Cup win, had hinted on Saturday he still had a card to play — and Sunday’s move appeared to blindside the opposition.

“This day will be remembered as a black day in Pakistan’s constitutional history,” said Shehbaz Sharif, tipped to replace

Khan if the no-confidence motion had succeeded.

The opposition said they would petition the courts with a slew of briefs, arguing the constitution had been violated.

Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) effectively lost its majority in the 342-member assembly last week when a coalition partner said its seven lawmakers would vote with the opposition.

More than a dozen PTI members had also indicated they would cross the floor.

In days leading up to the vote, Khan accused the opposition of conspiring with “foreign powers” to remove him because he would not take the West’s side on global issues against Russia and China.

On Thursday he accused the US of meddling in Pakistan’s affairs.

— AFP

S Sudan rivals agree military provision of peace pact

JUBA: In a major breakthrough, South Sudan’s rival leaders sealed an agreement on Sunday on a key military provision of their faltering peace deal following mediation by neighbouring Sudan.

President Salva Kiir and his rival, Vice-President Riek Machar, agreed on the creation of a unified armed forces command, one of several crucial unresolved issues holding up implementation of the 2018 deal to end the country’s bloody five-year civil war.

“Peace is about security and today we have (achieved) a milestone,” said Martin Abucha, who signed the agreement on behalf of Machar’s opposition party the SPLM/A-IO.

“This to inform everyone that we are for peace and let all of us work for peace,” added Kiir’s security adviser Tut Gatluak.

Tensions between forces loyal to Kiir and former rebel leader Machar have spiralled recently, triggering fears in the international community of a return to full-blown conflict in the world’s youngest nation.

Both men were present at the ceremony in the capital Juba for the signing of the accord, which stipulates a 60-40 distribution of key leadership posts in the army, police and national security forces.

Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, currently the number two in Sudan’s post-coup ruling council, had arrived in Juba on Friday on a bid to break the deadlock over the security arrangements.

— AFP

Breakthrough truce begins in Yemen

SANAA: Yemen’s warring parties laid down their weapons for the first nationwide truce since 2016 on Saturday, with all eyes on whether the UN-brokered ceasefire will hold. The Ansar Allah fighters and coalition have both agreed to observe the two-month truce, which took effect at 1600 GMT on the first day of Ramadhan.

“The two-month truce started at 7 pm tonight. As of tonight, all offensive ground, aerial and naval military operations should cease,” UN special envoy Hans Grundberg said in a statement.

Ansar Allah military spokesman Yahya Saree confirmed “our commitment to a comprehensive cessation of military operations as long as the other party adheres to this”, in a statement released by the fighters.

Yemen’s intractable war has killed hundreds of thousands directly or indirectly and displaced millions, triggering the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations.

Previous ceasefires have been ineffective. A national truce ahead of peace talks in April 2016 was violated almost immediately, as were other ceasefires that year.

A 2018 agreement to cease hostilities around fighter-held Hodeida port, a lifeline for the country, was also largely ignored.

Both the Ansar Allah and Saudi Arabia have welcomed the latest initiative, which follows a surge in attacks but also increasing diplomacy including ongoing talks — snubbed by the fighters — in Riyadh.

“This time I am optimistic. This truce is unlike all the previous ones,” Asmaa Zayed, a college student who also works as a cashier in Hodeida, said.

“The fact it comes with Ramadhan gives us a lot of hope. This war started when I was 15 years old and turned all my dreams into nightmares.”

Under the agreement, all ground, air and sea military operations in Yemen and across its borders are to stop.

— AFP



Men read the holy Quran at the Al Kabir Mosque in the old city of Sanaa on the first day of Ramadhan. — AFP

Sri Lanka protesters defy curfew after social media ban

COLOMBO: Armed troops in Sri Lanka had a tense confrontation with a crowd protesting a worsening economic crisis on Sunday, after a social media blackout failed to halt another day of anti-government demonstrations.

The South Asian nation is facing severe shortages of food, fuel and other essentials — along with record inflation and crippling power cuts — in its most painful downturn since independence from Britain in 1948.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa imposed a state of emergency on Friday, the day after a crowd

attempted to storm his home in the capital Colombo, and a nationwide curfew is in effect until Monday morning.

The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), Sri Lanka’s main opposition alliance, denounced a social media blackout aimed at quelling intensifying public demonstrations, and said it was time for the government to resign.

“President Rajapaksa better realise that the tide has already turned on his autocratic rule,” SJB lawmaker Harsha de Silva said.

Troops armed with automatic assault rifles moved to stop a protest by opposition lawmakers



Police prepare to patrol the streets after authorities imposed a nationwide weekend curfew to contain protests over a worsening economic crisis in Colombo. — AFP

and hundreds of their supporters attempting to march to the capital’s Independence Square.

The road was barricaded a few hundred metres from the home of opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and the crowd engaged in a tense stand-off with security forces for nearly two hours before dispersing peacefully.

Eran Wickramaratne, another SLB lawmaker, condemned the state of emergency declaration and the presence of troops on city streets.

“We can’t allow a military takeover,” he said. “They should know we are still a democracy.”

Internet service providers were ordered to block access to Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and several other social media platforms but the blackout did not deter several small demonstrations elsewhere in Sri Lanka.

Police fired tear gas to disperse university students in the central town of Peradeniya, though protests in other parts of the country ended without incident.

Private media outlets reported that the chief of Sri Lanka’s Internet regulator resigned after the ban order went into effect.

— AFP

SAN FRANCISCO

At least 6 dead in California shooting

At least six people were killed and nine more wounded in a shooting in the California state capital of Sacramento early on Sunday, police said. “Officers located at least 15 shooting victims, including 6 who are deceased,” Sacramento police said in a statement on Twitter.

In an earlier tweet at just after 4 am they had called for people to avoid the area “as a large police presence will remain and the scene remains active.” A video posted online showed people



scuffling in the street, then starting to run as gunfire can be heard. AFP could not verify the footage. The shooting occurred in the downtown area, which has many bars and restaurants. Police provided few other details.

TEHRAN

Iran: agreement in Vienna N-talks ‘close’

Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said an agreement is “close” in paused negotiations to restore the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers. Iran has been engaged in negotiations to revive the deal, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China directly, and the US indirectly.

“We are close to an agreement in the negotiations,” Amir-



Abdollahian said during a phone conversation with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Iranian and US delegations in Vienna do not communicate directly, but messages are passed through other participants.

ISLAMABAD

1 killed, dozens hurt in Kabul market blast

At least one person is dead and 59 in hospital following an explosion at Afghanistan’s largest money exchange market in Kabul. Italian non-governmental organisation Emergency, which runs a surgery centre for war victims in Kabul, said on Twitter that of the 59 brought to hospital, 33 victims had been admitted with more serious injuries.

Initially, the Taliban Interior Ministry reported that 10 people had been wounded in the blast, adding that it had occurred when



a thief threw a hand grenade in order to steal money. Since returning to power, the Taliban have been under reporting security incidents in Afghanistan and often dismiss them as robberies and kidnappings.



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In brief

■ SINGAPORE



SINGAPOREANS PROTEST IN RARE DEMONSTRATION

Hundreds of protesters in tightly controlled Singapore staged a rare demonstration against the death penalty on Sunday as fears grow the city-state is set to carry out a wave of hangings.

Authorities last week conducted the country's first execution since 2019 when they hanged a drug trafficker. Several other death row convicts recently had appeals rejected.

Organisers said about 400 people joined the demonstration at 'Speakers' Corner' in a downtown park, the only place in the city-state where protests are allowed without prior police approval.

■ BELGRADE



SERBIANS VOTE IN POLLS OVERSHADOWED BY WAR

Serbians went to the polls in elections that will likely see populist President Aleksandar Vucic extend his rule in the Balkan country, as he vows to provide stability amid war raging in Ukraine.

The country of around seven million will elect the president, deputies for the 250-seat parliament and cast votes in several municipal contests.

The latest opinion polls see Vucic's centre-right Serbian Progressive Party maintaining its control over the parliament, while the president is poised to win a second term.

■ FLORIANA



POPE PRAYS FOR UKRAINE AT LARGE MASS IN MALTA

Pope Francis celebrated Mass in front of thousands of people and called for prayers for Ukraine on the second day of his Malta trip.

"Let us pray for peace and remember the humanitarian tragedy of martyred Ukraine", the head of the Catholic Church said in Floriana — a suburb of the capital Valletta — at the end of the Mass celebration. The country is still under bombardment from this "sacrilegious war", he said. In his homily the leader of the Catholic Church spoke of the "worm of hypocrisy" that could creep in.

People pretend to be good and decent and are only concerned about the faults of others rather than their own, he explained.



An Ukrainian soldier patrols in an armoured vehicle a street in Bucha, northwest of Kyiv. — AFP

US, Nato express shock over civilian killings

WASHINGTON: US and Nato leaders voiced shock and horror on Sunday at new evidence of atrocities against civilians in Ukraine, and warned that Russian troop movements away from Kyiv did not signal a withdrawal or end to the violence.

Evidence of possible civilian killings around Kyiv has emerged as the Russian army has pulled back from the capital in the face of ferocious resistance from Ukrainian forces.

AFP reporters saw at least 20 bodies, all in civilian clothing, strewn across a single street in the town of Bucha on Friday. One had his hands tied behind his back with a white cloth and his Ukrainian passport left open beside his body.

Bucha's Mayor Anatoly Fedoruk said 280 other bodies had been buried in mass graves in the town.

"You can't help but see these images as a punch to the gut", Secretary of State Antony Blinken told CNN a day after horrific footage from Bucha, recently retaken from Russian forces, was

UKRAINE WAR

widely aired.

But, he said, such killings were "the reality of what's going on every single day" that Russia remains in Ukraine.

He reaffirmed that the US was helping to document possible war crimes, but did not say whether he considered them to be crimes against humanity or acts of genocide.

Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the killings of civilians in Bucha were "horrific and absolutely unacceptable."

Stoltenberg also said he was not "too optimistic" about Russia's claim to be pulling troops away from Kyiv.

"What we see is not a withdrawal, but we see that Russia is repositioning its troops", he told CNN, warning of the potential of increased attacks.

Blinken echoed that warning in an interview on MSNBC on Sunday, saying that Moscow still has "the ability to wreak massive death and destruction, including in places like Kyiv, with air

power and missiles."

But he also noted that the shift appears to be "evidence that Russia's original plans to take over the whole country, including Kyiv, have been dealt a devastating setback."

"Russia had three goals going into this: To subjugate Ukraine to its will, to deny its sovereignty and its independence, to assert Russian power and to divide the West, divide the alliance. And on all three fronts, it's failed", Blinken said.

He said it was urgent that the West and Kyiv keep the pressure on Russia.

"We're doing everything that we can to support Ukrainians... All of that is going to strengthen Ukraine's hand at the negotiating table", he told CNN.

Ukraine has offered to accept becoming neutral if it receives adequate security guarantees from Western nations, abandoning aspirations to join Nato.

Blinken said that if Ukraine negotiates an agreement "that meets their needs... we will support it."

— AFP

Nearly 4.2 million refugees flee war

GENEVA: Nearly 4.2 million Ukrainians have fled their country since Russia's war began on February 24, with almost 40,000 pouring into neighbouring countries in the past 24 hours, UN numbers show.

The United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, said on Sunday that 4,176,401 Ukrainians had fled in just over five weeks, up 38,559 from the figure given a day earlier.

Women and children account for 90 per cent of those who have left Ukraine, with men aged 18 to 60 eligible for military call-up and unable to leave.

The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) said that in addition to Ukrainian refugees, nearly 205,500 non-Ukrainians living, studying or working in the country have also left. Nearly 6.48 million people were meanwhile estimated to be internally displaced within Ukraine as of mid-March, according to IOM.

That puts the total number of people displaced by the conflict at well over 10 million, or around a quarter of Ukraine's total population. Children have been disproportionately affected.

The UN children's agency Unicef said in late March that more than half of the country's estimated 7.5 million children had been displaced — 2.5 million internally and two million abroad. Here is a breakdown of how many Ukrainian refugees have fled to neighbouring countries, according to UNHCR:

POLAND: Nearly six out of 10 Ukrainian refugees — 2,429,265 so far — have crossed into Poland, according to the UN tally. Polish border guards put the number even higher, saying on Sunday that 2,461,000 people had entered from Ukraine since February 24.

The small border city of Przemyśl alone has seen some 800,000 refugees arrive, according to its mayor, with up to 55,000 people arriving each day at the peak -- nearly equivalent to the city's total population.

ROMANIA: A total of 635,816 Ukrainians have entered the EU member state, including a large number who crossed over from Moldova, wedged between Romania and Ukraine. The vast majority are thought to have gone on to other countries.

MOLDOVA: The Moldovan border is the closest to the major port city of Odessa, which was hit by air strikes on Sunday morning. Some 392,933 Ukrainians have crossed into the non-EU state, one of the poorest in Europe.

Most of those who have entered the former Soviet republic of 2.6 million people, sandwiched between Ukraine and Romania, have moved on.

But around 93,000 have stayed, with the UN Development Programme saying that some 80 per cent are being housed by private individuals.

HUNGARY: A total of 385,783 Ukrainians have entered Hungary.

RUSSIA: Some 350,632 refugees had sought shelter in Russia as of last Tuesday.

In addition, 113,000 people crossed into Russia from the separatist-held pro-Russian regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in eastern Ukraine between February 21 and 23.

SLOVAKIA: A total of 298,183 people have crossed Ukraine's shortest border into Slovakia.

BELARUS: Another 12,746 refugees had made it north to Russia's close ally Belarus as of last Thursday. — AFP

Hungary vote goes to wire as PM Orban seeks fourth term

BUDAPEST: Nationalist Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban faces a tough challenge with a united opposition in an unpredictable general election on Sunday, after a campaign dominated by Russia's war on neighbouring Ukraine.

The six main opposition parties are for the first time fielding a joint list, determined to roll back the "illiberal" revolution Orban's Fidesz party has pursued during its 12 consecutive years in office.

That has involved repeated confrontations with EU institutions, including over the neutering of the press and judiciary, and measures targeting the community.

On Saturday, opposition supporters braved rain and chilly temperatures in Budapest to hear the opposition alliance's candidate for prime minister, Peter Marki-Zay.

While admitting the election was "an uphill battle" given what he called "12 years of brainwashing" under Fidesz, he insisted the



Women in traditional Hungarian dresses cast their ballots at a polling station in a school in Veresegyhaz, east of Budapest, during the general election. — AFP

opposition alliance stood "at the gates of victory". Polls opened at 6 am local time and will close at 7 pm.

However, government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs says a defini-

tive picture of results will likely only emerge between 11 pm and midnight.

Turnout is expected to be high, surpassing 70 per cent. Orban himself voted on Sunday morning

at a school in a Budapest suburb and told reporters on the way out he was expecting a "great victory".

"It's a fair election", he said, dismissing complaints that the process had been weighted towards

Fidesz.

More than 200 international observers will be monitoring the vote for the first time.

The capital is favourable territory for the opposition and 75-year-old retiree Maria Rapcsak said that she had "voted for the alliance for change", adding: "I hope today we will put an end to Orban's corrupt pro-Putin politics".

However, the election will be decided in around 30 less-urban swing seats out of the 106 directly elected constituencies.

Marki-Zay has been criss-crossing these areas in recent weeks to reach voters directly and try to break through government "propaganda".

At his rally on Saturday, he cut an approachable figure, wading into the crowd to take selfies with supporters.

By contrast, Orban has been "hidden", with no open events apart from a final rally on Friday, says Andras Pulai of the opposition-leaning Publicus polling institute. — AFP

What does a month’s fasting do to your body



DR NISMA HARIS

The writer is a general physician and wellness adviser

Ramadhan has begun and we are all excited to welcome it with all the zeal and enthusiasm.

Since fasting has been practised in all religions and cultures in various forms for ages, besides the spiritual benefits, let us dive into the physical benefits of fasting.

Fasting is when you abstain from food and drinks for a set of certain hours.

When you are not eating, you are giving your body the time to revive and replenish. How?

The following are some of the numerous benefits of fasting:

These days, many of us are struggling with joint pains, fatigue, muscle stiffness, body pain, skin rashes which are usually an outcome of inflammatory processes

undergoing in the body.

This chronic inflammation in the body can be a precursor for various health issues such as rheumatoid arthritis, heart disease, or even cancer.

Moreover, cancer too tends to spread in areas of inflammation. What fasting do here is reduces the chronic inflammation in the body making it a powerful anti-inflammatory.

Additionally, increasing one’s immunity is something that has been a major takeaway from the ongoing pandemic.

Fasting also boosts your immunity by regenerating new white blood cells responsible for fighting any infection or disease.

What’s next? Fasting induces a

FASTING INDUCES A BLOOD SUGAR LOWERING EFFECT THEREBY DECREASING INSULIN RESISTANCE WHICH IS CAUSED BY EATING TOO MUCH OR TOO FREQUENTLY

blood sugar lowering effect thereby decreasing insulin resistance which is caused by eating too much or too frequently. Hence fasting is an efficient approach towards correcting insulin resistance. Results from the study published

in World Journal of Diabetes by National Library of Medicine indicates that short-term daily IF (Intermittent Fasting) may be a safe, tolerable, dietary intervention in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus patients that may improve key outcomes including body weight, fasting glucose and postprandial variability.

What is even more fascinating is that fasting increases the production of Human Growth Hormone (HGH), which is responsible for growth, metabolism, muscle strength, skin elasticity as well as preserving bone density and preventing osteoporosis.

Also, HGH helps tremendously to burn fat. To put it simply, this is the hormone that is hugely

responsible for keeping you youthful. It spikes at puberty and then decreases as age advances.

Eating a calorie-laden diet coupled with stress suppresses growth hormone; whereas fasting tremendously boosts its production making it the natural anti-aging hormone.

Last but not least which we all are aware of is fasting aids in weight loss compared to any low-calorie diets by limiting the calorie intake and improving metabolism.

Just make sure you are consuming healthier food along with adequate drinking water during the non-fasting hours.

Sugary and fried foods need to be avoided at all costs to derive the maximum benefits of fasting.

The Hungarian Internet TV fighting ‘propaganda’

PETER MURPHY

Their studio is makeshift and their funds are largely crowd-sourced, yet Hungary’s top YouTube politics channel is one of the few voices left in the country critical of the government.

Partizan has become essential viewing for hundreds of thousands of Hungarians ahead of Sunday’s general elections in which nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban faces his tightest fight for political survival in years.

Founder and host Marton Gulyas, who produces at least one discussion, debate show or in-depth interview a day, says the purpose is to “liberate the political imagination of the people”.

“Public media here has no ambition of creating public service content, only spreading government propaganda,” Gulyas, a bearded and lanky 35-year-old, said.

“It doesn’t work for the people as it should, instead it destroys and intoxicates public discourse and debate,” he said.

Partizan’s studio is in a dilapidated, red-brick warehouse on the outskirts of Budapest. The channel commands a fraction of the roughly € 350 million taxpayer-funded budget lavished annually on Hungary’s public broadcaster MTVA.

MTVA, who enjoys a state-of-the-art headquarters just a kilometre from Partizan’s — faithfully toes the government line of the day.

News items typically attack the EU, migration, or the opposition and currently chime with Orban’s neutral approach to the Russian attack.

The central European country now ranks in 92nd position — the second lowest in the EU — in the annual press freedom index of media watchdog Reporters Without Borders.

Independent news outlets have largely been squeezed out — having had their licences revoked or editors replaced with those who support the government line.

During the election campaign, MTVA’s news television channel M1 and radio stations have bombarded viewers with Orban-friendly messaging.

M1 replayed Orban’s March 15 national day address nine times the following day.

The same morning Orban’s challenger, provincial mayor Peter Marki-Zay, was given just five minutes to outline his election manifesto on the channel, albeit the first time an opposition politician was given a platform to speak on M1 in four years.

Government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs denies public media coverage is slanted in favour of Orban’s ruling Fidesz party. “If you listen to the morning news on the radio, it is clear that there is a variety of views and opinions,” he said. — AFP



CARLOTTA GALL

The writer is a British journalist and author

When the Russians picked the wrong garrison town to attack

The accounts of resistance in the small garrison town of Vasytkiv have already taken on the sheen of legend. There are reports of Russian transport planes shot down, paratroopers hunted in the woods and even an unknown Ukrainian pilot nicknamed the Ghost of Kyiv defending the skies.

Hyperboles aside, the people of this quiet provincial town of tree-lined streets and low-rise buildings dating back to the Russian empire managed to fight off Russian troops in the critical opening days of the war, preventing Russian forces from capturing strategic bases that could have allowed the nation’s capital, Kyiv, to be encircled.

Vasytkiv — home to an aviation school that has trained generations of pilots, a counterterrorism task force and an air defence command centre that protects the capital and central Ukraine — became one of the first targets of a Russian attack in the first hours and days of the war. Cruise missiles slammed into the air base and then Russian airborne forces attacked in a series of ground assaults.

They did not prevail. Accounts from residents, government officials, armed forces personnel and civilians who have enlisted territorial defence units described how Ukraine rebuffed the Russian assault and helped prevent Russia’s wider aims to seize control of the country.

An air base on the edge of Vasytkiv was among the first targets hit at 5 am on the morning of February 24, in the opening salvos of the war. The strikes damaged buildings, equipment and air defence systems.

Russian airborne troops were dropped into nearby villages and began an assault, local officials and officers said. Russian soldiers attacked during an air raid, using it to their advantage as Ukrainian troops took cover in bomb shelters.

“After the airstrikes, they tried to test the perimeter,” said one air force officer involved in fighting in one of several military installations in the area, speaking on condition that he only be identified by his rank — a major — and his military code name, KR@M. “They tried to sneak inside

and they managed.”

For security reasons, the officer did not specify exactly where the battles took place, except to say the Kyiv region.

The Russian attackers had most likely been dropped by helicopter

UKRAINE’S AIR DEFENCE EQUIPMENT DATED FROM THE 1970S AND 1980S, AND WAS FAR LESS SOPHISTICATED THAN THE SYSTEMS BEING USED BY THE RUSSIANS

in villages away from their target and advanced on foot, he and other officials said. They attacked two separate military targets, and for four days Ukrainian forces fended off several attacks. At one point, he said, the Russians succeeded in entering one compound but retreated again after taking casualties.

Officials said that some of the Russian attackers were already present in the town, and had been living as sleeper cells for months. The city

mayor, Natalia Balasynovych, said some had even bought apartments in a new residential complex and moved in with their families for cover.

The Ukrainian military claimed at the time that one of its fighter jets had shot down a Russian transport aircraft that same night. There were also media reports that two military cargo planes headed for Vasytkiv were intercepted and downed by Ukrainian air defences.

But the wreckage of any downed planes has proved elusive. Members of the territorial defence units, many of them ex-military volunteers as well as local hunters, said they have combed the woods and surrounding countryside but have not found wreckage of any planes.

But Ukraine’s skies were full of Russian helicopters in the first nights of the war, said Yuriy Ignat, public relations officer at the Ukrainian Air Force Command. “We do not think they came in big planes, but there were many saboteur groups in many places.”

By the fourth night of the war, the Russian attackers had regrouped and were better organised, said KR@M, a member of the quick reaction unit that was involved in the battle.

He said the Russians were equipped with assault rifles, silencers and night vision goggles, enabling them to attack in the dark. “At 4 am, when the fighting started our guard was shot silently, in the head, in full darkness,” he said.

— The New York Times



A volunteer with Ukraine’s territorial defence units posted in Vasytkiv, a town on the southern outskirts of Kyiv that fought off Russian troops in the critical opening days of the war.

Ramadhan, the best month ever



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

Welcome the blessed month of Ramadhan. The month has started bringing a different experience to people's daily lifestyle, both Muslims and others. Everyone gets adapted to the spirit of Ramadhan, which brings calmness and tranquility to one's character. The attitudes and behaviours change during this month, especially Muslims who fast all day. People tend to be more compassionate and patient; it is the month of mercy overall. These are some

of Ramadhan's blessings that are reflected into one's attitude.

The month-long fasting is a very effective way of acquiring self-control and development skills in different aspects. As Ramadhan is the month of fasting, mercy, forgiveness and kindness, people become more compassionate to one another. Fasting teaches people to stay soft, compassionate, merciful and respectful to others. One can also be more supportive to his family, colleagues, friends and others. In other words, people tend to be more emotional more than other times of the year.

Ramadhan comes with various objectives, among of which is that the Almighty Allah wanted to teach Muslims different personal and social lessons. Fasting during Ramadhan helps Muslims to develop and strengthen their powers of self-discipline, so they can resist wrongful desires and bad habits. Hence, Muslims can control their behaviours, thoughts and desires even. The 30 days of fasting will be enough to urge people give up bad habits and avoid wrong deeds.

RAMADHAN COMES WITH VARIOUS OBJECTIVES, AMONG OF WHICH IS THAT THE ALMIGHTY ALLAH WANTED TO TEACH MUSLIMS DIFFERENT PERSONAL AND SOCIAL LESSONS

Another key lesson that one learns from fasting is that by being away from all the bad things and refraining from personal desires, one can be closer to Allah. Acknowledging that Allah knows what we all do and think about, whether it is good or bad it intensifies the consciousness of Allah in our heart. This increases the bar of our spiritual attitude, so we become more religious and attached to Allah.

That is why you can see people more obedient and kindhearted during Ramadhan more than ever.

Furthermore, fasting, as a religious ritual, teaches Muslims to think about the poor and needy people who have shortfall of food and cannot afford getting three meals a day. In view of that, fasting allows others to experience hunger like those poor families and individuals. Accordingly, Ramadhan brings the focus on the importance of practicing charity and voluntary work in the society. Thus, you see people strive to do different sorts of charitable tasks with the poor people and needy families. This reflects their spirit of compassion that Ramadhan instills in people.

Fortunately, people become more considerate and they contribute to helping others through various charitable organisations and deeds. Their interest to support voluntary work and charities is not only limited to this month, but it increases in Ramadhan as the credit and reward of such activities is getting double. That is why Ramadhan is called the month of giving and generosity. Sparing one's attention towards charity while fasting marks a major value of Ramadhan.

To tell the truth, fasting, generally, does not only tells us to refrain from eating and drinking, but from all kinds of selfish desires and wrong doings. Fasting is not merely intended for the body, but for the spirit as well. Therefore, the physical fasting symbolises and expresses the real and inner fasting. Fasting is a spiritual practice that is targeting the spirit and body alike. It calls upon us to discover ourselves, master ourselves, and discipline ourselves.

The month of Ramadhan is an opportunity, which should not be missed and undervalued. Its religious and social advantages are many and we should all invest on this time of the year, which brings blessings to life. It also unites people together in special moments. May the Almighty Allah bestow us all truthful and honest fasting. Wish you all a rewarding fasting and a blessed Ramadhan.



BEATING UTENSILS!

Sri Lankans beat utensils as a sign of protest during a march against the surge in prices and shortage of fuel and other essential commodities in Colombo on Sunday. Armed troops had a tense confrontation with a crowd protesting a worsening economic crisis after a social media blackout failed to halt another day of anti-government demonstrations.

– AFP

The G20 must speak truth to Putin



Maurice Obstfeld

The writer is a former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, is Professor of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley, and a senior non-resident fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics

The next big test of the G20's credibility will come when (or if) its finance ministers and central bank governors meet for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund spring meetings on April 18-24. As the leading forum for international economic policy cooperation today, the G20 will have a crowded agenda. Top-line issues include central bank responses to escalating global inflation; accumulating evidence of rapid climate change; and coordination of health and fiscal policy. But the bear in the room will be Russia's war on Ukraine and its economic repercussions, starting with its effect on world food prices.

Despite some important achievements, several visible failures have undermined the G20's credibility in recent years. During US President Donald Trump's administration, G20 communiqués were regularly watered down to near meaninglessness. More recently, the group has failed to formulate an effective global response to Covid-19, let alone prepare for future pandemics.

The G20's credibility is an important asset in a world of increasingly globalised challenges. But credibility is hard to build and easy to lose, which means this month's meeting could be a watershed. So far, G20 members have approached the Ukraine crisis in very different ways, in terms of both public communications and policies. While the United States and its allies have responded with significant sanctions, China, India and South Africa recently abstained from a United Nations General Assembly resolution criticising Russia and demanding humanitarian access in Ukraine.

According to the sanctions tracker maintained by Chad P Bown of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, eight G20 members (all the middle-income members) have publicly declared their non-participation in economic sanctions against Russia, and Saudi Arabia – a US ally that is a partner of Russia within Opec plus – has proven similarly disinclined. It is thus apparent that the group will not reach a consensus even on how to describe Russia's war or its effects on world markets. Yet to downplay Russia's war in the interest of unanimity might erode the G20's credibility beyond recovery.

In any case, the G20 is sure to weigh in on one prominent and direct repercussion of Russia's war: a prospective fall in global food supply. Even before February 24, global food prices were approaching record highs, owing to a confluence of factors similar to those that generated food-price spikes in 2007-08 and 2010. Those earlier episodes led to widespread social instability in some poorer countries; with many low- and middle-income countries now also facing inflation pressures, higher debt levels, and continuing vulnerabilities to disease

and climate change, the effects could be explosive.

Ukraine and Russia are top exporters of wheat, maize, and sunflower seeds and oil. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's recent projections, already-high food and feed prices could increase by 8-22 per cent over the course of this year and next, owing to the destruction of Ukraine's production, storage, and transport facilities, coupled with possible sanctions-related disruptions to Russia's grain

AT THEIR UPCOMING MEETING, G20 FINANCE MINISTERS AND CENTRAL BANK GOVERNORS WILL NEED TO ADDRESS THE GLOBAL SPIKE IN FOOD PRICES, WHICH IN TURN WILL REQUIRE AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE FACTS ABOUT RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE

and fertiliser exports, elevated world energy prices, and higher shipping and insurance fees. As a result, the number of undernourished people worldwide could rise by 8-13 million.

As with previous food-price shocks, today's crisis puts a premium on international policy coordination. Most importantly, as the FAO and the World Trade Organization have urged, the G20 must collectively reject beggar-thy-neighbour food export taxes or controls. These measures have already begun to proliferate, even though they produced massive increases in global food prices in the past.

But the G20 must not stop there. Calls for palliative measures can help, but unless they are accompanied by a frank discussion of root causes and remedies, they risk enabling bad behaviour. The current threat to global food supplies

has been exacerbated by a single G20 member's war and other violations of international law. Russia could easily and unilaterally mitigate the crisis by ending its assault, particularly its targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

True, part of the global economic shock from the war is due to sanctions; but these would be scaled back were Russia to withdraw its forces and cease its bombardments. In the meantime, Saudi Arabia (along with the United Arab Emirates) could temper the surge in global energy prices by pumping more oil – something it has so far refused to do.

Although deep disagreements between G20 members are inevitable, the summit must go on, because cancelling it at this point would be no less discrediting. The group must demonstrate that it is capable of confronting the realities of an uncomfortable situation. To that end, the bulk of the members should aim to draft and endorse a communiqué that candidly identifies Russia as the obvious source of both the problem and its remediation. This could be a simple statement of facts, free of language overtly condemning anyone.

Of course, Russia steadfastly refuses to acknowledge the facts, arguing that "a possible food crisis is provoked not by Russia's special operation in Ukraine but by the West's illegal unilateral sanctions." But if a sizable share of G20 members signs onto the communiqué, a credible rump of countries that can support future multilateral cooperation would be preserved. It is better to let some countries bow out, if that is their wish, than to pretend a false unity exists.

G20 members, including Russia, are the major players affecting the global commons. It is still important that they communicate in all the critical areas where they wield influence, including nutrition, health, and climate. Substantive agreement, where possible, will advance global welfare. But fundamental disagreement can and should be publicly acknowledged so that subsets of members can still pursue their own initiatives.

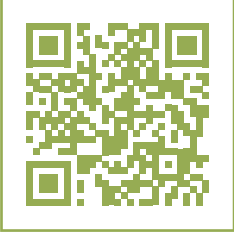
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An elderly woman embraces an Ukrainian soldier in Bucha, northwest of Kyiv, where the town's mayor said 280 people had been buried in a mass grave and that the town is littered with corpses. – AFP

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Oman Stallions emerge Premier League champs

C H A I T A N Y A - O W N E D T E A M S S W E E P O M A N C R I C K E T T I T L E S

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Oman Stallions beat Muscat CT by 35 runs in a thriller to clinch the Oman Premier League 2021-22 title at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat on Saturday.

Oman Stallions completed the League proceedings with 24 points from 14 matches to top the points table. Muscat CT finished runners-up with 20 points from 14 matches in the eight-team league.

Renaissance were third with 16 points on better net run-rate (0.6755) over Majees (0.3816) who

also had 16 points.

Another team from the same ownership or Oman Stallions, Yalla Shabab claimed the fifth spot with 16 points with a net run-rate of 0.3382.

For Chaitanya Khimji, the owner of Oman Stallions and Yalla Shabab, it was an unprecedented sweep of all title on offer in the Oman Cricket domestic circuit.

Chaitanya's Ruwi Rangers (Yalla Shabab) had bagged the D20 and D10 championships earlier.

The Sanuth Ebrahim-captained team dominated the short formats and thrashed Qurum Thunders by eight wickets in the final of D10 to win the title on March 22.

In January, Ruwi Rangers (Yalla Shabab) thumped Darsait Titans by 80 runs to claim the D20 top honours.

Chaitanya was elated after the grand success.

"This has been a dream come true for me. Clean sweep of all three Oman Cricket titles is first one of a kind. I am so very happy with both my teams Oman Stallions and Yalla Shabab who have given me a gift of a life time. I am very thrilled, kudos to the teams!" the veteran cricket enthusiast said.

Vinu Mathew, team manager of Oman Stallions and Yalla Shabab, said this is a remarkable achievement for a team

management.

"Sweeping all three titles were fantastic. Our team players had put up their level best performance in the highly-competitive three formats. We believed in our players and they delivered," Vinu said.

SPARKLING TON

At the OCA grounds on Saturday, Oman Stallions, who were two points ahead of Muscat CT with 22 points, needed to raise their net run-rate to keep the title in their grip.

Winning the toss, Stallions suffered a poor start and were struggling at 74 for 5 wickets in 19.3 overs.

Mehran Khan, then played a match-changing innings of 134 from 100 balls, which included 11 sixers and eight fours.

Mehran and Vinay Shukla (86 – 76 balls, 5x4, 4x6) put the team back in the driving seat with their 199-run partnership for the fifth wicket.

Both of them ensured the championship for Stallions after reaching a net run-rate of 2.0342.

Rafi Ullah chipped in with an eight-ball 17 in the final overs as Stallions posted a commanding 322 for eight in 50 overs.

Samay Shrivastava took 3-48 in his 10 overs while Ganesh Chandrashekhar bagged 3 wickets

giving away 61 runs.

In reply, Muscat CT also had a poor start by losing top three wickets for 52 runs inside first 10 overs.

They recovered to 170-5 in 28.4 overs due to a 105-run partnership between Ayaan Khan (71) and Hashir Dafedar (56) for the fifth wicket.

In the final stages, Sandeep Goud staged a lone battle to score 64 but Bilal Khan castled through his defence to end the Muscat CT campaign at 287 in 46.3 overs.

Bilal (3-46), Hemalkumar Tandel (3-45) and Rafi Ullah (3-71) were among the wickets for the champions.

Seeb remain on top with win, Al Nahda prevail in OL

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Seeb registered a thrilling 4-1 win over Nizwa to remain on top of the table on Saturday night in the 17th week of 2021-22 Omantel League.

At the Seeb Stadium, Amjad al Harthi, Abdulaziz al Maqbali (two goals) and Marwan al Siyabi sealed Seeb's triumph while Abdullah al Yarubi netted the consolation goal for the visitors. The Muscat-based team raised their tally to 35 points while the defeat intensified relegation fears for Nizwa team as they are now at 13th place with 11 points only.

In the other late fixtures on Saturday, Al Buraimi's representative Al Nahda snatched a crucial 1-0 win over Sohar at the latter's home in Sohar Sports Complex. Oudi al Qura scored the most important goal in the game as he converted from the penalty spot in the second half. The win helped coach Hamed al Azani's battalion to equalise with Seeb on the top at



35 points while Sohar remained at the previous credit of 23 points in the eighth place.

MUSANNAH PREVAIL

Al Musannah emerged a 2-1 winner over Bahla in another tight match of the week. At Nizwa Sports Complex, Arseni Luki put

the visitors ahead while Musab al Lamaki added the second goal. The only goal scored by the hosts was by Yahya al Hudaifi.

The triumph assisted Batinah team to position in the middle place of the league table as they moved to sixth place with 27 points. The defeat put Bahla in the danger zone in 11th position with 12 points. Any further losses for the Al Dakhiliyah team, Bahla will join the three clubs including Al Ittihad, Nizwa and Saham in the relegation.

At the Al Saada Stadium, Al Nasr recorded their eighth win in the league as they defeated Al Suwaiq 1-0 in a tight clash. Former national team player Said al Ruzaiqi scored the only goal of the game through a header and delivered crucial three points to his team. The win moved Dhofar representatives upto fourth place with a tally of 30 points while northern Batinah team Al Suwaiq remained in ninth position with the previous credit of 21 points.



Healy sparkles as Australia grab World Cup



CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: Australia, led by a sublime 170 from Alyssa Healy, rewrote the record books to beat a valiant England by 71 runs in the Women's World Cup final in Christchurch on Sunday.

Australia amassed a daunting 356 for five but the defending champions England, faced with a record target, kept up the run rate but ran out of wickets to be dismissed for 285 in the 44th over, with Nat Sciver unbeaten on 148.

The victory continued Australia's dominance of the 50-over format with their seventh title from 12 World Cups and extended their one-day international record to 38 wins from 39 matches over the past four years.

Against England, they lost the toss but nothing else.

England captain Heather Knight put Australia into bat, noting her side had bowled "outstandingly well" at Hagley Oval, but Australian openers Perry and Rachael Haynes were not listening.

They showed patience, scoring a sedate 26 off the first eight overs before Healy went on the rampage, paying the bowlers no respect as she pounded all points of the boundary with 26 fours.

Her 170, off just 138 deliveries, was the highest score in a women's or men's World Cup final, the highest score in this tournament and contributed to her tournament record of 509 runs, eclipsing



the 497, set by Haynes earlier in the same innings. The Healy and Haynes 160-run opening stand was a record partnership for any

wicket in a World Cup final. England could have claimed both wickets in the 21st over, with Australia still in the 90s, when

Healy and Haynes were dropped off the bowling of Kate Cross.

It took Australia 22.2 overs to bring up their first 100, 13 more overs for the second hundred but just nine overs for the third, helped by England returning to the poor fielding which had plagued their start to the World Cup when they lost their first three games.

When Haynes went for 68, Beth Mooney joined Healy in a 156-run partnership before Healy's extraordinary innings ended in the 46th over when she missed an Anya Shrubsole delivery outside off stump and was stumped.

Mooney quickly followed for 62 as Australia lost four wickets in a push for runs over the last four overs, with Elysse Perry finish-

ing not out 17 after coming in at number seven on her return from injury.

Anya Shrubsole was the one England bowler to perform with credit with three for 46 off her 10 overs — the figures inflated by the final over which cost 15 runs.

England made a determined effort to stay within reach of the required run rate, but were hampered by wickets falling at regular intervals.

Sciver's 148 was the second highest score in a Women's World Cup final, but the next best for England was 27 by opener Tammy Beaumont. For Australia, Jess Jonassen took three for 57 and Alana King finished with three for 64. — AFP

Ferguson, Gill power Gujarat to second IPL win

PUNE: Lockie Ferguson claimed four wickets and Shubman Gill hit 84 to help newcomers Gujarat Titans remain unbeaten in two IPL matches after a 14-run win over Delhi Capitals on Saturday.

Ferguson returned figures of 4-28 with his express pace in Pune to keep Delhi down to 157 for nine while chasing 172 in the second match of the day.

Gill set up victory for Gujarat, one of the two new teams including Lucknow Super Giants added to the Indian Premier League, with his 46-ball knock that guided the team to 171-6.

"The kind of attack we have, we always felt that we can make a score that's 10 under-par look like 25 above," Gujarat skipper Hardik Pandya said after the win.

Gill lost opening partner Matthew Wade for one but built crucial partnerships including a 65-run third-wicket stand with Pandya, who made 31.

David Miller hit an unbeaten 20 off 15 balls to boost the team total, which turned out to be enough for Gujarat's second win in as many games.

Pandya took down Tim Seifert for three with the opening ball of his spell and Ferguson soon took charge with his twin strikes in one over



to rattle the Delhi top-order.

Skipper Rishabh Pant and Lalit Yadav attempted to rebuild by putting together 61 runs but a run out ended the partnership. Yadav was out for 25.

Pant made 43 off 29 balls to raise hopes of chasing down the total but Ferguson sent back the left-handed wicketkeeper-batter and struck again in the same over to hurt Delhi.

"Till Rishabh was there, the game was in the balance or maybe Delhi was ahead, and that over from Lockie really turned it for us," said Pandya.

Ferguson said: "Hardik is always giving us confidence to play the game that we want

to play and it's nice to have a captain who trusts your skills."

Fast bowler Mohammed Shami struck on successive balls before a hat-trick was averted but the curtains came down on Delhi who hunt for their maiden title in the Twenty20 tournament.

In the first match of the day, England's Jos Buttler hit the first century of this IPL season to lead his side Rajasthan Royals to a 23-run victory over Mumbai Indians in Mumbai.

Royals top the 10-team table in the expanded IPL that is being played at four venues in two cities with limited crowds due to Covid-related restrictions. — AFP

Babar leads Pakistan to first series win over Australia in 20 years

LAHORE: Skipper Babar Azam hit a second successive century and Imam-ul-Haq an impressive half century Saturday to anchor Pakistan's first series win over Australia since 2002 with a nine-wicket victory in the third and final one-day international in Lahore.

It was a dominant performance by the home team at Gaddafi Stadium as they dismissed Australia for a below-par 210 through their fast bowlers, who shared eight wickets, and then chased down the target in 37.5 overs losing just one wicket.

Azam, dropped by Travis Head off Jason Behrendorff on one, took full advantage of the reprieve, driving Marnus Labuschagne for two to complete his 16th ODI hundred off 110 balls.

Azam, who scored 114 in the second game, hit 12 boundaries in his 115-ball 105 not out.

Unbeaten Haq followed his own back-to-back hundreds with a polished 89 for his 11th ODI half century. He cracked six boundaries and a six, and finished the series with 298 runs.

Haq and Azam shared an unbroken 190-run stand for the second wicket after opener Fakhar Zaman fell to Nathan Ellis for 17 — Australia's only success in the innings. The elusive 2-1 win came after Pakistan lost six consecutive ODI series to Australia — and the preceding three-match Test series 1-0 last month.



Pakistan's captain Babar Azam poses with the trophy after winning the ODI series against Australia at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore. — AFP

Australia won the first ODI by 88 runs while Pakistan clinched the second by six wickets, both also at the same venue

"When you lose the first game then your players need confidence and once they were given that they came back strongly and did well," said Azam. "Credit to them for this series win."

Australian skipper Aaron Finch rued the lack of runs. "We didn't get enough runs," said

Finch. "When you go three down in the first few overs, it's always going to be hard to get a big total."

Earlier, fast bowlers Haris Rauf (3-39), Mohammad Wasim (3-40) and Shaheen Shah Afridi (2-40) kept the pressure from the start as Australia were bowled out in 41.5 overs. Alex Carey top-scored with a gritty 61-ball 56 and Sean Abbott hit a 40-ball 49 in an otherwise dismal batting show by the visitors. — AFP



Poland's Iga Swiatek poses with her trophy after winning the women's single final at the 2022 Miami Open. – AFP

SWIATEK BEATS OSAKA TO WIN MIAMI OPEN

MIAMI: Iga Swiatek's dream season continued as the incoming world number one scooped her third successive WTA 1000 title to beat Naomi Osaka in the Miami Open final on Saturday.

The Polish 20-year-old became only the fourth — and youngest — player to win the 'Sunshine Double' of Indian Wells and Miami in the same year following Steffi Graf, Kim Clijsters and Victoria Azarenka with a 6-4, 6-0 win over Osaka.

Swiatek, who will be formally confirmed as world number one when the new WTA rankings are announced on Monday, has now won 17 straight games, a winning streak that includes titles in Doha, Indian Wells and now Miami.

Osaka, 24, enjoyed a welcome return to form in Florida even if the four-time Grand Slam champion's first final since the Australian Open in 2021 ended in a comprehensive defeat.

"I feel privileged to be among those players who have done this double before, I knew it would be tough playing these tournaments in a row but I took it step by step", said Swiatek, who won her maiden Grand Slam at the French Open in 2020 as a 19-year-old and will be the favourite to win another Roland Garros crown next month on her favoured surface.

"I was in the zone in the second set — that's the easiest way for me to be dominant. I was surprised I could handle all these matches.

"I am still the same person though. My idols were like that and I don't want the success to



Poland's Iga Swiatek returns a shot against Naomi Osaka in Miami Open. – AFP

change me in a negative way. It gives me confidence.

Swiatek headed into a seventh career final on the back of 16 straight wins — the last player to win 16 or more in a row was Osaka, between Cincinnati in 2020 and last year's Miami Open.

Osaka has been serving well this tournament but was broken by Swiatek to make it 3-2 in the first and began to look vulnerable.

The former French Open champion is one of the finest returners in the women's game and even though Osaka was attempting to aggressively jump upon Swiatek's second serve, her opponent was far more consistent and clinical overall.

'SAD OUTCOME, FUN DAY'

The Polish player didn't face a single break point in a match that lasted just 80 minutes.

A break of the Osaka serve right at the start of the second saw any

lingering hopes for the Japanese melt in the Miami sunshine and Swiatek easily moved through the gears to land her sixth career title amid joyous scenes at Hard Rock Stadium.

For former world number one Osaka, who left Indian Wells last month in tears after being heckled by a fan during a second round defeat, this run to the final in Miami has at least given her renewed hope of returning to the top after a spell out of tennis in 2021 to deal with mental health issues.

"Iga is quite different from the other players I have played against, she is very explosive but I'm not as disappointed as I've been before after losses", said Osaka, who will head to Europe a week early to prepare for the clay swing of the season. "It was a sad outcome but a fun day.

"Normally I would be crying in the locker room but I guess life

I feel privileged to be among those players who have done this double before, I knew it would be tough playing these tournaments in a row but I took it step by step

IGA SWIATEK
2022 Miami Open champion

experiences help.

"Only a couple days ago I was celebrating getting back into the top 50 but I don't take things like that for granted.

"I'm a bit more humble now about the opportunities I get. I can take a lot of positives from this."

Osaka revealed when she had dinner with Swiatek in Australia a couple of years ago, she was asked her opinion about what the future held for the up and coming Polish star. "She said she might go to college but I said don't do that", smiled Osaka.

"I remember thinking she was so young and this good that she should commit to playing more tournaments first.

"It's been cool to watch her grow."

Sunday's ATP men's final sees 18-year-old Spanish sensation Carlos Alcaraz take on Norway's world No 8 Casper Ruud. — AFP

Man Utd slip up again in race for top four

MANCHESTER : Manchester United boss Ralf Rangnick bemoaned his lack of attacking options after a 1-1 draw against Leicester on Saturday badly damaged their hopes of securing Champions League football for next season.

Kelechi Iheanacho put the visitors in front in the second half but although Fred equalised just three minutes later, neither side could find a winner.

Rangnick's misfiring side are three points behind fourth-placed Arsenal, who have two games in hand, but the German interim manager said they would continue to fight for the top four even though it was an uphill task.

"In the last 15 minutes we tried to score a goal but in this game we did not score the late goal", he told Sky Sports. "We don't have the offensive players and even Jesse Lingard was feeling sick.

"As long as it (top four) is possible mathematically, it is possible. It is our job and duty to do our best to finish on the best possible note."

United are hunting for a new permanent manager, with Ajax boss Erik ten Hag emerging as a clear favourite, and the team's shortcomings were all too obvious against Brendan Rodgers' team.

TOOTHLESS UNITED

The home side, missing top-scorer Cristiano Ronaldo through illness, looked anaemic in attack for most of the first half as they struggled to establish any attacking rhythm.

Bruno Fernandes, who signed a new deal this week, was put through by Fred in the 27th minute but the Portuguese playmaker failed to make good contact and Kasper Schmeichel saved with his outstretched left foot.

Minutes later Leicester had a chance to take the lead but Iheanacho failed to

control the ball on the edge of the area and ended up skewing his shot wide.

The sides remained deadlocked at 0-0 at the interval.

United looked sharper in the early stages of the second half but midfielder Scott McTominay was lucky to stay on the pitch after a nasty-looking challenge on James Maddison.

Marcus Rashford was brought on by Rangnick to replace McTominay and add extra zip to the home side's attack.

But it was the visitors who took the lead in the 63rd minute when a United attack broke down and Maddison attacked down the left.

The England international produced a fine left-footed cross and former Manchester City forward Iheanacho headed past David de Gea, who got a hand to the ball but could not keep it out.

Leicester's lead was short-lived, however, with United level just three minutes later.

The ball broke for Fernandes after the visitors failed to clear their lines properly. Schmeichel could only parry the shot from the Portuguese forward and Fred lashed into the roof of the net.

Leicester had chances to re-take the lead.

Inheancho lifted the ball over the crossbar from a tight angle and De Gea then produced an outstanding fingertip save to keep out a goal-bound header from Wesley Fofana.

Leicester continued to look the more dangerous side and had the ball in the net with 10 minutes to go when Maddison finished at the back post.

But the goal was overturned for a foul by Iheanacho on Raphael Varane.

United piled on the pressure late on but could not find a winner.

— AFP



United boss Ralf Rangnick





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Over 5,000 One-Person-Companies registered in 2021

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

The number of One-Person Companies (OPC) registered via the Invest Easy portal of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has soared to 5,063 companies as of 2021-end, reflecting the growing popularity of this new legal structure among entrepreneurs.

According to the Ministry, this number represents a hefty 112.6 per cent increase over the total number of 2,381 OPCs

registered by end-2020.

This spike underscores that Omani entrepreneurs took advantage of the pandemic period to set up One-Person Companies to engage in business or provide services, it pointed out.

The new Commercial Companies Law issued by Royal Decree 18/2019 approved the registration of One-Person Companies as a new legal form of companies.

It represents a new type of commercial company, based on the limited liability company format, with its capital fully owned by one natural or juristic person.



The spike underscores that Omani entrepreneurs took advantage of the pandemic period to set up One-Person Companies to engage in business or provide services

However, a natural person may not establish more than one limited liability company in one person's name.

The regulations specify that this type

of company should be managed by the owner of the capital.

They may appoint one or more managers to represent the company before the judiciary and others and will be responsible for managing it on behalf of the owner. The company's capital should be more than RO 50,000.

One-Person Companies are treated similar to limited liability companies. For the convenience of new investors, registration of one-person companies can be done electronically through the "Invest Easy" portal.

Shopping discounts should not be less than 20%: Ministry



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Applications for shopping promotions and discounts approved by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion totalled 7,175 in 2021, presenting a 27.7 per cent increase over the previous year's total of 5,619 approvals.

According to Amal bint Abdullah al Fahdiah, Head of the Commercial Licensing Department at the Ministry, applications for promotions are governed by Ministerial Resolution 239/2013 and cover all types of promotions organised by commercial, industrial and service establishments, with the exception of fast food restaurants.

These include promotions conducted throughout the year, offers organised by commercial centres and gifts bundled with item on sale – provided advertisements and posters promoting these offers are approved by the Ministry in advance.

Promotional offers conducted by commercial centre on the occasion of festivals, or by commercial, industrial and service establishments on the occasion of the opening of a new branch, are excluded from the provisions of this regulation if they are held for a period of one day. However, the Ministry's approval is mandatory before they are held.

"It is not permitted for commercial, industrial and service establishments to hold or advertise any of the promotions except after obtaining the necessary licence from the ministry.

The application for obtaining a license to conduct a promotional show must be submitted at least 15 days before the start of the offer, provided that the application includes specifying the type of offer and the method of conducting it, specifying the periods and places for conducting the show, attaching a list of the number and types of prizes and gifts allocated to the winners, their purchase invoices and specifying the place and date of the draw and its mechanism "by lottery or by automatic draw," Amal explained.

Importantly, strictly barred from promotions - direct or indirect - are tobacco items and its products and derivatives. Moreover, violators from any of these provisions are liable to face bans for one year from holding any promotions.

Sales of goods at discounted prices are covered by Ministerial Resolution 129/2015 provided they are for not more than three days and offer discounts of not less than 20 per cent.

All applications for promotional offers, discounts, marketing cards and advertising brochures may be submitted through the electronic portal "Invest Easy", the official added.

OIA strengthens the Sultanate of Oman's food security ambitions

Alternative foods: US firm MycoTechnology secures funding support from group backed by Oman Investment Authority

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Leading US-based food innovation start-up MycoTechnology has announced that it has successfully wrapped up a new round of fundraising with support from a group affiliated with Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman.

The announcement comes less than two months after the establishment of Vital Foods Technologies, a partnership between OIA and MycoTechnology to support the implementation of a major alternative foods-based project in the Sultanate of Oman.

Colorado - USA headquartered MycoTechnology said it has secured \$85 million in the latest Series E fundraise. Supporting the funding injection, besides Oman Investment Authority, were a number of leading international players operating in the conventional as well as alternative-foods businesses, including Tyson Ventures, Nourish Ventures (Griffith Foods' venture capital group), Rage Capital, Alphacy Investment, Siddhi Capital, S2G Ventures, Continental Grain Company, Bunge Ventures, Maple Leaf Foods, Evolution VC Partners, and Gaingels.

For OIA, currently the biggest investor in the Sultanate of Oman's food sector, the



latest funding support for MycoTechnology is broadly in line with its mandate to, among other goals, strengthen the country's food security.

Vital Foods Technologies, set up in February as a joint venture with MycoTechnology, aims to capitalize on the latter's proprietary fermentation technology to produce alternative protein from Omani dates. The goal is to enable the production of a variety of healthful, nutritious and dietary foodstuffs based on this alternative protein, thereby advancing the country's food security objectives.

Established in 2013, MycoTechnology's proprietary mushroom fermentation process harnesses the natural power of mycelia – the invisible root system of mushrooms – to

develop a range of alternative protein-based foods that address sugar reduction, sustainable protein, nutrient density, and other nutrition-based factors.

Following the conclusion of the fundraise, MycoTechnology says it is now well-positioned to offer its product portfolio to consumers globally, with a focus on expanding in the Middle East, Europe and Asia.

Alan Hahn, CEO and Co-Founder of MycoTechnology, who was in Muscat earlier this year, commented: "This fundraise is a validation of the potential of our breakthrough proposition and next-generation ingredients. It will be a catalyst to accelerate our growth further and faster. The investment will power the imagination of our incredible

The investment will power the imagination of our incredible team, driving our plans to add more new-to-the-world ingredients from the fungal kingdom

ALAN HAHN
CEO and Co-Founder,
MycoTechnology

team, driving our plans to add more new-to-the-world ingredients from the fungal kingdom. We have big things coming!"

Significantly, Vital Foods Technologies is the latest addition to OIA's food-related investment lines. The Group also oversees Oman Food Investment Holding Co (OFIC) and owns Fisheries Development Oman (FDO).

Sohar International provides equity capital advisory services to Apollo Hospitals Muscat



MUSCAT: Continuing its strategic roadmap to effectively contribute to the national agenda of diversification and generating In-Country value, Sohar International has acted as the sole financial adviser to Apollo Hospitals Muscat, on raising its equity capital from investors.

"At Sohar International, our market knowhow and analysis gives us an edge to extend support to ventures that provide sustainable socio-economic benefits to the community enabling people to prosper and grow.

To that effect, our well-planned approach ensures that we continue to deliver institutional advisory services that are drawn from a thorough understanding of the local market and are further complemented with valuable insights that we gain from our international partnerships.

We are delighted to be a part of this significant milestone in the journey of Apollo Hospital Muscat, catering its financial needs for the next phase of the hospital's growth in Oman.

The project provides impetus to Oman's emerging healthcare landscape, which has witnessed multi-fold growth and enhancement during the pandemic," commented Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer, Sohar International.

Alizz Islamic Bank celebrates Ramadhan with attractive finance offers

MUSCAT: As part of its efforts to enhance customer experience by introducing Sharia-compliant offers, products and services, Alizz Islamic Bank has announced the launch of several finance offers on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadhan.

These finance offers are available to all retail customers from the public sector, semi-governmental or private sector institutions who transfer their salaries to Alizz Islamic Bank or the bank's customers who didn't benefit from any previous finance facilities, with special finance rates on home finance, auto finance and personal finance, including Goods Murabaha & Service Ijarah.

New customers can benefit from the home finance offer with a profit rate of 4.75% only for the purchase of ready properties and under construction properties, as well as diminishing Musharaka



to purchase lands. The new offer also includes auto finance at a competitive profit rate of 4.95%

for terms of up to 5 years or 60 months only, and 5.65% only for terms between 6 to 10 years, i.e.

+60 months to 120 months.

Moreover, Alizz Islamic Bank announced that its customers can enjoy the auto finance offer without the need to transfer their salary, which is applicable to all car finance schemes made on the basis of post-dated cheques, as the eligibility criteria for this finance option include the minimum salary, age, employer's eligibility and debt burden ratio (DBR) as per the bank's policy. This offer applies to auto finance only and is exclusive of the Murabaha finance product for land finance or commercial products.

Commenting on launch of these various offers, Mohammed al Ghassani, Chief Consumer Banking Officer at Alizz Islamic Bank, said: "We give priority to enhancing the customer experience, and it is our tradition since the bank's inception to launch various finance offers that

meet needs of all segments of the society during the holy month of Ramadhan. We are keen on taking customers' requirements into consideration during the development of the offers, services and products that we launch from time to time. It should be noted that this campaign was preceded by a comprehensive training of our staff in all branches to ensure seamless experiences".

Al Ghassani added: "We conduct surveys periodically, to assess customers' satisfaction with our services and products, and to determine the offers they expect the bank to launch. We do not take a step forward until we are pretty sure that it will be for the customer's benefit as we provide the appropriate offers that fulfil customers' needs, whether with respect to personal finance, home finance, or even auto and land finance".

Enjoy the drive in the GAC Motor's GS3 SUV

MUSCAT: GAC Motor's GS3 SUV is built to offer exciting driving experiences. From routine tasks to weekend getaways, the GS3 delivers on all fronts encouraging you to make the most of every journey.

Pushing you to enjoy every drive is a choice of 113 HP, 1.5L engine with 150 Nm torque and a 135 HP, 1.3L turbo-charged engine with 202 Nm torque. Both are paired to a 6-speed automatic transmission. An available ECO drive mode offers the advantage of better fuel-efficiency.

The GS3's stylish profile is complemented by a choice of 16", 17" and 18" alloy wheels. Adding to its bold design are the sleek daytime running lights (available on 1.3L Turbo AT), front and rear fog lamps, LED taillights and halogen projector headlights with follow-me-home function.

These headlights are

equipped with alarm feature for headlights on warning. The interior of the GS3 is impressive, spacious and comfortable.

Passengers in the GS3 can revel in a cool and comforting environment with automatic air conditioning with air filter and negative ion air purifier. Rear passengers too can stay relaxed with the rear a/c vents and second row centre arm rest with cup holders.

It has a rear transverse space of 1,500 mm which can comfortably seat three passengers and is the best in its class. A multi-functional steering wheel gives the driver a good reason to stay focused on the road ahead. The leatherette-trimmed seats increase the convenience aspect besides adding to the style quotient.

The driver's seat and passenger seat is 6-way and 4-way adjustable



respectively. The second row seats are 60:40 split offering an option of more space in case the need arises.

Giving passengers more reasons to enjoy the most of every journey is a range of features that include 8-inch TFT colour screen display with Navigation, front row USB port, rear row USB port, 6-speaker music system with AM/FM, MP3/WMA, Bluetooth hands-free phone system, speed

based volume adjustment, cruise control and more.

In terms of safety, the GS3 is equipped with an impressive list of safety features. They include, dual front airbags, front side airbags (available on 1.3L Turbo AT), Electronic Stability Program (ESP), Anti-lock Braking system (ABS), Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD), Traction Control System (TCS), Hydraulic Brake Assist (HBA), Hill-start

Hold Control (HHC), Hill Descent Control (HDC), impact sensing door unlock, engine immobiliser and more. The Electronic Parking Brake (EPB) with Auto Hold adds to the convenience for the driver.

Customers interested in experiencing the GS3 turbocharged SUV are invited to visit their nearest GAC Motor showroom.

In Oman, GAC Motor vehicles are distributed by New World Autos and backed by Saud Bahwan Group. For more information, please visit www.gacmotoroman.com or [www.youtube.com/GAC Motor Oman](http://www.youtube.com/GACMotorOman) or [www.facebook.com/GAC Motor Oman](http://www.facebook.com/GACMotorOman) or [instagram.com/GAC Motor Oman/](http://www.instagram.com/GACMotorOman/).

For further details, & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit the GAC Motor showroom at Wattayah, Seeb and Nizwa.

Meethaq Sharia Supervisory Board appoints Chairman, Deputy Chairman

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat held its first Sharia Supervisory Board meeting for 2022 at the bank's Head Office in Seeb recently. The meeting began with a welcome for the new Sharia Supervisory Board members, who include Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Mubarak al Abri, Shaikh Dr Akram Laldin, Shaikh Dr Abdul Aziz al Qassar, Shaikh Waleed al Qurri and Shaikh Dr Ahmed Rufai.

The Sharia Board members approved the appointment of Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Mubarak al Abri as Chairman and Shaikh Dr Akram Laldin as Deputy Chairman of Meethaq's Sharia Supervisory Board respectively.

In addition, the Sharia Board members also appointed Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Mubarak al Abri and Shaikh Waleed al Qurri to the Executive Sharia Committee of the Board. Other matters discussed by the Meethaq Sharia Supervisory



Shaikh Dr Abdullah al Abri

Board included the approving of a framework mechanism for seeking Sharia Supervisory Board reviews and resolutions, as well as the reviewing of a number of proposals for transactions by the bank.

Meethaq thanked Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Mubarak al Abri and all the members for their valuable efforts and contributions to developing Islamic Banking in the Sultanate of Oman. The bank noted that regular meetings of the Board are very important since it

provides sound legal opinion for the transactions, agreements and contracts made across its business activities.

Meethaq Islamic Banking provides Sharia-compliant banking services under the supervision of Sharia Supervisory Board and in line with the regulations for Islamic banks issued by the Central Bank of Oman.

The Sharia Supervisory Board consists of scholars who are well-known for their knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence, especially the jurisprudence of transactions and contemporary economy.

Their responsibilities includes reviewing and approving products, services, activities, investments, operations and transactions before their implementation, in addition to auditing them through the internal Sharia audit department to ensure their integrity in

accordance with the legal aspects specified in the decisions and fatwas of the Board.

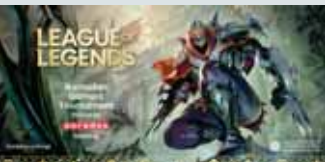
With close to 30 per cent market share of the total Islamic banking assets, Meethaq once again demonstrated its leadership in the Sultanate of Oman's Islamic Banking sector with its Islamic financing receivables reaching RO 1.4 billion and customer deposits growing close to RO 1.2 billion as at December 31, 2021.

Meethaq's Total Asset base stood at about RO 1.63 billion at the end of 2021. It must also be noted that Meethaq's excellent customer-centric vision and strong commitment to offer a world-class Islamic banking experience has won it several accolades in the past including being chosen as Oman's Most Trusted Brand (Islamic Banking) 2021 as well as securing multiple industry awards from Islamic Finance News (IFN).

Ooredoo launches League of Legends tournament

MUSCAT: Gamers, Ooredoo has you covered this Ramadhan with the second online League of Legends tournament. Backed by Ooredoo's fantastic network, see the virtual world come to life in real-time and experience the thrill of high-speed capabilities and fastest reaction times of Ooredoo's Home Internet plans. Start building your team to take on the best players from across the country and compete for the grand prize of RO 1,000 on offer for the winner. Cash prizes are also available to the runner up and third place.

Ooredoo's Home Internet allows subscribers to stream and download everything they need, including the latest TV shows, movies, music and games, while being able to work and study with multiple



devices connected at the same time and no interruptions. Combining speed, simplicity, and value, Ooredoo offers customers a variety of plans to suit their needs.

Users can now order Home Internet simply by messaging WhatsApp on 95103000, sharing their house location and Civil ID/Residence ID, or by calling 1514. The games begin on April 8, 2022 and the tournament runs until 15 April 2022. To find out more about the tournament, please visit Ooredoo's Instagram page: www.instagram.com/ooredooman.



CI revises OAB's outlook to stable from negative

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has announced that the international credit rating agency, 'Capital Intelligence' (CI), has revised the outlook for its Long-Term Foreign Currency Rating (LT FCR) and Bank Standalone Rating (BSR) to Stable from Negative.

The recent revision comes in the wake of the amendment of the Sultanate of Oman's sovereign credit rating to Stable from Negative. The agency also affirmed the bank's Long-Term (LT FCR) and Short-Term Foreign Currency Ratings (ST FCR) at 'BB' and 'B' respectively.

The revision of Oman's LT FCR Outlook by the agency to Stable



THE REVISION OF OMAN'S LT FCR OUTLOOK BY THE AGENCY TO STABLE REFLECTS THE ONGOING STRENGTHENING OF THE SULTANATE'S PUBLIC FINANCES AND EXTERNAL BALANCES, AS WELL AS IMPROVING GOVERNMENT DEBT METRICS DUE TO THE RECENT RISE IN OIL PRICES.

reflects the ongoing strengthening of the Sultanate's public finances and external balances, as well as improving government debt metrics due to the recent rise in oil prices.

Commenting on the result of this report, Rashad al Zubair, Chairman of Oman Arab Bank said, "The improvement of the macroeconomic environment of

the Sultanate, and its reflection on the banking sector, which showed high efficiency in managing the last stage, led to the revision of the outlook by the agency. The report emphasised that the credit rating of Oman Arab Bank is based on its strong deposits, good loans and high capital adequacy ratios after issuing perpetual bonds during the past year."

He added, "We are confident that this report will reflect positively on the financial position of the bank and we, in turn, will continue to diversify our activities and strengthen our financial position by following a prudent and focused approach to risk management, as we look forward to further development and growth in all areas."

Baltic states stop Russian gas imports

RIGA: The head of Latvia's natural gas storage operator said on Saturday the Baltic states were no longer importing Russian natural gas. "If there were still any doubts about whether there may be any trust in deliveries from Russia, current events clearly show us that there is no more trust," said Uldis Bariss, CEO of Conexus Baltic Grid.

"Since April 1st Russian natural gas is no longer flowing to Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania," he told Latvian radio. He added that the Baltic market was currently being served by gas reserves stored underground in Latvia. The move comes as Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought to leverage Russia's status as an energy power.

With his economy crippled by unprecedented international sanctions, Putin warned EU members that they would need to set up ruble accounts to pay for Russian gas. He said on Thursday that existing contracts would be halted if the payments were not made.

While the United States banned the import of Russian oil and gas, the European Union — which received around 40 per cent of its gas supplies from Russia in 2021 — has retained deliveries from Moscow. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda called on the rest of the EU to follow the Baltic example.

"From this month on — no more Russian gas in Lithuania.

Years ago my country made decisions that today allow us with no pain to break energy ties with the aggressor," he said on Twitter. — **AFP**

US Energy Department issues notice of record sale of oil from reserve

WASHINGTON: The US Energy Department formally outlined a sale of oil from emergency reserves, after President Joe Biden announced the largest release ever in an effort to push down fuel prices that have soared during Russia's war with Ukraine.

Up to 1 million barrels of oil a day will be sold from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve for six months starting in May. Biden said the release, the third in the past six months, will serve as a bridge until domestic producers can boost output and bring supply back into balance with demand.

Last month Biden banned US imports from Russia, which produces about 10 per cent of the world's oil. The first 90 million barrels of SPR oil will be sold between May and July, including 20 million barrels that had already been scheduled to get to market in May. The another 90 million barrels will



Crude oil storage tanks are seen in an aerial photograph at the Cushing oil hub in Oklahoma. — **Reuters**

be released between August and October, the Energy Department said.

The SPR, which currently contains about 568.3 million barrels, the lowest since about May 2002, is held in four sites along coastal Texas and Louisiana. Up to 38.5 million barrels will be sold through July from the two Texas sites, and up to 31.5 million barrels will be sold from the two Louisiana sites. Proceeds from the sale will be used to refill the reserve at a later date, the White House has said.

— **Reuters**

Tesla delivers over one million electric cars over past year

NEW YORK: US electric car manufacturer Tesla shipped a record number of more than one million cars over the past year, according to figures published on Saturday.

The company delivered 1.06 million cars from April 2021 to March 2022, including more than 310,000 cars in the first quarter of this year alone, which is 67 per cent higher than over the same period last year.

Still, the figure fell short of analysts' expectations of 317,000 cars, according to data compiled by FactSet. Deliveries are considered similar to sales figures published by other manufacturers.

Growth, however, slowed sharply in recent months for the Austin, Texas-based company, with deliveries rising a minuscule 0.4 per cent since the fourth quarter of last year. The number of vehicles produced is also slightly down against the previous quarter (-0.1 per cent).

"This was an exceptionally difficult quarter due to supply



Tesla CEO Elon Musk dances onstage during a delivery event for Tesla China-made Model 3 cars in Shanghai, in this file photo. — **AFP**

chain interruptions & China zero-Covid policy," Tesla CEO Elon Musk said on Twitter, referring to China's strict health restrictions.

"Outstanding work by Tesla team & key suppliers saved the day." However, Tesla is still faring better than its competitors, with the entire automobile industry affected by supply chains snarls.

Toyota saw its sales in North

America fall 23.5 per cent in volume in the first quarter of 2022, compared to the same period last year, and 26.3 per cent in value.

General Motors earned a profit of \$1.7 billion for the quarter ending December 31, down 38.7 per cent from the final three months of 2020 as revenues dropped 10.5 per cent to \$33.6 billion. — **AFP**

UK may build seven nuclear plants by 2050

LONDON: Britain could build up to seven new nuclear power plants by 2050, as well as boost offshore wind to diversify energy sources, a senior minister said on Sunday. "If we fast forward to 2050, there is a world where we have six or seven (nuclear) sites in the UK," Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng told The Sunday Telegraph.

"That isn't going to happen in the next two years. But it's definitely something that we can aspire to." Britain has set itself a target of carbon neutrality by 2050 and the government is expected to publish a delayed new energy security strategy next week. This comes as many British people are struggling to pay energy bills amid a cost of living crisis.

Kwarteng said the strategy "looks at offshore wind, and particularly nuclear, as ways in which we can actually have electricity-generating capacity



Hinkley Point C nuclear power station site is seen near Bridgwater in Britain. — **Reuters**

here in the UK".

About 21 per cent of Britain's electricity comes from 15 nuclear reactors today, according to Energy UK trade association.

Kwarteng and transport minister Grant Shapps downplayed prospects of building more onshore wind turbines, however, citing public opposition, "In

relation to onshore wind and fracking, we can only do those with a large measure of community consent," Kwarteng said.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps told Sky News: "I don't favour the vast increase in onshore wind farms, for pretty obvious reasons".

"They sit on the hills there and can create something of an eyesore for communities as well as actual problems of noise as well." While the UK is less dependent on Russian energy than other European countries such as Germany, Kwarteng cited the need to avoid such imports.

"The idea is that, given what (Russian President Vladimir) Putin is doing, we don't want to live in a world where we're dependent on Russian hydrocarbons," he said. "The fact is we're not, but we want to have more independence of supply."

"None of our petrol is from Russia, about 18 per cent of our diesel is," Shapps said. Britain plans to phase out Russian oil imports by the end of the year. — **AFP**

'Always put your client first'



CHARLES SHAW

Tejarah Talks

BUSINESS STORIES ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER

We sat down with Sir Charles Shaw, CEO, Bondi and Tejarah Talks panellist to talk post-Covid corporate culture, risk taking, openness and transparency, prioritising employee well-being and more.

When you think of post-Covid-19 workplace culture, what descriptions come to mind?

Workplace culture is the cornerstone of any successful company. Regardless of the prevailing business environment, culture led by a strong set of values will always stand the test of time.

With the advent of the pandemic, management right across Oman realised they had to change tack. In fact, Covid -19 has altered Oman's business landscape, possibly forever.

As a result, we have seen companies embed their corporate culture into every part of the business, from staff hiring and on-boarding to continuing professional development. Business leaders in every sector are also promoting openness and transparency and it is this open and flexible corporate culture that is allowing employees up and down Oman to thrive.

Would you agree that culture is central to growth, profit and innovation?

Profit is a product of corporate values. Profit is the way clients say thank you to a company for doing a good job. This is achieved by living a culture that courses through the veins of the business and where focus is firmly fixed on staff, clients, innovation and financial prudence.

Although the culture needs to be explicitly and regularly communicated by management, the



values also need to be embedded and woven into every single policy that drives the business forward.

What three corporate values should every start-up have?

Building on what I mentioned earlier, the fewer values a company has, the easier it is for all involved to live and breathe them. The five values that stand out for me are:

- Client-centric – always put the client first.
- Employee focus – recruit and retain people who are the right fit for your culture. A person's first week on the job is hugely important in the context of culture. It is their first impression and one that tends to be lasting and difficult to change. Bear that in mind.
- Innovation – embrace change. Be fearless. If you want your staff to take risks, you need to ensure management leads by example.

- Financial prudence – conservative financial management in all business circumstances.
- Principled – pay attention to sustainability, climate change, ethics and corporate social responsibility.

As the pandemic eases and the recovery starts, leaders are assessing how their culture responded. Overall, how would you say Omani businesses have fared?

Alt is probably still too early to gauge. However, companies that survived the pandemic will have learnt huge lessons, and in many cases, which learning curve will have been vertical.

Smart management teams are engaging with staff and getting feedback on the policies introduced during the pandemic – looking to see what worked and jettisoning old-fashioned policies that were

unsuccessful. This kind of approach generates new ideas, provides a fresh perspective on company values and positively impacts performance, productivity and profitability.

Environments where people work in silos and are not encouraged to step forward and give their opinion, do not nurture creativity or innovation.

Transparent management-employee dialogue is what is helping businesses right across Oman survive and thrive in the post-Covid era.

What would you say are some of the more subtle cultural changes companies have undergone because of the pandemic?

It was clear from last week's Tejarah Talks that local businesses understand that as a result of the pandemic large-scale shifts have altered how people work and how business is done. Going forward,

a few of the changes I expect to see include more remote working, adjusted hours of operation and greater childcare provisions.

Indeed, companies will be prioritising employee engagement and well-being – treating them as people first and workers second. Companies will be streamlining roles, supply chains and workflows to increase efficiency.

They will also be looking to increase their resilience, agility and flexibility as well as improve communications.

Have any cultural elements been suppressed during the pandemic which need reintroducing?

Working as a team to reignite the esprit de corps that most staff enjoyed pre-pandemic. Face-to-face relationships with all stakeholders. Inclusivity, especially as Omani companies embark on new post-Covid strategies.

PROFIT IS A PRODUCT OF CORPORATE VALUES. PROFIT IS THE WAY CLIENTS SAY THANK YOU TO A COMPANY FOR DOING A GOOD JOB. THIS IS ACHIEVED BY LIVING A CULTURE THAT COURSES THROUGH THE VEINS OF THE BUSINESS AND WHERE FOCUS IS FIRMLY FIXED ON STAFF, CLIENTS, INNOVATION AND FINANCIAL PRUDENCE.

Russia is finished as a major energy power



SIMON JOHNSON

The writer, a former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund, is a professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management and a co-chair of the Covid-19 Policy Alliance.



OLEG USTENKO

The writer has been economic adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky since May 2019.

Russia looms large in world energy markets. It supplies 40 per cent of the gas consumed in the European Union, and this is a particularly important economic issue for Germany, Italy, and Austria. But Russia's global energy footprint is largely about oil.

It is the second-largest exporter of crude, behind only Saudi Arabia, averaging about 5 million barrels per day. Russia also exports some 2.85 million barrels of refined products, such as diesel and aviation fuel.

These fossil-fuel exports have enabled Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its extreme violence against unarmed civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Russian President Vladimir Putin apparently believes that no one can stand up to him because of the naked power that he can exert through energy markets. If the Europeans resist too much, he will cut off their gas. If the rest of the world cuts back on their purchases from Russia, the price of oil will rise - causing economic difficulties everywhere.

But Putin underestimated the horror and fear that his invasion would create, particularly in Europe. Even worse for him, the United States, Europe, and their allies have all the tools needed to end Russia's energy leverage.



Importers around the world are shunning Russian oil and gas. Europe, certainly, will never again risk its national security on Russian energy imports. Consequently, Russia will soon be finished as a major player in world energy markets.

Putin's war of aggression has killed thousands of civilians and displaced about 10 million, including more than 4 million who have fled the country.

With Russian forces repeatedly shelling and firing missiles at civilian areas, 13 million Ukrainians are at risk of bombardment. In Mariupol and elsewhere, Putin's forces have

targeted buildings where civilians were sheltering, even where the word "children" was clearly marked or a red cross was painted on the roof. In the eyes of the world, these are war crimes, pure and simple.

Nowhere is the shock and revulsion felt as intensely as in Europe. The entire EU has come together, taking in millions of Ukrainian refugees and seeking to help Ukraine in as many other ways as possible. Every atrocity committed by Russian forces generates more support for Ukraine among European leaders and publics alike.

Some EU countries are already

de facto boycotting Russian oil. According to TankerTrackers.com, in February, Denmark imported just over 7.5 million barrels of crude oil from Russia by ship. But in the first 27 days of March, Denmark imported no Russian crude whatsoever.

Sweden, Finland, and other countries also reported big declines in Russian crude imported by tanker. And there are increasing signs that Germany and other countries will step up to lead a full and immediate embargo on imports of Russian oil by tanker into the EU.

There is also discussion of

paying for Russian gas and pipeline oil into escrow accounts that are effectively frozen - to ensure the euro proceeds cannot be used by Russia to buy weapons anywhere in the world.

Putin attempted to get ahead of this development by demanding payment for gas only in roubles, but the EU has rebuffed this as a breach of contract. Germany and Austria are preparing to ration the use of gas.

Putin and some energy traders apparently think that it will be easy for Russia to switch from European oil deliveries to Asian markets. But they seem to have forgotten a key lesson of the Iran oil sanctions.

Should the US, the EU, the United Kingdom, and Norway implement sanctions that prohibit all forms of maritime insurance for tankers carrying Russian oil and refined products, most of the world's tanker fleets would withdraw from the Russian market.

The Russians have their own tankers, of course, but their fleet is too small to move more than about 1 million barrels per day, particularly because a lot of the crude would need to be hauled from Murmansk, the Baltic Sea, or the Black Sea all the way to Asia.

Russian fossil fuels are funding an awful war. The killing must stop. And the world must learn to live without Russian energy products.

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Classifieds



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Iftar buffets continue to be a trend this Ramadhan

By Yeru Ebuén

Iftar is one of the highly anticipated meals during Ramadhan. After a long day of fasting, believers look forward to their first meal of the day with anticipation which is why food joints across the Sultanate of Oman had created special buffet menus to capitalise on the dining needs of Oman's residents. While the majority of Omanis still prefer the first few days of Ramadhan iftars to be spent with families at home, other Muslims and a growing number of the local population particularly those working in Muscat and far from their families head out to restaurants to avoid the inconvenience of having to exert so much effort in preparing a meal especially when one is already tired from the day's work.

An expat food critic shared that just like the previous years and now that people are freer to dine at different food joints, the iftar and suhoor buffets definitely will be one of the best trends that people are looking forward to with many online forums already busy collecting information of the best offers avail-

able across Oman.

"If you go through different online platforms, particularly those centred on food, you would notice that businesses are given spaces for them to post their promotional offers. From the buyer's perspective, they wanted a good meal at an affordable rate so whoever provides the friendliest price with the most food diversity will definitely become an instant favourite," the food critic noted.

For the low and mid-price ranges, people are open to paying between 4 to 8 RO for a good iftar buffet spread.

"This price range already provides you with the basics, from salads and starters to maybe about four or five mains, and a good selection of desserts and juices. Of course, laban and dates which are essential in breaking the fast are mandatory," the food critic shared.

A LUSH SPREAD FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

Over the weekend, several high-end restaurants and hotels had already offered a media preview of their lavish offerings.

The Layali Ramadhan (or Nights of

Ramadhan) by Al Bustan Palace was a tour around the world offering a good mix of Arabic including Asian, Mediterranean and Intercontinental dishes.

"But we are taking it one notch higher. We are looking into utilising the gardens and putting out stalls where there will be different activities for adults and kids alike. Other than the food, we wanted it to be a memorable Ramadhan experience which is so much deserved after the couple of years' subtle celebration," the team shared.

"What we are doing here is combining stunning natural surroundings and lavish interiors. The palatial resort is the perfect setting for making magical memories. Guests can indulge in a traditional iftar, breaking fast in festive style and ease into the early morning hours with a leisurely Suhoor by the shore. From delectable menus to entertaining events, Ritz Kids fun and night-time glitter, the joyful season is always a grand affair at the palace," the Al Bustan team added.

For Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, Marketing and Communications Director Sarah Khaled revealed that

they have multiple options for their guests to choose from – the options speak highly of the amount of detail they put into preparing for this year's offerings.

"We have a sumptuous iftar buffet at Al Tanoor where we feature a host of Omani, regional and international dishes paired with refreshing Ramadhan juices. We are topping this off with live entertainment and since kids are an important part of the celebration, we also have a special kid's corner for them to enjoy," she shared.

"We also have Layalina Tent and Lounge where guests can enjoy delicious dishes from the ala carte Suhoor menu. For those who want to spend it with their families at home, we introduced the Ramadhan at Home menu where guests can enjoy a selection of hot and cold mezze including Omani lamb shuwa, lamb ouzi, Persian grill, saffron turkey biryani among others," she added.

In Salalah, Alila Hinu Bay is focusing the celebration on their Friday iftar offering.

"In the spirit of the Holy Month, Alila Hinu Bay's iftar offering has been specially curated for family-

style dining, embracing culture and togetherness with sharing plates and mezzes. Guests may commence the breaking of fast with Alila's signature beverages and refreshing Laban, followed by an array of cold and hot appetisers such as a Sambousek, Mini Pani Puri, Pakora, Mixed Arabic Mezzes and an Oriental Soup," the team shared.

They added, "Embracing the beautiful sunset and relaxing into a blissful evening, guests will be served a selection of decadent mains which will include, a signature Salalah Mutton Kabuli Rice with Dakkhous Sauce, a Chicken Liver with Pomegranate Molasses and a succulent Mirbat Fish topped with traditional and contemporary herbs, as well as fresh local Mussels."

Finally, "To end on a sweet note, Alila Hinu Bay promises delicious luxury with an Almond and Saffron Umm Ali, a creamy Rose Mahalabia, a deep Chocolate Coconut Luqaimat, Aish Al Saraya, or Fresh Fruits and Ice Cream, as well as the famous Kunafa. Embark on a harmonious journey this Ramadhan and create special memories with family and friends at Alila Hinu Bay."

QURAN

VERSE OF THE DAY

We have given you plenty. So pray to your Lord and sacrifice. He who hates you is the loser.

(al Kawthar)



HIS EMINENCE
SHAIKH AHMED
BIN HAMAD AL KHALILI
GRAND MUFTI OF OMAN

FATWA

QUESTION:
Q: If someone wants to smell roses or flowers during days of Ramadhan, can he?

ANSWER:
Yes, he can.

HADITH

A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Tamim al-Dari reported:

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: Verily, the religion is sincerity. We said, "To whom?"

The Prophet said: To Allah, His book, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims, and their common people.

Today's

Recipe



AFGHANI CHOPS

0

Afghan cuisine less ingredients awesome taste...Soft tender afgani chops, with few ingredients these chops have awesome flavors in them, just give them enough marination time and you will get them perfect.

0

INGREDIENTS

- lamb chops 500 g
- ginger garlic paste 1 tbsp heaped
- cinnamon powder (darchini) 1/2 tsp
- salt 1 tsp
- crushed black pepper 1 tsp
- white vinegar 2 tbsp
- oil 3-4 tbsp
- papaya paste 2 tbsp (I use meat tenderizer powder 1 tsp heaped)

STEPS

1. Add all above ingredients in a bowl.
2. Marinate it for 7-8 hours, this way it will get perfect taste.
3. Thread them in skewers.
4. Bake them on 175 C for 25-30 minutes...turn them after 15 minutes so they can bake equally both sides...or you can also grill them or cook them in a pan.
5. In a chopper, finely chop 2 garlic cloves, 1 tsp whole cumin, 5-6 mint leaves, and 1 green chili with 1/4 cup water.
6. Add 250g yogurt and mix well with 1/4 tsp salt—your dip is ready

• Enjoy your chicken chops

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CULTURE

Looted Libyan artefacts returned by US



LIBYAN AUTHORITIES said on Thursday they had received nine ancient artefacts including funerary stone heads, urns and pottery that were returned by the United States after being smuggled out of the North African country.

All the pieces had been illegally excavated and shipped to the United States, but they were identified by archaeologists working with the Manhattan District Attorney's office in New York and have been returned to the Museum of Libya in Tripoli.

"They were not stolen from museums and were not recorded with us," said Libyan government antiquities department head Muhammad Faraj Muhammad.

"But because they are of a distinctive style, the retrieval process was rather simple," he added.

The grandest pieces returned to Libya were the four funerary heads, marble busts including one whose sculptor had added a delicate stone veil that seemed to flow across the face.

The pottery included patterned jars. All the pieces are now in the museum located in the central Tripoli palace of King Idris, who was ousted in 1969, and which has been closed to the public since the 2011 uprising.

Once a major province of the Roman empire and home to spectacular coastal ruins, Libya has a wealth of archaeological sites and its museums boasted an array of ancient treasures.

However, during the years of chaos that have followed the 2011 Nato-backed uprising some of its museums were looted and numerous sites were pillaged by treasure hunters digging in the ground.

After major antiquities looting following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and in Syria during the war after its own 2011 uprising, militant groups raised money by trading in antiquities, drawing greater involvement from police.

"The process to return cultural antiquities is incredibly complex. It requires massive partnership. In this case, there was a partnership with the US authorities," said Antonia Marie de Meo, the director of the UN's interregional crime and justice research institute. — Reuters

TRAVEL TALES

Kuwaiti mountaineer becomes the youngest to climb world's Seven Volcanic Summits



HE TOOK UP exercise seriously almost all his life, but mountaineer Yousef al Refaie has taken it to the next level setting a Guinness World Records title for being the Youngest person to climb the Seven Volcanic Summits at 24 years and 119 days.

Al Refaie is not only 24 but he is also the 24th globally to climb each continent's tallest volcano. Notoriety is not the key component here as ascending the seven calderas is a very rare achievement, so becoming the youngest person to complete the circuit is even rarer feat.

"You came from the desert, I wouldn't think you will be able climb the highest mountains" is what kept pushing him towards his goal that started as a normal tourist trip on December 30, 2015 to Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

The Volcanic Seven Summits is a relatively young circuit, however, the multicontinental project still never be easy, especially for a person who was born in 1997. The volcanoes were climbed in the following order - Kilimanjaro (December 30, 2015) - Elbrus (July 18, 2017) - Giluwe (July 21, 2018) - Pico de Orizaba (January 6, 2019) - Damavand (August 11, 2019) - Ojos Del Salado (January 15, 2020) - Sidley (December 22, 2021).

Speaking with Guinness World Records, Al Refaie described the difficulty of ascending Mount Sidley at

4,285m, a dormant volcano in Antarctica's Marie Byrd Land. He shared other than the physical distance, they also would have to carry heavy loads to get to the summit.

Al Refaie previously attempted the world record of the Fastest time to climb the highest points in all Arabian Peninsula countries, but similar to many other applicants, he was not allowed into Yemen to complete the feat.

Marie Byrd Land is one of the largest uninhabited areas in the world, and it does not have basis or camps, so reaching to the highest volcano in such area was the toughest among all other summits. It costed Al Refaie and his friends around US 60,000 to mount this summit.

"With a cost of around US 60,000, and eight other people on my side, I was able to complete the Sidley mount. We were able to see sunlight, but the temperature was around -35°C," he added.

Each team member was carrying their own food, and eating at least three times a day, yet still constantly losing weight. "We carried 27 meals each for this trip. Food alone was about 10kg in total. It was mainly dehydrated meals that are high in calories."

It took the team seven hours to push from their camp at 3,000m to the crest of the caldera. Of course, not all the ascending missions costs the same, and the range is never

consistent. For instance, reaching Mount Damavand in Iran costed no more than US 1,000, while the others costed almost everything between US 2,000 and 10,000.

"Planning is a key. Everyone one was assigned for a mission, some are dedicated for digging, while others for tasks like cooking and camping. You need very disciplined people around you to complete this trip."

Inspired by Mohammed Burbayea, the Guinness World Records title holder for the Most IJSBA World Championship wins (male), Youssef is willing to take a next challenge in November crossing the largest deserts in the world, starting with the Empty Quarter in the region. "I am thinking of crossing The Empty Quarter through a new route."

Two other summiters have reportedly completed the relatively young circuit in January 2022 following Al Refaie's achievement, bringing the total to 26 mountaineers, yet the Kuwaiti national is still youngest to do it.

"When I first asked my mom for the Guinness World Records Book as a kid, she told me she would only buy it if I had something amazing to make my way into it. I really don't know if she meant it that time, but here we are living the dream. My message to those who try and fail, get inspired by people who did it before and never give up. Amazing will find its way to you one way or another."

ENTERTAINMENT

Stars roll dice for Grammys gold as Vegas hosts music's best

THE MUSIC WORLD'S A-listers will hit Las Vegas on Sunday for the Grammy Awards, where pop's chart-toppers along with jazzman Jon Batiste will compete for the industry's most coveted trophies.

The US gambling capital is hosting the ceremony for the first time ever, after organisers postponed the original January 31 event over a surge in Covid-19 cases and then moved it out of Los Angeles.

The timing of the Grammys just one week after Will Smith stunned the world by slapping Chris Rock on stage at the Oscars adds an extra layer of unpredictability to what is already usually one of the more bizarre nights on the showbiz awards circuit.

Justin Bieber will vie for eight trophies at the ceremony hosted by late night television personality Trevor Noah, as will R&B favourite H.E.R. and singer-rapper Doja Cat.

Grammys darling Billie Eilish is in the running for seven prizes. The same holds true for Olivia Rodrigo, a former Disney channel actress who exploded onto the pop scene last year with her breakout smash hit "drivers license."

The 19-year-old Rodrigo landed expected nods for her much-touted debut album "Sour," and is a near shoo-in for the Best New Artist prize -- she is up against Eilish's brother Finneas, rapper Saweetie and experimental pop act Japanese Breakfast, among others.

Like Eilish in 2020, Rodrigo has the opportunity to sweep the top four categories on the same night, which would make her only the third artist to do so. The first was singer-songwriter Christopher Cross.

But it is Jon Batiste -- the jazz and R&B artist and bandleader, who won an Oscar last year for his soundtrack to the Pixar animated movie "Soul" -- who has the most chances at Grammys gold, snagging 11 nominations including in two top categories.

The artist born into a prominent New Orleans musical dynasty will compete mainly on the strength of his album "We Are" and its rousing single "Freedom."

The sleeper nominations leader is up for awards in fields spanning genre and medium, including R&B, jazz, American roots and contemporary classical, along with nods for Best Music Video and his composition work on "Soul."

He appeared briefly on the red carpet at a pre-Grammy gala on Friday, hamming it up for

photographers before telling AFP he was feeling "great" ahead of Sunday's awards.

"I'm so happy," he said with a loud whoop. "My granddad came to town!"

RECOGNITION ACROSS THE BOARD

The Grammys field is wide open -- especially after the Recording Academy expanded

the top four categories yet again, this time to include 10 nominees, in a bid to improve diversity.

"I guess in this instance, expansion of the categories does mean more women, more marginalised people getting recognised," said Brandi Carlile, who is up this year for five gramophones.

"Some things improve in certain areas, they slip in other places," she told AFP, but added: "I'm watching it change and evolve and get better every year, and I'm heartened by it."

The expansion has also resulted in one of the most eclectic crops of Best New Artist nominees in recent memory, even if Rodrigo is widely tipped to win.

"Pop just has a bigger footprint, but I love that they're diving into other genres," country singer Jimmie Allen, a nominee in the category, told AFP.

"Win or lose, I'm just happy to be nominated."

Angeliqe Kidjo, who has four past Grammys under her belt and has three chances to win this year in the global performance categories, said the Recording Academy had made strides in recent years but that there was a "long road" ahead.

"It's a work in progress," she told AFP. "There's goodwill on their part. How do we bring that into action?"

Among Sunday's presenters will be folk icon Joni Mitchell, who was honoured at a moving tribute gala on Friday. — AFP





The dome rooms of Bidiya allow for a million-stars experience in the desert

By Erin Coyle

There's something about the desert that allows one to forget about problems and stress. When thinking about staying in the desert, tents and sleeping bags may come to mind. However, a new camping style allows for a million-stars experience in Bidiya.

Starry Domes Desert Camp features dome-shaped rooms complete with a bathroom and shower, a king bed and two chairs to enjoy the sunrise in the morning. You do not even have to leave the room to watch the sunrise; open the curtain, and it is right in front of you. The outside of the dome has two lounge chairs, a small table with two chairs, and a sitting area on the sand with cushions and a small white net on either side of two sticks that make this look like a teepee.

There is a wooden swing to relax on. There's also a traditional wooden door next to a reflection mirror for picture lovers. Do not miss a chance to take a picture in front of the mirror. Sunrise is the best time because of the lighting. The reflection plus the golden colour sand with a hint of yellow coming from the sun makes for a nice shot.

Guests can order dinner and breakfast on-site for a small fee, or bringing your food is also an option. Dinner can be grilled chicken and bbq meat with salad and hummus. The breakfast menu includes a choice of french toast, fava beans, eggs, pita bread and croissants.

The best time to arrive is late afternoon. Take in the red and beige sand ripples and climb up a small hill to appreciate the sunset. The domes have lights around the sitting areas when it gets dark, making this another chance for good pictures. There is also a zipline, so make sure to try it when you come.

Salim bin Mohammed al Hajri, the owner, has thought of everything for guests to feel at ease. The rooms also have ACs, hot water and heaters when it gets cold. There are even toiletries in the bathroom. He said he wanted to make these domes so visitors could have a five-star stay in the desert while feeling very comfortable and relaxed. He has provided a unique experience and makes guests feel at home.

It is so peaceful looking at the stars at night while sitting in a lounge chair outside. I recommend bring-

ing cards or any game for night-time. The rooms also have chips and biscuits, but getting extra snacks is good.

The Mars and Venus rooms currently hold two people, while the Jupiter room has a small jacuzzi. A small camping mattress is also an option for an additional person to share the space. The domes are about 100 metres from each other, feeling like you have the place to yourself.

A four-wheel drive is needed. However, guests can be picked up in Bidiya and taken to the site for an additional fee. Choose the desert crossing option so the driver can take you up and down the dunes. Have cameras ready to take some pictures of camels.

The rooms sell out quickly, so book as soon as possible. Weekend prices are RO 70 for Mars and Venus, while Jupiter costs RO 90. Transportation is RO 25 for the desert crossing option or RO 20 without the crossing. Check Instagram @starry_domes for booking and other information.

It is worth visiting and staying at this site. For those wanting a desert experience without the hassle of having to bring camping gear, make sure to check this out. It has all the amenities while still providing the chance of a magical night in the desert that allows for all worries to go away.

