

New paid parking zones delayed

Muscat Municipality has postponed the activation of paid parking zones in some areas of Muscat. The new paid parking zones were to be implemented from March 6. The areas to be covered include some of the busiest commercial areas of the capital such as the parking spaces around the new Al Khoudh Market, behind Ooredoo Store, Sultan Qaboos Mosque in Ruwi and Sultan Qaboos Street in Al Khuwair South.



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CRICKET'S
ULTIMATE
SHOWMAN



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BLUE AMMONIA
FROM MINERALISATION
IN WORLD FIRST



P20

AL RAWAHI... AN
INTERNATIONAL RALLY
RACER TO-BE



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY SAUDI KING

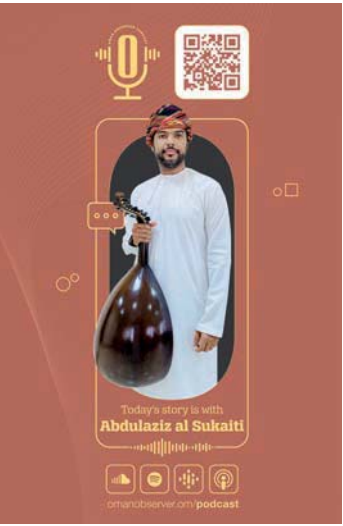
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable to him on the occasion of the Founding Day. In his cable, King Salman expressed his utmost appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's sincere sentiments and prayers. He also wished His Majesty good health and happiness and the Omani people further progress and prosperity.

— ONA

RNO BEGINS DRILL SHARP DAGGER

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) on Sunday began implementing a naval drill 'Sharp Dagger' at Al Batinah naval site. The drill is conducted with participation of navies friendly countries and assistance of the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) jets. The drill lasts till March 10.

DETAILS ON P2



INSIDE



SOUTH KOREATO PICK
NEW PRESIDENT

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WILL UKRAINE'S TRAGEDY
SPUR UN REFORM?

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SEARCH AND RESCUE DRILL IN QATAR



A force from the National Search and Rescue Team of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), headed to the sisterly State of Qatar to take part in a joint exercise with Qatar International Search and Rescue Group. The drill is part of the training and operational plans conducted by CDAA with international search and rescue teams to upgrade readiness and efficiency required for dealing with emergency cases.

Crowdfunding allowed only in selected sectors, says CMA

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Non-profit organisations of societies are not allowed to go for crowdfunding as per the law and only selected categories can seek funds on crowdfunding platforms, according to the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

Article 5 of the CMA Regulatory Act has clearly prohibited three categories from crowdfunding and violation of the rule is a clear breach of law which invites legal action, a senior executive has said.

“Three entities are prohibited from raising funds through crowdfunding platform and they are non-profit organisations of societies, public joint stock companies SAOG and companies



and enterprises with no specific business plans,” said Musab bin Mohammed al Lawati, Director of Supervision and Compliance, which supervises the regulation of crowdfunding activity.

Speaking to the *Observer* on the sidelines of the workshop on ‘Regulatory Frameworks of Crowdfunding Platforms, Regional and International

Experiences’ organised by the Arab Monetary Fund from March 2 to 3, Musab said the workshop is aimed at highlighting the realities and prospects of crowdfunding platforms in the Arab world and to exchange expertise related to the regulatory frameworks of crowdfunding platforms based on best regional and global practices through working papers presented by specialist and researchers from the member countries.

Crowdfunding is a window for entrepreneurs and innovators for financing from donors or investors to support their projects through electronic platform which enables the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to get financing.

BAN ON COLLECTION OF METAL SCRAP

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 6

The office of the Minister of State and Governor of Muscat Governorate, banned collection and dealing of scrap metal unless after obtaining a license.

As per the new regulations, scrap metal collectors and dealers should practice the activity within the industrial areas in Muscat Governorate after obtaining license from the relevant authority.

Scrap metal collectors and dealers are not permitted to concede the license to another person nor are they allowed to practice the activity outside the designated area or in residential quarters.

The regulations also criminalise dealing in scrap metal coming from unknown sources.

The decision is taken in view of recurring and persistent complaints regarding scrap collecting vehicles and to address public concerns.

Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, issued a ministerial decision regulating the practice of scrap collection and handling activity in the governorate.

POLLUTION

Previously, scrap collecting vehicles used to ply in various residential neighbourhoods in most governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, a phenomenon which has brought lot of problems to the residents due to the noise made by these vehicles.

Scrap metal collectors and dealers are not permitted to concede the license to another person nor are they allowed to practice the activity outside the designated area or in residential quarters

MINISTRY'S DECISION

In addition to this, the environmental pollution of these vehicles, forced many citizens and residents to complain to the authorities concerned regarding these vehicles and sought to find a solution to this issue. This has resulted in the issuance of a regulation regulating the practice of scrap collection and handling activity in Muscat Governorate. The scrap collecting and handling licenses will be cancelled in the event of a repeat violation of vehicle movement in residential neighbourhoods and a fine of RO 500 for those who practice the activity without a license. Also, a fine of RO 300 will be imposed on those who engage in the activity with an expired license.

The scrap includes any pieces from which iron, copper or other materials are extracted and the activity must be done in the industrial areas in the governorate.

Putin tells Ukraine to stop fighting as evacuations hit

LVIV/KYIV: Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday his campaign in Ukraine was going to plan and would not end until Kyiv stopped fighting, as efforts to evacuate 200,000 people from the heavily bombarded city of Mariupol fell apart for a second day in a row.

Most people trapped in the port city are sleeping in bomb shelters to escape more than six days of near-constant shelling by encircling Russian forces that has cut off food, water, power and heating supplies, according to the



A protester holds a sign during a demonstration in Belgrade on March. — AFP

Ukrainian authorities.

The civilian death toll from hostilities across Ukraine since Moscow launched its campaign on February 24 stood at 364, including more than 20 children, according to the United Nations on Sunday, with hundreds more injured.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said most civilian casualties were caused by the use of “explosive weapons with a wide impact area, including shelling from heavy artillery and multi-launch rocket systems and

missile and air strikes.”

Moscow has repeatedly denied attacking civilian areas.

In Irpin, a town some 25 km northwest of the capital Kyiv, men, women and children trying to escape armed clashes in the area were forced to take cover when missiles struck nearby, according to Reuters witnesses.

Soldiers and fellow residents helped the elderly hurry to a bus filled with frightened people, some cowering as they waited to be driven to safety.

SEE ALSO P7



OMAN, UK REVIEW MILITARY COOPERATION



MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Sunday Admiral Sir Benjamin John Key,

Chief of Naval Staff of the United Kingdom. The two sides reviewed aspects of the existing military cooperation between the two countries and means of enhancing

them. They also discussed several matters of common interest. The meeting was attended by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), and

the British Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. Separately, General Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, also received at his office Admiral Sir Benjamin

Key. The British guest expressed his appreciation for Oman's efforts in promoting cooperation to achieve the joint interests between the two countries. The two sides reviewed the march of historic

relations between Oman and the UK. They also discussed several matters of common interest. Admiral Sir Benjamin Key is on a two-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Ban on collection of metal scrap



FROM P1 It is notable that the decision was based on the Royal Decree No 101/2020 issuing the system of governorates and municipal affairs and on the local order No 1/2009 regulating the practice of scrap collection and handling activity in the Governorate of Muscat and the approval of the Ministry of Finance. The regulation noted that one of the most important

requirements is to ensure that all health and technical requirements are met for this job. The validity period of the licence shall be for one year, and this may be renewed or extended. One of its most important national priorities is to achieve a sustainable environment, and to develop sustainable governorates and cities to create atmosphere suitable for environmentally and socially safe living. However, the continuation of such practices prevents achieving the desired results in comprehensive sustainable development and promoting social and economic prosperity. The illegal activities of these vehicles in residential neighbourhoods cause environmental and economic damages. These activities also raise security concerns.



RNO conducts Sharp Dagger naval drill

MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) on Sunday began implementing a naval drill 'Sharp Dagger' at Al Batinah naval site. The drill is conducted with participation of friendly countries' navies and assistance of the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) jets. The drill lasts till March

10. The drill comes within the framework of the RNO's annual training plans, besides exchanging experience with friendly countries to sustain the reediness levels of the RNO fleet and personnel on various marine disciplines in line with their national tasks. — ONA

Crowdfunding allowed in selected sectors: CMA

FROM P1 The CMA has issued the regulation for crowdfunding vide Decision No 153/2021 dated November 21, 2021. Accordingly, the regulation of the Capital Market Law shall apply on any person licensed to carry out crowdfunding activity or desirous of obtaining a licence. The operator may provide crowdfunding through one or more methods such as the following: **Donation Crowdfunding:** Donations without expecting any return; **Reward Crowdfunding:** Funding in return for products in the early version of a product or special version or service on commencement of operation or production; **Equity Crowdfunding:** Providing

funding in return of getting shares in the capital. Such shares may be convertible or tradable, and Peer-to-Peer **Crowdfunding:** Providing funding in consideration of issuing conventional investment notes or Islamic investment notes including invoice financing which are convertible or tradable. Such funding instruments may be convertible to equity. A working paper on crowdfunding platforms experience presented by Musab al Lawati contained a detailed account on the types of crowdfunding platforms in the Sultanate of Oman, the categories of investors, the general features of the regulation for crowdfunding platforms and the obligations of applicants for financing.

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers to the following tenders:

No	Tender Ref	Tender Title	Tender Fee RO
1	SIPC 2022/016	Structure Condition Assessment and Remaining Service Life Expectancy Study for OOTO Berth	105.000

- The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%.
- Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00am on Monday, 07/03/2022 until 4:00 pm on Sunday 20/03/2022.
- Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

Account Name	Sohar Industrial Port Co
Account Number	3101-007970-500
Bank Name	Oman Arab bank SAOC – Main Br
SWIT	OMABOMRXXX

Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted

Step 2: Tenderers to send the following documents:

- A request for the electronic tender documents
- Scanned bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents
- All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address: sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

Step 3: Tenderers will receive the electronic tender documents. The Technical and Commercial proposals must be in separate, marked "Technical and Commercial" addressed to: SOHAR Port and Freezone Bid Opening Committee Tender Reference No. Tender Name:

- SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons.
- All SMES are requested to provide their Green Card along with the required documents.
- For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to: sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

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Dam revitalises Wadi Al Mahyoul

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

The dam in Wadi Al Mahyoul is one of the important sources of water for the Wilayat of Ibri. This surface storage dam provides fresh water to the villages scattered on the banks of the wadi. This dam is a big relief to the wilayat, which was previously suffering from drought amid harsh climatic conditions. Because of scarce water resources, the majority of people were forced to migrate to other places. The length of the dam is 32m and height. This dam can store 30,000 cubic metre of water. While this dam has helped people to return to their original environment where they grew up long ago, it has also attracted many wildlife. "Today, we can see many wild animals, birds and butterflies. These animals and birds have disappeared for a long time due to the lack of water. The valley has regained its greenness and freshness, as many plants and trees began to grow, which adds an aesthetic touch to



the place", residents told *Observer*. The dam not only restored sustenance to various types of wildlife, but also contributed to the development of eco-tourism in this area.

The storage dam is a big relief to the Ibri which was previously suffering from drought amid harsh climatic conditions

"The valley has become a destination for many tourists who visit this site, especially during weekends and holidays, which bodes well for the people of the Wilayat of Ibri through the sale of

handicrafts and agricultural produce." Residents praise the benefits from the dam. "Today, we are reaping the benefits of this dam. We extend our thanks to the competent authorities for their cooperation, interest and support for all the proposals we sent years ago with the aim of developing water resources in this area." The setting up of the dam in Wadi Al Mahyoul is part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources' mission to ensure water for drinking and farming across the Sultanate of Oman. It has built 106 storage dams in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. This is proof that officials in the ministry are aware of the needs of the citizens in remote areas. It will encourage residents of mountainous areas to settle and thus significantly reduce their migration to urban areas. These dams will also boost agriculture and thereby ensure food security. The authorities request all visitors to the wadi not to litter waste and warn them against swimming in deep pools.



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MONDAY | MARCH 7 | 2022

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State Council chairman receives French senator

MUSCAT: Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, received Olivier Cadic, the French senator for French citizens living abroad and President of the France-Gulf States Friendship Group, within the framework of his current visit to the Sultanate of Oman from March 5 to 8.

The chairman of the State

Council commended the existing relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the French Republic, hoping that the visit will enhance cooperation and bilateral relations between the two countries.

Senator Olivier Cadic expressed his happiness over his visit to the Sultanate of Oman noting that his country

attaches great attention to fostering cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman to cover several areas to the benefit of both countries.

He added that his current visit to the Sultanate of Oman comes within the framework of preparations for future visits by the members of the Omani French Friendship Association.

Oman Vision 2040 Unit and PDO sign cooperation memorandum

MUSCAT: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-Up Unit and Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) on Sunday signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) to support and enhance national efforts to implement Oman Vision 2040.

The memorandum also aims to develop the abilities and experiences of those in-charge of the implementation follow up of programmes and initiatives.

The MoC was signed by Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-Up Unit, and Steve Phimister, managing director of PDO. The memorandum includes cooperation in areas focusing on national priorities within Oman Vision 2040, particularly the expansion of in-country



value (ICV), promoting green growth opportunities and energy transformation and confronting climate change and its effects.

The MoC also supports the government's efforts in developing the data system to serve its executive plans, and exchange of

expertise in communication and media field.

Within the context of the MoC, PDO provides support to Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-Up Unit, programmes and initiatives related to the areas covered by the MoC. — ONA

Shot in arm for date farmers

QASIM AL MASHANI
MUSCAT, MARCH 6

Date farmers in the Sultanate of Oman will receive a sales boost as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is conducting a public expo of their produce aiming at motivating and inspiring them to actively participate in the farming of Omani dates.

The expo to be held at the Muscat Mall from March 22 to 29 also aims to inculcate the lifestyle of date farming amongst the young Omani generation who wish to engage themselves in farming.

"The aim of the expo is to generate an interest for Omani dates as well as supporting the date farmers in the country," said a senior official from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

He further said that the farmers were devoid of any venue to showcase their produce during the past two years due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The expo which will be held at the main corridor of the Muscat Mall also aims at companies that



specialise in dates, packaging units, cottage industries and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The expo will cover Omanis licensed and registered with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) to trade in dates. Other conditions to participate in the expo are the dates must be produced during the current year or last year according to the specification approved by the Sultanate of Oman and the

packaging and labelling should be in accordance with the ministry's terms and conditions clearly showing the production and expiry dates, weight and the like.

The timings are from 10am to 10pm on all days during the expo at the mall and they will be divided in two groups. Also, farmers and traders need to adhere to the guidelines of the organising committee and the instructions issued by the competent authorities to limit the spread of the pandemic.

Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals marks two decades of care

MUSCAT: Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals organised the event to mark its 20 years of operations in Oman. The glorious journey of 20 years, from a humble initiation in 2002, helped Badr Al Samaa to become the largest private healthcare group with 13 centres currently and many more to come. It is the only group of Oman in private healthcare having all its hospitals accredited by international accreditation bodies like JCI (USA) and ACHSI (Australia). A special 20-year celebration logo was unveiled on the occasion and the audience went through the 20 years journey of Badr Al Samaa with a special movie made for this occasion.

The event also witnessed ACHSI accreditation certificate presentation to the corporate and four recently accredited hospitals of Badr Al Samaa; Barka, Nizwa, Suhar and Salalah.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, was the chief guest of the event. Dr Shashi Tharoor, member of Indian Parliament, Former Under-Secretary General — UN, was the guest of honour. The event was also attended by Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman, Abdullah bin Saud Alanazi, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Oman, Dr Muhanne bin Nasir al Muslahi, Director General — DGPHE, executive directors, senior management, staff of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals and various dignitaries from companies, corporate, media and many social organisations.

In his welcome address, Abdul Latheef, Managing Director of Badr Al Samaa attributed the credit for the success of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals to the dedicated and selfless workforce, continuous support from the Ministry of Health, various ministries and all concerned stakeholders and above all the continuous trust of their patients in their healthcare services. He said Badr Al Samaa standardised its clinical and non-clinical



operations with international accreditations since beginning. He said the celebrations will witness many Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, introduction of advanced clinical programmes and awareness and training programmes for the general public on basic health issues like Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, etc.

Dr P A Mohammed, Managing Director of Badr Al Samaa, said the theme of this 20 Years celebration is based on trust and care. The trusts which people have shown in Badr Al Samaa for two decades and the quality of care with which Badr Al Samaa has complemented that trust. He said Badr Al Samaa has aggressive future expansion plans and they are coming up with a premium hospital in near future along with some more multispecialty hospitals and medical centres in addition to super specialised centres for IVF, Ophthalmology and Oncology.

Dr Ahmed al Saeedi in his address said he is delighted to celebrate the 20 year anniversary launch programme and ACHSI accreditation of four hospitals with everyone present. He said during Covid due to the well-equipped healthcare surveillance system the impact was not worse. He appreciated the private healthcare sector's support. He believed in equity not just for Covid treatment and vaccines but the overall healthcare sector and he said the Sultanate of Oman

has worked a lot in this direction. He said in Oman the outcomes in healthcare are way too ahead than the spending, which is exceptional. He said life expectancy in Oman in 1970's was only 49 years which has grown to 78 years today due to reforms in the healthcare sector.

Dr Sashi Tharoor appreciated the management and staff of Badr Al Samaa for this remarkable achievement which is a testimony of providing valuable humanitarian services. He said Indian doctors and paramedics have achieved recognition of dedication and service excellence. He said this talent coupled with resources, capabilities and leadership of Oman has helped the healthcare sector of Oman to grow along world standards and produce impressive results in a short span of time. He appreciated the commitment which everybody had made during Covid pandemic and developed an environment that will safeguard our health against any such threats in future. He appreciated the impressive doctor to patient ratio of Oman which stands at 2.1 to 1,000 people which is closer to the USA, nurses ratio of 4.5 to 1,000 people. He said 95% of the population of Oman lives within 5 kilometres of a good primary healthcare centre. He attributed the credit of all this to the strong leadership of Oman. He chaired the interactive session after his speech; many attendees were excited to interact with him during the event.

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة
Tender Notice

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tender:

TENDER NO	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCIT/HQ-3/15/2022	REMAINING WORKS FOR BUILDING AT HARMOUL HARBOR IN SOHAR PORT AREA	28/2/2022	13/3/2022	10/4/2022	EXPERIENCED SME COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board 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. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. In addition to Tender Bond as Bank Guarantee issued by local bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (1%) of the Tender value validity for (90) days.

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200, e-mail : etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE

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بؤواك
المملكة العربية العربية
Muscat Arab Digital Capital
2022



B E W A R E O F C O U N T E R F E I T

CONTACT LENSES

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

Many people who suffer from vision problems go for contact lenses rather than glasses because they — besides allowing a more natural vision — give a nicer look. These lenses are available in different colours and types at varying prices. They are now available everywhere outside pharmacies and approved optical shops, as people are buying them for cosmetic rather than medical reasons.

Doctors, however, have warned against poor quality lenses that are sold at cheap prices, as they cause damage and health problems to eyes and may lead to blindness in some cases.

The components of inexpensive contact lenses cause severe redness in the eyes, pain and itching. Also, the cornea swells due to the buildup of water inside it as a

result of allergies, which affects vision and causes a kind of discomfort.

The general public is ignorant of the harms of contact lenses and the ability of germs to enter the cornea and cause infection. This stems from the constant friction between the lens, which is a foreign object and corneal epithelium, or the outer layer of the cornea, which loses the ability to form an effective barrier to prevent germs from entering it.

The increase in the number of contact lens users in the last decade has led to a significant increase in the number of people with corneal infection.

Besides, the conjunctival sac and eyelids are also important areas for the reproduction of germs that cause most corneal infections in people who use contact lenses.

As a result of improper lens care, and the fact that only a small number of

**The increase
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with corneal
infection**

people who use them maintain this, too many cases of infection appear in a large number of lens users.

Dr Talal al Busaidy, an ophthalmologist, specialised in cornea, laser operations and contact lenses (French Board), said one of his patients suffering from acute bacterial infection due to the use of poor quality colored cosmetic lenses, told him that she bought them from WhatsApp and Instagram merchant for five rials.

“Without consulting an ophthalmologist, without knowing the quality of the lenses and how to clean or use them, we cannot risk our eyes”, he said.

Many studies have shown that wearing inexpensive contact lenses does not pass enough oxygen to the eye to breathe and they are more susceptible to germs and eye scratches. At the same time, activists called for tightening control over shops, saying that lenses and glasses should only

be sold in licensed eyewear shops. On the contrary, they are widely available in beauty centres and even luxury stores without accountability or supervision.

The prices of cheap cosmetic lenses in stores range from RO 4 to 10, while the value of original lenses are RO 20 and above, depending on the brand.

In order to avoid health problems that may affect the eyes, it is advised not to buy contact lenses except through the ophthalmologist, provided that they are a well-known and guaranteed brand, and not counterfeit. The patient must learn how to put on and take off the contact lens so as not to injure the eye. Personal hygiene and washing hands well before holding the lens so that microbes do not transfer to them. Also, if the lens remains in the solution for a long time, it must be reassured that it is clean and that no deposits have formed on it.

Fears of inflation loom amid economic recovery

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

Even as the Sultanate of Oman has seen an economic rebound in the backdrop of the current oil prices, there is fear that the surge may drive inflation higher.

The country’s annual inflation rate which is based on the consumer price index (CPI) has increased to 3.56 per cent even before the acceleration in the prices of the crude in November 2021.

Although imported inflation remains a major determinant of inflation in the Sultanate of Oman, domestic factors also play some role in conditioning inflationary conditions. An increase in inflation rate was expected as a result of value-added tax (VAT) last year coupled with rising commodities prices globally in the recent months.

On the other hand, Russian war in Ukraine carries huge risks for a world economy that’s yet to fully recover from the pandemic shock.

While addressing the Majlis Ashshura last week, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, also confirmed that the rise in the inflation was due to the high domestic demand for goods and services

resulting from economic growth, high oil prices, the continuation of the impact of the local value-added tax and the rise in international prices of goods.

Inflation conditions in the Sultanate of Oman are influenced by both domestic and global factors.

“High dependence on import of goods and services along with rial’s peg with dollar and open capital account accords dominant role to global factors in the domestic inflation”, points out Abdullah bin Salim al Lawati, a financial expert with a leading bank.

According to Fitch Ratings’ latest ‘20/20 Vision’ chart pack, the pick-up in global inflation has been widespread and persistent and has shown few signs of having peaked.

“CPI inflation has increased in virtually every Fitch 20 country in the past three months and is now elevated relative to pre-pandemic rates and inflation targets in many of the major economies”, the global rating agency said.

“High fuel prices will lead to a further rise in cost of logistics and crude oil-linked raw materials, and that may necessitate more price hikes”, said Abdullah.

British PM’s trade envoy to visit Oman

MUSCAT: Lord Astor of Haver, the British Prime Minister’s Trade Envoy to Oman, will return to the Sultanate of Oman.

“Ever since my days as a UK Defence Minister, I have thoroughly enjoyed my many interactions with this marvellous country — and my visit comes at a key time as UK-GCC Free Trade Agreement negotiations advance, Oman progresses with the brilliantly ambitious Oman Vision 2040 and the UK-Oman continue to strengthen trade and investment ties through avenues like the Sovereign Investment Partnership,” he said of the visit in a press statement.

During his visit, Lord Astor of Haver will meet with UK companies who are operating and investing in Oman, as well as interact with the Omani stakeholders who are driving this partnership to further prosperity.



Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos Private School

Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos PVT School is currently seeking teachers to fill the following vacancies for the academic year 2022/2023:

1) Female English Teacher

2) Female Physics Teacher

3) Female Math Teacher (5-10)

4) Female Economics Teacher / Business Studies

Requirements: candidates must have

- ❖ B.A. in the subject / B.Ed.
- ❖ Minimum 3 Years experience.
- ❖ Must be resident in Oman.
- ❖ Minimum score 6 in IELTS.

Please submit your CVs in via E-mail:
info@msqps.edu.com or **schoolhr@gmail.com**

Note: CV from outside Oman will not be considered



تکافل عمان للتأمين ش.م.ع.ع

TAKAFUL OMAN INSURANCE SAOG

DIRECTORS REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On Behalf of the Board of Directors and myself, I am pleased to present your company’s Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2021.

Performance in Brief

Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG recorded a Gross Written Contribution of OMR 26.65 million for the full-year 2021, making it the 7th largest insurer in Oman. The gross written contribution has shown a growth of 6% & the Medical & Life books have reported a growth of 42% and 12% respectively.

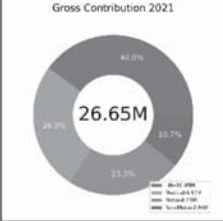
The Shareholders’ fund has reported a profit after tax of OMR 0.76 million (2020 – OMR 2.09 million), further earning per share OMR 0.008 per share and OMR (2020: 0.21 per share). The participants’ fund has reported a deficit of OMR 6.07 million (2020 – OMR 3.05 million).

Business Update

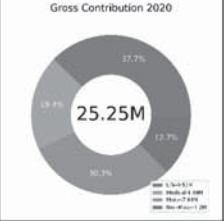
Medical & Life book has reported a topline growth of OMR 2.04M (42%) & OMR 1.130m (12%). There is a decline in Motor book of OMR 1.43m (-19%). This decrease in business is in line with the company strategy to eliminate loss-making fleets out of the book and to focus on profitable segments.

Following is the portfolio split compared last year:

Gross Contribution 2021



Gross Contribution 2020



Regulatory updates

The company is in compliance with the Minimum Capital Requirement (MCR) as per the regulation and reported total equity & reserve of OMR 29.29m. The company has reported Solvency Margin Deficit in General Takaful RO 12.01m, Deficit in Medical Takaful RO 0.77m, and Surplus in Life Takaful RO 2.75m. Out of the total net deficit, OMR 7.82m represents inadmissibility on account of Reinsurance Recovery on a few major claims which once settled becomes admissible for solvency purposes.

Capital Market Authority (CMA) has instructed the board of directors of the company to meet the solvency deficit by injecting money into the shareholders’ fund by share capital or any form of equity. The 1st tranche is equivalent to an amount of OMR 4.2m before the end of March 2022. The board of directors has taken note of the requirement and has taken necessary actions to comply with the CMA directives within stipulated timelines.

On 31st of January 2021, the company has issued perpetual Sukuks’ amounting to OMR 6.0m. These Sukuks are perpetual, unsecured, subordinated to ordinary equity shares and the payment of the profit is non-cumulative and at the discretion of the company and has been initially recognized as equity.

In 2020 the Capital Market Authority (CMA) has come with a new licensing system for Medical Insurance Business. The company has applied to be selected as one of the insurance companies that will be licensed to provide medical insurance in the Sultanate.

Key Management Changes

Mr. Neelmani Bhardwaj has joined Takaful Oman Company SAOG during 2021 as Deputy Chief Executive Officer and also performing as Acting Chief Executive Officer since February 7th, 2022 as Sayyida Rawan Ahmed Al Said has resigned as CEO for personal reasons. Further, a new Chief Financial Officer & Chief Underwriting Officer have been onboarded during the year to strengthen the company’s Leadership & Executive Management Team.

Market & Business Outlook

Improvement in the credit rating of the country by key credit agencies in 2021, as a result of good fiscal discipline and a recovery in oil prices in 2021, affirms the growth trajectory and positive outlook for the country. The decrease in fiscal deficit (2021: 1.2b – 2020: 4.4b) with a stable public spending budget of OMR 12.13b places Oman on a positive economic outlook.

Takaful market has shown a growth of 9% (2021) as compared to conventional business 3% (2021) depicts the market readiness to buy a shariah-compliant product over conventional insurance products.

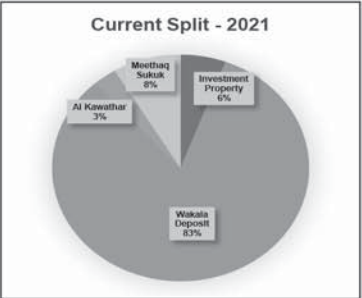
To capitalize on the positive market sentiments and opportunities available as an Islamic Financial Institution, the company has developed a 3 years business strategy based on its strategic framework pillars of 4P i.e. people, product, process, and profitability. The key focus areas are:

- **Strengthen & enhance bancatakaful channel:** Bancatakaful being a key strategic distribution channel, the company is ready to utilize its full potential by upselling & cross-selling.
- **Digital Journey:** Embarking on the digital journey to provide new products & seamless customer experience through a single touch.
- **New products in the retail business:** Tap customer’s today’s needs and develop & provide Shariah-compliant products across all product lines
- **Strengthen Underwriting and Claims Management-** The company has taken the necessary steps to strengthen the underwriting controls and improve claims management.
- **Expense Rationalization:** Increase the Return on Equity (ROE) by enhancing the profitability of the company through strong management of its operating expense.

Investment Portfolio

The company has a strong investment portfolio of OMR 14.984 million. Out of the total, OMR 11.519 are in Wakala Deposits of Islamic Banks:

Current Split - 2021



Consolidated statement of financial position as at 31 December 2021

Shareholders	2021		
	General takaful RO	Family takaful RO	Total RO
ASSETS			
Cash and bank balances	326,860	195,897	522,757
Financial asset at fair value through equity	515,895	-	515,895
Receivable from participants’ fund	15,598,047	-	15,598,047
Takaful balance receivables	-	3,142,020	3,142,020
Retakaful balance receivables	-	2,313,239	2,313,239
Other receivables and prepayments	1,451,504	377,334	1,828,838
Retakaful contract assets	-	14,895,827	14,895,827
Deferred policy acquisition costs	479,051	-	479,051
Wakala bank deposits	11,519,000	1,500,000	13,019,000
Investment carried at amortised cost	1,500,000	-	1,500,000
Property and equipment	336,338	-	336,338
Intangible assets	373,594	-	373,594
Deferred tax asset	1,048,899	-	1,048,899
Right of use assets	1,449,240	-	1,449,240
Total assets	34,598,428	22,424,317	57,022,745
LIABILITIES, PARTICIPANTS’ FUND AND EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Takaful contract liabilities	-	25,604,947	25,604,947
Payable to shareholders’ fund	-	12,007,526	12,007,526
Payable to retakaful	-	2,688,369	2,688,369
Accounts and other payables	698,930	2,054,008	2,752,938
Wakala financing	3,581,956	-	3,581,956
Deferred income from retakaful contracts	-	47,009	47,009
Employees’ end of service benefits	74,385	6,756	81,141
Ijarah liabilities	947,292	-	947,292
Total liabilities	5,302,563	42,401,859	47,704,422
Participants fund	-	13,414,037	13,414,037
Deficit in participant’s funds	-	(3,996,015)	(3,996,015)
Equity			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital	10,000,000	-	10,000,000
Legal reserve	1,436,739	-	1,436,739
Investment fair value reserve	74,505	-	74,505
Retained earnings	11,784,621	-	11,784,621
Total equity attributable to Shareholders’	23,295,865	-	23,295,865
Perpetual Sukuk eligible as additional capital	6,000,000	-	6,000,000
Total equity	29,295,865	-	29,295,865
Total liabilities, participants fund and equity	34,598,428	9,418,022	44,016,450
Net assets per share attributable to shareholders	0.233	-	0.233

Consolidated statement of financial position as at 31 December 2021 (continued)

Shareholders	2020		
	General takaful RO	Family takaful RO	Total RO
ASSETS			
Cash and bank balances	98,669	76,436	175,105
Financial asset at fair value through equity	431,532	-	431,532
Receivable from participants’ fund	11,252,141	-	11,252,141
Takaful balance receivables	-	3,452,589	3,452,589
Retakaful balance receivables	-	1,152,170	1,152,170
Other receivables and prepayments	1,197,129	301,246	1,498,375
Retakaful contract assets	-	5,067,009	5,067,009
Deferred policy acquisition costs	54,229	1,200,806	1,255,035
Wakala bank deposits	8,519,000	-	8,519,000
Investment carried at amortised cost	1,503,000	-	1,503,000
Investment in a real estate	909,111	-	909,111
Property and equipment	303,245	-	303,245
Intangible assets	227,806	-	227,806
Deferred tax asset	828,355	-	828,355
Total assets	25,322,217	11,250,256	36,572,473
LIABILITIES, PARTICIPANTS’ FUND AND EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Takaful contract liabilities	-	13,327,392	13,327,392
Payable to shareholders’ fund	-	8,316,810	8,316,810
Payable to retakaful	-	2,528,825	2,528,825
Accounts and other payables	243,419	2,266,083	2,509,502
Wakala financing	1,850,000	-	1,850,000
Deferred income from retakaful contracts	-	139,630	139,630
Employees’ end of service benefits	48,004	-	48,004
Total liabilities	2,141,423	26,578,740	28,720,163
Participant’s fund			
Deficit in participant’s fund	-	(15,328,484)	(15,328,484)
Equity			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital	10,000,000	-	10,000,000
Legal reserve	1,360,635	-	1,360,635
Investment fair value reserve	(9,858)	-	(9,858)
Property fair value reserve	250,284	-	250,284
Retained earnings	11,579,733	-	11,579,733
Total equity	23,180,794	-	23,180,794
Total liabilities, participants’ fund and equity	25,322,217	11,250,256	36,572,473
Net assets per share attributable to shareholders	0.232	-	0.232

Consolidated statement of participants’ revenues and expenses for the year ended 31 December 2021

	2021		
	General takaful RO	Family takaful RO	Total RO
Takaful revenue			
Gross contributions	16,002,096	10,652,897	26,654,993
Contributions ceded to retakaful	(7,053,462)	(8,494,749)	(15,548,211)
Net retained contributions	8,948,634	2,158,148	11,106,782
Movement in unearned contribution reserve - net	250,067	(544,588)	(294,521)
Income from retakaful contracts	364,134	146,067	510,201
Total takaful revenue	9,562,835	1,759,627	11,322,462
Takaful expenses			
Gross claims settled	(14,388,894)	(6,738,577)	(21,127,471)
Retakaful share in claim settled	7,612,342	5,912,647	13,524,989
Net claims settled	(6,776,552)	(825,930)	(7,602,482)
Movement in outstanding claims reserve - net	(3,049,939)	(127,168)	(3,177,107)
Movement in other reserves	351,135	9,771	360,906
Net claims incurred	(9,475,356)	(943,327)	(10,418,683)
Acquisition costs amortised during the year	(1,200,806)	(346,451)	(1,547,257)
Other takaful expenses / (reversal)	(877,194)	23,279	(853,915)
Wakala fee expense	(2,880,408)	(1,917,491)	(4,797,899)
Total takaful expenses	(14,433,764)	(3,183,990)	(17,617,754)
Other income	221,871	-	221,871
Deficit from takaful operations	(4,649,058)	(1,424,363)	(6,073,421)

	2020		
	General takaful RO	Family takaful RO	Total RO
Takaful revenue	15,726,176	9,522,751	25,248,927
Gross contributions	15,726,176	9,522,751	25,248,927
Contributions ceded to retakaful	(6,011,111)	(7,611,004)	(13,622,115)
Net retained contributions	9,715,065	1,911,747	11,626,812
Movement in unearned contribution reserve - net	316,002	166,431	482,433
Income from retakaful contracts	362,769	177,950	540,719
Total takaful revenue	10,393,836	2,256,128	12,649,964
Takaful expenses			
Gross claims settled	(11,688,582)	(4,520,007)	(16,208,589)
Retakaful share in claim settled	3,997,931	3,902,816	7,900,747
Net claims settled	(7,690,651)	(617,191)	(8,307,842)
Movement in outstanding claims reserve - net	(356,893)	(33,400)	(390,293)
Movement in other reserves	(512,347)	(219,466)	(731,813)
Net claims incurred	(8,559,891)	(930,057)	(9,489,948)
Acquisition costs amortised during the year	(1,872,786)	(437,788)	(2,310,574)
Other takaful expenses	(174,953)	(44,266)	(219,219)
Wakala fees expense	(2,830,712)	(1,714,095)	(4,544,807)
Total takaful expenses	(13,438,342)	(3,126,206)	(16,564,548)
Other income	516,411	349,694	866,105
Deficit from takaful operations	(2,528,095)	(520,384)	(3,048,479)



South Korea to pick new president

SEOUL: South Korea will elect a new president on Wednesday and voters face a stark choice: a feminist-bashing conservative or a scandal-plagued liberal? So far, it's a dead heat.

The two frontrunners, dour former prosecutor Yoon Suk-yeol of the People Power party and the incumbent Democratic party's maverick ex-governor Lee Jae-myung are trapped in a neck-and-neck race to become the next leader of Asia's fourth largest economy.

And what propels one of them to victory will not be their populist campaign promises or North Korea policy, analysts say. Instead, it's what the papers have dubbed a "cycle of revenge" in South Korea's famously adversarial politics.

"This election is a battle between two opposite forces — the progressives and conservatives," said political analyst Park Sang-byoung.

South Korean presidents are allowed by law to serve a single five year term, and every living former president has been investigated and jailed for



South Korea's presidential candidate Sim Sang-jung of the opposition Justice Party during an election campaign in Seoul. — AFP



South Korea's presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung of the ruling Democratic Party during an election campaign in Seoul ahead of the March 9 presidential election. — AFP

THE TWO
FRONTRUNNERS
ARE FORMER
PROSECUTOR
YOON SUK-
YEOL OF THE
PEOPLE POWER
PARTY AND THE
INCUMBENT
DEMOCRATIC
PARTY'S
MAVERICK LEE
JAE-MYUNG

corruption after leaving office.

Outgoing President Moon Jae-in himself swept to power in 2017 after his disgraced predecessor Park Geun-hye was impeached over an influence-peddling scandal that also put a Samsung heir behind bars.

Now, Park's conservatives are eager for revenge.

Ironically, their candidate Yoon was chief prosecutor under Moon and pursued Park when she was impeached —

an experience that boosted his profile and popularity and pushed him to enter politics.

South Korean politics has seen a "deepening division" in recent years, with elections more focused on party rivalry than policy, analyst Yoo Jung-hoon said.

"Many conservatives still hold a grudge over the impeachment of Park Geun-hye," he said. Yoon is appealing to these disgruntled voters, offering a chance at

"revenge" for Park's ousting — even going so far as to threaten to investigate Moon for unspecified "irregularities".

"We should do it," Yoon said last month, referring to prosecuting Moon and his administration.

His comments earned a rare rebuke from the presidential Blue House and the ruling Democratic party's candidate Lee said they indicated his rival was not fit to lead the nation.

But analysts say it's just political

business as usual in Seoul.

"The Moon administration has prosecuted many former officials in the name of rooting out deep-rooted corruption," Shin Yul, a political science professor at Myongji University.

"I expect the same standard to be applied under the Yoon government should wrongdoings be found," he said.

Yoon's wife in January gave an unwitting insight into the realpolitik to come, claiming

enemies and critics would be prosecuted if her husband won because that's "the nature of power," according to taped comments released after a court battle.

Polls show that voters' top concerns this election cycle are skyrocketing house prices in the capital Seoul, stagnant growth, and stubborn youth unemployment — but campaigning has been dominated by mud-slinging. — AFP

MODELS AND RIFLES



A model poses with Russian made automatic assault rifles at World Defence Show in Riyadh. — Reuters

Doctors Without Borders aid workers kidnapped in Yemen

SANAA: Unknown gunmen have kidnapped two foreign employees working for Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in war-torn Yemen, a local security official said on Sunday. The two men, a German and a Mexican, were kidnapped on Saturday in the eastern province of Hadramout, the official said on condition of anonymity.

"The armed men seized the car carrying the employees along with their Yemeni escorts while they were on their way from Hadramout to Marib," the official added.

"They blindfolded them and led them to a desert area. They later released the Yemenis and took the doctors to an unknown place," the official said. The German abductee is in his 40s while the Mexican is in his 30s, according to the official. The identity of the kidnappers is not known, but it's feared they could be linked to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, an offshoot of the fighter organisation, Yemeni newspaper *Al Ayyam* reported.

— dpa

Iran and IAEA agree timeline to remove hurdle to reviving N-deal

VIENNA: Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog on Saturday agreed a three-month plan that in the best case will resolve the long-stalled issue of uranium particles found at old but undeclared sites in the country, removing an obstacle to reviving the Iran nuclear deal.

Eleven months after indirect talks between Iran and the United States on salvaging the 2015 deal began in Vienna, delegates are trying to settle the final thorny issues within days as Western powers say time is running out since Iran's nuclear advances will soon make the deal redundant.

One unresolved issue, diplomats say, has been Iran's demand for the closure of the International Atomic Energy Agency's investigation into uranium particles found at three apparently old but undeclared sites, which suggest that Iran had nuclear material there that it did not declare to the agency.

The agency has long said Iran has not given satisfactory answers on those issues, but on Saturday they announced a plan for a series of exchanges after which IAEA chief Rafael Grossi "will aim to



IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi during a news conference with Head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization Mohammad Eslami in Tehran. — Reuters

report his conclusion by the June 2022 (IAEA) Board of Governors" meeting, which begins on June 6.

The joint plan clears the way for a possible agreement to revive the 2015 deal, though Grossi emphasised that his conclusion would not necessarily be positive. Where anything other than full resolution would leave implementation of any agreement, however, remains to be seen.

"It would be difficult to imagine you can have a cooperative relationship as if nothing had

happened if the clarification of very important safeguards issues were to fail," Grossi said in a news conference when asked what the effect on reviving the deal would be if the issues were not closed.

Grossi also suggested the presentation of his conclusion would happen before "Re-Implementation Day" — the day by which the bulk of US sanctions-lifting and Iranian implementation of nuclear restrictions will have happened under any future agreement — even though they are officially unrelated. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BIREUEN

Over 100 Rohingya refugees arrive in Aceh

Over 100 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar arrived by boat on the shores of Indonesia's Aceh province in the early hours of Sunday, an NGO group at the scene said.

Authorities were unsure for how long the 114 refugees, including 35 children, had been at sea, but some needed medical assistance when they arrived in Bireuen, Aceh, Nurul Yana Daba, a volunteer for the NGO Aksi Cepat Tanggap, told reporters.



"One female refugee got swellings on her arms and legs and is unable to stand or walk, while one man, maybe because they've been at sea for too long, is a bit malnourished," Nurul said.

SEOUL

N Korea holds another test for satellite development

North Korea said that a missile launch a day earlier was part of the development of a "reconnaissance satellite," state new agency KCNA reported.

"The DPRK National Aerospace Development Administration (NADA) and the Academy of Defence Science conducted another important test under the plan of developing a reconnaissance satellite," KCNA reported.

The test helped the two bodies confirm "the reliability of



data transmission and reception system of the satellite, its control command system and various ground-based control systems," according to the agency.

SYDNEY

Australia braces for more wild weather

Australian towns devastated by deadly flooding over the past week prepared for further intense weather on Sunday, with expected downpours halting volunteer recovery and clean-up efforts.

The national weather bureau warned of severe thunderstorms and major flooding in the state of Queensland, where 11 people died in the past week's floods. Flash flooding is forecast for the major city of Brisbane, home to 2.6 million people.

Heavy rains, large hailstones



and damaging winds were also expected to hit further south in the state of New South Wales, including the town of Lismore, which last week saw record flooding.

Putin tells Ukraine to stop fighting

NEW CEASEFIRE CALLS

LVIV/KYIV: Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday his campaign in Ukraine was going according to plan and would not end until Kyiv stopped fighting, as efforts to evacuate the heavily bombed city of Mariupol failed for a second day in a row.

He made the comments in a phone call with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who appealed for a ceasefire in the conflict that the United Nations says has created the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War Two.

Russian media said Putin also held almost two hours of talks on Sunday with French President Emmanuel Macron, who has stayed in regular contact but, as with other international efforts, has yet to persuade Moscow to call off a campaign now in an 11th day.

Authorities in Mariupol had said on Sunday they would make a second attempt to evacuate some of the 400,000 residents, after the Ukrainian coastal city endured days of shelling that has trapped people in without heat, power and water.

But the ceasefire plan collapsed, as it had on Saturday, with each side blaming the other for the failure.

Putin told Erdogan he was ready for dialogue with Ukraine and foreign partners but any attempt to draw out negotiation would fail, a Kremlin statement said. Turkey said Erdogan had called for a ceasefire to ease humanitarian concerns.

Kyiv renewed its appeal to the West to toughen sanctions beyond existing efforts that have hammered Russia's economy. It also requested more weapons, including a plea for Russian-made planes, to help it repel Russian forces.

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said Washington was "very,



Members of the Ukrainian Territorial Defence Forces, the military reserve of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, stand guard next to anti-tank structures blocking the streets of the centre of Kyiv.

very actively" considering how it could backfill aircraft for Poland, if Warsaw decided to supply its warplanes to Ukraine, speaking on a trip to neighbouring Moldova.

Moscow calls the campaign it launched on February 24 a "special military operation", saying it has no plans to occupy Ukraine, which was once part of the Soviet Union under Moscow's sway but which has now turned West seeking membership of Nato and the European Union.

"They're destroying us," Mariupol mayor Vadym Boychenko said in a video call, describing the plight of the city of 400,000. "They will not even give us an opportunity to count the wounded and the killed because the shelling does not stop."

- ★ BID TO EVACUATE RESIDENTS FROM MARIUPOL FAILS AGAIN
- ★ UKRAINE, RUSSIA TRADE BLAME FOR MARIUPOL CEASEFIRE FAILURE
- ★ PUTIN HOLDS TALKS WITH TURKISH AND FRENCH PRESIDENTS
- ★ US 'ACTIVELY' WORKING ON PLAN TO REARM UKRAINE WITH JETS

Russia, which denies attacking civilian areas, has poured troops and equipment into Ukraine. A huge Russian convoy on a road north of Kyiv has made limited visible progress in recent days, although Russia's defence ministry released footage on Sunday showing some tracked military vehicles on the move.

In the capital, Ukrainian soldiers bolstered defences by digging trenches, blocking roads and liaising with civil defence units as Russian forces bombarded areas nearby. "Positions are prepared, we've fitted them out and we are simply waiting to meet them here," said a soldier in a video released by Ukraine's armed forces. "Victory will be ours."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russian rockets had destroyed the civilian airport of the central-western region capital of Vinnytsia on Sunday. He also said Russia was preparing to bombard another southern city, Odessa.

"Rockets against Odessa? This will be a war crime," he said.

—Reuters

Russia's war in Ukraine: latest developments

MARCH 5 - 6, 2022



UKRAINIANS FLEEING KYIV



UKRAINIAN SERVICEMAN IN LUGANSK REGION



REFUGEES FLEE TO POLAND FROM LVIV

- Fierce battles on the edge of Mykolaiv. Dozens of civilians killed in Chernihiv
- Russian push on Kyiv becoming more deadly and indiscriminate
- Russia resumes attack on besieged Mariupol. City attempts to evacuate civilians March 6
- Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskiy pleads for Russian-made warplanes
- Russian President Vladimir Putin warns Ukraine may cease to exist as a state
- More than 1.5 million refugees have fled Ukraine since invasion began, UN figures show
- Visa and Mastercard join growing list of brands refusing to do business with Moscow
- Several international broadcasters say they will stop reporting from Russia
- Economic impact of war would be "all the more devastating" should the conflict escalate: IMF
- Aeroflot suspends all its international flights except to Belarus
- Putin says countries imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine considered combatants
- Third round of talks to end the fighting planned for March 7

Source: AFP bureaus/AFP Photos

AFP

Fleeing refugees arrive in record numbers

MEDYKA: Record numbers of refugees headed into Poland from Ukraine with the total number expected to surpass 1 million later on Sunday, as Russian forces continued shelling Ukraine's cities.

Polish border guards cleared as many as 129,000 people at border crossings on Saturday, the latest data showed, the most in a single day since the war started on February 24, bringing the total to 922,400.

"Check-in is as simplified as possible," Polish Border Guard spokeswoman Anna Michalska said. "The point is to confirm the identity of persons, verify documents, check the databases if they are not wanted persons. It takes a few minutes."

"Forecasts indicate that today the number of people who entered Poland from Ukraine from February 24 will exceed one million."

At the Medyka crossing, the busiest along Poland's roughly 500-kilometre border with Ukraine, refugees streamed past boxes of clothes laid out along a path from the border crossing while Scouts handed out hot tea, food and toiletries.

Some carried babies, others dogs and cats wrapped in blankets.



A woman reacts as crossing the border from Ukraine to Poland after fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in Medyka, Poland. — Reuters

Many joined a queue for buses to the nearby town Przemysl where friends, relatives and volunteers waited to take them to other cities in Poland and beyond.

Just inside Ukraine a 10-kilometre line of cars stretched back from the Polish border, almost bumper to bumper and sometimes two abreast. Refugees trudged alongside on foot carrying bags or dragging suitcases.

"In Kyiv there are many bombs and you sit in the basement and still hear it and because of that I left this

city," said Anna Klimova, 21, after crossing the border on her way to Wroclaw to stay with her brother. "It's a really hard situation."

Poland's Ukrainian community of around 1.5 million is the region's largest and makes the country a major destination point for refugees, though fleeing Ukrainians also cross to safety through Slovakia, Hungary and northern Romania.

Poland plans to launch a platform that will allow local governments, non-governmental

organisations and private companies to better coordinate relief efforts aimed at transporting supplies into Ukraine.

"Two border crossings have been designated through which this aid will be transported: Dorohusk-Jagodzin and Korczowa-Krakowiec," the head of the Polish prime minister's office Michał Dworczyk told reporters. "Through these two crossings, all humanitarian cargo transports can reach Ukraine." — AFP



My heart is being torn apart. I simply lack words. And I feel so sorry for these children. They're so young

OLHA KUCHER

Director of the Zaporizhzhia Central Christian Orphanage

Railways ready to boost grain exports by train

LVIV: Ukraine's state-run railway operator is ready to organise agricultural exports by rail as a matter of urgency, it said on Sunday, after closure of the country's Black Sea ports because of the military invasion by Russia. A major global agricultural producer and exporter, Ukraine has historically exported its grain, vegetable oils and other food products by ship.

POPE DEMANDS END TO WAR AND URGES TALKS

ROME: Pope Francis has called for an end to the fighting in Ukraine, telling worshippers in St Peter's Square in Rome: "I beg above all that the armed attacks stop and that negotiation and common sense prevail."

"There are rivers of blood and tears flowing in Ukraine," the Pope lamented, as some in the crowd held up Ukrainian flags. "This is not just a military operation, but a war that sows death, destruction and suffering," Francis said. He did not mention Russia in his address, but did thank journalists in Ukraine for their service, saying that they risked their lives to ensure that the public got reliable information and could "judge the cruelty of war." The POPE announced that two Catholic cardinals had travelled to Ukraine in solidarity with the population there. "The Holy See is ready to do everything and to put itself at the service of this peace," Francis said.

BBC WORLD NEWS TAKEN OFF AIR IN RUSSIA

LONDON: The BBC said that its World News television channel has been taken off the air in Russia as Moscow clamps down further on foreign media during its war in Ukraine. BBC World News presenter Victoria Derbyshire first announced the suspension to viewers outside Russia on Sunday. "BBC World News, the channel you are watching if you are outside the UK right now, and which is the BBC's global television news channel, has just been taken off air in Russia," she said. A BBC spokesperson said that BBC World News had not been available in Russia since Saturday. "We regret that our Russian audiences are being denied access to trusted and impartial news at a time when they need it most," the spokesperson said. — Reuters/AFP

Need for awareness to adopt healthier life choices



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician, content creator, health and wellness adviser

When it comes to food, usually flavour and palatability score the highest on taste buds and its nutritional value the lowest; not just for adults but for children as well. Try bartering a homemade healthy meal with some burger or pizza with a kid and you will land in dismay. Over the past decades, the vast accessibility and consumption of calorie-laden foodstuffs augmented with sedentary behaviours have cleared the way for childhood obesity than ever. Moreover, we too sometimes fail to draw the line between being healthy or being obese for our children.

Embryonically, “weight gain due to excessive or abnormal fat accumulation posing a health risk is overweight or obese”. To make matters worse, obesity has tripled since 1975 and for children aged

5-19, figures were 340 million for 2016 as per WHO statistics. In 2019, 38 million children under the age of 5 were overweight or obese.

At the launch of Oman Obesity Briefing Book in September 2021; Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, said, “The Sultanate of Oman faces a growing rise in the burden of obesity among its population. More than half of the Omani population are now overweight or obese with 30 per cent of the population having a BMI of more than 30.”

Ease of access and keenly priced ready-to-eat foodstuffs, irregular meals, impulsive snacking, increased food portions, long sitting hours, lack of interest in outdoor sports, gaming and other online activities have created an ‘obesogenic environment’ for children. Pandemic-driven online

ADVERTISING HAS A TREMENDOUS EFFECT ON GROOMING EATING HABITS IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

mode of education has only twisted the knife in the wound.

Staying entirely in an air-conditioned environment is also responsible for the bulge as the body has to make less effort to adjust to surrounding temperature thereby burning fewer calories. Moreover, cozy temperatures also lead to a rise in appetite during summers. Not to mention, food has been the source to seek comfort for mankind under stressful conditions for ages and the same goes with kids. This means that often they are eating not

out of hunger but out of emotions which is termed emotional eating; another contributing factor towards childhood obesity.

What is more, is future relationships and career prospects additionally affected for obese and overweight children leading to financial and emotional burdens in society.

The clock is constantly ticking and we need to raise awareness among the masses to adopt healthier life choices. These include promoting healthy eating in schools that are less fattening and more nourishing, encouraging cycling and walking options for commuters, active participation in sports activities, and liaising with the food industry to reduce energy and fat content as well as proper labeling of food products.

Advertising has a tremendous

effect on grooming eating habits in children and adolescents. Hence nutritious foods must be presented in luring ways and restrictions must be placed on marketing junk food. Most of us are unaware but foods that are labelled as ‘low fat’ are still energy-dense (high in calorie count and less in nutrient value) and this is a serious concern. We need to understand the fact that prevention is always the right choice rather than waiting for the worse to happen and then landing inactive and panic mode. The former has always been easier to practice than the latter.

The good news is health risks associated with obesity are largely reversible by making lifestyle changes emphasising lowering body weight and increasing physical activity. High time we start working on it!

Ukraine dominates social media info war with Russia

JORIS FIORITI

Ukraine has succeeded in dominating social media in the first days since the Russian attack, in an intensifying information war with Moscow that Kyiv so far appears to be winning, analysts say.

Even as President Volodymyr Zelensky remains bunkered down in Kyiv amid heavy bombardment and the fear of assassination, his government has forced an all-out assault on social media to win supporters for their cause.

Zelensky’s daily video addresses, usually published with English subtitles, have become viral sensations, while the defence and foreign ministries tout the military resistance of Ukraine in snazzy graphics.

Meanwhile, Ukrainians have posted videos showing the success of their forces that have become viral trends, including a Ukrainian missile shooting down a Russian helicopter and a Ukrainian farmer towing away captured Russian military hardware on his tractor. Self-shot videos of Ukrainians sobbing amid the ruins of their towns after Russia stepped up bombardments have also gripped people around the world.

More unverifiable viral claims have included the so-called “ghost of Kyiv”, a flying ace said to have downed a dozen Russian warplanes, or the Kyiv woman who purportedly knocked out a Russian drone with a jar of pickled cucumbers.

“In the first phase of the conflict, in terms of international opinion, the Ukrainians are clearly ahead in information”, said Baptiste Robert, founder of Predicta Lab, a French company fighting disinformation.

“The most impressive thing is that it is organic”, he said. “There is a real desire of the Ukrainians to document this war. When something happens, they pull out their phones.”

Robert said the majority of pro-Ukraine videos doing the rounds on Twitter are genuine, but there have been claims which subsequent fact-checking proved to be exaggerated.

In the early stages of the war, Kyiv hailed as heroes 13 border guards who it said lost their lives defending a tiny Black Sea island after swearing at the Russian forces over the radio.

They had in fact all survived, as the Ukrainian authorities later acknowledged. Ukraine’s Embassy in Paris denies any deliberate attempt to mislead, saying “we don’t do fake news”. Russia, accused of spreading disinformation in the 2016 US election to weigh the balance in favour of Donald Trump, is seen as a past master of such tactics. — AFP

Putin picked the wrong nation to mess with



Anastasiia Lapatina

The writer is a Ukrainian journalist and a reporter at *The Kyiv Independent*

For months, Ukraine worried and agonised about a potential attack. But in just over one week of hellish war, Ukrainians revealed themselves to be some of the bravest people in the world.

Against Russia’s full-scale assault, civilians across the country have been courageously, even terrifyingly, defiant.

There’s the man who stood in front of a Russian tank, pushing against it to stop it from advancing. And the man who picked up an unexploded mine from the road with his bare hands and carried it deep into a forest, with a cigarette in his mouth.

There’s the woman who walked up to a Russian soldier and told him to put sunflower seeds in his pockets. That way when he dies on Ukrainian land, she explained, flowers will grow.

And then there’s the already legendary story of the 13 Snake Island defenders who, when asked to capitulate, refused in gloriously colourful terms.

Yet these heroic displays barely scratch the surface of Ukrainian resistance.

From sharing food to taking up arms, Ukrainians across the country are united in repelling the invaders — and protecting our homeland. President Vladimir Putin was apparently confident that Russia would defeat Ukraine in two or three days. But he picked the wrong nation to mess with.

The Ukrainian Army, destroying enemy tanks and intercepting missiles, has been remarkable. And behind it stand legions of Ukrainians who have made camouflage netting, dispatched humanitarian aid and raised funds. The sums, for a country under attack, are astounding: In one day, Ukraine’s most-trusted military aid nonprofit, Come Back Alive, raised over \$680,000 — a donation larger than the amount raised in all of 2021. The National Bank of Ukraine, which opened a special account to raise funds for Ukraine’s military, received nearly \$10 million in just the first day of the war.

Some stories, like that of 8-year-old Alisa Zhuk from Kyiv, are especially touching. The little girl is selling her drawings for \$20 and up, donating all proceeds to the army — to make sure that Ukrainian soldiers have enough

UKRAINIANS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE UNITED IN REPELLING THE INVADERS — AND PROTECTING THEIR HOMELAND

food and clothes, she said. “Our children”, her mother told me, “will grow up proud of Ukraine.”

Many citizens have gone a step further in their support and joined territorial defence units.

As of February 26, two days into Russia’s attack, 37,000 Ukrainians were signed up. Now journalists, artists, musicians, TV hosts, comedians and thousands of others are patrolling the streets. Using conventional arms and Molotov cocktails — which have become something of a revered national weapon — they have apprehended saboteurs, shot down drones and stopped enemy tanks. In the defense of our country, they have been indispensable.

Ivan and Danylo Stolyarevskiy, brothers from Kyiv, wanted to join them. But because resources could not keep pace with the overwhelming number of volunteers, they were turned down. So the brothers joined Ukraine’s resistance online instead.

Ivan, 27, now spends his time writing Google reviews for Russian cafes and restaurants. But they are no ordinary reviews.

“Russian troops have been bombing Kyiv and its peaceful residents for 4 days”, one reads. “Go out in the streets — stop the deaths of children.” By flooding places where Russians are congregating online, Ivan and the hundreds of others writing similar messages hope to spread the truth of the Kremlin’s atrocities.

Danylo, 30, plays a different role. He’s part of the “IT Army of Ukraine”, a group chat with over 285,000 participants on the messaging app Telegram. There, web developers from all over the country coordinate cyberattacks on Russian and Belarusian websites. The method is quite simple.

Regular websites in Russia and Belarus aren’t equipped to handle large numbers of visitors, so to destabilise them, a group of people reload the web page many times.

Dozens of strategically important websites have been struck down, including that of the National Bank of Belarus.

“It is a drop in the ocean, but you feel your small contribution to the common cause”, Danylo told me.

That’s something every Ukrainian is doing, in ways big and small. Even under bombardment, people have lined up to donate blood, providing vital assistance to the country’s hospitals.

— *The New York Times*



Ukrainian volunteer fighters training to confront Russian forces.

A ‘Journey’ beyond man’s thought



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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

Challenges never stop arising every now and then during our lifetime. Regardless how big or small these challenges and difficulties are, they mark part of the daily experiences we come across. However, they don’t always tend to be serious one, but they are matters that take share of our attention, time and effort. This is the beauty of life; every dawn comes with a different surprise that

might be pleasing or frustrating.

Occasionally, it is our work place, others’ attitude, or finance-related issues that stand behind us getting challenged or irritated. Our feelings and personalities as well as those whom we work or live with could be another reason too. This happens like anything else in life as days are not always the same. As we could receive more than a challenge on a day, what actually matters is the way we perceive every challenge that we face.

It is us who control how we run the show on every single day! Being positive and looking at the brighter side of each experience is the best way to overcome disappointing or unpleasant challenges. Although it is not easy to manage our reactions, attitudes and feelings, we should always try to enjoy every moment of life.

As we look back at the old days of history, we recall the story of Ascension Day of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). The day, called Al Israa Wal Miraj, was a two-part night journey arranged by the Almighty Allah to the Prophet. The first part, Israa, was a travel on the back of a winged mule-like white beast, called Buraq, from Mecca to Jerusalem in Palestine where he led the past Prophets in a prayer. The second part was the Prophet’s ascension to Heaven where he was instructed by Allah of the duty for Muslims to pray five times a day, which is still a pillar of Islam.

The story of Al Israa Wal Miraj is described in the Holy Quran in the versus: “Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing”.

It is believed that the Al Israa Wal Miraj was not only a physical journey, but of a high spiritual level where the Prophet made the journey through spiritual vision. During his ascension, he met the past Prophets Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus and others as well. It is also stated that the Angel Gabriel accompanied him to some extent of the ascension.

The ascension was a matter of seeing Heaven and Hell and of getting new revelations from Allah. Before the night was over, the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) had returned to Mecca where his journey began. It is important to remember that this ascension was not the end of Muhammad’s life for he lived about another 10 years after that. The Al Israa Wal Miraj journey was a relief to the Prophet after he lost his wife Khadija and his uncle Abdulmotalib who was signifying the real family support to him.

The occasion is being observed by Muslims all over the world on the 27th of Rajab, the seventh month in the Islamic Calendar. It is one of the most important events in the history of Islam. Commemorating the anniversary of this historical story signifies the importance of patience while facing challenges of life. As well, it teaches human beings how strong they should be like all the Prophets of Allah who were struggling with their people. They were sparing no effort to guide their people and teach them the religions and messages from Allah.



A SELFIE WITH A VINTAGE

A visitor takes a picture with the ‘MG-TB 1939’ car at a vintage cars display during a heritage auto show in Chennai, India, on Sunday. – AFP

Will Ukraine’s tragedy spur UN Security Council reform?

KEMAL DERVIŞ & JOSÉ ANTONIO OCAMPO

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has exposed many grave weaknesses in the international order. One prominent flaw that needs addressing concerns the United Nations Security Council and its role in overseeing the multilateral system. Specifically, and underscoring a point we highlighted in our essay in a recent Brookings Institution report, the war in Ukraine has once again shown the veto power of the Security Council’s five permanent members to be a major stumbling block to peace.

Chapter I, Article 1 of the UN Charter, which was drafted following the devastation of World War II, states that the UN’s first purpose is to maintain international peace and security. To that end, the organisation aims to prevent threats to peace, suppress acts of aggression, and bring about peaceful settlement of international disputes. Chapters VI and VII of the Charter entrust this core mission to the Security Council.

But the absolute veto power granted by Article 27 to each of the Council’s permanent members (the P5, comprising China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) has from the beginning been a key obstacle to the body’s fulfilment of its mission. That is because the P5 have almost always been divided into rival geopolitical blocs, with a member of one bloc — mostly either the Soviet Union (and now its heir, Russia) or the US — exercising its veto on many crucial decisions.

Russia’s blitz on Ukraine is a stark reminder of the Security Council’s

inability when the interests of one or more of the P5 conflict with those of the other members. After WWII, optimists hoped that a threat to security would lead the Security Council initially to impose comprehensive binding economic sanctions in order to deter aggression and encourage peaceful conflict resolution.

But in the current Ukraine conflict, Russia’s Security Council veto means that the US and its allies can impose sanctions only through a “coalition of the willing.” True, the large number of countries and the extraterritorial reach of the dollar-based payments system gives US-imposed sanctions tremendous clout. Yet, in this case as in others, a Security Council-enforced system of global sanctions would be even more debilitating to the sanctioned economy.

Moreover, the emerging role of digital money and changes in the international monetary system that it might bring about could soon diminish the dollar’s role and reduce what a US-led coalition of the willing can achieve. And in other cases, such as former US President Donald Trump’s 2018 decision to reimpose harsh economic sanctions against Iran, the dollar’s extraterritorial reach has generated considerable resentment even among US allies.

Finally, while much of the world is currently rallying around the US-led coalition of democracies in the face of Russian war against Ukraine, unfortunately we cannot rule out the possibility that a future Trump or Trump-like administration in the US does something that could potentially make its Security Council veto a problem for much of the democratic world.

The fact that an increasingly illegitimate and ineffective Security Council lies at the heart of today’s multilateral system is all the more unfortunate given the growing range of threats to peace and security. These include not only conventional acts of aggression of the sort the world is witnessing in Ukraine — and which could yet escalate to nuclear exchanges — but also other security threats posed by new technologies.

For example, state or non-state actors could cause havoc through devastating cyberattacks or the abuse of artificial intelligence. Synthetic viruses even more deadly than the coronavirus that caused Covid-19 could inflict unspeakable harm, whether through bioterror or bio-error. And climate change is a threat to all of humanity that must be on a reformed Security Council’s radar screen. Tight and universally binding regulations are urgently needed in all of these domains.

We therefore advocate radically changing the way the Security Council operates, by introducing the possibility of overturning a permanent member’s veto. This could be done by adding a clause to Article 27 that would allow a large double majority — representing, for example, at least two-thirds of member countries and two-thirds of the world’s population — to override a veto.

Our proposal would be vetoed today by Russia and probably China — and perhaps also by the three democracies among the P5, including the US. But a large majority of countries would likely support it. In fact, this is an ideal time for the world’s democracies, including the US, to propose such a change. By backing it, President Joe Biden’s administration could seize the moment and show its determination to create a more equitable and inclusive multilateral system. This would send a powerful — and widely welcomed — message that the US is confident that its enlightened national self-interest will be in accord with the interests of a large majority of the world’s countries and people.

At first, such a proposal would be unlikely to get sufficient backing in the US Congress. But every crisis contains an opportunity. A scheme as outlined above could spur support for reform in the US and other democracies among all who are concerned about old and new threats to human security.

With peace increasingly at risk, the Security Council could play a much greater role in mitigating dangers. Let us hope that Russia’s aggression against Ukraine triggers a radical change that makes the body more legitimate and effective. ©Project Syndicate, 2021



A local resident walks past anti-tank structures blocking the streets of the centre of Kyiv on Sunday. – AFP



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BILAL KHAN TAKES FIVE WICKETS IN 12-RUN WIN



OMAN EDGE UAE IN OPENING MATCH

BRIEF SCORES

Oman 225/7 in 50 overs (Shoaib Khan 61 (89) 3 x 4 ; Zahoor Khan 55/3) beat UAE 213 all out in 48.5 overs (Vriitya Aravind 44 (55) 5 x 4; Bilal Khan 31/5) by 12 runs

MUSCAT: Oman beat the United Arab Emirates by 12 runs in the ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup League 2 match at the ICC Academy in Dubai on Saturday.

Put to bat after losing the toss, an 85-run fourth-wicket partnership between Shoaib Khan and Ayaan Khan provided the foundation for Oman to build on. Shoaib top-scored with an 89 ball 61 and the pair consolidated remarkably well after the early dismissals of both openers.

However, both were sent back in the space of four overs to place

the UAE in command once again. Rohan Mustafa provided the initial breakthrough with Ayaan’s wicket and Zahoor Khan claimed the prized scalp of Shoaib. The two of them were UAE’s top performers with the ball, picking up two and three wickets respectively.

A 35-run contribution from captain Zeeshan Maqsood to go with Sandeep Goud’s 22 took Oman past the 200 mark. They eventually finished on 225/7 after 50 overs.

In response, the hosts were bundled out for 213. Vriitya

Aravind, who claimed three catches along with a stumping in the first innings, top scored with a 65-ball 44.

Kaleemullah was imperious in the powerplay for Oman. He sent the dangerous opening pair of Muhammad Waseem and Chirag Suri packing for a combined score of 12. Ayaan Khan, Mohammad Nadeem and Khawar Ali all picked up one middle-order wicket apiece but undoubtedly the star with the ball was Bilal Khan, who cleaned up the UAE lower order all on his

own. He finished with figures of 5/31 in 9.5 overs.

A lack of meaningful partnerships proved costly for the UAE. Chundangapoyil Rizwan, Asif Khan and Rohan Mustafa all got starts but none of them crossed the 25-run mark. Basil Hameed and Ahmad Raza did so but were unable to play a match-defining knock like Shoaib Khan had done in the first innings. Oman on the other hand were disciplined in the field and with the ball in hand, clinching a deserved victory in the end.

Omani riders clinch 9 gold at International Showjumping event

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MARCH 6

The International Showjumping Championship (Masters 2022), organised by the Mojo Equestrian Centre, in cooperation with the Oman Equestrian Federation (OEF) and under the supervision of the International Equestrian Federation, took place over two days in Barka with the participation of 110 riders.

The closing ceremony was attended by Munthir bin Saif bin Hamad al Busaidy, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Equestrian Federation, in the presence of a number of sports federations and heads of representatives of government and private cavalry units and representatives of the sponsoring companies.

The Omani riders won 23 medals, including 9 gold, 7 silver and 7 bronze.

The championship witnessed strong competition among 110 riders from 12 countries. Oman, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Britain, America, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Canada, Italy, Iraq and Morocco riders took part in the event.

The first women’s championship was also launched.

In the first round for new local horses and riders (hurdles height 70-80 cm), 8 horses participated.

Anas bin Walid al Wahaibi on ‘Hajis’ from Al Amerat Equestrian School came first, followed by Abdulrahman al Harrasi by ‘Sandy Baba’ from Al Rayyan Centre and Omar bin Imad al Wahaibi on ‘Ram’ from Al Amerat Equestrian School.

The second round for local beginners’ category (hurdles 90-95 cm) saw 18 riders in action. Qasim bin Muhammad al Farsi

on ‘Sohar’ from the Royal Oman Police (ROP) won the top spot. Haider Anwar al Rashed on ‘Shars’ from the Arabian Stables, was second and Asaad al Hadi by ‘Hayam’ (ROP) came third.

In the women’s third international round, (105 cm) 12 horses took part. Amna bint Nasser al Sharjiyah over ‘Roel’ from Oman won the top place. Natasha Langrish over ‘Linka’ from the United Kingdom claimed second and Heba Samhoury on ‘Fantastic’ from the Jordan finished third.

The fourth round for Category E (height 105 cm), saw 28 participants and Omani riders took the top three places. Madin bin Saeed al Yousufi on ‘Wadood’ claimed first, Al Munthir bin Mohammed al Toobi on ‘Aram’ was second and Mohammed bin Hamoud al Touqi on ‘Gold Girl’ finished third.

In the international fifth round for Category D (hurdles 110 cm), 15 riders participated.

Haider Anwar al Rashed on ‘Weidam’ from Iraq won the first place, Hamoud bin Sultan al Touqi on ‘Danny de Ferheit’ from Oman was second and Jamal bin Humaid al Sharyani on ‘E Jain’ from Oman came third.

Four riders took part in the sixth round for Category C (120 cm). Hamoud bin Sultan al Touqi on ‘Philo’ was first, followed by Barakat bin Muhanna al Hadi on ‘Al Adham’ and Shaikh Khalid bin Saeed al Wahaibi on ‘Ali Bey’.

Oman swept the seventh international round for Category B (130 cm). Sultan bin Hamoud al Touqi won the first place on the ‘Hangover’, Hamoud bin Sultan al Touqi on ‘Talbot’ was second and Mohammed bin Salim al Hadhrami over ‘Raja’ finished third.



Vastrakar, Rana stand sees India overwhelm Pakistan

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, NEW ZEALAND: India dispatched a meek Pakistan by 107 runs after a record stand by Pooja Vastrakar and Sneha Rana overcame a mid-innings slump in their Women’s Cricket World Cup clash at Mount Maunganui on Sunday.

The first clash between the Asian rivals since India’s victory in the 2017 World Cup ended with Pakistan all out in the 43rd over for 137 in reply to India’s 244 for seven.

Pakistan sensed they had the upper hand when they had India six for 114 in the 34th over. But Vastrakar and Rana rescued the innings with a World Cup record seventh-wicket stand of 122 to get

the score up to 244 for seven.

Vastrakar, the player of the match, belted 67 off 59 deliveries before she was bowled by Fatima Sana at the start of the final over while Rana was unbeaten on 53 off 48.

While it was a comprehensive victory for India, captain Mithali Raj said there was plenty to work on if they were to make the play-offs. “A very important partnership there between Pooja and Sneha brought us to the total we put on the board, but that is something we would like to address, because when you start playing the tournament, it’s important that your top order scores runs,” she said.



India’s Pooja Vastrakar (R) plays a shot as Pakistan’s wicketkeeper Sidra Nawaz looks on during the Round 1 Women’s Cricket World cup match at Bay Oval. – AFP

BRIEF SCORES

IND V PAK
India 244 for seven in 50 overs (P. Vastrakar 67, S. Rana 53 not out; S. Mandhana 52, N. Sandu 2-36, N. Dar 2-45) bt Pakistan 137 all out in 43 overs (Sidra Ameen 30; R. Gayakwad 4-31, J. Goswami 2-26, S, Rana 2-27).

RSA V BAN (SATURDAY)
South Africa 207 all out in 49.5 overs (M. Kapp 42, L. Wolvaardt 41; F. Trisna 3-35, J. Alam 2-28).
Bangladesh 175 all out in 49.3 overs (S. Akhter 34, N. Sultana 29; A. Khaka 4-32, M. Klaas 2-36).

AUS V ENG
Australia 310-3 in 50 overs (R. Haynes 130, M. Lanning 86; N. Sciver 2-68).
England 298-8 in 50 overs (N. Sciver 109 n.o., T. Beaumont 74; A. King 3-59, J. Jonassen 2-18).

At the top of the order for India, Smriti Mandhana and Deepti Sharma contributed 52 and 40 respectively and, along with Vastrakar and Rana, the quartet provided all but 32 of their total.

Pakistan did not help their cause by giving away 11 extras including three in a nine-ball over from Fatima Sana that included two wides and a no ball.

While the required run rate was under five an over, Pakistan fell off the pace from the start.

The veteran left-armer Gayakwad took four for 31 off her 10 overs while teenager Ghosh had a hand in five dismissals with four catches and a stumping.

— AFP

Jadeja stars as India crush Lanka



MOHALI, India: All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja starred with bat and bowl to lead India to a crushing innings-and-222-run victory over Sri Lanka inside three days of the first Test on Sunday.

In Virat Kohli's 100th Test and Rohit Sharma's first as captain, Jadeja hit an unbeaten 175 in India's 574-8 declared and then claimed a match tally of nine wickets with his left-arm spin in Mohali.

"This is my lucky ground. Whenever I come here, I always get positive vibes," Jadeja, 33, said afterwards. "I haven't done anything differently with my batting, just backing my instincts. I try to settle down and after that I play my shots. I try to keep it simple."

Jadeja, named player of the match, returned figures of 5-41 to help bowl out Sri Lanka for 174 in their first innings after the tourists resumed the day on 108-4.

Enforcing the follow-on, the

hosts then dismissed Sri Lanka for 178 in the final session to lead the two-match series 1-0.

Niroshan Dickwella stood unbeaten on 51 when Ravichandran Ashwin got the final wicket of number 11 Lahiru Kumara, who was struggling with his hamstring injury, triggering wild celebrations.

Ashwin, who now has 436 scalps in 85 Tests, took four wickets in Sri Lanka's second innings and surpassed pace bowling great Kapil Dev's tally of 434 scalps.

He is now India's second highest wicket-taker behind spin legend Anil Kumble, who finished his career with 619 Test scalps.

Ashwin rattled the top-order with two wickets on either side of the lunch break as he sent back Lahiru Thirimanne for nought and Pathum Nissanka caught behind for six.

Pace bowler Mohammed Shami was rewarded for his

SCOREBOARD	
INDIA 1ST INNINGS 574-8 DEC	
SRI LANKA 1ST INNINGS	
D Karunaratne lbw Jadeja	28
L Thirimanne lbw Ashwin	17
P Nissanka not out	61
A Mathews lbw Bumrah	22
D de Silva lbw Ashwin	1
C Asalanka lbw Bumrah	29
N Dickwella c Iyer b Jadeja	2
S Lakmal c Ashwin b Jadeja	0
L Embuldeniya c Agarwal b Shami	0
V Fernando c Sharma b Jadeja	0
I Kumara b Jadeja	0
Extras (lb6, nb8)	14
Total (all out 65 overs)	174
Fall of wickets: 1-48, 2-59, 3-96, 4-103, 5-161, 6-164, 7-164, 8-173, 9-174	
Bowling: Shami 12-5-27-1, Bumrah 14-3-36-2, Ashwin 20-7-49-2, Yadav 6-2-15-0, Jadeja 13-4-41-5	
SRI LANKA 2ND INNINGS	
L Thirimanne c Sharma b Ashwin	0
D Karunaratne c Pant b Shami	27
P Nissanka c Pant b Ashwin	6
A Mathews lbw Jadeja	28
D de Silva c Iyer b Jadeja	30
C Asalanka c Kohli b Ashwin	20
N Dickwella not out	51
S Lakmal c Yadav b Jadeja	0
L Embuldeniya c Pant b Jadeja	2
V Fernando lbw Shami	0
I Kumara c Shami b Ashwin	4
Extras (b4, lb5, nb1)	10
Total (all out, 60 overs)	178
Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-19, 3-45, 4-94, 5-121, 6-121, 7-121, 8-153, 9-170	
Bowling: Ashwin 21-5-47-4, Shami 8-1-48-2, Jadeja 16-5-46-4, Yadav 11-3-21-0, Bumrah 4-1-7-0	

consistency as he got skipper Dimuth Karunaratne caught behind for 27.

Angelo Mathews (28) and Dhananjaya de Silva (30) then put on 49 runs in their attempt to resist the team's quick fall before Jadeja broke the stand.

Earlier in Sri Lanka's first innings Pathum Nissanka top-scored with an unbeaten 61 and with his overnight partner Asalanka to put up some resistance in the first hour of play.

Nissanka hung on but wickets kept tumbling and Jadeja took two wickets in one over twice to send the opposition packing.

With the bat, Jadeja recorded a Test best in his second century of his career and put on marathon partnerships, including a 130-run seventh-wicket stand with Ashwin, to deflate the opposition.

Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant took the attack to the Sri Lanka bowlers on day one with his quickfire 96. —AFP



Australia's Usman Khawaja plays a shot during the third day of the first Test against Pakistan at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi. — AFP

Khawaja misses ton as Pakistan Test hit by rain

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan: Australian opener Usman Khawaja said he was disappointed to have missed what would have been a "memorable hundred" in the country of his birth as his side made a strong response to Pakistan on Sunday on the third day of the first Test in Rawalpindi.

Bad light stopped play and then rain poured down with Australia on 271-2, trailing Pakistan by 205 runs with eight wickets remaining after the home side declared on Saturday at 476-4.

Marnus Labuschagne was on 69 and Steve Smith 24, but with rain forecast for the last two days a result is unlikely. It could still have been a memorable day for Khawaja had he completed his 11th Test century in Pakistan, where he was born in 1986 before his parents emigrated to Australia.

"It was a bit disappointing," said Khawaja, who was caught on 97. "You come to the change room and feel worse than getting a 20 in some respects."

The left hander was caught at forward short leg by Imam-ul-Haq as he gloved a reverse sweep off left-arm spinner Nauman Ali.

Umpire Aleem Dar ruled him not out, but Pakistan were given the wicket on review.

"My family would have been watching back home... my wife too, who is pregnant with our second child," said Khawaja.

"But if you put that in perspective, then I was not in the Australian team two months ago so I am very grateful and happy that I have contributed to the team's total in the end."

Khawaja's 219-minute knock included 15 boundaries and he put on 156 for the opening wicket with David Warner, who made an attractive 68. Warner fell in the eighth over after lunch when he missed a square drive and was bowled by off-spinner Sajid Khan.

The pair scored at more than four an over in the morning session, a contrast to the Pakistan first innings which lasted two days and 162 overs. — AFP



MUSCAT: The Grand cricket tournament 2022, a knockout tennis ball T10 tournament organised by the Grand Global Investment (GGI), began at the Al Hail Cricket Club grounds with the participation of 48 teams on the weekend.

On the first day on Friday, Karla Friends bt Qurum Tuskers by 72 runs, Bahmani CC beat Legends XI by 9 runs, Beagles CT bt Falcon by six wickets, Ruwi Smashers thrashed Rayyan Royals by 125 runs, Rebels XI beat United CC by 46 runs, Spartans beat Team 08 Muscat by 2 wickets and Desert Warriors defeated Muscat Zalmi by six wickets.

On Saturday, Tamil CC got a walkover against Jaguar Cricketers to the next round, AHC 11 got the better of Abeer Warriors by 7 wickets, Proline Knight Riders beat Deccan Stars by 9 wickets, MIS Fighters beat Rising Star Sharadi by 71 runs, Kingstar Ghubra got a walkover against BLS International Service and Adrak Blasters prevailed over Chanks Mabelah by 52 runs.

Ali Humaid al Alawi, Chairman of Grand Global Investment, opened the tournament in presence of the organising committee members. Al Alawi said it was exciting to watch the action with many families watching the event on the weekend.

"The matches were exciting and

the teams brought out their best performance. There were some families enjoying the cricket also," he said.

Tournament director Sanjit Kanojia said there were some high scoring games as 14 teams advanced to the second round.

Altam from Ruwi Smashers became the first centurion of the tournament with a 34-ball 117 runs studded with 15 sixers. Meanwhile, the Women's Cup matches will begin on March 12 with four matches and the remaining three matches will be played on March 26.

Indian Social Club Oman, Sun Shine International SPC, Seema Dance Academy (SDA), Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir and Aster Hospital will compete for the honours.



Akshay helps Yalla Shabab to victory

MUSCAT: Akshaykumar Patel was the hero of Oman Stallions' exciting 3-wicket win over Yalla Shabab in a 50-over Premier Division League clash at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Amerat on Friday.

Stallions bowled exceptionally well to dismiss Yalla Shabab for 184 in 47.3 overs, Akshay and Hemalkumar Tandel taking three wickets each and Mehran Khan picking up two. Wasim Ali top-scored with a fine 72.

Akshay led the chase with a solid 45 with other notable contributions from Prasad Sankata (40) and Pratik Athavale (30). Jitenkumar Ramanandi and Sanuth Ebrahim bagged two wickets each.

GANESH BOWLS MUSCAT TO VICTORY

In another Premier Division game on Saturday, Ganesh Chandrashekhar picked up 4 for



Akshay Patel of Oman Stallions

34 to help Muscat CT to a 6-wicket victory against Ibn Abdul Samad Engineering & Construction Co (IAS) at OC Turf 1.

IAS were bundled out for a lowly 137 in the 50th over, Haythim Bahar top-scoring with 71. Samay Shrivastava and Chonira Aiyappa took two wickets each.

Muscat raced to the target in only the 24th over, scoring 143 for 4 thanks to Hashir Dafedar's

unbeaten 41 and Chonira's 15-ball 30 not out.

NISHAD STARS IN ZAWAWI WIN

Top class all-round show by Nishad KS lifted Zawawi Powertech to a big 112-run win over Ernst and Young (E&Y) in a 50-over A Division League encounter at OC Turf 2 on Friday.

Opening the batting, Nishad top-scored with a solid 72 as Zawawi posted a robust 296 all out on the board in 47 overs with other notable scores coming from Nalaka Pathum (53) and Mohan Kumar (46). Masud Parvez claimed 3 for 68.

E&Y could not respond with equal force, folding up for 184 in the 40th over due to excellent bowling by Nishad (3 for 33) and Vijeesh Chennangaden (3 for 46). Shrey Wilson was the main scorer with 49.

BRIEF SCORES

Premier Division

Yalla Shabab 184 all out in 47.3 overs (Wasim Ali 72 - 6x4, 1x6, Hassnain Ali 39 - 2x4, 4x6, Akshaykumar Patel 3-31, Hemalkumar Tandel 3-37, Mehran Khan 2-28) lost to Oman Stallions 188 for 7 in 38.2 overs (Akshaykumar Patel 45 - 4x4, 4x6, Prasad Sankata 40 - 5x4, Pratik Athavale 30 - 5x4, Jitenkumar Ramanandi 2-24, Sanuth Ebrahim 2-47) by 3 wickets.

IAS (Ibn Abdul Samad Eng & Cons)

137 all out in 49.1 overs (Haythim Bahar 71 - 8x4, Ganesh Chandrashekhar 4-34, Samay Shrivastava 2-20, Chonira Aiyappa 2-24) lost to Muscat CT 143 for 4 in 23.3 overs (Hashir Dafedar 41 - 5x4, Chonira Aiyappa 30 - 3x4, 2x6) by 6 wickets.

A Division

Zawawi Powertech 296 all out in 47 overs (Nishad KS 72 - 5x4, Nalaka Pathum 53 - 4x4, 4x6, Mohan Kumar 46 - 3x4, 1x6, Masud Parvez 3-68, Chadith Lakmal 2-48, Shrey Wilson 2-27, Rana Zeeshan 2-54) beat Ernst & Young 184 all out in 39.1 overs (Shrey Wilson 49 - 5x4, 2x6, Nishad KS 3-33, Vijeesh Channengaden 3-46, Prabhakaran Kannan 2-22) by 112 runs.

CRICKET’S ULTIMATE SHOWMAN

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, MARCH 6

Shane Warne’s cricketing legend and rockstar persona was a cult all its own in the eyes of the people who knew him, loved him and admired him.

There probably will never be a cricketer who embodied oodles of talent, alluring charisma, excellence and mad genius with the swagger of a Hollywood movie star or music icon.

Someone who changed the art of leg spin forever with his mesmerising skills that bamboozled batsmen around the world.

The superstar who made the challenging medium of leg spin box office material in Test cricket. Warne changed Test cricket forever with his stunning exploits as he burst onto the scene.

Although the 1992 debut series against India was uneventful and full of learnings against a vastly experienced Indian team, who are the best players of spin.



It was the year 1993 when Shane Keith Warne was selected to be a part of Australia’s squad for the Ashes tour of England where he made the world sit up and take notice of him.

England batting’s lynchpin Mike Gatting was the victim of what is now famously known as the ‘Ball of the Century’.

It was Warne’s first ball of the Ashes series and he gave it an almighty tweak that saw the ball pitch well outside leg stump before clipping the off bail.

Gatting’s face was that of bewilderment of what had just transpired. It looked as if the ball had spun a mile before taking out the off bail.

This single event changed Warne’s life as the English media and later the international media went into a frenzy.

What followed over the course of the next 15 years was magical as he treated cricket fans around the world to his unique stage show of leg spin bowling.

For Warne, it would not be wrong to say that Test match cricket was a stage for him to perform the fine arts. In this case, it was the Art of Leg Spin.

With 708 Test wickets and 293 ODI wickets, Warne was a colossus of a bowler who was a core element of Australia’s 1990s-2000s Invincibles teams under Steve Waugh and Ricky Ponting.



BATTLE WITH TENDULKAR
Warne’s battles with Indian batting legend Sachin Tendulkar on Australia’s 1998 tour of India and his contests with Tendulkar in the Coca Cola Trophy in Sharjah the same year is the stuff of lore.

Although, Tendulkar had the better of him most of the time, especially in Sharjah, Warne had his share of success too.

Together, the two forged a great friendship based on mutual respect and admiration and both these young superstars of that era had the privilege of meeting the great Sir Don Bradman on India’s 1999 tour of Australia.



BRUSH WITH CONTROVERSIES
Australia’s 1994 tour of Pakistan when Warne and Mark Waugh were accused of having accepted offers from bookmakers to underperform was a low point for Warne.

Controversies were never far away for Warne as he lived life right on the edge. That was his persona. That was just Warnie being Warnie.

He was probably flawed in the conventional sense of the way but he was just being genuinely himself.

What defined him overwhelmingly throughout his career was his passion for the game and in particular, leg spin bowling.

He loved sharing his knowledge and insights with the younger breed of players coming through. The latest known recipients have been Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav and Rashid Khan.

When Warne was at the helm of affairs at Rajasthan Royals in the inaugural IPL in 2008, the Australian legend referred to Jadeja as the ‘Rockstar’. This was when Jadeja was yet to make it.

Today, Jadeja is one of the finest all rounder’s in the world and a critical cog in the wheel in India’s world-beating Test team and limited overs set ups.

LOYAL FRIEND

Warne was known to be a steadfast and loyal friend and some of his Australian team-mates and other players from the cricket fraternity would vouch for that.

On the 1997 tour of England, former Australian wicket-keeper batsman and legend Adam Gilchrist spoke about Warne’s magnanimous personality.

“His generosity, underestimated by those who didn’t know him, was a strong suit of Warnie’s. I remember flying home with a knee injury after the third Test at Old Trafford in 1997 and Warnie was on the same flight because his daughter Brooke was born.

“We flew home together and he used his points to upgrade me to first class. Sitting next to a legend who had just become a father was an experience I will always cherish.

“At Christmas he would pay for a lavish function at his home and I know the English team benefited from his generosity this summer,” added Gilchrist.

As Gilchrist said, “I know time heals and people come in but there’s only one Warnie”.

Yes.
There is only ONE Warnie.



Shocked, stunned & miserable... Will miss you Warnie. There was never a dull moment with you around, on or off the field. Will always treasure our on field duels & off field banter. You always had a special place for India & Indians had a special place for you. Gone too young!



Sachin Tendulkar,
Indian batting legend

This is absolutely unbelievable. Shocked beyond words. A legend and one of the greatest players ever to grace the game..
Gone too soon...
Condolences to his family and friends.



VVS Laxman, former India batsman

Cannot believe it. One of the greatest spinners, the man who made spin cool, superstar Shane Warne is no more. Life is very fragile, but this is very difficult to fathom. My heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and fans all around the world.



Virender Sehwag, former India batsman

Just heard the devastating news about legendary Shane Warne passing away. No words to describe how shocked & sad i am.
What a legend. What a man. What a cricketer.



Shoaib Akhtar, former Pakistan bowler

Sad, speechless, and completely shocked. An incredible loss to cricket. I have no words. Thank you for everything you’ve done for the sport. Rest in Peace, Shane Warne. Sending my condolences to his loved ones.



Shikhar Dhawan, India batsman



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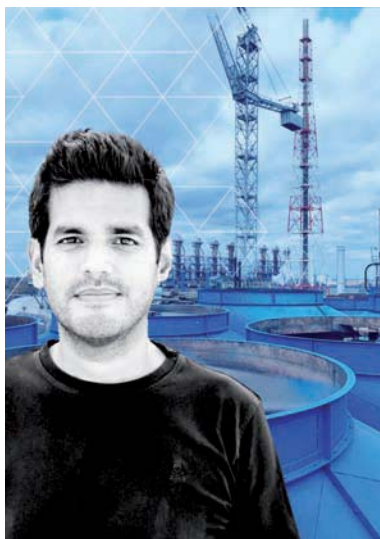
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MOMENTOUS RESULTS: Pilot project by Muscat-based carbon removal firm 44.01 yields 500 kg of Blue Ammonia using mineralisation process

In a first for the Sultanate Oman, 44.01 (a local Omani technology start-up) has carried out a pilot project to produce Blue Ammonia. This project was made possible by 44.01's CO₂ mineralisation process, which turns captured CO₂ into rock, making this the world's first Blue Ammonia using mineralisation. Blue chemicals

Talal Hasan (pictured), co-founder and CEO, 44.01, commented: "What's exciting is that ammonia is just one product we can turn Blue. We can replicate



this for any other chemical which has CO2 emissions and can help multiple industries decarbonise their products with



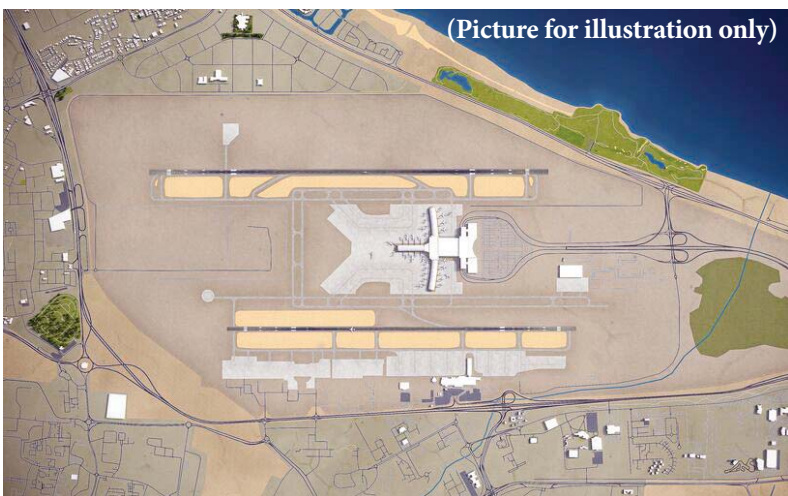
“We are so excited to have produced Oman’s first Blue Ammonia and the world’s

first Blue Ammonia using mineralisation. Although this was just a demonstration with small quantities, this is something we can

More recently in May 24, 2021, ADNOC in the UAE have announced the development of a world-scale blue ammonia production facility at the Ta'ziz Industrial Chemicals Zone in Ruwais.

CATALYSING GROWTH: Strong boost for air cargo throughput in line with National Air Cargo Strategy 2030

The concept of Airport Free Zones anchored by large Airport



The biggest of these was planned in the vicinity of Muscat International Airport. Covering an area of over 350 hectares, the proposed Muscat Airport City

With the promulgation of a new legislation framework governing the introduction of airport free zones for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman, the country's three key airports will anchor new economic developments similar to how seaports anchor adjoining free zones or special economic zones. They promise to herald the growth of a new economic sector around airports, air cargo, e-commerce, sea-to-air logistics, and aeronautical services, among other activities.

Invitation From Bank Muscat (S.A.O.G)
For an Extraordinary General Meeting and an Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Shareholders of the Bank

Bank Muscat "S.A.O.G" takes pleasure in inviting all its shareholders to an Extraordinary General Meeting and an Annual Ordinary General Meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 22nd March 2022. The meeting will be convened at "Zaiba Hall" at Hormuz Grand Muscat Hotel at the Airport Heights. Shareholders can also participate in the meeting via the electronic platform to hold the general meetings, which can be accessed via the Muscat Clearing and Depository's website (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum for this meeting is not met, a second meeting will be convened at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, 24th March 2022, at the same location and through the same electronic platform. The meeting will consider and decide on the following Agenda:

First: The Agenda for the Extraordinary General Meeting

1. Proposed amendments of the Articles of Association of the Bank. The proposed amendments shall not, however, be effective and valid unless they have been approved by the regulatory bodies.

Second: The Agenda for the Annual Ordinary General Meeting:

1. To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
2. To consider and approve the report on Corporate Governance for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
3. To consider the Auditor's report and approval of the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Accounts for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
4. To consider the report of the Shari'a Supervisory Board of Meethaq, the Islamic Banking Window, for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
5. To consider and approve the recommendation to distribute cash dividend of (30) Baiza for each share for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
6. To consider and approve the recommendation to distribute stock dividend at the rate of (5%) per share of the issued share capital of the Bank (being 5 bonus shares for each 100 shares) for the financial year ended 31st December 2021. The approval of the distribution of the bonus shares will result in the increase of the issued share capital of the Bank from (3,574,474,792) shares to (3,753,198,531) shares of a nominal value of (100) Baiza each.
7. To consider and ratify the sitting fees for the Board of Directors and its committees' meetings for the financial year ended 31st December 2021 and fixing sitting fees for the current financial year.
8. To consider and approve the Board of Directors' remuneration of RO 300,000/- for the financial year ended 31st December 2021.
9. Appointment of Shari'a Supervisory Board of Meethaq, the Islamic Banking Window and fixing their sitting fees and remunerations.
10. To appoint the statutory auditors for the Bank and the external independent Sharia auditors for Meethaq, the Islamic Banking Window of the Bank, for the financial year ending 31st December 2022 and fixing their fees, subject to the applicable regulatory approvals.
11. To elect a new Board of Directors for the Bank. Those who wish to nominate themselves for the election of the Board of Directors, whether shareholders or not, must fill-in the nomination forms prepared by the Capital Market Authority (CMA) for such purpose. Nomination forms are available at the CMA's site and the Head Office of the Bank. The completed and signed nomination forms and the supporting identity documents, an ID copy for an Omani National or a copy of a Resident Card and a copy of a passport for a non-Omani, must be submitted to the Secretariat of the Board of Directors at the Head Office of the Bank not later than 3:00 pm. on Wednesday, 16th March, 2022.

In accordance with the regulations for holding general meetings using modern technology issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

1. A Juristic person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the general meetings and vote on its behalf through the electronic platform, provided that this natural person has an investor number at Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
2. Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the meetings until the end of the voting process during the meeting, in the event that the shareholder's shareholding balance is changed by increase or decrease, the voting process will be canceled, and he will have to vote again on the day of the meetings.

For any clarifications in respect of the agenda of the above meetings, please contact: Ms. Fatma Malallah Mohamed Al Lawati, the Secretariat to the Board of Directors, at Tel. No. (24768345) or E-mail (fmallah@bankmuscat.com).

Khalid bin Mustahail Al Mashani
Chairman of the Board of Directors

Ernst & Young
Statutory Auditors of the Bank and External Independent Sharia Auditors for Meethaq, the Islamic Banking Window

Legal Advisor

National Finance, Sharakah hold “Calculate it Right” workshops

National Finance, Oman’s leading finance company, conducted the first workshop of “Calculate it Right” programme in collaboration with the Fund for Development of Youth Projects, “Sharakah”. The workshop took place in National Finance’s main office in Muscat and comes under the company’s independent wing for sustainable initiatives — ‘Imtidad’.

The initiative targets existing and potential entrepreneurs, and aims to equip business owners with the necessary skills set in financial management and resource planning. The workshop shed light on the basics of determining the required capital for projects, the mechanism for calculating sales projections, the availability of the required resources, factors affecting sales, calculating operating expenses, and other related fields.

Tariq al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance said: “Joining hands with Sharakah to develop the skills of local talents reflects the vision of the company’s independent wing for sustainable initiatives — ‘Imtidad’. Through Imtidad, we aspire to form strategic partnerships with stakeholders to benefit the community as a whole. Imtidad seeks to deliver effective and sustainable initiatives that resonate with our endeavours towards contributing to the development of local communities



as well as developing the skills of its people.”

“Through these workshops, we aim to uplift the capabilities of the upcoming generation of entrepreneurs, help them realise their potential and support in executing their projects. The workshops provide a plethora of advantages for the participants such as experiencing the atmosphere of entrepreneurship first-hand through effective training, and challenges that stimulate reality. During this year, we will conduct another four

workshops across the Sultanate,” said Faris bin Mohammed al Harthy, Senior Project Specialist at Sharakah.

National Finance is collaborating with Sharakah for the third consecutive year to support a series of educational programmes on financial planning that aims to develop youth and SMEs in Oman. More than 500 participants benefited from the initiative over the two previous years.

National Finance remains committed to its corporate social

responsibility by delivering various initiatives. Therefore, the company launched ‘Imtidad’, an expression of the company’s commitment to positively impact vital sectors that include education, community, health and environment.

National Finance, established in 1987, has built a reputation as the market leader trusted by thousands of customers across the Sultanate. National Finance offers a wide range of products targeting both individual customers and SMEs through its 20 branches across the Sultanate.

Kia’s exciting scratch & win campaign till May 1



Kia is offering winnings like never before in its latest campaign. As part of the campaign, customers purchasing a new Kia, have an unbelievable opportunity to scratch and win 2 Kia at one time. Additional scratch and win prizes include, win your purchased Kia back, Win all-new Sportage, Win up to 20 per cent on display price, Win periodic service up to 100,000 kms and VAT on us. The campaign is valid until May 1.

According to a representative from Reliable International Automotive, “This is one of the most exciting offers from Kia! It gives customers an unbelievable opportunity to buy their favourite Kia and scratch and win exciting prizes. It could possibly be a very rare opportunity where customers get a chance to win not one, but two vehicles at once. An offer like this is like a dream offer, no one should miss. So head to your nearest Kia showroom and experience winnings like never before.”

People looking forward to owning a Kia can choose from a range of exciting models. They include the Kia Seltos which combines forward-looking technical features, class-leading space and a suite of world-class safety features, and is powered by a highly-efficient Smartstream petrol engine.

Powering the Seltos is a 1.6-litre gasoline engine producing 121 HP paired to a six-speed automatic transmission (6AT). The interior of the Seltos is impressive. The cabin is characterised by broad, sweeping shapes and highly technical details and is equipped with a range of technologies to maximise convenience, connectivity and ease of use. The Seltos is a technologically advanced and refined compact SUV equipped with a range of advanced features. They include a Smart Key with Button Start, Auto Cruise Control, Terrain Mode System (Snow, Mud, Sand), Electronic Stability Program (ESP) among many other advanced features and technology.



الشركة الوطنية العمانية للهندسة والاستثمار (ش.م.ع.ع.)
Oman National Engineering & Investment Co. (S.A.O.G)

INVITATION for ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors is pleased to invite all the shareholders to attend the annual General Meeting of the company intended to be held at Hilton inn garden Al Khuwair behind the company building as well as via the Electronic Platform (announced by Muscat Clearance & Depository Company) (www.mcd.gov.om) on Wednesday 23rd of March 2022 at 5:00 PM. In case the quorum has not completed it has been decided to hold the second annual general meeting on next Wednesday 30th of March 2022 at the same time, same place and via same means to discuss and approve the following agenda:-

1. Study the report of Directors' for the Fiscal Year ended 31st December 2021 and Approval.
2. Study the Corporate Governance Report for the fiscal year ended 31st December 2021 and Approval.
3. Study the Auditors' Report, including, Balance Sheet and Profit & loss Account for the Fiscal Year ended 31st December 2021 and Approval.
4. Study proposed cash dividend to shareholders in the date of the meeting by (5 bisas) per share & approval.
5. Study proposed of distribution of bounce share amounting (7.6923 %) of the company's capital by (share per thirteen shares) which will increase the issued capital up to (14,000,000) accordingly.
6. Approval of sitting fees of the BOD and Its Committees for the previous financial year, and recommended sitting fees for the next year (enclosed).
7. Study proposed the board members awards by OMR (29,275) twenty nine thousand two hundred and seventy five for the ended year on 31/12/2021 .and approval.
8. Inform the AGM about the Related Parties Transactions executed in the financial year ended 31/12/2021. (Enclosed)
9. Inform the AGM with the amounts donated to charity organizations in the financial year ended 31/12/2021 and Approval. (Enclosed)
10. To allocate the sum of R O (15,000) to support the community and charity organizations during the financial year 2022 and approval.
11. Appointment independent authority to measure the performance of BOD during the financial year ended 2022 and fixing their fees.
12. Appointment of External Auditors for the financial year ending on 31st December 2022 and fixing their fees.

According to the Company's Article of Association, and the rules for Convening General Meetings via Electronic platform issued by CMA, we would like to call your attention to the following:

- (a) Only corporate person may authorize a natural person to attend and vote on its behalf on decision/resolutions of the general meeting, through electronic means, provided such natural person must have an investor number at MCD;
- (b) Voting on any item of the agenda commence prior to the convention of the general meeting at a maximum of three (3) days and ends on the date of the meeting. If a shareholder's balance is changed either by increase or decrease the voting process shall stand cancelled and must revoke on the date of the meeting.

For any inquiries, please call **Mr. Mohamed Humaid Al Hinaii** – Legal Advisor on **GSM No. 99580795** or **Telephone No. 24396260**.

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Advisor

O.N.E.I.C. P.O. Box - 1393 P.C. 112, Ruwi Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24396201, Fax 24396499, Email: oneic@oneic.com.om

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Exclusive benefits on Toyota Range ending soon



The right time to own a Toyota is ending soon. Own a Toyota and benefit with Service 2 Years/20,000 kms, 5 Years/50,000 kms (On LC200 4.6 & 5.7 models only) and 8 Years/80,000 kms (On Corolla 1.8 HEV Only) (Whichever is earlier), 1 Year Insurance Or Cash Gift in Lieu of Insurance RO 125 to RO 450. The campaign is valid until March 9. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details.

In Oman, Toyota range include sedans like the Yaris. The Yaris sedan with a choice of 1.3-Litre and 1.5-Litre engines, delivers a dynamic driving experience. It is equipped with 15” Alloy Wheels, Daytime Running Lights, Smart Entry & Push Button Start, Auto Air Conditioner and more.

The Toyota Corolla — the popular choice of people around the world has been developed from a driver and passengers’ point of view first. The Corolla is also available in a Hybrid option.

The sleek and stylish Toyota Camry has been one of the best-sellers. Equipped with a range of exciting features, technology and

more, the Camry is also available in a 2.5L, 3.5L and Hybrid options.

The Toyota Avalon is a statement of luxury. It is equipped with 3.5L V6 Engine, LED Headlamps with Adaptive Cornering Lamps, Premium Leather Seat Material, 9” Navigation System with 14 JBL Speakers, Head Up Display, Toyota Safety Sense and more.

In the SUV range customers can choose from the C-HR. The C-HR, represents a leap forward in design, manufacturing and engineering for Toyota. The C-HR offers impressive fuel economy with 23.9 Kms/L as per GSO Conformity Certificate and carries a Hybrid battery warranty of 8 Years/160,000 Kms.

The Highlander offers an impressive fuel economy of 20 Kms/L (GLE Grade) & 19.3 Kms/L (LTD Grade) as per GSO Conformity Certificate and comes with 8 Years/160,000 Kms Hybrid Battery Warranty.

The sporty and stylish RAV4 ticks all the boxes when it comes to enjoying extraordinary moments. The RAV4 includes features like 19” Alloy Wheels, LED Headlamps & DRL, Power Back Door, Wide Moonroof, 7” TFT Multi Information

Display, Wireless Charger (Qi Enabled) and more.

The Fortuner is equipped with 4.0L, V6 Engine, 18” Alloy Wheels, LED Projector Headlamps with DRL, Navigation System, Power & Ventilated Driver & Front Passenger Seats, Power Back Door and more.

The powerful and capable Prado includes 4.0L, V6 Engine, LED Headlamps & Fog Lamp, 9” Navigation System, Ventilated Front Seats, Moonroof, Airbags: Driver + Front Passenger + Curtain + Side (Front) + Knee (Driver) and more.

The pride of the land — the Land Cruiser is a symbol of strength, durability and reliability. Rugged yet luxurious, the Land Cruiser delivers high-end performance and advanced off-roading capabilities and safety features.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions and fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.



Leading crowdfunding platform operator to launch EthisX in Oman

GLOBALMARKETPLACE: CMA-approved EthisX crowdfunding platform to allow companies to raise funds through equity crowdfunding (ECF) and peer-2-peer (P2P) financing that includes sukuk and micro-sukuk

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 6

Ethical investment and social finance platform operator, Ethis Group, will be launching EthisX as part of its global expansion plan. Approved by the Capital Market Authority (CMA) — the Sultanate of Oman's regulator and supervisor of the capital market and insurance sector — EthisX is managed by Ethis Investment Platform LLC based out of Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

EthisX is unique in that it acts as a first-of-its-kind cross-border Ethical Private Capital Marketplace able to offer direct shariah-compliant investments into SME companies and special purpose vehicle (SPV) projects from around the globe.

Mohamed Shehzad bin Mohamed Islam, Chief Executive Officer of Ethis Investment Platform LLC (EIP) said, "We are committed to working alongside Oman CMA towards a successful global cross-border marketplace. With the approval of CMA, companies from inside and outside Oman can apply to raise funding. This, in turn, allows global investors access to shariah-compliant, impactful and sustainable investments in emerging and developed markets like never before."

He added, "EthisX will be rolled out in geographical phases starting with Oman. The platform allows companies to raise funds through



equity crowdfunding (ECF) and peer-2-peer (P2P) financing that includes sukuk and micro-sukuk. For P2P, EthisX is focusing on invoice financing, asset-backed financing, working capital financing and Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) financing. ECF issuances will focus on startups and growth companies particularly in the tech sector."

Amran Mohd, Chairman of EIP, commented, "Oman is a bridge between emerging regions with the potential to extend to other parts of the world, and has great potential to be an emerging regional hub for Islamic finance and fintech. As the regulator and supervisor of the capital market and insurance sector in Oman, we value CMA's acceptance of EthisX as a platform that curates



the capital marketplace. We aim to have EthisX become a valuable contributor towards realising Oman's Vision 2040, which emphasises the country's economic development that is anchored to Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For the Group, EthisX as our next step forward makes the best strategic business sense as Ethis is amongst the early adopters of crowdfunding as an investment

marketplace and is an Islamic fintech proponent."

"EthisX will be leveraging on the immediate transaction volume from other Ethis platforms, targeting to grow transaction value per month by at least 10 times from current by Q4 2022. We want to push our market expansion plan through EthisX as aggressively as possible, and we would like to express our gratitude towards Oman CMA for believing in our vision and execution ability", added Mohamed Shehzad.

Umar Munshi, Co-Founder and Group MD of Ethis Group elaborated, "As one of the pioneers of shariah-compliant crowdfunding, Ethis not only has proof of concept but also substantial experience and knowledge through the management of its platforms which prioritise deals with social impact so that the community can enjoy the benefits of their investments. As a testimony to that, we are humbled and further motivated to do better when Ethis Group was recently awarded the Best Islamic Crowdfunding Platform in the World 2021 by the Awards Committee of the Islamic Retail Banking Awards (IRBA) based on the efficiency model developed by Cambridge IFA."

Listed firms can hold general meetings online or in-person: CMA

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 6

General meetings of public joint stock companies and investment funds can be convened either in physical or online formats, the Capital Market Authority (CMA) confirmed here on Sunday.

The announcement came as the Authority began receiving applications for approvals to hold general meetings. The forums give shareholders the opportunity to either vote or object to any resolutions, evaluate the competency of directors (service providers in the case of investment funds), and elect new board members, among other privileges.

In a statement, Mohammed bin Said al Abri, Vice-President for the Capital Sector, said the Omani capital market has shown resilience in the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic. Listed companies conducted their vital business using the electronic platform for general meetings administered by Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (MCD), which is governed by a clear-cut set of rules to safeguard the rights of all stakeholders, he noted.

The platform is now available for use for the third consecutive general meetings season, Al Abri said, noting that its success attests to the success of the digital transformation under way in the capital market.

Al Abri added that MCD, together with its partners, continues to support the development of the platform through the introduction of new e-services or by addressing queries raised in the past.

The Authority emphasised that public joint stock companies, investment funds, auditors and legal advisors must comply with the laws regulating the general meetings and the rules for convening general meetings physically or online.



Omantel, Rihai sign MoU to support RPA training

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 6

Rihai, an Omani company specialised in providing data migration and management solutions, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Omantel for providing a comprehensive training programme in the field of robotic process automation (RPA) to a group of young Omanis who are enrolled in the "Generation Z" programme, an annual training programme for graduates offered by Omantel to train a group of the programme members on robotic automation in various fields.

The MoU was signed by Azzan bin Qais al Kindi, CEO of Rihai, and Eng Sami bin Ahmed al Ghassani, Chief Operating Officer of Omantel.

Omantel's Sami al Ghassani said: "We at Omantel give special



importance to the Omani youth because we believe that they have the capabilities and energies that push them to be creative and innovative in various fields."

"For this reason, Omantel has invested in creating a conducive

environment that suits their aspirations and develops their skills. The "Generation Z" program reflects Omantel's vision towards youth in terms of empowering them, enhancing their leadership capabilities by providing an

environment that helps them to gain hands-on experiences, identify challenges, and come out with practical solutions, he added.

Azzan bin Qais al Kindi, CEO of Rihai, said: "This cooperation between Rihai and Omantel aims to enhance cooperation, share practical knowledge and experiences and develop future skills among Omani youths."

Al Kindi noted that RPA is one of Rihai's core areas of expertise. The Process Automation department will provide the trainees with a comprehensive training programme that will help them gain knowledge and develop their career in one of the booming industries in the current digital economy."

RPA technology, which is part of Omantel's operations, is one of the services provided by Rihai. The technology reduces time and effort with high efficiency.

CMA attends workshop on crowdfunding regulations

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 6

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) participated in a workshop titled 'Regulatory Frameworks of Crowdfunding Platforms — Regional and International Experiences', which was organised by the Arab Monetary Fund last week.

The workshop shed light on the realities and expectations surrounding crowdfunding platforms in the Arab world. Participants also exchanged expertise related to regulation of crowdfunding platforms based on best regional and global practices.

The Authority's Musab bin Mohammed al Lawati, Director of Supervision and Compliance, presented a paper on the regulation of the crowdfunding platforms. It provided details



of the types of crowdfunding platforms licensed in the Sultanate of Oman, the categories of investors, the general features of regulations the financing obligations of applicants.

Crowdfunding is a window for entrepreneurs and innovators for financing from donors or investors to support their projects through and electronic platform which enables the small and medium enterprises to obtain financing.

CMA has issued the Regulation for Crowdfunding vide Decision 153/2021 dated November 21, 2021.

Southern Europe grapples with changing face of tourism

KAROLINA TAGARIS

CORFU: It took one electricity bill to crush Dimitris Diavatis’ hopes that his Greek summer resort could bounce back to its pre-pandemic health this year, even with bookings pouring in.

The amount was more than double what he paid this time last year when the hotel was not even open. After two sluggish summers, the irony was not lost on him: “We won’t make a profit in a good year”, he said. “It’ll be eaten up by inflation.”

Greece — like the other tourism-dependent economies on the euro zone’s Mediterranean fringe — is seeing signs of a much-needed recovery in visitor numbers in 2022 after two largely lost years. As in Spain, Portugal and Italy, the sector is a huge employer and contributor to state revenues.

But across the region, the pandemic has changed the face of tourism. Hotels were already grappling with higher fuel bills and inflation which a further energy price surge in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will only make worse.

The dislocation of labour markets caused by Covid-19 has left entrenched staffing shortages, while Italian tourist officials concede that pandemic-era holidaying — with its emphasis on hygiene, cleanliness and space — is a big challenge for its ageing infrastructure.

Meanwhile, a market for more modest, small-scale vacations is opening up: In Spain and Portugal, a reluctance among many tourists to travel far is accentuating the trend for stays in rural areas in tents, campers or motorhomes.

Industry and government officials in Greece are forecasting revenues will reach 80-90 per cent of the record seen in 2019, when 33 million tourists brought in €18 billion in revenues, worth a fifth of national output. Yet a bumper season is unlikely to offer much relief to struggling businesses which emerged from a decade-long financial crisis in 2018 only to have the pandemic bring global travel to a halt two years later.

So acute is the problem of soaring heating oil, gas and electricity prices that the president of the Greek tourism confederation SETE, Yiannis Retsos, wrote to ministers in January urging them to provide financial support, saying it was “objectively impossible” for year-round hotels to the cover their costs, especially after the quieter winter months. The highly indebted countries of Europe’s south were also bracing for the European Central Bank to remove the stimulus that has kept their borrowing costs down.

Although the Ukraine war has left the interest rate outlook uncertain, the southern fringe still badly needs its tourism sectors to get back to work given the economic hit the conflict is set to deliver. — Reuters

“We won’t make a profit in a good year. It’ll be eaten up by inflation”

DIMITRIS DIAVATIS’
Greek resort owner



CHELSEA TO LOSE ITS CHARM

A woman walks past a Chelsea merchandise store at Stamford Bridge, the stadium for Chelsea Football Club, after Russian businessman Roman Abramovich said that he would sell Chelsea, 19 years after buying it, amid growing pressure for oligarchs to be hit by sanctions after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in London. — Reuters

Neutral Switzerland’s economy shaken by sanctions on Russia



NATHALIE OLOF-OROS
The writer is bureau chief at AFP

RUSSIA IS ONLY SWITZERLAND’S 23RD-BIGGEST TRADING PARTNER. THE SWISS MAINLY EXPORT MEDICINES, MEDICAL PRODUCTS, WATCHES AND MACHINERY TO RUSSIA

ZURICH: Switzerland’s newly adopted tough stance on Russia has forced the Swiss economy to readjust to sanctions, blowing a wind of panic through the raw materials market in particular. Switzerland announced it would follow the sanctions being imposed by the European Union, abandoning Bern’s traditional reserve by ordering the immediate freezing of assets belonging to Russian companies and individuals appearing on the EU blacklist.

And it went further on Friday, adopting even stricter EU sanctions applied in response to Moscow’s February 24 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Exporting goods that could enhance Russia’s military capabilities is prohibited, as is the exportation of certain goods and services in the oil sector, and aviation technology.

“The implementation of these sanctions is compatible with Switzerland’s neutrality”, the government insisted in a statement.

The wealthy Alpine nation’s businesses are complying with the sanctions but have also stressed that Russian money accounts for only a fraction of their turnover, in an attempt to reassure investors.

The airline Swiss, a subsidiary of Germany’s Lufthansa, has suspended its flights to Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

Luxury group Richemont, which owns jewellery company Cartier, told business press agency AWP on Thursday that it had halted its commercial activities in Russia.

Global container shipping company MSC and freight logistics firm Kuehne + Nagel have stopped taking Russian orders for cargo, except for food, medical and humanitarian goods.

Business lobby Economiesuisse said the sanctions would have “limited” direct consequences on foreign trade.

Russia is only Switzerland’s 23rd-biggest trading partner. The Swiss mainly export medicines, medical products, watches and machinery to Russia, while the chief imports are gold, precious metals and aluminium.

In 2021, exports to Russia amounted to 3.2 billion Swiss francs (\$3.5 billion), with imports as low as 270 million francs, according to the customs authorities.

However, the landlocked state is an important player in raw materials trading, through companies such as Glencore, Trafigura, Vitol and Gunvor.

Gennady Gatilov, Russia’s ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, said he was surprised by the sanctions, because Switzerland had always “tried to maintain a certain neutrality”.

“We are disappointed with this, because we have very good relations with Switzerland... and the joining of Switzerland to these unlawful sanctions... will have (a) certain negative impact”, he told reporters.

According to figures circulating in the Swiss press, 80 per cent of Russian oil is traded in Switzerland, though Florence Schurch, secretary general of the Swiss Trading and Shipping Association, could not confirm the figure.

The exact amount is “being assessed”, she said, nonetheless confirming that the sector weighs heavily in the economy.

In employment terms, energy, grains, metals and minerals trading represents some 10,000 direct and 35,000 indirect jobs.

“Since Monday, everyone has been in a bit of a crisis cell mode”, Schurch explained. Some companies are already trying to “locate their cargoes” on the move, or “repatriate sailors stranded in the Black Sea”.

“A lot of companies have censored themselves”, she said, not least because payments are becoming “complicated” now that Russian banks are cut off from the SWIFT system and Swiss banks are reviewing their trade financing.

— AFP

Can workers climb the career ladder from outside the office?



CORINNE PURTILL
The writer is a freelance writer and reporter

During his internship at a major bank last summer, Costa Kosmidis spent most of his time working remotely. The bank did its best to help interns bridge the distance, he said, including by putting into practice “an open ‘virtual door’ policy” that made senior staff readily available by phone or email for job-related queries and career advice.

Nevertheless, when Kosmidis, 22, starts a job at the same bank after graduating from Fordham University this year, he hopes to spend more time in the office.

“You can feel people’s energy better when you’re around them”, Kosmidis said. Assessing

someone’s availability, for example, is trickier from afar: “It’s a quick glance when you’re in the office, but when you’re online, you’re not sure how much they have on their plate.”

Remote work is often favoured by established employees who know their manager, are comfortable in their role and want to balance work with family responsibilities or other personal obligations. For those just starting their careers, working in isolation can make fitting into an organisation — and eventually progressing up its ranks — more difficult.

Companies have become more open to remote work during the

pandemic. Now, as they plan for what work will look like going forward, they are paying more attention to what it means to build a career without the traditional opportunities for networking, mentorship and visibility that come with a full-time physical office. Some of their employees are also giving more thought to what long-term remote or hybrid work might mean for their futures.

“We’re beginning to hear from employees, in particular young employees who are — believe it or not — concerned”, said Johnny C Taylor Jr, CEO at the Society for Human Resource Management.

Prithwiraj Choudhury, an

associate professor at Harvard Business School who focuses on the changing geography of work, said he had seen three common practices at companies that managed remote work successfully. These companies took the time to compile information and practices in handbooks or guides that employees can consult from anywhere; paired remote workers with mentors outside their department so that they could speak frankly without endangering team relationships; and created what he called the “virtual water cooler.”

In one study, Choudhury and his colleagues randomly assigned some interns at a global bank to

take part in one-on-one video meetings with senior executives. Others met virtually with fellow interns, and some were assigned no extra meetings at all. Those assigned to meet with the senior employees had better performance reviews at the end of the summer and were more likely to receive job offers.

Managed effectively, remote work can lead to more in-depth conversations, Choudhury said.

“When people talk about office hallway conversations and office water cooler conversations, the reality is that those are really limited”, he said.

— The New York Times

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#Living_with_COVID19

features

OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | editor@omanobserver.om



Working hard to gain his spot amongst the racing greats

Abdullah al Rawahi, an emerging Omani talent in rally races, with the help of his team, has been exerting heroic efforts to elevate their existing skills and acquire new ones in order to achieve more accomplishments not just locally but regionally and internationally to finally one day earn a spot amongst the world's great racers ...**P20**

READ

NOTES ON AN EXECUTION

BY DANYA KUKAFKA

Kukafka seeks to interrogate that cultural preoccupation and cliché. The novel focuses on a man on death row named Ansel Packer. When we first meet Ansel, he has been convicted of murdering multiple women and is due to be executed in 12 hours,

COMMUNITY EVENT

Italian jazz maestro Paolo Fresu to play timeless pieces in Muscat tonight

COMPOSING ART AND communicating life through music, the Italian jazz Maestro Paolo Fresu, accompanied by pianist Dino Rubino and bassist Marco Bardoscia will tune an enchanting story about Jazz in Muscat tonight, March 7, 2022.

With the presence of government officials, Omani and Italian community, influencers and young talented local musicians, the Embassy of Italy is hosting a

memorable evening at the Diplomatic Club which comes as part of Paolo Fresu Trio regional tour for the year 2022.

This jazz concert is among the first live cultural events that the Embassy is promoting after the reopening of the activities this year, aiming to bring Italy closer to Oman and increase cultural cohesion between our two countries through music. Throughout the year, the



Embassy will continue to propose many enriching activities that cover the fields of archaeology, language, art, design, cui-

sine and music.

Paolo Fresu and Group will play a new trio entitled: "Tempo di Chet" meaning "Chet's Time",

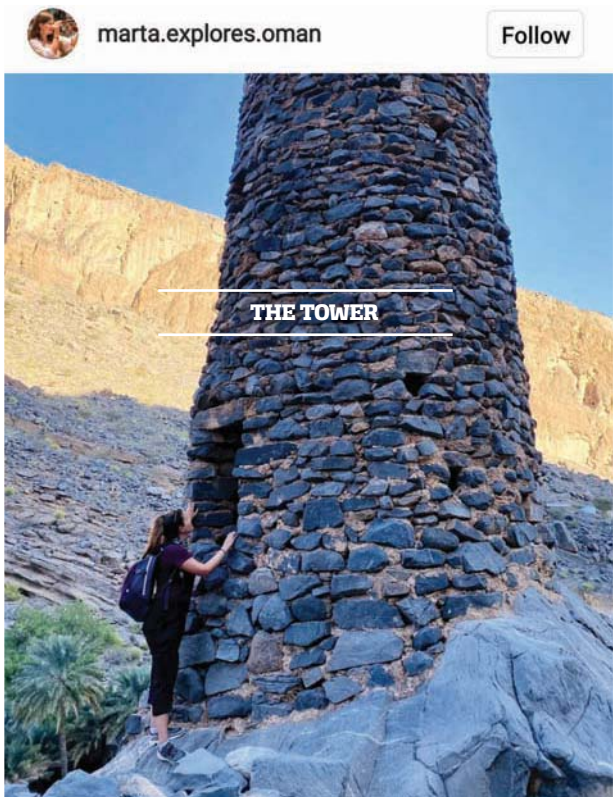
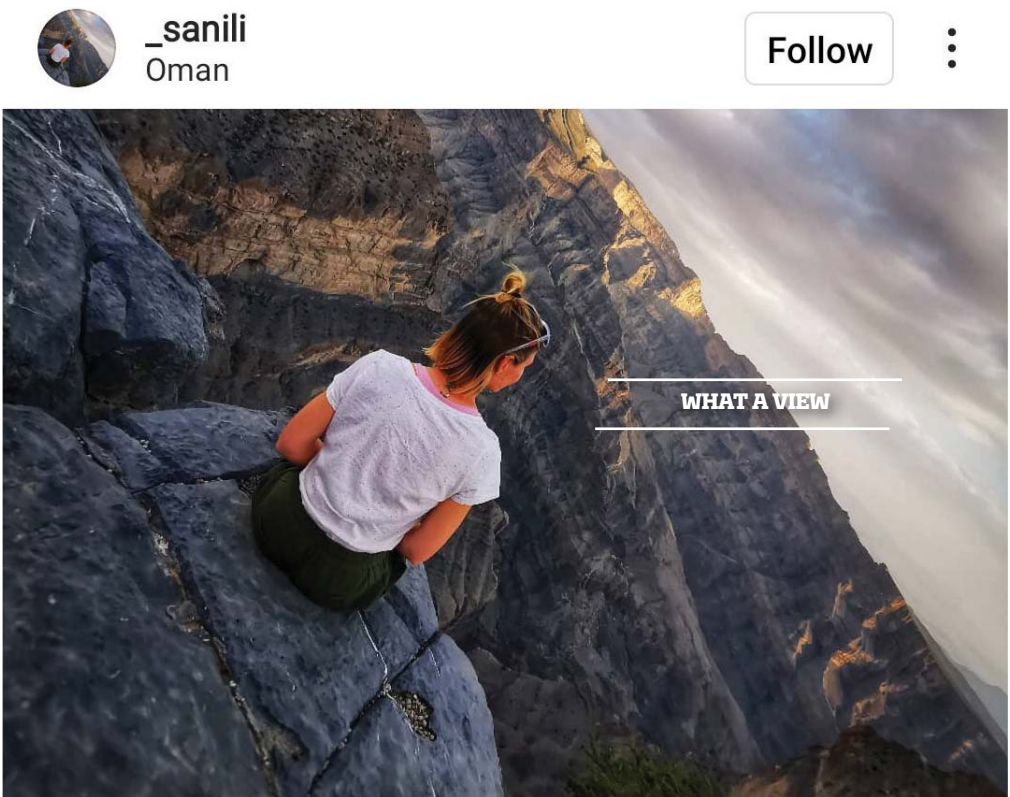
a refined tribute to great jazz musician Chet Baker, featuring a dialogue with a great emotional and intellectual impact between Fresu's warm trumpet sound and vivid and creative mind, the powerful and engaging lines of Bardoscia's double bass and Rubino's elegant and vibrant pianism.

The trio was designed in this form by Fresu for the theatrical adventure "Tempo di Chet - La versione di Chet Baker" produced by Teatro Stabile di Bolzano and directed by Leo Muscato. All the music of this trio is original and composed by the three musicians and published by Tuk Music, the record label of the Sardinian-born trumpet player, primarily dedicated to new Italian talents, of which both Bardoscia and Rubino are an integral part since several years.



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AROUND THE WORLD

CELEBRATE

With poems and lights, UK kicks off year-long creativity celebration



FROM LIVE CHOIRS to luminous projections, a free, open-air event exploring the history of the universe kicked off in the Scottish town of Paisley on Tuesday, as part of a UK-wide event this year celebrating creativity.

A collaborative effort between scientists, musicians, poets, visual artists and schoolchildren, "About Us" is the first project on show for "UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK", which will run events in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and online until October.

Covering 13.8 billion years of history from the Big Bang to today, "About Us" looks at how humans are connected to each other and our relationship with nature and the cosmos.

"The basic concept...is that all of the iron in all of our bodies, no matter who we are in the world, comes from the same star system and we are literally all made of the same stardust," Martin Green, chief creative officer of "UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK", told Reuters.

"And so the show acts as that connection point to show what we have in common rather than as too often happens, what we have different between us."

The event, created by 59 Productions, The Poetry Society and social enterprise Stemettes, features animated projections accompanied by poetry, as well as music and live choirs.

It runs in Paisley until March 6 before heading to Londonderry in Northern Ireland, Caernarfon in Wales as well as Luton and Hull in England as part of a five-stop tour running until May.

"UNBOXED", which is funded by the four governments of the UK, will hold 10 multi-site and digital projections during 2022, with input from designers, scientists, arts organisation, tech companies and universities.

"We wanted a project that would go end to end in the UK and visit places that all too often don't get high quality, imaginative work on the scale that we're able to do it through the 'UNBOXED' project," Green said. — Reuters

FASHION

Japanese designer Yamamoto plays with complex layers and volumes at Paris Fashion Week

TRUE TO ITS codes of draping techniques, layering and unfinished looks, Yohji Yamamoto's autumn and winter collection displayed on Friday in Paris showcased busy designs with lace skirts, shredded garments and inflated dresses.

The show opened with a succession of blue denim jackets over layers of fluid tunics and skirts.

Models strutted under the fresco ceiling of the French capital's Hotel de Ville wearing mostly black but two head-to-toe white looks stood out with asymmetrical blazer, ruffled skirt with raw edge details and sneakers.

There were no accessories other than wire hats on grunge hair-styles.

There were passages of tucked skirts and warm jackets, puffer coats and draped shirts, followed up by models wearing to close the show a pile of knitted garments topped with umbrella hats made of wool. — Reuters



DISCOVERY

Scientist uses tiny trackers to keep tabs on funnel-web spiders



SOME SYDNEY funnel-web spiders are scrambling into the Australian brush carrying special cargo: a telemetry tracker to study how far a mature male can travel at night and whether their movements are affected by the environment and weather.

Caitlin Creak, a PhD candidate at the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences of the University of New South Wales, has been tracking the male Sydney funnel-web, one of the world's deadliest spiders, for two summers. The nocturnal arachnid lives within around 100km (62 miles) of Australia's largest city, and is mostly active between November and April.

Having grown up in Australia's bushland, the 27-year-old is no stranger to spiders, but her love for them grew after she learned about them during her biology degree, and interacted with the creatures she thinks are wonderful.

Most studies on the Sydney funnel-web spider are about its venom and taxonomy, but Creak's study focuses on its behaviour and ecology.

"The Sydney funnel-web has a human-lethal venom, which is just a bit of an evolutionary coincidence, as we suspect at this stage," she said. "That's kind of all we know about them to be honest. We don't actually really know anything else in terms of their behaviour, their biology or their ecology."

To be able to attach the tracker, the spider must first be knocked out with carbon dioxide, a standard practice for sedating invertebrates, Creak said.

As the spider dozes for a couple of minutes on a

wet sponge that keeps it hydrated, Creak places a second sponge around its head to safely glue the small tracking device, slightly bigger than a grain of rice, to its fused head and thorax, called the cephalothorax.

Creak is extremely cautious when handling the spider, never touching them with her hands. Instead, she uses 30cm-long forceps and when awake, the spider is kept in a thick plastic container.

Weather permitting, Creak tracks the spider daily for as long as the trackers stay functional. They can sometimes become dislodged, and the tiny batteries last about a month.

"In the morning, I'll come back, and I'll be able to see how far he's gone overnight," said Creak. "Once they're used to having a tracker on, they're off. They can go, God, anywhere between a metre to 60 metres in a night, that I've recorded."

It is no easy task to track the arachnids. With a receiver and antenna, Creak must tread carefully over vegetation, logs and leaf litter. The telemetry tracker on the spider sends beeps to the receiver as Creak gets close.

Australia has many species of funnel-webs but only the male Sydney funnel-web is responsible for human deaths. Only 13 deaths have been recorded but more than 30 people are bitten by the spider each year, according to the Australian Museum.

"We're with them all the time, we might as well try and coexist and to do that, we need to know more about them," Creak said of spiders during a recent tracking expedition. — Reuters



Working hard to gain his spot amongst the racing greats

By Baraah al Mujaini

In an unprecedented achievement in Oman's motorsport history, Abdullah al Rawahi, an emerging Omani talent in rally races, has won the Oman Rally Sohar International 2021 round in Middle East Rally Championship becoming the first Omani to win a round in this race.

"When they announced my name as the winner, I was over the moon. The accomplishment meant a lot for me and for my country. Winning at home was even sweeter", he shared.

"I trained hard for this event and thankfully, it has resulted in a satisfying performance", Abdullah said.

Winning wasn't easy. Racing with a new car that requires familiarisation as well as exerting a lot of effort to adapt to its complex system, Abdullah has his eyes set on the prize determined to bag the championship no matter what.

The win has fuelled Abdullah's passion and fire to aim even higher now highly considering that he might actually do well and earn his spot amongst the greats in the international scene.

Annually, Abdullah and his team prepare a rigid training schedule based on their budget, and the competitions they plan to join, either regionally or internationally.

Abdullah's eventual love for the sport started when one of the Omani rally races pioneers, Nizar al Shanfari, suggested he joined.

"When I joined my first race, I felt like I belong. I was thrilled to finally find a sport that suited what I wanted", he shared.

As a sport, joining a rally race comes with its own sets of challenges. Abdullah said that they can be physically and mentally exhausting especially since races sometimes are consist of three rounds. They also have to drive long distances which requires a lot of concentration



while one of the physical challenges include being depleted due to high temperatures inside the car that can reach around 50 degree Celsius.

"Despite these obstacles, I always remind myself to be patient and determined to achieve my goal and to take the Omani Rally-sport into an advanced level", Abdullah said.

He also mentioned that the lack of financial support is one of the biggest challenges they

have to contend with as it's usually one of the main things that hinders him and the team to compete internationally.

But while the challenges are always part of any journey, many of their sacrifices had been rewarded. Abdullah has consistently gained high scores in many different championships. Recently, he won one of the rounds in the Jordan Rally, an event that was participated by some of the most well-known

racers from different countries. He also won second place in the Qatar segment of the Middle East Rally Championship.

"My favourite moments are when I am on the podium, raising my country's flag, feeling proud and satisfied", Abdullah expressed.

To Abdullah, this period of his life is highly critical in shaping his career.

"I am relatively young in the world of this motorsport; there-

fore, I am aware of the potentials I have to reach my goals and to facilitate my journey", he shared.

Abdullah and his team are exerting heroic efforts to elevate their existing skills and acquire new ones. They are always eager to achieve more accomplishments at all levels – locally, regionally and internationally.

"Whenever I am involved in a competition, I try to observe the strong competitors' attitude and reflect on mine. Trying to detect my pitfalls by comparing their methodology in racing to mine. Having experienced competitors is like having treasure that guides you to enhance your current version of you", Abdullah explained.

Behind every successful talent, is faith and support. Even in the beginning, Abdullah has been consistently supported by his father.

"I got support from my whole family generally and from my father particularly. My mother's wholehearted support has played a considerable role in guiding me to reach an optimum balance between my academic career and my passion for Rally", Abdullah said.

While he is quite happy about his recent achievements, Abdullah believes that he still can push more and has set his eyes on making a well-known name in motorsport history. For now, his road is set in participating in more championships and winning. He is also networking with other international racers to gain a wealth of knowledge and experience and all this he does, not just to gain recognition for himself but also to elevate Oman as a hub for great racing talents.

