



Budget surplus to help spending

Additional revenues to be used for development projects, including roads and schools

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Having begun fiscal 2022 with a promising economic outlook bolstered by revenues from higher oil prices, Oman saw a budget surplus of RO18mn at the end of January 2022.

Price of Oman oil (May 2022 delivery) on Thursday peaked at US\$115.70, up US\$3 from Wednesday. If oil prices remain at these levels for the rest of the year, it will result in a significant budget surplus that will help the country repay its debt while embarking on new developments project given that the 2022 State Budget was based on US\$50 a barrel.

In his meeting with sheikhs from the governorates of North Batinah, Dhahirah and Buraimi at Bait Bahjat al Andhar last week, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin

Tariq said, "Any surplus resulting from the high oil revenues will be used as much as possible to settle the country's debt while looking at spending on development."

He also stated that building basic facilities such as new schools, maintaining what is currently in place, and expanding roads and hospitals will be prioritised in the increase in spending above the approved Five-Year Plan.

"The state's development plans are progressing as planned and are in the interest of the country and citizens. The government has always worked to serve the interests of citizens," His Majesty the Sultan said.

According to the Ministry of Finance's monthly newsletter on the country's fiscal performance, public revenues ballooned an unprecedented 85.2 per cent to RO803.3mn at the end of Janu-

If oil prices remain at these levels for the rest of the year, it will result in a significant budget surplus that will help the country repay its debt

ary 2022, versus earnings of RO433.7mn for the corresponding period of 2021.

Aiding the upsurge in public revenues were increases in oil and gas export earnings with oil export revenues soaring 94.42 per cent to RO553.9mn in January 2022, up from RO284.9mn in January 2021.

On the development front, His Majesty said North Batinah has become a governorate with great economic potential. "An economic zone will be established in the Al Rawdah area in Buraimi. In the coming days, a number of officials will visit the area to determine the land on which the zone will be built," he said.

Among new health facilities, Suwaiq Hospital is under development, while Sohar Hospital is ready. Other hospitals are under construction or nearing completion.

Based on His Majesty's Royal Directives, the Ministry of Finance announced more projects, which will be implemented alongside other projects of the tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025). These include several new hospitals, construction of 76 government schools in different

governorates, compensations for those displaced by the Al Batinah Coastal Road and first phase of Khasab Airport.

Projects in the transport sector include development of a road connecting Daba-Lima-Khasab and a link to Kumzar in Musandam, dualisation of the Al Ansab-Al Jefnain road (Phase 2), Phase 1 of the Al Batinah Expressway, renovation of roads connecting Sahwa roundabout and Mawalih intersections, and expansion of Muscat Expressway.

Projects in the tourism sector include developing the seafont at Al Dahariz beach in Dhofar, developing the seafont in the niyabat of Al Ashkhara, tourism facilities in the wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid, protection systems for wadis in Dhofar and developing rainwater drainage systems in Muscat governorate.

02

MoL announces 675 job opportunities in private sector

10

Yemen rebels attack oil facilities near Saudi Formula One track

CAA to open sector for private investment

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With flights and passenger traffic rising once again, Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) wants to use the opportunity to bolster the sector by opening it up for private investments.

Naif bin Ali al Abri, chairman of CAA, presented an overview of the authority's broad vision for the sector in 2022 on Thursday. CAA plans to prepare a national aviation safety plan and update the Civil Aviation Strategy 2030 this year.

Under its plans to open up the sector for local and international investments, Abri informed that the authority is considering usufruct rights for investors to use land and buildings owned by

CAA seeks to offer usufruct rights of its assets to local and foreign companies to invest in the land and buildings it owns

NAIF AL ABRI



the CAA for aviation-related activities. In this regard, the authority plans to explore the potential of granting concessions in the management and operations of local airports and aviation-related services to private operators and investors.

"The authority seeks to offer usufruct rights of its assets to local and foreign companies to invest in the land and buildings it owns. The authority will also

work this year to issue the Oman Aviation Academy licence, issue an amphibious flight licence, start restructuring Omani airspace, modernise rules for economic regulation for airlines, and protect the rights of travellers."

According to Abri, amphibious aircraft will be deployed in areas like Musandam, Masirah and the Hallaniyat Islands due to their topography and geographical location. "Amphibious flights will help

link the islands of Musandam governorate and Masirah and promote tourism in Ras al Hadd."

He also informed that CAA's total revenue exceeded RO45mn at the end of 2021, an increase of 18 per cent over 2020.

He listed the completion of assessment of airport runways as part of the International Civil Aviation Organization index among the most prominent achievements and works carried out by the authority last year.

Abri confirmed that the authority has completed 75 per cent of the requirements for accreditation of Oman Aviation Academy in 2021. The total number of countries with which Oman signed air transport agreements was 118 in 2021 with 62 open sky agreements.

SITARA-E-PAKISTAN CONFERRED ON SHEIKH KHALILI



His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Khalili, Grand Mufti of Oman, has been awarded one of Pakistan's highest civilian awards given for contribution to society. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saud al Siyabi, Secretary-General of the Grand Mufti's Office, received the Sitara-e-Pakistan medal on behalf of His Eminence Sheikh Khalili from Dr Arif Alvi, President of Pakistan, on Wednesday in Islamabad (ONA)

(From March 13 to April 13)

SUBSCRIBE TO MUSCAT DAILY

WIN EVERYDAY

ONE NIGHT STAY WITH BREAKFAST FOR TWO

RO27
1 YEAR
(Print + Online edition)

RO24
1 YEAR
(Print edition)

RO15
1 YEAR
(online edition)

Name

Flat No: Building / Villa No: Way No:

Area: Landmark:

Mobile No: Email:

Print edition only ☐ print+Online edition ☐ Online edition only ☐

Fill up the form and send it to WhatsApp no: 99104345

For more details
PLEASE CALL 80076000
E-mail: subscription@apexmedia.co.om
Call Shamshad on 99104345

MARCH 24 WINNER
Subscription No: 71229

GRAND MILLENNIUM MUSCAT

www.muscatdaily.com

MUSCAT DAILY
AN APEX MEDIA PUBLICATION

675 opportunities announced for jobseekers

Our Correspondent
Muscat

On the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to speed up the execution of employment initiatives, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) has announced 675 job opportunities in line with the wage support initiative for new employees in the private sector.

As part of its contribution to the national agenda of job creation for citizens, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has also announced on-the-job training opportunities in its subsidiaries.

A statement issued by MoL said, 'The ministry is pleased to announce to jobseekers who have never worked the availability of 675 job opportunities in various private sector institutions that wish to benefit from the wage support initiative.'

Of the total, 161 jobs are for

holders of Bachelor's degrees, 105 for post-GED (General Education Diploma), 360 for holders of GED and 49 for non-GED qualification holders.

Under the initiative, wages of these employees will subsidised to the tune of RO200 for a period of two years, provided that the employer bears the difference, and employment is at least for a period equal to the period of government support.

MoL coordinates with the private sector to fill up vacancies for various specialisations.

Announcing the on-the-job training opportunities in its subsidiaries, OIA said, 'Selected candidates will receive first-hand professional experience in the world of business and finance, in order to hone and develop their skills in their respective fields.'

The authority confirmed that the targeted specialisations in-

clude accounting, finance, economics, business management, human resource management, media studies, law, information technology and computer science programming. Candidates must have a Bachelor's degree with a minimum CGPA of 2.7.

The authority informed that applicants will have a written test and a personal interview. Programme trainees will receive a monthly allowance.

Those interested must register before April 4, 2022, via <https://career.oia.gov.om>

According to MoL data, 49,276 jobseekers were appointed in the private sector in 2021.

H E Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, recently stated that the ministry aims to provide 35,000 job opportunities through recruitment, replacement and training for citizens in 2022.



(For illustrative purpose)

27 airport CEOs attend ACI meet, discuss way forward after COVID-19

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The World Governing Board of Airports Council International (ACI) convened a series of meetings over two days starting on Saturday in Muscat with the participation of 27 CEOs representing the board. Several prominent figures of the aviation sector have been invited to the event.

The meetings - held at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel - are being chaired by Sheikh Aimen bin Ahmed al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports, and chairman of the ACI World Governing Board, to discuss and approve ACI's work plan, and ways to enhance cooperation between airports, international aviation organisations, and various strategic partners around the world.

The meetings' outcomes will aim of find innovative ways to enhance efficiency in the airports



(Supplied photo)

and aviation sector, develop environmental and economically sustainable projects, and address other challenges that directly affect the airports and civil aviation sector worldwide.

Hosni expressed his happiness in welcoming the leaders of the airports sector from around the world, representing all five continents, to Oman. "We are inaugu-

rating the first meetings of the new phase of the ACI World Governing Board in Muscat, which is the historical axis between East and West, and the meeting point of all opinions and views, so welcome to you all in the Sultanate of Oman."

Hosni added, "These meetings constitutes the first stage of a roadmap for ACI's work for the

upcoming two years. The sector is on its way to recovery after the pandemic which has left airports and the aviation sector all over the world in a difficult state. We are pleased that Muscat has been chosen for this, the 65th meeting of the ACI World Governing Board, which comes while the sector breathes a sigh of relief marking a great beginning. We hope that the positive vibes will continue for the stability of the sector and its people."

On Saturday, CEOs of many of the world's leading airports held a meeting on the sidelines of the ACI meetings to discuss solutions to confront emerging challenges, especially after the devastating impact of the pandemic and the circumstances that accompanied the suspension of international travel, which was one of the most difficult periods that the world's airports, and the global travel sector faced.

MoH, municipality to launch campaign to combat Aedes aegypti mosquitoes

Muscat - The Ministry of Health (MoH) and Muscat Municipality will launch a joint campaign to combat the spread of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes in Muscat governorate.

The campaign, which will continue for several days, will cover Ghubra South, Al Hail South and Al Ansab daily between 6am and 11am.

The special campaign will be in addition to the measures already announced by Muscat Municipality last week.

H E Dr Mohammed al Hosani, Undersecretary for Health Affairs in MoH, confirmed the registration of seven cases of dengue in the wilayat of Bausher last week.

He informed that this is not the first time dengue cases were recorded in Oman. Cases were recorded in 2019 and



(Supplied photo)

2020 in the governorates of Muscat and Dhofar.

He added that dengue is not transmitted from one person to another directly. "It is transmitted to humans through the bite of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes."

Muscat Municipality launched a vector control campaign last week with an aim to

combat mosquitoes, and create a healthier environment for people in Muscat.

A statement issued by the municipality on Monday said, 'Muscat Municipality has intensified its efforts to detect and investigate the causes and breeding points of mosquitoes in Muscat.'

A hassle-free, life-size viewing experience awaits you!

ViewSonic

M1 Plus and M1 Mini Plus portable projectors

Enjoy entertainment on the big screen anywhere with the new Viewsonic Portable Projector M1 Plus and M1 Mini Plus. These versatile, lightweight and wireless projectors are equipped with a long-lasting built-in battery and high-end Bluetooth speakers all set to deliver an all-round immersive viewing experience whether you're watching movies, playing games or listening to a live concert. Make them yours today!

VERSATILE SMART STAND | WI-FI SCREEN MIRRORING | ULTRA-PORTABLE DESIGN

OHI ELECTRONICS

Visit Bose Store at Qurum City Center
Tel: 24470497 / 92311039 / 99433620
Also available at Lulu Hypermarkets and Virgin Megastore, Muscat City Center.

8th edition of Oman Desert Marathon scheduled for Nov 26

Muscat - The date for one of the toughest multi-stage desert running races in the world hosted by Oman has been announced.

Organisers Tamkeen Sports has announced that the eighth edition of Oman Desert Marathon will take place on November 26, 2022.

The marathon requires high endurance and covers four stages over a distance of 165km. The four stages - 35km, 50km, 38km and 42km - help discover the most remote and untouched sands and the highest dunes of the Omani desert on the tracks of ancient caravans. The course will start from the oasis of Bidiyah and finish at Al Jawharat Resort in Bidiyah.

Last year, local residents took part in the race. However, since Oman and the world are now open for travel, the international event is back for 2022. The marathon attracts more than 200 athletes from around the world.

Following the sultanate being listed among Lonely Planet's top ten countries to visit in 2022 - the only country in the Arabian Gulf included in the list - this edition of the race is expected to have more participants, a press release stated.

This year, the event will feature for the second time a 2km Kids Race, 5km Family Run and 10km Cross Country Run.

The event has accommodation and camping options for those wanting to spend a weekend in the interiors.

Said al Hajri, proprietor and founder of the race, is happy to welcome runners to Oman. For him, Oman Desert Marathon is not only a race, but also an event that joins people from local communities in expressing their love for Oman. The event aims to welcome participants with the legendary Omani hospitality and give all runners a fantastic experience in the Omani desert.

Information about the race at <http://marathonoman.com/>

Omran and Dar al Arkan to develop 'AIDA'

The premium, mixed-use project marks Dar al Arkan's entry into Oman to drive development of the property market

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) - the executive arm of the sultanate for tourism development, and Dar al Arkan, the leading real-estate company in Saudi Arabia and the GCC, have signed an agreement to develop 'AIDA' a premium, mixed-use project nestled within the masterplan of Yiti Integrated Tourism Development.

The project marks Dar al



Arkan's first entry into Oman to drive the development of the property market and support the growth of Oman's tourism and real-estate sectors in accordance with Oman Vision 2040. The value of the investment in the project from both parties will reach US\$1.5bn, and it will be developed in three phases on an area of 3.5mn sqm.

Through the partnership, Dar al Arkan will develop a mixed-use project in Yiti and Yankat areas, 20-minutes from downtown Muscat, a paradise with a

AIDA is where real life melts away, and inspiration begins in the middle of undisturbed nature

HASHIL AL MAHROUQI

distinctive terrain where the earthy atmosphere envelops part of a large master development, situated 100m above the shores



and overlooking of Sea of Oman in Muscat, comprising of 3,500 residential units of medium-sized villas, townhouses and low-rise apartments. AIDA will have two charming hotels of 450 rooms, a plaza filled with cafes and restaurants, a gated promenade with luxury retail and other amenities.

The partnership agreement was signed at the sultanate's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai by Mohammed Salim al Busaidi, chairman of Omran Group, and Yousef al Shalash, chairman of

Dar al Arkan Real Estate Development Company, a press release said.

Hashil Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, said, "We are delighted to work with Dar al Arkan on this master project that is being developed with world class expertise. We share the same vision with regards to balanced and sustainable building practices, and this is a critical factor in the success of this project. The project is strategically designed as an extension to Muscat city to showcase the vi-

sion of progress and sustainable urbanisation. AIDA is where real life melts away, and inspiration begins in the middle of undisturbed nature, a mixed-use development where every inch allows you to gaze into never-ending blue waters to a horizon rich in brilliant colours. AIDA will become an attractive and sought-after destination with its many residential, entertainment, cultural, retail and recreational offerings that will put Oman on the regional and global tourism map".

Ziad el Chaar, vice-chairman of Dar al Arkan Properties, said, "We are excited to become part of this unique project. Oman has always offered an exceptional experience for residents and tourists, and the development of Yiti and Yankat areas will further elevate the nation's offering and position it as a world-class destination. AIDA sits atop one of the world's highest peaks. Overlooking one of the most breath-taking horizons in the world, will lie a place bubbling with inspiration."

Ihsaan launches its fifth ambulance for elderly

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ihsaan Association launched its fifth ambulance on Thursday to help the elderly and the disabled reach hospitals for healthcare needs.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Jokha Mohammed Khamis al Farsi, head and founder of Ihsaan Association, said, "The initiative aims to provide the elderly in the sultanate with social care, in order to ensure a better life for them."

Jokha said that the association launched the services of its fifth ambulance under the patronage of Mohammed al Kindi, Deputy Governor of Muscat.

"Our association provides an ambulance service to help the elderly and the disabled reach hospitals for routine check-ups and other healthcare needs. We have provided 3,000 elderly persons with access to hospitals in Muscat and other wilayats, so far. We have 100 volunteers, 50 of



whom are ambulance drivers," Jokha said.

The association aims to strengthen the bonds between members of society and teach the society to care for the elderly. "We hold awareness seminars among community members, such as in schools and Omani women's associations and talk about the needs and assisting the elderly," she added.

The association recently started an initiative where foster families were arranged for 22 eld-

erly persons in different wilayats of the sultanate. "We arranged alternative families for older people who have no children or relatives to care for. These foster families provide them all that they need, from lodging, food to healthcare.

"We hope to have financial support from private companies for the establishment of our new headquarters. We also seek to set up a special social entertainment club for the elderly," Jokha said.

Gulf Ceramics Carnival in Jabreen Castle promotes tourism, heritage

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With an aim to promote tourist sites and support small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in cooperation with the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) kicked off the four-day Gulf Ceramics Carnival at Jabreen Castle on Thursday.

The event was hosted under the patronage of H E Ibrahim al Kharousi, Undersecretary for Heritage in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Abdullah al Harthi, CEO of Total Trust Investment company, which manages Jabreen Castle, said, "More than 15 craftsmen will participate in the Gulf Ceramics Carnival. Gulf countries such as Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia will also participate in the ceramics carnival in addition to Oman.

"The four-day carnival aims to celebrate the Omani Craftsmen's



Day, support SMEs, and promote families engaged in handicrafts activities. It also aims to promote tourism for the castles and forts in Oman and exchange of experiences between the participating craftsmen from the Gulf countries.

"The carnival will include many activities such as workshops for craftsmen, a potters' competition, traditional folklore,

local food and a military band will also perform. The festival will also include a special corner for children, art exhibitions and an exhibition of antiques."

According to Harthi, Jabreen Castle dates back to 1670. Its design and construction were supervised by the Al Immam Bilal bin Sultan al Y'aribi (who

now rests on the left side of the castle's main entrance) and was built to resemble the most beautiful palaces of that period. "This castle was a beautiful palace for the Immam and his family and a bastion during wartime. It was also a beacon of education and had many study rooms.

"The palace is a large rectangular building consisting of five floors and containing 55 rooms. A falaj runs through the middle of the castle. The castle is distinguished by the inscriptions and frescoes that adorn its rooms. The castle's ceilings are decorated with paintings and Islamic-era style inscriptions, and its doors are beautifully carved. All these architectural details make Jabreen Castle an authentic expression of Omani craftsmanship.

"Organising events inside tourist castles and forts will enhance domestic tourism, attract foreign tourists and spread the culture of preserving authentic Omani heritage," said Harthi.

Oman, US defence officials discuss bolstering joint military cooperation

Washington, US - Oman and the United States discussed security assistance and military cooperation under a Joint Military Commission (JMC) meeting held at the Pentagon on March 23-24.

The JMC is the premier bilateral forum for senior US and Omani government and defence officials to discuss military cooperation, and to advance the Oman-US defence relationship.

The Omani delegation was led by H E Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence, and Dana Stroul, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for the Middle East.

According to the US Department of Defence, Dana and H E Za'abi reaffirmed the strength of the US-Oman strategic partnership. The delegations conferred on a broad range of security challenges throughout the region, including maritime and border security threats as well as Iran's activities in the region.



Omani and US participants also discussed the conflict in Yemen, continuing efforts to combat violent extremist organisations, and ways to grow the defence partnership over the coming years, including strengthening air and missile defence and bolstering maritime security.

The JMC included sessions on security assistance, military operations and military agree-

ments, and strategic initiatives.

The US delegation expressed gratitude for Oman's continued support for safe and secure US military access in Oman. Both sides agreed on the importance of continuing to advance the US-Oman defence and security partnership through joint training, exercises, and working together to expand regional cooperation to address shared threats.

H E Za'abi also met Bonnie

Jenkins, US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, on Thursday. The meeting discussed the advanced relations between the two countries and means of enhancing them to serve the joint interests of both sides.

It was attended by H E Moosa Hamdan al Tai, Ambassador of Oman to the US, and the Military Attaché at Oman's Embassy in Washington.



Royal Oman Police

Directorate of Public Relations

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Royal Oman Police - Department of Relations and Security Media - announces the holding of an auction for the sale of canceled police vehicles through closed envelopes (each vehicle separately).

Vehicles can be inspected in the yard of the Transportation Department at the Dhofar Governorate Police Command during official working hours from 27/3/2022 until 3/4/2022, provided that offers are sent in closed envelopes to the Department of Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Dhofar Police Command during the inspection period. The successful bidder shall abide by the following:

Pay the value of the vehicle electronically.

Transporting the vehicle within a maximum period of three days from the date of awarding the auction, and a fine of (5) Omani riyals is calculated for each day of delay after the specified period.

The buyer is responsible for paying the vehicle registration fees in his name in the traffic system before receiving the vehicle.

Islamic banking growth to continue despite challenges

Islamic financing growth topped 11.6 per cent in 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's Islamic banking sector is likely to sustain its strong growth trajectory in the short-to-medium term despite a number of structural challenges, according to Fitch Ratings.

Growth in Islamic banking, Fitch said, will be driven by growing awareness, strong retail demand for Islamic products, supportive regulations, and a strong push from the Islamic windows of conventional banks.

'An improving operating environment, expected positive real GDP growth, higher oil prices, the easing of coronavirus restrictions, and the rise in interest or profit rates will also support growth in both Islamic and conventional banking in the sultanate,' Fitch said in a statement. Islamic banking sector's financing growth in Oman topped 11.6 per cent year-on-year in 2021, in contrast to the conventional banking sector's 3.1 per cent growth, with a compounded annual growth rate of 9 per cent during 2017-2021.

Surging public demand and low-base effect propelled the growth. As a result, the market share of Islamic banking and Islamic windows increased to 15.2 per cent at end-2021 (from 14.3 per cent at end-2020), with total assets of RO5.9bn.

Fitch, however, noted that key structural challenges persist mainly due to the sector's recent inception in Oman (around ten years ago).

These include gaps in the distribution channels, limited product offerings, a still-developing regulatory framework, a small capital base, limited sukuk investment options and insufficient Islamic liquidity management products.



'Consolidation is credit-positive'

Fitch said it continues to see consolidation in Oman's Islamic banking industry. In January 2022, Bank Nizwa and Sohar International Bank received Central Bank of Oman's (CBO) approval to start due diligence for a potential merger. This follows the takeover of Alizz Islamic Bank by Oman Arab Bank in 2020.

As per the ratings agency, consolidation could be a credit-positive as it generates cost-efficiencies, deepen distribution channels, and strengthen capitalisation levels.

'Consolidation could also support faster growth in the Islamic subsidiary or window through the larger conventional banks' capitalisation and liquidity profiles,' Fitch said.

The ratings agency expects a mild asset quality deterioration at Islamic banking entities following the end of payment holidays and flexibility as banks will not have to classify financing as

impaired when payments are deferred.

'This is likely to arise in the more vulnerable sectors, particularly in real estate, construction, tourism and manufacturing.

We expect profitability to improve with rising rates and lower impairment charges, but a return to pre-pandemic levels is unlikely before 2023-2024,' Fitch noted in its statement.

Omani Islamic banks have in the past been adequately capitalised, but at lower levels than conventional banks.

The sultanate's Islamic banking regulatory framework allows Islamic banks to use a 30 per cent alpha factor which can uplift capital ratios, unlike conventional banks, Fitch said.

Fitch believes that the capital bases of Islamic banks in Oman are also smaller than those of conventional peers, which may limit the scale of participation in large government financing projects.

'However, amid rising core

capital and reserves at Islamic banks and windows, Islamic banks are increasingly financing government and public enterprise projects, with their share of total financing jumping to 10.4 per cent at end-2021 (from 4.6 per cent at end-2020).

It was lower than that of conventional banks whose share was 16.1 per cent at end-2021,' the ratings agency added.

The CBO, Fitch further said, is developing a medium-term strategy for the Islamic banking sector, including a lender of last resort facility for Islamic banking entities, with a sharia-compliant deposit insurance scheme.

Oman's share of global Islamic banking assets is growing but was small at 0.7 per cent as of the end of third quarter of 2020, according to the Islamic Financial Services Board.

'The long-term growth potential remains positive given Oman's Muslim-majority, with a sizeable sharia-sensitive and unbanked population,' the ratings agency added.

Higher oil prices put GCC petrochemical industry on course for swift recovery

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A new COVID-19 Recovery Roadmap (CRR), produced by Oxford Business Group (OBG) in partnership with Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA), explores the key part that the downstream hydrocarbons industry is set to play in supporting economic diversification efforts in the GCC countries.

Titled 'Innovation in the GCC Petrochemicals Industry', the report shines a spotlight on downstream production across the region, tracking the segment's history, development and outlook, in an easy-to-navigate and accessible format that includes key data and infographics.

The CRR notes that an uptick in oil prices and high demand globally for chemicals and petrochemicals have put the industry on course for a swift and strong recovery.

It also examines a move under way to attract investment for research and development, as part of broader efforts to transition to a knowledge-based economy and enhance competitiveness, which bodes well for research and value-added innovation in the chemicals and petrochemicals sector.

The topical issue of sustainability and the implications of the green revolution for the industry are also explored.

The CRR considers the challenges that regional petrochemicals stakeholders face in their efforts to drive sustainable growth, which include measuring emissions along the supply chain. It also looks at the critical role that renewable sources of energy are set to play as part of the broader drive to minimise harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, the report asks whether the industry could be in



line for a period of consolidation. It highlights the possible benefits that mergers and acquisitions could bring, which include easing the risk of oversupply and improving both resilience and efficiencies.

The CRR includes case studies charting the pandemic response and future growth strategies of Advanced Petrochemical Company and Maersk, all of whom are key regional stakeholders in the industry.

Commenting ahead of the report's launch, Abdulwahab al Sadoun, secretary-general of GPCA, said that the global recovery offered regional chemical and petrochemical companies a timely opportunity to contribute to economic diversification and further strengthen the industry's resilience to external headwinds.

"The chemicals segment has the opportunity to put innovation

at the core of its business strategy," he said. "It is well positioned for the development of processes and products in the areas of sustainability, the circular economy, recycling, decarbonisation, feedstock evolution and digitalisation."

Jana Treeck, OBG's managing director for the Middle East, said that the ongoing global recovery from the pandemic, and rising oil prices, augured well for the GCC's chemical and petrochemicals industry.

"Sustained production in a challenging environment has provided the region's stakeholders with firm foundations for future expansion," Treeck said. "With forecasts indicating rising export demand, our report points to a bright future for the chemicals sector and a key role in the diversification plans of the region's economies."

COMMENTARY

Breaking down Oman's property push to expats

Oman recently announced that expatriates can now purchase real estate assets outside the Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITCs) based on two categories. Investing in assets between RO250,000 and RO500,000 would entitle investors to a five-year extendable second-class residency, but this only applies to residential units. An investment of over RO500,000, however, entitles the investor to a ten-year extendable first-class residency, while also allowing the acquisition of commercial and industrial assets.

Anyone who wishes to make an investment of under RO250,000 can still do so, only in the ITC projects or usufruct schemes. Some governorates are still restricted as are other areas which are deemed to be of strategic importance.

The initial reaction to this policy change has been somewhat polarised. One viewpoint is that this will be extremely beneficial to Oman as it can trigger a flood of investment into a wide range of assets beyond the standard ITC residential unit, based on the belief that there is significant pent-up demand for such assets.

The opposing view is that this

decree will have little impact on the market, arguing that the level of investment required to make a dent is much higher when compared to other regional or global markets. For example, within the GCC in Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE, investments in properties valued in the range of RO50,000

some expatriates will seek residency through the minimum RO250,000 acquisition, such purchasers already have plenty of economical options of apartments to choose from within ITC projects.

However, buyers might consider purchasing a residential

residential assets that expatriates can already acquire within ITC projects at better price points, and opens up new investment avenues.

It is likely that we will see interest from expatriate businessmen in Oman in owning factories, logistics warehouses, retail units or offices. Businesses will be able to benefit from the greater security afforded by ownership and can potentially insulate themselves from future increases in rental rates.

Owners would also have more control over their assets and would be encouraged to make capital investments in the property, which would not have been viable in a leasehold arrangement.

Ultimately, we consider that this is a positive move as it adds flexibility to the market, specifically to expatriate business owners with commercial or industrial occupational requirements in the country, and signals the further opening up of the sultanate to foreign investors.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Media Publication

TCL

4K HDR

P725

Series

55" 65" 75"

androidtv R

Colorful · Wonderful

MEMC | Dolby Vision & Atmos | Hands-Free Voice Control 2.0

C.R. No. 1009680
97693496, 96742452
Available at
Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

www.genetco.net
@GenetcoOman
@GenetcoOman
Genetco Oman

MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

MSX posts weekly drop as financial stocks fall

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded weekly decline amid a sharp drop in banking and financial sector stocks.

The MSX30 index ended the week lower by 0.80 per cent. Financial index fell most by 1.77 per cent, while Service index inched down by 0.09 per cent. Industrial index was up for the week by 0.74 per cent. The MSX Shariah index closed lower by 0.11 per cent.

Local news

►Raysut Cement Company informed the MSX that there was a price hike of raw materials in international market which interrupted operations of Sohar Cement Factory and Pioneer Cement Industries - 100 per cent owned subsidiaries of Raysut Cement - for the period of 23 days. During these period Raysut Cement's Salalah and Duqm operations were normal. The company said there will be no material financial impact on annual performance of Raysut Cement Group due to preponement of routine plant maintenance shut down which was originally planned during the month of Ramadhan.

►A cooperation agreement was signed between the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) and Salalah Port to encourage integration between small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and major companies operating in the logistics field to offer support services and implement In-Country Value (ICV) programmes. This agreement is part of several partnerships through which ASMED seeks to empower SMEs and enhance their sustainability as well as diversify their services. The agreement also offers incentives for SMEs to develop suppliers and enhance ICV programmes. As per the agreement, technical support will be provided to facilitate the implementation of the programmes and provide information and data related to the SMEs. It will also offer financial, technical, administrative and legal consultations, training services and marketing for SMEs.

►The contribution of non-oil sectors in Oman is expected to reach 90 per cent of the total GDP by the end of 2040, said Ahmed al Hajri, director general of Nizwa Industrial City. "The



economic stimulus plan, approved by the Council of Ministers and endorsed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, presents incentives to ensure economic growth rates of more than 2.5 per cent," he said at a seminar entitled 'Nizwa Industrial City: Reality and Prospects', organised as part of Madayn's Oman Manufacturing Group (OMG) series of events for the year 2022.

►Samail Industrial City, affiliated to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), has signed an agreement with Gulf Petrochemical Services and Trading to set up a steel industries plant on an area of 181,000 sqm, with an investment volume touching RO3mn

for phase one of the project. Samail Industrial City is designed according to the latest international standards taking into account the environmental, civil defence, social and recreational requirements to achieve an integrated live-work-play model. Moreover, the Medical Fitness Examination project in Samail Industrial City will be opened next June in cooperation with the Ministry of Health. Samail Industrial City is divided into several sectors to attract a variety of industries. These include the food industry, plastic and petrochemical industry, steel industry; marble industry; building materials industry; and supporting services sector (e.g. warehouses).

►Oman News Agency, reported that the board of directors of the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund approves 13 projects with a total estimated cost of RO1.3mn related to the agriculture sector (plant and animal) and the fisheries sector. The projects will be implemented in various governorates of the sultanate.

►Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) signed contract extension agreements with several Super Local Community Contractors (SLCCs), which reflects the great success and the maturity achieved by these companies in the oil and gas sector. The signing took place at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre during Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES), which was inaugurated by H H Sayyid Taimur bin Asaad bin Tariq al Said, chairman of the Central Bank of Oman's board of governors. The event was organised under the patronage of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and hosted by PDO. The contracts extended with Al Baraka Oil Services, Shawamikh Oil Services and Al Sahari Oil Services are to provide well maintenance services.

►The Ministry of Energy and Minerals has decided to raise oil production rates to their maximum levels in light of the current rise in oil prices. Dr. Said Bader al Kharusi, executive director of the North Oil Directorate at Petroleum Development Oman (which is owned by the majority of the government), said the government aims to benefit from oil and gas prices.

He said the sultanate's production of crude is currently estimated at one million barrels per day, while for PDO it is 680,000 barrels per day. "High oil prices globally are an opportunity for us to increase production," Dr Aflah al Hadrami of Al Shawamikh Oil-filed Services said.

GCC markets

The GCC countries recorded net foreign inflows of US\$3.44bn in February 2022 with year-to-date net inflows at US\$6.14bn. Countries with positive foreign inflows in February were led by Saudi Arabia followed by Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait, respectively. Overall, Saudi Arabia led with net foreign inflows of US\$3.52bn fol-

lowed by US\$1.10bn by Qatar and US\$903mn by Abu Dhabi.

The Middle East stock markets are expected to attract foreign investments worth nearly US\$82bn, due to their outperformance over global peers, Asharq Business with Bloomberg reported, citing Morgan Stanley analysts.

They added that cash flows would rise amid the increasing exposure of global emerging market funds to the region and growth of their relative weight on the MSCI Emerging Markets Index.

The fundamental and technical reasons for the continued rise in the region's markets include higher energy prices and current reforms.

The region's markets witnessed strong performance in 2021 and the first quarter of 2022, topped by the Saudi Exchange (Tadawul) and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX).

World share markets were volatile as the Russia-Ukraine war kept oil above US\$120 a barrel, while "stagflation" worries rose on renewed talk of aggressive US interest rates hikes and slowing growth.

By special arrangement with U Capital

Iran says Kuwait-Saudi deal to develop gas field 'illegal'

Tehran, Iran - Iran on Saturday branded "illegal" a deal reached between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to develop a disputed gas field in the Gulf, insisting on its right to also exploit it.

The energy ministers of the Gulf Arab states signed an agreement on Monday to develop the Arash/Dorra gas field, according to an official Kuwaiti statement.

The move comes with energy prices soaring on world markets in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Iran's foreign ministry dismissed the agreement as "illegal" on Saturday, saying it was "contrary to current procedures and previously held negotiations".

"The Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its right to exploit the Arash/Dorra gas field," the ministry's spokesman Saeed Khatib-



bzadeh said in a statement.

"Any action for the operation and development of this field must be done in coordination with and cooperation of all the three countries."

The dispute dates back to the 1960s, when Iran and Kuwait each awarded an offshore con-

cession, one to the former Anglo-Iranian Petroleum Co, which became part of BP, and one to Royal Dutch Shell.

The two concessions overlapped in the northern part of the field, whose recoverable reserves are estimated at some 220bn cubic metres (seven trillion cubic

feet).

Iran and Kuwait have held unsuccessful talks for many years over their disputed maritime border area, which is rich in natural gas.

The Kuwaiti statement said the field was expected to produce 1bn cubic feet of natural gas per day with 84,000 barrels of condensate daily.

Khatibzadeh said Iran was "ready" to discuss with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia "how to exploit the joint field" whose largest part, which is not demarcated, is located on the Saudi-Kuwaiti common maritime border.

Iranian drilling of the field in 2001 spurred Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to agree on a maritime border deal which stipulated that they jointly develop the natural resources of the offshore zone.

AFP

IATA shifts AGM from China to Qatar

Paris, France - The International Air Transport Association (IATA) on Friday said its annual general meeting (AGM) in June would be held in Qatar instead of COVID-hit China.

China is experiencing its worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic more than two years ago, with Shanghai posting record-high case counts.

"It is deeply disappointing that

we are not able to meet in Shanghai as planned" between June 19 and 21, IATA director general Willie Walsh said.

"The decision to change the venue reflects continuing COVID-19-related restrictions on travel to China," the body said in a statement. "We are pleased to be returning to the dynamic aviation hub of Doha," Walsh said.

"This year's AGM will be an

important opportunity for aviation's leaders to reflect on the shifting political, economic and technological realities facing air travel as the industry's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic gathers pace," he added. The IATA comprises some 280 airlines and air companies, accounting for 83 per cent of global air travel.

AFP

Europe's economic growth slows as Ukraine war threatens recovery

Brussels, Belgium - Business activity in the eurozone slowed in March, according to a closely watched survey, as high prices and a gloomy outlook raised fears the Ukraine war could snuff out economic recovery.

Thursday's data indicated that while Europe was still growing at a solid pace after the lows of the coronavirus pandemic, clouds loomed for the health of the economy moving forward.

The survey underscores the "immediate and material impact" of the war on the economy and "highlights the risk of the eurozone falling into decline in the second quarter", said S&P's chief business economist, Chris Williamson. Had it not been for the easing of coronavirus measures, "business activity would have weakened far more sharply



in March", Williamson added.

The purchase managers' index (PMI) from S&P (formerly IHS Markit), slipped 1.0 points to 54.5, a statement said.

A figure above 50 indicates growth.

Among eurozone countries, France best resisted the negative effects of the war, as its service

industry boomed and consumer demand offset slumping exports.

Growth slowed more steeply in Germany, Europe's biggest economy, but manufacturing was still above the levels seen late last year, when the country's crucial export sector suffered deeply due to the pandemic.

Analysts and officials warn

that the effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine have made economic forecasting highly uncertain but most agree that predictions of major growth will have to be significantly lowered.

The continent was already suffering a period of record inflation before troops from Russia, the EU's biggest source of natural gas, moved into Ukraine on February 24. The conflict has seen Europe and the US inflict a wave of sanctions against President Vladimir Putin and his regime that will certainly have counter-effects on the European economy especially.

With war raging, businesses are living in fear that economic growth could be "collapsing" in the coming months, Williamson warned.

AFP



Al Hassan Engineering Company SAOG
P.O Box 1948, Ruwi, PC 112, Sultanate of Oman

Invitation to attend ordinary Annual General Meeting and Extraordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Al Hassan Engineering Company SAOG is pleased to invite all shareholders of the Company to attend the Annual ordinary General Meeting of the Company (AGM) and the Annual Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on Sunday 10 April 2022 at 03:00 PM at the company's headquarters in Muscat, located in Al Wadi Al Kabir, Muscat Hall, also through the electronic platform, which you can enter through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om), and If the legal quorum is not complete for the meeting of these two assemblies or one of them, the second meeting will be held on Wednesday 13 April 2022 at 03:00 PM via the above mentioned electronic platform, and that to discuss the following agenda:

First: The Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting:

1. Study the erosion of the company's capital and taking appropriate measures in this regard.

Second: The Annual Ordinary General Assembly Meeting:

1. To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2021.
2. To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2021.
3. To consider the Auditor's report and to approve the financial statements (Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account) in respect of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2021.
4. Approve sitting fees for the Board of Directors & subcommittees which were received by the Directors during the financial year ended 31.12.2021 & determine the sitting fees for the year ending 31.12.2022.(as per attachment).
5. Update & appraise the AGM with transactions that the Company performed with related parties during the year ended 31.12.2021.(as per attachment).
6. Study & approve the transactions which will be performed by the Company with related parties during the year ending 31.12.2022. (as per attachment).
7. Appointment of the auditors for the fiscal year ending on 31/12/2022 and determine their fees
8. To appoint independent party to measure the performance of the Board of Directors and fixing their fees.

Notes:
According to the company's articles of association and general meeting regulations using modern technology issued by the authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following: -

- A. A legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Assembly meeting and vote on his behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in the MCDC.
- B. Voting on any of the items on the agenda shall start with a period of no In excess of three days, until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting, and in the event the shareholder balance is changed With an increase or decrease, the voting process will be canceled, and he will have to vote again in a day Assembly meeting.

In case of any inquiries, please contact the legal Advisor / Mr. Ahmed Al Khuzaei on 24810575-614 - GSM 95334805

LuLu opens new store in Falaj Al Qabail

LuLu Hypermarket Oman strengthened its retail presence in Downtown Sohar with the grand opening of its new store located at Falaj Al Qabail. This is the retail giant's second store in Sohar and the 29th branch in the sultanate.

The new store was inaugurated by Sheikh Saif bin Himyar al Malik Al Shehi, Governor of North Batinah, in the presence of Mr Yusuffali M A, chairman and managing director of LuLu Group, senior management, and LuLu staff. Spread over an area of 75,000 sq ft, the store will offer a one-stop shopping experience complete with enhanced and expanded departments to better serve customers in Sohar, the major industrial hub of the sultanate, and its residential areas.

The new store will feature sophisticated fit outs and category bays with spacious layout for categories like grocery, fruits and vegetables, dairy products, poultry, meat and fish and the ever popular hot food and bakery. There is also designated sections for garments, electronics, IT products, stationery, and home appliances. There are multiple check-out counters and ample parking spaces to contribute to a relaxed shopping experience.



ping experience.

Just in time for Ramadan shopping, the store will feature a range of exciting offers and deals on fresh food, grocery, electronics and home appliances, as well as inaugural of-

fers on a range of products at attractive prices. In addition, shoppers can participate in the first-of-its-kind LuLu Shop & Win promotion across all its stores in Oman. Through this promotion, which will run till

May 7, customers can win cash prizes worth RO100,000.

There will be a Grand Prize of RO10,000 cash as well as Weekly Cash Prizes of RO5000, RO750, RO500, and more.

Yusuffali, said, "Under the able guidance of His Majesty Haitham bin Tariq, the country is rapidly progressing in all spheres and we thank His Majesty and the government for their pro-business approach.

We thank the citizens and residents of Oman for their tremendous support towards all our ventures in this country. With every new store, our ultimate aim is to become the favourite shopping destination not just

for customers in cities but also in the smaller towns of the country."

Ananth A V, director of LuLu Hypermarkets Oman & India, stated, "We are truly excited to bring Lulu's unique combination of variety, value and service to customers in Falaj and the surrounding areas. The new store will be the perfect location for a seamless shopping experience and convenience for customers in Falaj Al Qabail."

Shabeer K A, regional director - Oman, said, "The new store in Falaj Al Qabail will offer a delightful new shopping experience for the neighbourhood and will provide a great platform to local manufacturers and producers from the Sultanate to promote their local products. Customers in and around Sohar will now be able to enjoy super value true savings, a wide selection of products, and world class shopping options."

The Group's online shopping portals have also seen a surge in popularity since its introduction and have enabled customers to order their daily essentials, household products and groceries online and get them delivered at their doorsteps using the Lulu shopping app.

Ooredoo Oman CEO Noor al Sulaiti named among 20 Women to Watch

Continuing to set benchmarks in the telecoms industry, Ooredoo Oman's chief executive officer, Noor al Sulaiti, has been named among the region's 20 Women to Watch by Capacity Media.

It's the fifth edition of the annual power listing, which recognises noteworthy women in the telecoms and tech sector. With 2022 seeing the highest number of submissions since the list's launch in 2018, 20 Women to Watch serves as an index that shines a light on women across the arena who have achieved significant results or reached major milestones in their respec-



Noor al Sulaiti

tive fields, while breaking barriers in the process.

Noor said, "It's an honour to be named in Capacity Media's power list alongside so many inspirational women. I feel very lucky to be among many examples of positive female talent at Ooredoo, which is a testament of our ongoing commitment to nurturing women's empowerment and an equal opportunities culture."

"Together, we are highlighting the enormous talent that exists in the region and setting an example to any budding professional that no industry or

achievement is out of reach."

Noor joined Ooredoo Oman as CEO in mid-2021, and has since embarked on an ambitious vision towards being a digitally-led, sustainable, and customer-centric telecoms company.

A graduate of Computer Science with an MBA in Strategic Management, she has worked in the telecoms for 19 years, having previously held the role of CEO at Starlink, one of the Ooredoo Group's subsidiaries in Qatar, and senior leadership positions in Phono and FASTtelco in Kuwait.

OBA hosts Hamood al Zadjali

Oman Banks Association (OBA) hosted Hamood Sangour al Zadjali, the previous executive president of the Central Bank of Oman for a book signing ceremony on Wednesday at OBA Office located at Madinat Al Erfaan, Muscat Hills.

The signing ceremony was organised for the publication 48 Years of Service in the Omani Banking Sector, written by Zadjali who shares his rich experience of central banking in the book.

The event was attended by a number of bank CEOs as well as retired CBO executives. The gathering was an opportunity for top banking professionals in Oman to exchange ideas and share experiences.



OBA is a non-profit professional association created to represent the banking sector, to promote Omani banking activi-

ties, coordinate with the regulators on matters of policy and strategy, and to support banking excellence in Oman.

Mazoon Electricity joins Gulf Engineering Forum

Mazoon Electricity Company (member of Nama Group) participated in the 23rd Gulf Engineering Forum at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel from March 20 to 22, under the theme 'Engineer and Disaster Challenges', hosted by Oman represented by the Oman Society of Engineers, in collaboration with the Gulf Engineering Union.

The forum touched on the importance of the role of engineers and specialists in the field of crisis management related to the challenges associated with disasters and ways to prevent them, through the latest technologies, plans and procedures that reduce damage caused by disasters and crises.

The forum is an important opportunity to enhance local and international engineering knowledge, share experiences among participants, discuss future issues, enrich engineering ideas, and discuss best engineering practices related to disasters.

The forum's theme entitled 'Engineer and Disaster Challenges' was due to the importance of this topic as Oman experiencing natural disasters, particularly cyclones and floods resulting from the running of valleys because of Oman's position



in the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula and its view of the Arabian Sea, making it one of the areas affected by such natural disasters, in addition disasters classified as technological or social disasters.

Three engineers from Mazoon Electricity Company, Engineer Khalfan Naser al Burtamani (senior manager regulatory & corporate affairs), Engineer Aza Hamed al Maamari (senior analyst risk management & BCM) and Engineer Mohammed Saif al Wardi (specialist risk management), participated in the forum, where they reviewed the experience of Mazoon Electricity Company in risk management (Coronavirus pandemic as case study), and the other paper discussed the company's experi-

ence in managing the business continuity plan during crises (Cyclone Shaheen as case study).

Through the two papers, Mazoon Electricity's engineers discussed crisis management plans at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak and the company's precautionary measures to prevent infection among employees.

The other paper presented the company's plan for business continuity during the crises and addressed the implementation of the plan during Cyclone Shaheen and its effects on the electricity network performance in areas affected by the cyclone. The paper addressed the company's preparedness for such crises and the lessons learned for review and development.

The all-electric Audi e-tron Sportback launched at iconic Omantel Headquarters

Making a giant leap in its journey of electric mobility, Audi Oman, represented by Premium Motors has brought the battery powered luxury crossover e-tron Sportback to Oman.

Sultanate's iconic building the Omantel headquarters, located in the Irfan Business Park in Madinat, provided a unique setting to the launch of the Audi's first full-electric model e-tron Sportback in the country. A selection of distinguished guests turned out to watch the reveal of the e-tron Sportback which ushered in an era of electric luxury mobility.

Three e-tron Sportbacks were unveiled by chief guest Talal bin Saeed bin Marhoon al Mamari, CEO of Omantel at a specially choreographed futuristic event. The show also included a projection of the Audi logo across the central eye panel of the building which scores high on inclusion of elements that promote environmental sustainability just like the car. Audi e-tron Sportback, a perfect confluence of luxury, zero emissions, performance, and everyday usability, found the perfect platform for its unveiling.

Christian Nehme, general manager of Premium Motors Oman, said, "e-tron Sportback is among the most important



launches in our brand history. What better way for us to welcome the incredible car than in the iconic Omantel Headquarters building which embodies Omani heritage and environmental sustainability, while also meeting 100 per cent compliance in using low energy emitting materials for the interiors and exteriors. Omantel is devoted to environmental protection and reducing the impact of its products and operations by employing sustainable ways to reduce emissions, waste, and energy consumption. Audi too continuously works to improve manufacturing processes and vehicle material choices that can reduce environmental impact.

The Audi e-tron serves as the blueprint for sustainable premium mobility. We are very happy to begin our EV journey in the country. Audi e-tron Sportback combines the space and comfort of a typical luxury class automobile with features suitable for everyday use. It catapults the driver into a new era with the electric all-wheel drive"

Saba Said al Busaidi, senior manager corporate affairs, Omantel, said, "It was a very special moment to watch the Audi e-tron Sportback being launched in Omantel headquarters. The newly revealed model from the leading German marque's electric SUV line is powerful, sustainable, dynamic and eco-friendly.

The brand's green goals and social conscience pointing to a new, greener, electric-driven future is similar to the environment objectives of Omantel. Omantel's headquarters is the embodiment of the company's mission: quality, sustainability and innovation. Audi e-tron Sportback found the ideal platform for the launch. We hope the launch provides a clear road map towards sustainable mobility and develops an EV ecosystem in Oman."

The new Audi e-tron Sportback impresses with an athletic sill, large single-frame octagon design with vertical struts in the front and the unmistakable sloping Sportback roofline in the back.

Bank Nizwa opens new branch in Bahla

In line with the bank's well-formulated expansion strategy that focuses on bringing Islamic banking closer to the people, Bank Nizwa recently opened a new branch in Bahla. The Bahla branch is Bank Nizwa's third branch in the Dakhliya region and its being the 16th in the sultanate.

"With several initiatives geared at raising awareness on Islamic banking practices, Bank Nizwa has been a key advocate of Sharia'a-compliant financing in the sultanate. As an established leader in its segment, Bank Nizwa has been meeting the growing demand for Islamic banking with innovative Sharia'a-compliant solutions and premium levels of customer service while focusing on expanding its network of branches in an endeavor to be closer to its customers," said Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa.

"Ease of accessibility, closer engagement and improved interaction have been key focus areas to enhance the banking experience for our customers. While we have achieved monumental progress in our digital outreach, we have also remained dedicated to expanding our network of branches to cover the length and breadth of the country. The opening of a new branch is an



other step towards strengthening the bank's network in the sultanate and addressing the demands of its growing customer base in the region."

The branch is strategically located in place with the highest levels of accessibility and convenience for its customers, the new branch in Bahla offers the complete suite of Sharia'a-compliant financing solutions to individuals. The new branch will also

provide a huge impetus to and support the economic progress of local SMEs and other businesses in the region by offering them services like customised structured working capital, long-term financing and trade finance facilities.

Recognised as a reliable Islamic finance partner, the Bahla branch will help Bank Nizwa better serve the needs of government establishments and

government-owned entities in the region.

While Bank Nizwa has remained steadfast in its mission to expand its operations across the sultanate and offer its world-class Islamic banking experience to customers in every corner of the country, it has also remained invested in its human resources. The newly opened Bahla branch is staffed with qualified, well-trained and experienced Omani

employees who not only reserve the skills, aptitude and knowledge to address the varying needs of the customers but also have a deeper understanding of the local community. At the forefront of digitalization and innovation, the branch is also well-equipped with the latest technological solutions to ensure all processes are seamless, quick and convenient.

Bank Nizwa has been suc-

cessful in striking the required balance between embracing digital trends and maintaining a personal relationship with its customers. With a well-diversified network of state-of-the-art branches at key locations in the sultanate complementing its efficient digital channels, the bank has been successfully growing its customer base while reaffirming its position as a pioneer in the Islamic banking sector.

Zubair SEC to unveil its new Identity

Zubair Small Enterprises Centre (Zubair SEC) announced that it's going to reveal its new identity tomorrow, during a special event that will be held at Bait Al Zubair Museum, in the presence of a number of members of The Zubair Corporation board of directors and representatives of relevant government and private bodies.

Zubair SEC is one of the initiatives emanating from the vision of The Zubair Corporation for its role in society. Since its establishment, Zubair SEC has been distinguished by its high professionalism, and the diversity in the fields of knowledge it provides.

The Centre offers a wide range of services, including advisory solutions, guidance, business development opportunities, capacity building, opportunities for networking and knowledge transfer.

MG Motor's Festival of Winning offer is back



DO MORE

FESTIVAL of WINNING

BUY ANY OF MG'S STUNNING 2022 MODELS AND WIN BIG

WIN YOUR CAR BACK EVERY WEEK

SCRATCH & WIN
MOBILE PHONE BUNDLE OR FUEL CARD
and
30K UP TO 200K SERVICE PACKAGES

FREE INSURANCE REGISTRATION



Following the massive success of the MG Motor's Festival of Winning Ramadan offer last year, the MG festival returns once again this year with its exciting rewards for MG Motor's customers. Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC (MHD), the sole MG Motor's dealership in Oman, has announced that this year's Ramadan offer will extend from March 22 to May 20, 2022.

The Festival of Winning extends a variety of benefits including the opportunity to win one's car back; a Scratch and Win coupon enabling customers to win plenty of prizes, among which are Huawei mobile phone bundles, RO100 fuel cards, and up to 200,000km service pack-

ages. In addition to, free insurance coverage in Oman and UAE, and free car registration.

To enjoy the benefits of this offer, customers can choose from the exceptional range of the 2022 MG cars, which come with a one-of-a-kind manufacturer warranty of ten years with unlimited km.

This range consists of sedans like the rebellious MG GT, the stylish MG 6, and the exciting MG 5; and SUV's such as MG's largest 7-seater SUV RX8, the dynamic MG HS, the adventurous MG RX5, and the ambitious MG ZST.

This all-new fleet of MG sedan and SUV vehicles encompasses diverse choices that

serve all needs and tastes. The latest MG GT, the coupé-like fastback sedan that embraces MG's latest design ethos, is hard to miss. This car's exterior will catch your eyes at first glance, with its wide stance and the silhouette of a fastback, aerodynamic, flowing body lines that create a visually stunning vehicle. But the look is only the beginning, because MG GT exceeds expectations with its performance. Available in two engine variants, it impresses from the moment you ignite the engine. With up to 173HP and 250Nm maximum torque, it propels you from 0-100km/h in only 8.5 seconds.

One of the most popular MG

sedans in Oman is the MG 5. With the three trim levels - STD, COM, and DEL, it offers amazing performance and its state-of-art features include: Interactive Technology, 5-Star CNAP Safety, 1.5L CVT and a Dual Cooling Cycle Engine and 29 storage spaces and 512 L super trunk space.

The exciting MG 5 model is a manifestation of confidence on the roads that gets you to embrace life and its many journeys in style.

Another remarkable MG sedan to look at is the MG 6, which also comes in three trim levels. The lively 1.5L turbo-charged engine gives this model a dynamic performance, com-

plemented by the sporty styling and head-turning aesthetics inside and out. Its other strong points include its C-NCAP 5 Star safety rating and its stability control system for complete peace of mind.

In the SUV category, the MG HS offers a thrilling driving experience and a sense of adventure, thanks to its X-Motion design concept. The dynamic MG HS is a smart and practical SUV that exudes charm and capability, letting you experience life like never before, powered by its 2.0-litre High Efficiency Turbo Engine and with its praiseworthy design makes it an irresistible choice for adventure seekers.

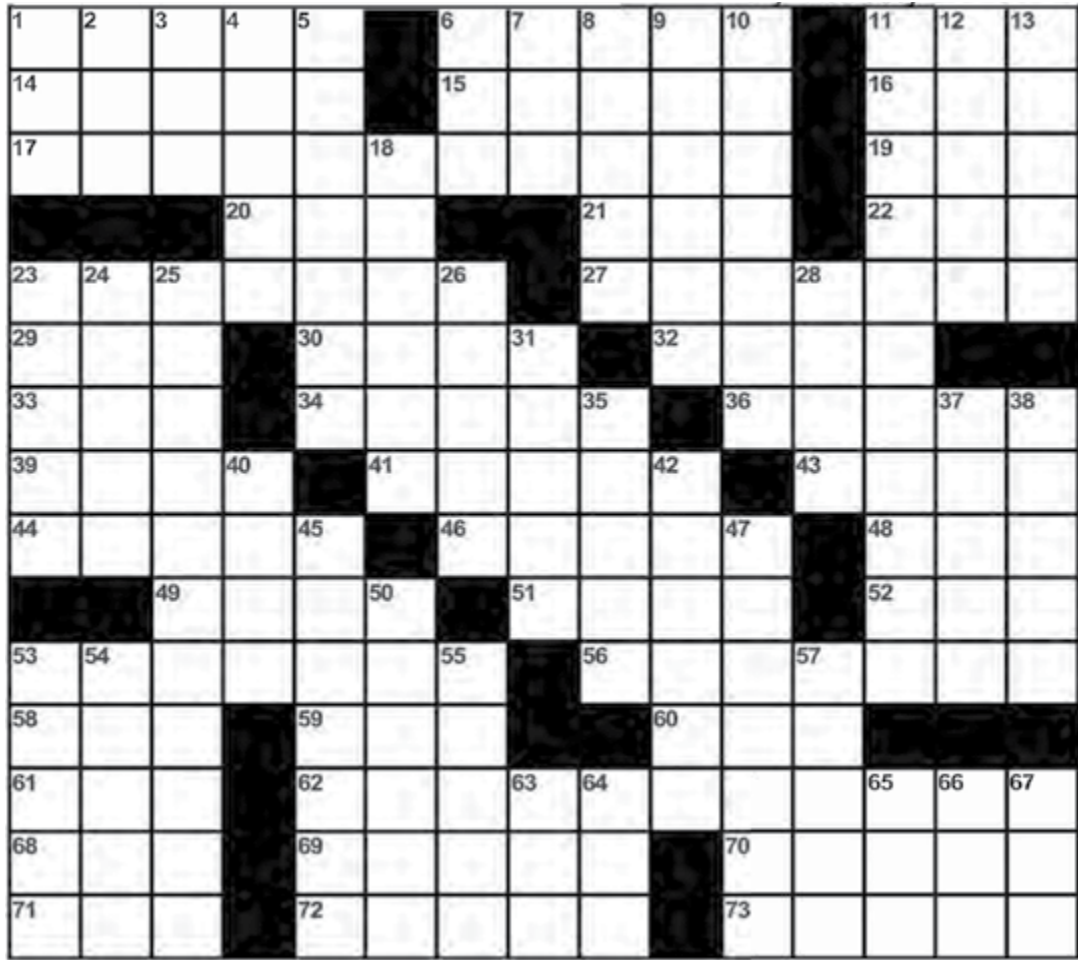
The ultimate SUV from MG Motor - the MG RX5 - makes every journey a memorable one. Versatile, capable, sporty and fun, the MG RX5 perfectly encapsulates the Do More ethos of the brand and offers sporty yet elegant design including violin-style tail lights and an 8 inch touchscreen console. It comes with a panoramic sunroof and spacious interiors with up to 1,639 L storage space. It is also available with the choice of Red, Blue, Black, White and Silver finishes.

Another class-leading SUV is the MG RX8. Epitomizing seven-seat perfection, the MG RX8 is a bold and capable SUV built to be noticed. This vehicle is packed

with all features allowing it to top competitors in the category. With the 2.0T engine paired with a six-speed automatic transmission, MG RX8 is unstoppable on any terrain. Add that to the exceptional safety features, technology-enabled control, and the amazingly elegant exterior this car boasts.

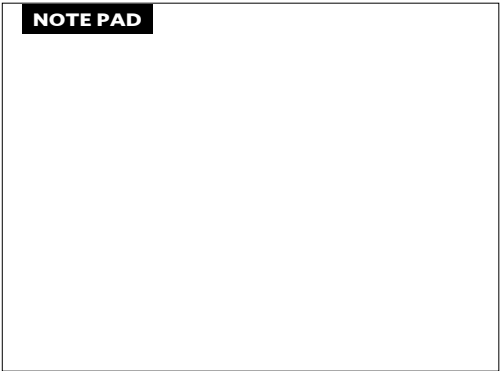
A contemporary design and punchy drive characterise the MG ZST which, though designed and built with British heritage in mind, has already proved its popularity in the Middle East. This striking crossover offers more equipment than ever, with an upgraded engine, additional styling features and the very latest in technology.

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Anklebones
 - 6) University in Texas
 - 11) "This means _!"
 - 14) For all to hear
 - 15) Truly love
 - 16) Anger
 - 17) They are see-through
 - 19) "... heat, _ gloom of night ..."
 - 20) "Mode" preceder
 - 21) Munched
 - 22) Tall Australian bird
 - 23) Becoming morning
 - 27) Like some humor
 - 29) _-Wan Kenobi
 - 30) Jewish homeland
 - 32) Below-the-belt comment
 - 33) Animal house
 - 34) "Come in!"
 - 36) Nosy thing to do?
 - 39) Roams
 - 41) Auctioneer's hammer
 - 43) Voyaging on an ocean
 - 44) Fire remnant
 - 46) Andrea Bocelli, for one
 - 48) Malone on "Cheers"
 - 49) Coral strip
 - 51) 100-meter event
 - 52) Clairvoyance, e.g.
 - 53) Breastbone
 - 56) Some instrument pluckers
 - 58) When doubled, a dance
 - 59) Airport schedule abbr.
 - 60) Chunk of lawn
 - 61) Common tree
 - 62) Achieve total victory
 - 68) "... moment, please"
 - 69) End of a bridal path
 - 70) Contents of some office cartridges
 - 71) The "p" in mpg
 - 72) Be educated
 - 73) Prepare to be tested
- DOWN**
- 1) Glass shooter
 - 2) Legendary Muhammad
 - 3) "Anchorman: The Legend of _ Burgundy"
 - 4) Country in northeastern Africa
 - 5) Put on a pedestal
 - 6) Drink from a dish
 - 7) Org. on toothpaste tubes
 - 8) One-celled organism
 - 9) Ridges on ranges
 - 10) Caulks again, e.g.
 - 11) Some juicy vats
 - 12) Bouquet
 - 13) Any "I Love Lucy," now
 - 18) On the decline
 - 23) Avoid artfully
 - 24) Crosswise, on deck
 - 25) Jacket worn on a blustery day
 - 26) Intimated
 - 28) Russian assembly
 - 31) Decisive refusal
 - 35) Kidney-related
 - 37) Minimal amount
 - 38) Reading lights
 - 40) Nostradamus, purportedly
 - 42) Plague item of biblical proportions
 - 45) Subscriber's option
 - 47) Sharp replies
 - 50) Pointless, as an effort
 - 53) Ice cream portion
 - 54) Macbeth was one
 - 55) Kind of ray
 - 57) Far from a Mensa

- candidate
- 63) Steering device, on water
- 64) Jumbo coffeepot
- 65) Large African antelope
- 66) "---- be a fool not to"
- 67) Attempt



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Retreating into the safety of your nest is all you want to do. You try to stay out of other people's way. If some thoughtless person inadvertently pushes your buttons, however, they're likely to get far more than they bargained for. You can be quite a tiger when you're backed into a corner, either real or imagined, and sometimes you aren't as careful as you should be about your claws as you lash out.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Sometimes when you're feeling invulnerable and in control, your ego can blind you to potential trouble spots. Protect your flank. Substitute cunning for complacency. You don't have to look for intrigue around every corner, but you do need to be aware that someone might be trying to put one over on you. Gather your family into a protective circle and spend some quality time together.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Deep in your own thoughts, you might be only peripherally aware of what's going on around you. In fact, you could be so preoccupied that you bump into a table or bang your shin on a chair. Pull yourself out of dreamland when you get behind the wheel of the car, however. Inspired creative ideas might churn up from your subconscious. Don't dismiss them without examining all the angles.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. From 1925 to the start of World War II in 1939, Ahmed Muhtar bey Zogolli ruled what country?

- A. Egypt
- B. Turkey
- C. Albania
- D. Libya

2. The GANEFO tournaments were initiated, and first held, where?

- A. Japan
- B. Russian
- C. Indonesia
- D. Cambodia

3. By late 2021, how many people approximately were in the world population?

- A. 9.2 bn
- B. 7.9 bn
- C. 6.9 bn
- D. 8.4bn

Answers: 1.C 2.C 3.D

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

The speed at which you're experiencing some surprising emotional shifts should give you pause. Knee-jerk reactions and split-second judgments almost always backfire, particularly when they're based on half-truths and suppositions. You might have some underlying cause for concern, but temper your response or it could be seen as way out of line and won't help solve the problem.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You're hungry, but for what? Maybe you're hungry to find some meaning in life beyond your usual day-to-day concerns. The urge could send you down unexplored paths. You might grope your way blindly for a while and perhaps even stumble once or twice. However, in many ways, the search is its own reward. Stay true to your purpose despite obstacles and setbacks.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You can get ahead if you take the initiative to press forward with your ideas. You've laid all the groundwork and only have to convince others you're on the right track. If you need help, just ask. Others will be eager to lend assistance and support. If you encounter any resistance, looking at it objectively will give you the means to overcome it. You are in the correct track, just keep moving forward.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

No matter what the weather is like today, go outside at least for a while. You need some fresh air and an unobstructed view of the sky. Stretch your legs, exercise your heart, and take deep breaths. Don't get too involved in sedentary pursuits. Learn how to balance the physical and the mental. You'll be amazed by how even a brief reconnection with the fundamental life force recharges your batteries.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Skating along with little regard for the subtleties could cause you to miss an important opportunity. Fine-tune your instincts to pick up on minutiae that you can put to good use. Great ideas often spring from chance remarks about unfilled needs. You have the intellect and skill to capitalise on such knowledge. A new pursuit could give you a fulfilling creative outlet.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

It's almost as if two people with wildly divergent attitudes are having a tug-of-war inside your head. On the one hand, you long to be out with friends, indulging in mindless chatter and giving yourself over to small pleasures. On the other, you feel a powerful urge to seclude yourself for some intense soul-searching. Impose your will on these dueling impulses and pick the one that's right for now.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

If you're uncomfortable with this phase you're going through, you might look for a quick fix to get out of the doldrums. If your solution involves a long-term financial commitment or a significant professional change, proceed cautiously. Be aware that the remedy could turn out to be far worse than the situation you're trying to move beyond. Precipitous decisions are rarely in your best interests. This uncertainty will pass without soon.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Your sunny disposition warms everyone around you and draws new admirers. You'll be buzzing quite industriously, filled with purpose, and supremely confident. Now is the time to end the procrastination and try your hand at a new skill you've been wanting to learn. Free from fears of failure, take advantage of your self-assurance and jump in with both feet. You can't win a race if you don't start running.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Facing emotional issues is not on your top ten list of things to do today. Indulging in some temporary denial until you're feeling stronger and more solidly put together could be in your best interests. Accordingly, avoid people who want to back you into a corner. They're likely pushing their own agendas with little regard for yours. Your first priority right now is taking care of yourself.

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

A	P	O	R
H	L	R	S
E	O	A	D
R	E	Y	L

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Joe Biden meets Ukraine ministers in Warsaw

Russia, on Saturday, signalled it may scale down its war aims after failing to break Ukraine’s resistance

Kyiv, Ukraine - US President Joe Biden met with Ukrainian ministers on Saturday, as Russia signalled it may scale down its war aims after failing to break the nation's resistance in a month of fighting and deadly attacks on civilians.

During the meeting, Biden was seated at a long white table alongside US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin facing Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov, a White House pool report said.

The US leader has been leading efforts among Western allies to press Vladimir Putin to end his invasion of Ukraine, branding the Russian president as a 'war criminal' over the assaults on civilians. Putin had sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, vowing to destroy the country's military and topple pro-Western President Volodymyr Zelensky.

But his army has made little progress on capturing key cities, and its attacks on civilians have become more deadly.

In a surprise statement, Sergei Rudskoi, a senior Russian general, suggested the time had come for a considerably reduced 'main goal' of controlling Donbas, an eastern region already partly held by Russian proxies.



A man stands while smoke rises after Russian attacks hit a fuel storage facility in Kalynivka, on Friday (AFP)

The apparent scaling down of ambitions came as a Western official reported that a seventh Russian general, Lieutenant General Yakov Rezanstev, had died in Ukraine and that a colonel had been 'deliberately' killed by his own demoralised men.

Complicating Moscow's challenges, invading troops were facing a counteroffensive in

Kherson, the only major Ukrainian city under Russian control.

‘Everybody’s shooting’

Russia’s far-bigger military continued to combat determined Ukrainian defenders who are using Western-supplied weapons - from near the capital Kyiv to Kharkiv, the Donbas

region and the devastated southern port city of Mariupol.

Authorities said they fear some 300 civilians in Mariupol may have died in a Russian air strike on a theatre being used as a bomb shelter last week.

The theatre was targeted despite the word 'children' being written large in Russian on the ground outside, so as to be visible



US President Joe Biden (left) speaks during a meeting on Russia's war on Ukraine at the presidential palace in Warsaw on Saturday (AFP)

to pilots. Russian forces hammering Mariupol's out-gunned resistance consider the city a lynchpin in their attempt to create a land corridor between the Crimea region, which Moscow seized in 2014, and the Donbas.

France's President Emmanuel Macron announced a bold plan with Turkey and Greece to evacuate 'all those who wish to leave Mariupol', adding he would discuss it with Putin soon.

One Mariupol resident who already left the city, 33-year-old Oksana Vynokurova, described leaving behind a hellscape.

"I have escaped, but I have lost all my family. I have lost my house. I am desperate," she told AFP after reaching the western city of Lviv by train.

"My mum is dead. I left my mother in the yard like a dog, because everybody's shooting."

In Kharkiv, where local authorities reported 44 artillery strikes and 140 rocket assaults in a single day, residents were resigned to the incessant bombardments.

Anna Kolinichienko, who lives in a three-room flat with her sister and brother-in-law, said they don't even bother to head down to the cellar when the sirens go off. "If a bomb drops, we're going to die anyway," she said, adding that 'we are getting a little used to explosions'.

Russian forces have taken control of Slavutych, the town where workers at the Chernobyl nuclear plant live, arresting the mayor, regional Ukrainian authorities said. But residents of the town were mounting pro-Ukrainian protests, prompting the invading forces to fire shots in the air and lobbing stun grenades into the crowd.

Counter-attacks

Russia's army was predicted by some to roll across Ukraine with little resistance.

But Putin's military has exhibited poor discipline and morale, faulty equipment and tactics, as well as brutality toward civilians, Western analysts say.

Amid heavy censorship, Russian authorities on Friday gave only their second official military death toll since the start of the invasion, at 1,351. This is far below Western estimates, with one senior NATO official saying between 7,000 and 15,000 Russian soldiers have died. Rudskoi's announcement of a pivot to the battle for eastern Ukraine was accompanied by claims of success.

He said Ukraine's military has been severely degraded and that Russia hadn't seized cities to 'prevent destruction and minimise losses among personnel and civilians'.

But his reference to plans for a 'liberation' of the Donbas region could lay the groundwork for the Kremlin to focus on an easier campaign that can be sold to Russians as a victory.

AFP

Russia fuelling nuclear arms race, says Zelensky

Doha, Qatar - Russia's 'bragging' about its nuclear weapons is fuelling a dangerous arms race, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky told the Doha Forum on Saturday.

Zelensky also called on Qatar, which organises the annual meeting of international political and business leaders, to increase production of natural gas to counter Russian efforts to use energy as a weapon.

"They are bragging that they can destroy with nuclear weapons not only a certain country but the entire planet," Zelensky said in a live video message to the forum on the 31st day of the Russian military assault against his country.

When Ukraine dismantled its nuclear stockpile in the 1990s it was given 'security assurances from the most powerful countries in the world', including Russia, he said in comments translated into English for the conference.

"But these assurances did not



Delegates attending a speech by Volodymyr Zelensky speaking remotely by video-link at the Doha Forum in Qatar's capital on Saturday (AFP)

become guarantees. And in fact, one of the countries supposed to give one of the greatest security promise started to work against Ukraine and this is the ultimate manifestation of injustice," Zelensky added.

Zelensky also called on Qatar, one of the world's top three producers of natural gas, to increase production because of the conflict. "The future of Europe rests with your efforts," he told the audience that included the Emir of

Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

"It depends on your output. I ask you to increase output of energy to ensure that everyone in Russia understands that no country can use energy as a weapon."

European nations have vowed to wean themselves off Russian oil and gas and have already turned to Qatar for alternative supplies.

AFP

Iraq fails again to elect new president

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraqi lawmakers failed again on Saturday to elect a new president for the country due to a lack of quorum in parliament, keeping the country mired in political paralysis.

Parliament had issued a final list of 40 candidates for the post, a largely ceremonial role that by convention is reserved for a member of Iraq's Kurdish minority. The contest pits Barham Saleh, the incumbent and member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, against Rebar Ahmed of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the PUK's rival.

But a lack of a quorum - set at two-thirds of the house's 329 members - held up the vote for the second time since February, deepening war-scarred Iraq's political uncertainty.

Only 202 lawmakers showed up for the latest vote, a parliamentary official told AFP on condition of anonymity, and a new session had to be scheduled for Wednesday. The postponement exacerbates Iraq's political problems because it is the task of the president to formally name a



Iraqi members of Sadrist bloc gather inside the Iraqi parliament in Baghdad, ahead of the country's presidential election, on Saturday (AFP)

prime minister, who must be backed by an absolute majority in parliament.

On February 13, Iraq's supreme court ruled out a presidential bid by KDP-backed veteran politician Hoshiyar Zebari, after a complaint filed against him over years-old, untried corruption charges.

Iraqi politics were thrown into turmoil following last October's general election, which was

marred by record-low turnout, post-vote threats and violence, and a months-long delay until the final results were confirmed.

Sharp divisions

Intense negotiations among political groups have since failed to form a majority parliamentary coalition to agree on a new prime minister to succeed Mustafa al-Kadhemi. The largest political bloc, led by Shiite cleric Moqtada

Sadr, had backed Zebari for the presidency and has now thrown its weight behind Ahmed.

A first vote in parliament on February 7 failed to materialise as it was widely boycotted amid the Zebari legal wrangle.

Saturday's failed session underscored the sharp divide in Iraqi politics between Sadr, the general election's big winner, and the powerful Coordination Framework, which had called for a boycott. The Coordination Framework includes the pro-Iran Fatah Alliance - the political arm of the Shiite-led former paramilitary group Hashed al-Shaabi.

With the support of Sunni and Kurdish parties, Sadr wants the post of prime minister to go to his cousin Jaafar Sadr, Iraq's ambassador to Britain, once the question of the four-year presidency has been settled.

Ahead of Saturday's debacle, political analyst Ihsan al-Shamari had said that, even if the vote had gone ahead as planned, the presidency would 'not be decided from the first round'.

AFP

North Korea has ‘likely more in store’ after missile test: US

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea likely has 'more in store' after successfully test-firing its largest-ever intercontinental ballistic missile, a top US official said on Friday, as Washington called for tougher international sanctions at the UN Security Council.

Thursday's launch was the first time Pyongyang has fired Kim Jong Un's most powerful missiles at full range since 2017.

It was conducted under Kim's 'direct guidance', and ensures his country is ready for 'long-standing confrontation' with the United States, state media outlet KCNA reported on Friday.

"We see this as part of a pattern of testing and provocation from North Korea... we think there is likely more in store," White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told reporters travelling on board Air Force One with President Joe Biden.

The missile appears to have travelled higher and further than any previous ICBM tested by the nuclear-armed country - including one designed to strike anywhere on the US mainland.

At the UN Security Council on Friday, the United States said the recent launches were 'increasingly dangerous provocations', and called for a 'resolution to update and strengthen the sanctions regime' against Pyongyang.

The move would follow up on sanctions implemented after the North's last test in 2017, when the council promised further measures in the event of future launches, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said.

"This is precisely what happened. So now is the time to take that action," she added.

However, China urged 'prudence and reason'. "All is not quiet on the international front,"



The test launch of Hwasongpho-17 of North Korea's strategic forces in an undisclosed location in North Korea (AFP)

China's UN ambassador Zhang Jun said. "No parties should take any action that would lead to greater tensions."

Russia warned against following Washington's lead on tightening sanctions, saying it believed doing so would "go beyond the framework of cutting off financing" for the DPRK missile and nuclear programmes and would "threaten North Korean citizens with unacceptable socio-economic and humanitarian problems". Following the meeting, a group of 15 nations including permanent Security Council members Britain, France and the US -- but minus China and Russia -- released a joint statement urging UN member states, in particular UNSC members, to do more.

"The DPRK is demonstrating its determination to continue advancing its weapons programme as it escalates its provocative behaviour -- and yet the Council has remained silent," said the statement, which included non-permanent Security Council members Brazil, Ireland and Norway, as well as Germany, Japan and South Korea.

haviour -- and yet the Council has remained silent," said the statement, which included non-permanent Security Council members Brazil, Ireland and Norway, as well as Germany, Japan and South Korea.

‘Monster missile’

Known as the Hwasong-17, the giant ICBM launched Thursday was first unveiled in October 2020 and dubbed a 'monster missile' by analysts.

It had never previously been successfully test-fired.

North Korean state media photographs showed Kim, wearing his customary black leather jacket and dark sunglasses, striding across the tarmac in front of a huge missile, with other images of him cheering and celebrating the test launch with uniformed military top brass.

South Korea's military had estimated the range of the Thursday launch as 6,200km - far longer than the last ICBM, the Hwasong-15, which North Korea tested in November 2017.

The missile landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone, prompting anger from Tokyo, but KCNA said the test had been carried out 'in a vertical launch mode' to ease neighbours' security concerns. Following the test, Washington imposed new sanctions on entities and people in Russia and North Korea who are accused of 'transferring sensitive items to North Korea's missile programme'. The test is a clear sign North Korea has made 'important qualitative progress' on its banned weapons programmes, said US-based analyst Ankit Panda.

"What's important about this ICBM is not how far it can go, but what it can potentially carry, which is multiple warheads."

AFP

Yemen rebels attack oil facilities near Saudi's Formula One track

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - A Yemeni rebel attack on a Saudi oil plant set off a huge fire near Jeddah's Formula One circuit during televised practice sessions on Friday, part of a wave of assaults on Aramco facilities.

Smoke billowed near the circuit and the second practice was delayed in the attack, one of 16 drone-and-missile attacks by the Iran-backed rebels around the kingdom.

The wave of assaults comes ahead of the seventh anniversary of a Saudi-led coalition's military intervention against the rebels in Yemen, a country in the grip of a major humanitarian crisis.

Oil prices have soared since Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked supply fears, prompting Western powers to implore Saudi Arabia and other members of the OPEC cartel to ramp up production.

Friday's attacks targeted 'Aramco facilities in Jeddah and vital facilities in the capital of the Saudi enemy, Riyadh', tweeted Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Iran-backed rebels confirmed the Jeddah attack.

The rebels have frequently launched similar assaults on Saudi oil facilities but the Jeddah attack came as a worldwide audience tuned in for the F1 Grand Prix.

World champion Max Verstappen was one of the first drivers to be aware of the drama



Smoke billows from an oil storage facility in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah on Friday (AFP)

unfolding.

"I can smell burning... is it my car?" Verstappen said over the team radio during the first practice session.

Coalition spokesman Turki al-Maliki said the fire had been brought under control and would not have an impact 'on activities in Jeddah'.

F1 boss Stefano Domenicali has insisted the race weekend will go ahead as planned.

Drivers, team bosses and

Domenicali had four hours of meetings which ended early on Saturday without an official announcement.

Mexican Red Bull driver Sergio Perez however said he was ready for the qualifying session.

"Ready and totally focused for tomorrow's qualify!" Perez tweeted after the meetings ended at 2:20am, apparently confirming the decision to race on Sunday.

A F1 spokesperson earlier

gave assurances that 'the event can continue as planned' as the delayed second practice session got underway.

Retaliatory strikes

The attacks were launched from Sanaa, the rebel-held Yemeni capital, and Hodeida.

In response, the coalition launched air strikes 'against sources of threat in Sanaa and Hodeida' early on Saturday.

"The military operation will

continue until its objectives are achieved," the coalition said in a statement quoted by the official Saudi news agency SPA.

The US State Department condemned the rebel attacks, calling them 'unacceptable'.

"We will continue to work with our Saudi partners to strengthen their defences while also working to advance a durable resolution that ends the conflict in Yemen," said State Department spokeswoman

Jalina Porter. The rebel attacks also hit an electrical station and a water facility in Jizan province, which borders Yemen.

'Direct threat' to oil supplies

Saudi Arabia, one of the world's biggest oil exporters, warned on Monday that the attacks posed a 'direct threat' to global supplies.

The kingdom 'will not incur any responsibility' for shortages in oil supplies in light of the Iran-backed Houthi attacks, the foreign ministry said.

The statement on Monday came after the kingdom acknowledged a temporary drop in production after the Houthis attacked a refinery with an armed drone.

A Saudi energy ministry official reiterated the warning, saying Houthi attacks could affect the country's 'production capacity and its ability to fulfil its obligations to global markets'.

"They (rebels) are trying to impact the nerve-centre of the world economy," the coalition said in a statement.

The Saudi-led coalition intervened to support Yemen's internationally recognised government in 2015, after the rebels seized the capital Sanaa the previous year. The war has killed hundreds of thousands directly or indirectly and left millions on the brink of famine in what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe.

AFP

Iran talks: EU envoy hopes to close gaps

Tehran, Iran - The European Union's (EU) coordinator for talks to restore the Iran nuclear deal, Enrique Mora, said he was hoping to close gaps in the negotiations ahead of his expected arrival on Saturday in Tehran.

Iran has been engaged in negotiations to revive the accord with Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly and the United States indirectly since April 2021.

The EU diplomat, who coordinates talks between Iran and the US, is due to arrive in Tehran on Saturday night, state news agency IRNA reported. He is scheduled to meet Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri on Sunday.

"Working on closing the remaining gaps in the #ViennaTalks on the #JCPOA," Mora tweeted ahead of his trip. "We must conclude this negotiation. Much is at stake."

Concerned parties have signalled for weeks that the negotiations are close to an agreement, but that 'political decisions' are required from Tehran and Washington.

Western parties have been pushing for the talks to be concluded 'urgently' given the accelerated pace of Iran's nuclear programme.

Following the United States' unilateral withdrawal from the deal in 2018 and the re-imposition of crippling economic sanctions, Iran began rolling back on most of its commitments under the accord from 2019.

The negotiations have been paused since March 11, after Russia demanded guarantees that Western sanctions imposed on it following its invasion of Ukraine would not damage its trade with Iran.

Days later, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov revealed during a joint news conference with his visiting Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian that Moscow had received the guarantees.

Consultations between Amir-Abdollahian and his counterparts had continued since delegations returned to their capitals, IRNA said.

AFP

All 132 on crashed China Eastern plane confirmed dead

Beijing, China - All 132 people aboard the plane that crashed into a mountainside in southern China last week have been confirmed dead, the country's civil aviation authority said on Saturday.

Dozens of victims' relatives have been waiting for days as rescue teams combed heavily forested slopes for plane debris and signs of survivors from Monday's disaster near the city of Wuzhou, Guangxi province.

While no cause has yet been



This screengrab taken on Thursday from a video by state broadcaster CCTV shows rescue teams with a piece of the fuselage (AFP)

determined, online tracking data showed the plane rapidly dropped from an altitude of 29,100 to 7,850 feet in just over a minute.

"All 123 passengers and nine crew members of flight MU5735 of China Eastern airlines have been killed on board on March 21," Hu Zhenjiang, deputy director-general of the Civil Aviation Administration of China, told a press conference.

"The identity of 120 victims has been determined by DNA

identification."

After the announcement, Hu and the assembled journalists stood to observe a minute's silence for the victims of the tragedy.

Aviation officials previously confirmed they had found a black box they believed to be the cockpit voice recorder, which should provide important clues to the cause of the crash.

The stricken jet, a Boeing 737-800, was equipped with two recorders: one in the rear pas-

senger cabin tracking flight data, and the other a cockpit voice recorder. Rescuers are still looking for the other recorder.

The cause has mystified aviation authorities, who have scoured the site's rugged terrain for clues as to what sparked China's deadliest plane crash in nearly 30 years.

China Eastern had earlier said the crashed plane had met all airworthiness requirements pre-flight.

AFP

Egypt's FM to join summit of Arab, US diplomats in Israel



(L-R): Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al Sisi, King Abdullah II of Jordan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi, meeting in Jordan's Red Sea resort on Friday (AFP)

Jerusalem - Egypt's foreign minister will take part in ground-breaking talks in Israel from today alongside his counterparts from the US and three Arab states, an Israeli official said.

Sameh Shoukry will be joining US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the foreign ministers of the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco for a series of meetings hosted by their Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid, an Israeli official told AFP on Saturday, on condition of anonymity.

The two-day event will be held against the backdrop of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a

conflict that has sparked wider security concerns and sent oil and food prices soaring.

It also comes as the United States is close to reaching an agreement with Iran to restore the 2015 accord limiting Tehran's nuclear activities in return for removing sanctions on the country. The United Arab Emirates forged diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020 under a series of US-brokered deals known as the Abraham Accords.

Bahrain and Morocco followed suit, while Sudan also agreed to normalise ties with Israel although it has yet to finalise

a deal. The agreements, reached under former US president Donald Trump, broke with decades of Arab consensus that there would be no relations with Israel while the Palestinian question remains unresolved.

The two-day meeting in Israel follows a three-way summit hosted by Egypt on Tuesday at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh between Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and the UAE's de facto ruler, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan.

AFP

Palestinians vote in phase II of municipal polls

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories - Polls opened on Saturday in towns and cities in the Israeli-occupied West Bank in a rare democratic exercise following a decade and a half of delays to Palestinian elections.

It is the second phase of municipal elections after a first round of voting in December in 154 West Bank villages.

Saturday's vote is being held in 50 towns and cities, with many elections uncontested, or without any candidates in some cases.

No legislative or presidential elections have been held in the Palestinian territories for 15 years, following repeated delays.

The last municipal elections, held in 2017, were boycotted by Hamas, the Islamist rulers of Gaza.

The fighter group, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, is also boycotting this vote in protest at president Mahmud Abbas' indefinite postponement of parliamentary and presidential elections that had been scheduled for last year.

The Islamists had been poised to sweep the parliamentary election, which was widely seen as the real reason for Abbas' 11th-hour postponement



An elderly Palestinian man votes in the local elections in Beit Furik, east of the West Bank city of Nablus, on Saturday (AFP)

of the poll, citing Israel's refusal to allow voting in annexed east Jerusalem. Abbas' presidential term was supposed to end in 2009.

No elections are being held in the Gaza Strip or Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem.

In the Jordan Valley city of Jericho, independents dominate the candidate lists, with established parties officially staying

away, a dynamic mirrored across the West Bank.

"Usually there are just one or two lists running - and they belong to the parties. This time there are five lists, many of them independents," said Emad Barahmeh, a local businessman who heads one of the independent lists running in Jericho.

Yet experts say that Hamas and Fateh, the secular party led

by Abbas, are still involved, running candidates under the table as independents.

"It is also noticeable that the various Palestinian factions are clearly absent from running for these elections, but their candidates have entered under the name of independents," Talab Awad, an expert on Palestinian elections, told AFP.

"There are candidates from the Hamas movement in these elections, but they are doing so personally," Awad said, adding participation would likely be 'high'.

Hamas is officially boycotting the elections.

"People were disappointed when they delayed the legislative elections, now they opened this, it's like a small piece of freedom for them," said Barahmeh.

Hamas and Fatah have been at loggerheads since 2007 when the Islamists seized Gaza after a week of deadly clashes.

Today, the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority has control over parts of the occupied West Bank, where 2.8mn Palestinians live, while the Gaza Strip, an enclave of 2.3mn inhabitants under Israeli blockade, remains under Hamas control.

AFP



Health workers wearing protective gear work along a street in Jing'an district in Shanghai on Saturday (AFP)

Shanghai to avoid lockdown despite rise in COVID cases

Shanghai, China - Shanghai on Saturday recorded a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases, but a member of the city's pandemic task force said officials were determined to avoid a full lockdown over the damage it would do to the economy.

Millions of Chinese in affected areas have been subjected to city-wide lockdowns by an Omicron-led outbreak that has sent daily case counts creeping ever-higher, though they remain insignificant compared to other countries.

Shanghai, however, has aimed to ease disruption with a more targeted approach marked by rolling 48-hour lockdowns of individual neighbourhoods and large-scale testing while largely keeping the metropolis of 25mn people running.

At a daily Shanghai press conference on Saturday, officials alluded to the importance of avoiding a full lockdown of the huge port city.

"If Shanghai, this city of ours, came to a complete halt, there would be many international cargo ships floating in the East China Sea," said Wu Fan, a medical expert with the city's pandemic task force.

"This would impact the entire national economy and the global economy."

Wu made the comments as city officials also announced that they would begin handing out self-testing kits to Shanghai residents, in the latest sign that the government was expanding its pandemic response.

The northeastern province of

Jilin also said on Saturday that it had begun distributing 500,000 of the rapid-antigen kits.

Shanghai and Jilin have been the areas hardest hit by the outbreak, which took off in early March. China had largely kept the coronavirus - which first emerged in the city of Wuhan in late 2019 - under control through its strict zero-tolerance measures.

But that top-down approach is increasingly being questioned amid concerns over the economic impact and public 'pandemic fatigue', especially considering Omicron's less severe symptoms.

The National Health Commission announced two weeks ago that it would introduce the sale in China of rapid antigen self-test kits for the first time, and they have begun to appear on pharmacy shelves. But Saturday's announcements appeared to mark their first wide-scale use as part of official pandemic control measures.

China on Saturday reported 5,600 new confirmed domestic transmissions, most of them asymptomatic.

Chinese authorities had watched nervously as a deadly Hong Kong Omicron surge sparked panic buying and claimed a high toll of unvaccinated elderly in the southern Chinese city.

Its subsequent spread in mainland China has posed a dilemma for authorities wrestling with how forcefully they should respond.

AFP

Thousands flee homes as Philippine volcano erupts

Laurel, Philippines - Thousands of people fled their homes near a Philippine volcano on Saturday after an eruption sent ash and steam hundreds of metres into the sky.

Taal volcano, which sits in a picturesque lake south of Manila, exploded with a 'short-lived' burst at 7:22am (2322 GMT), the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said in a statement. It warned further eruptions were possible, which it said could trigger dangerous, fast-moving volcanic flows of gas, ash and debris, as well as a tsunami.

Residents in five fishing and farming settlements around the lake were ordered to leave their homes, in the third mass evacuation in as many years around one of the country's most active volcanoes. "It rained mud," said Cornelia Pesigan, 25, who sought shelter at a school outside the 7km 'danger zone'. "It smelled really bad and I had difficulty breathing," the mother-of-two added.

The initial eruption was followed by 'nearly continuous



Coast guard personnel evacuating fishermen along Taal lake in Talisay town, Batangas province, as the Taal volcano spews ash and steam hundreds of metres into the sky (AFP)

phreatomagmatic activity' that sent plumes stretching 1,500 metres into the air, the seismological agency said, raising the alert level from two to three on a scale of zero to five.

A phreatomagmatic eruption happens when molten rock comes into contact with under-

ground or surface water, said Princess Cosalan, a scientist at the agency, likening it to pouring 'water on a hot pan'.

Cosalan told AFP that ash and steam emissions had quietened in the hours after the initial burst, but said the institute's on-site sensors continued to detect vol-

canic earthquakes and another eruption was 'possible'.

The agency's chief, Renato Solidum, said the activity was weaker than in January 2020, when Taal shot ash 15km high and spewed red-hot lava, crushing scores of homes, killing livestock and sending tens of

thousands into shelters.

"There is no threat beyond the... five villages," Solidum said.

More than 12,000 people live in the most vulnerable communities, according to the latest available official data.

Police have been deployed to stop people entering the high-risk zones, while aviation authorities warned airlines and pilots of potential hazards from volcanic ash in the atmosphere.

The Philippines is hit periodically by eruptions and earthquakes due to its location on the Pacific 'Ring of Fire' - a zone of intense seismic activity. Access to the volcano island, which was once home to a community of thousands, has been prohibited since the 2020 eruption.

Last July, the seismological agency raised the alert level to three after Taal burst to life again. It belched sulphur dioxide for several days, creating a thick haze over the capital and surrounding provinces.

The alert level was lowered back to two before Saturday's eruption.

AFP

Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins dies at 50

Bogota, Colombia - Drummer Taylor Hawkins of the multi-Grammy award-winning rock group Foo Fighters has died, his bandmates said in a statement on Friday. He was 50.

As part of one of the world's most influential and critically lauded alternative rock bands, Hawkins was known for his on-stage charisma and classic rock-inspired beats, which he once said were influenced by legends like Phil Collins and Queen's Roger Taylor.

He had played with Foo Fighters since 1997, when he was taken on by lead singer and former Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl, providing percussion on some of the group's biggest hits including *Learn to Fly* and *Best of*



This file photo shows Hawkins performing onstage at the after party for the premiere of *Studio 666* in Hollywood, California on February 16 (AFP)

You. "The Foo Fighters family is devastated by the tragic and untimely loss of our beloved Taylor Hawkins," the band said in a statement on Twitter.

"His musical spirit and infectious laughter will live on with all

of us forever," they added.

The statement did not reveal the cause of Hawkins' death, news of which emerged the same day the band was due to play at the Festival Estereo Picnic in Bogota, Colombia.

A source in Colombia's prosecutor's office told AFP that Hawkins' body had been found in a hotel in eastern Bogota. The festival said in a statement that the show would not go ahead.

'Amazing drummer'

Prior to joining Foo Fighters, Hawkins drummed for Canadian indie songstress Alanis Morissette. In an interview with 95.5 KLOS last year, Grohl described his first meeting with Hawkins and how he convinced him to join his band.

"I was like, 'Wow, you're either my twin or my spirit animal, or my best friend!' In the first 10 seconds of meeting him," he said.

"And, of course, I'd seen him

play the drums and I thought he was an amazing drummer," he added. "When I called him and said, 'Hey, I'm looking for a drummer.' He said, 'You know I'm your guy.' And I think it had more to do with our personal relationship than anything musical."

Foo Fighters celebrated their 25th anniversary last year in a pandemic-delayed tour, and had most recently produced *Studio 666*, a rock-and-roll horror movie. Tributes poured in from across the music world, with Black Sabbath frontman Ozzy Osbourne hailing him as a 'great person and an amazing musician' and punk rocker Billy Idol describing the news as 'tragic'.

AFP

'Open the schools': Afghan girls protest Taliban's decision

Kabul, Afghanistan - About two dozen girls and women chanting 'open the schools' protested in the Afghan capital on Saturday against the Taliban's decision to shut their secondary schools just hours after re-opening them this week.

Thousands of jubilant girls across Afghanistan had flocked to learning institutions on Wednesday - the date the education ministry had set for classes to resume.

But just hours into the first day, the ministry announced a shock policy reversal that left youngsters saying they felt betrayed and foreign governments expressing outrage.

"Open the schools! Justice, justice!" chanted protesters on Saturday, some carrying school books as they gathered at a city square in Kabul.

They held banners that said: 'Education is our fundamental right, not a political plan' as they marched for a short distance and later dispersed as Taliban fighters arrived at the scene.

The protest was the first held by women in weeks after the Taliban rounded up the ring-leaders of initial demonstrations held after they returned to power in August.

The Islamists have not given a clear reason for their decision,



Afghan women and girls take part in a protest in front of the Ministry of Education in Kabul on Saturday (AFP)

which came after a meeting late on Tuesday of senior officials in the southern city of Kandahar, the Taliban's de facto power centre and spiritual heartland.

It followed months of work by some foreign countries on a plan to support the payment of teachers' wages.

Afghan secondary school girls have now been out of education for more than seven months.

"Even the Prophet Mo-

ammed said everyone has the right to education, but the Taliban have snatched this right from us," said youngster Nawesa at the demonstration, which was organised by two women's rights groups.

"The Taliban can not oppress the women of Afghanistan," pointed out another protester, Laila Basim. Since returning to power on August 15 the Taliban have rolled back two decades of gains made by the country's

women, who have been squeezed out of many government jobs, barred from travelling alone, and ordered to dress according to a strict interpretation of the Q'uran.

The Taliban had promised a softer version of the harsh Islamist rule that characterised their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001.

But many restrictions have still been imposed - if not at the national level then implemented

locally at the whim of regional officials.

Some Afghan women initially pushed back against the Taliban's curbs, holding small protests where they demanded the right to education and work. But the Taliban soon rounded up the ringleaders, holding them incommunicado while denying that they had been detained.

Since their release, most have gone silent.

AFP

US cancels Taliban talks after girls school closure

Washington, US - The United States said on Friday that it has cancelled planned talks in Doha with the Taliban after the headline Islamist rulers of Afghanistan shut girls' secondary schools.

"We have cancelled some of our engagements, including planned meetings in Doha around the Doha Forum, and have made clear that we see this decision as a potential turning point in our engagement," State Department deputy spokeswoman Jalina Porter said. "This decision by the Taliban, if it is not swiftly reversed, will profoundly harm the Afghan people, the country's prospects for economic growth, and the Taliban's ambition to improve their relations with the international community."

"For the sake of Afghanistan's future and the Taliban's relations with the international community we urge the Taliban to live up to their commitments and to their people," she said.

"We also stand with

Afghan girls and their families, who see education as a path to realising the full potential of Afghanistan's society and economy," she added.

In a joint statement on Thursday the foreign ministers of Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Norway and the United States, plus the high representative of the European Union, said the Taliban's decision will harm the group's prospects for legitimacy. The signatories to the statement notably included Norway, which hosted landmark talks between the Taliban and several Western diplomats in January.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said on Wednesday that 'the denial of education violates the human rights of women and girls', leaving them 'more exposed to violence, poverty and exploitation'. The head of the UN's educational organisation UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, also criticised the Taliban's move, calling it a 'major setback'.

AFP

THE HISTORY OF NOW



Egyptian flair

Artist Amal Ezzat Soliman presents a solo exhibition titled The History of Now at the Art & Soul Gallery, in Water Front mall, Shatti al Qurm, reflecting the influence of ancient Egyptians

A lecturer at the Scientific College of Design and former faculty at the Fine Arts Alexandria University, in Egypt, Amal says, “I bring a theme of ancient Egyptian flair to the gallery, and my work represents a studious and refined compositional method that is preoccupied with the common pictorial language that all ancient art forms share - from ancient Egyptian culture, symbols, Gods and traditions. It is a blend between contemporary art and abstract expressionism.”

Amal asserts that the ancient Egyptians have influenced civilisations in many ways over the centuries. They have influenced the world in inventions, math, literature, medicine, religion, sports, and music. The ancient Egyptians built massive temples, monuments and pyramids, and some of the architectural skills used by them are still used today, she pointed out.

“In this exhibition I wanted to reflect my identity as an Egyptian into my work,” says Amal. The exhibition, which was inaugurated last evening under the auspices of H E Khaled Rady, Ambassador of Egypt, will continue till April 4.

“I started out by creating a story in the form of paintings. Little did I know that this would soon become the start of a passion. During this time, I also discovered that filmmaking would be most appealing to me as it gave me the chance to express life experiences and apply them in a manner which could reach other people and give them the opportunity to escape into the cinematic world,” she said, noting



I started out by creating a story in the form of paintings. Little did I know that this would soon become the start of a passion

AMAL EZZAT SOLIMAN



that cinema has provided the greatest filmmakers with opportunities to express themselves artistically, and that she intends to someday follow in their footsteps.

Aside from my academic activities, I have a deep interest in creating scripts. I believe that this also has encouraged my passion for scriptwriting and the various forms of storytelling. Outside education, I have also kept a positive attitude toward bettering myself and developing my qualities. I believe that I have achieved this through both, my hobbies and my work life. Within these areas, I believe that they have awarded me with qualities, such as determination, which I have expressed through my commitment to my involvement in playing music and diving.

“Whilst working outside of education, as in being an artist, I have been awarded and have developed such skills as ‘time management’ and ‘punctuality’, all of which will benefit me in the future of my education and life at university,” she asserts.

Recalling her initiation into the field of art, Amal said she started out after high school by studying painting, design, art history, and mural paintings. This helped her develop a growing mindset and it also helped her grown as an individual. She is also fully aware of my goals in life and how to work her way towards achieving them with resilience and determination.

“I am especially excited about developing my understanding and the skills required to work within the film industry. I am positive that I have the determination as well as the passion to successfully study film making at degree level,” says Amal indicating her transition from art to films within the same creative realm that would offer her greater freedom and opportunities to express herself and create work with greater impact on the human mind.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

I hereby seek suitable position in the field of accounts.Well-versed in Accounting/Tally ERP9 Expert. Please contact me on 78020502 or Zunedmemon2020@gmail.com

JOB WANTED

Senior Accountant 16 years of experience in Accounts and Finance in Oman. D/L and NOC Available contact 92103806

AUDIT, VAT, TAXATION

Accounting, Auditing, Vat Services, Taxation

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit Chartered Accountants

Contact: 92469602/93949235

Offices at Muscat, Salalah, Sohar & Sur

Email: kumar@gccaoman.com

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories: Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/ Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)

Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346

STOCK DISPOSAL

Stock Disposal of popular Japanese and Chinese auto parts.

Interested Scrap Buyers can visit the Towell Barka warehouse or contact

96177646/94299300

parts@towellauto.com for details.

DUENDE

Spirit of EVOCAATION

TWO SENIOR ARTISTS HAVE COME TOGETHER TO PRESENT 'DUENDE' – A JOINT EXHIBITION WHICH INTERPRETS THE BEAUTY OF OMAN AND MAKES THE VIEWER INTROSPECT, YET LIVE IN THE MOMENT

THE ARTISTS

Born and raised in rural Bosnia, **Alma De Ville** has established a deep connection with nature by being observant and inquisitive. She moved to London, UK, in 1989 where she completed her studies, obtaining a degree in Interior Design and Technology and worked within the industry for several years before moving to Oman in 2010. In the past twelve years she has enjoyed the privilege of living in Oman where she has discovered her new passion for collecting beach debris, which she uses as a medium for her current work.



I work in
obscurity,
long hours...
collecting,
meditating,
pondering,
wondering...
connecting with
the universe
and its formulas

ALMA DE VILLE



Anna Dudchenko has been living and working in Oman since 1999. With her Western background that includes a Master's in Fine Arts, Art History, and English Linguistics, she has become one of the most active figures in the Omani art scene. Dudchenko has organised thirteen solo exhibitions, participated in numerous group shows, international art fairs, and worked as a curator and an art consultant on different projects, special commissions for private companies and government entities. Dudchenko has curated exhibitions and displays at art fairs both locally and internationally, including helping patrons build their private collections.

If you consider
the short
duration of your
life and the little
space you
occupy in the
universe that
you know
nothing of, the
eternal silence
of this infinite
space can be
frightening and
mysterious

ANNA DUDCHENKO

Hubert Vaz

When you enter Bait Muzna Gallery tomorrow evening, the exhibits on display seem to have the ability to suck the viewer into a realm of abstract fantasy – one that celebrates the beauty of Oman and at the same time evokes a response from deep within that is marked with a 'spirit of evocation'.

The gallery presents 'Duende' an art exhibition by Alma De Ville and Anna Dudchenko, two expatriate artists in Oman, that opens Sunday evening at 6.30pm. Curated by popular artist Farah Asqul, 'Duende' is a Spanish term for a heightened state of emotion, expression, and authenticity.

'Duende is said to come from deep within, as a physical or emotional response to art, music, dance, nature. It is the spirit of evocation – that which gives you chills, and makes you smile or cry. It brings unknown feelings and reactions, and produces a miracle-like enthusiasm', a gallery statement said.

The artworks in this collection are a culmination of working in symbiosis with the natural environment. The artists capture and reinterpret the beauty of Oman using their own unique artistic languages.

About her work, Alma De Ville says, "The art pieces in this collection are the culmination of working in symbiosis with the natural environment. My input in resulting outcome is the last link in nature's chain of processes, which allows me to capture and reinterpret the beauty of Oman at the micro level. I work in obscurity, long hours...collecting, meditating, pondering, wondering...connecting with the universe and its formulas."

She further asserts that the debris that she collects finds itself under new circumstances to be admired. The materials possess simplicity, whilst disguising complexity, and the inherent beauty of nature's diversity.

The fragments of once living creatures which are meticulously collated, cleaned, sorted, and reassembled are not agreeable to just any composition arrangements. They are mostly at ease in the calm, repetitive, often circular patterns of my works, which are textured and tactile collage compositions.

"My work seeks to celebrate the serendipitous nature of my time in this beautiful country. The beauty in small details observed has caused affection and understanding of nature's creations, it reverberates at same frequency as my own," she adds.

Anna Dudchenko, on the other hand, said, "I have always been haunted by the feeling of insignificance in this world. We are just grains of sand in this universe passing through time Nature has always been an immense source of inspiration for me. When I walk on the beach and pick up shells and pieces of driftwood, or hike in the mountains and watch the sun disappear in the horizon, swim in the ocean, or drive along the coastline, I always come across such unique places and landforms that make me want to stop and



take a close look. And I do stop and observe, and sometimes take photos which often result in some abstract forms and shapes that later become part of the paintings."

This exhibition, she said, is a small effort to transfer a profound, mysterious sense of the beauty of the universe onto the canvas and to make the viewer live in the moment, detached from the cares and worries of life. Some of the paintings seem to resemble aerial shots of the cliffs and rivers flowing between them, others – the geological formations found on the surface of the rocks and floating in the cosmos, like a speck of dust in the evening sky. "We're nothing more than a tiny fraction of the aftermath of the big bang. If you consider the short duration of your life and the little space you occupy in the universe that you know nothing of, the eternal silence of this infinite space can be frightening and mysterious. The mountains, a few might have some connection to the beach, but these are not specific places and landforms, but rather feelings and emotions triggered by the wind, the waves, the sun, the clouds, the stars, and the humble existence in this world. We are all visitors to this time, this place," she asserts

Farah, curator at Bait Muzna, added, "It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Alma and Anna on this exhibition, their artworks truly compliment one another. They are both artists that observe and connect with the beauty and simplicity of the environment in Oman and their intriguing use and exploration of using alternative natural media in their artworks has created pieces that are original and sublime."



Messi scores as Argentina take unbeaten run to 30

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Lionel Messi scored on his return to the national team as Argentina stretched their world-leading unbeaten run to 30 matches with a routine 3-0 World Cup qualifying win over Venezuela on Friday.

Goals from Nicolas Gonzalez and Angel Di Maria, both created by Rodrigo De Paul, also kept a packed Bombonera stadium enthralled in Buenos Aires for a match that had nothing riding on it. Argentina have long qualified for the World Cup in Qatar later this year, while Venezuela were the first team in South America's single 10-nation qualification group to be eliminated.

The victory kept Argentina just four points behind group leaders Brazil with two matches to go.

Venezuela are now guaranteed to finish bottom after a 13th defeat in 17 qualifiers so far.

All four automatic qualifica-

tion spots have been decided ahead of next week's qualification finale, with Uruguay and Ecuador booking their tickets to Qatar on Thursday night.

The only thing that remains undecided is who will finish fifth and head into an intercontinental qualification play-off.

Peru lead that battle by a point from Colombia and two ahead of Chile. Argentina dominated from the off and opened the scoring 10 minutes before half-time as Gonzalez managed to stay onside to slide in De Paul's precise right wing cross from six yards.

Messi was heavily involved on his return, having been rested for Argentina's previous two qualifiers.

The veteran seven-time Ballon d'Or winner had three shots at goal from direct free-kicks but was unable to even test goalkeeper Wuilker Farinez.

AFP



Argentina's Lionel Messi and Angel Di Maria (R) celebrate after the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualifying match against Venezuela



Ferrari's Charles Leclerc drives during the second practice session ahead of the 2022 Saudi Arabia Formula One Grand Prix at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit on March 25 (AFP)

Leclerc tops Saudi Arabian GP practice, Verstappen 2nd

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Ferrari's Charles Leclerc outpaced world champion Max Verstappen with a late flying lap in Saturday's final Saudi Arabian Grand Prix practice after drivers agreed to carry on despite an attack on a nearby oil facility.

None of the drivers appeared to be the worse for wear despite lengthy debates overnight about racing in the aftermath of Friday's missile strike by Yemen's Huthi rebels on the Aramco fuel plant, which ignited a blaze with black smoke billowing across the Formula One track.

Leclerc, winner of last weekend's season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix, clocked a best lap of one minute and 29.735 seconds to beat the Dutchman by 0.033 seconds.

Verstappen's Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez was third, just 0.098 behind, ahead of Carlos Sainz in the second Ferrari and

Valtteri Bottas, who was sixth for Alfa Romeo.

Defending champion Verstappen dominated most of the session, but made two errors on his final laps, once clipping a wall before bouncing heavily over a

kerb, as he succumbed to over-aggression on the high-speed street track.

In a generally calm session, Esteban Ocon was sixth for Alpine ahead of Pierre Gasly of Alpha Tauri, Kevin Magnussen of Haas, Fernando Alonso in the second Alpine and Yuki Tsunoda of Alpha Tauri.

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton struggled again in his Mercedes and wound up 11th with team-mate George Russell 14th as they battled the 'bouncing' again.

On another warm day at the Jeddah Street Circuit, following a short night after four-hour talks between drivers, teams and organisers, Bottas was the first man on track for final free practice.

The Finn, now with Alfa Romeo after leaving Mercedes, has exuded a new-found enthusiasm this season and was soon

lapping quickly, but not rapidly enough to outpace the Ferraris of Leclerc and Sainz.

Team principals, race organisers, Formula One and the ruling body, the FIA, had said they had reached a unanimous agreement for the show to go on, in less than an hour, but it took much longer to convince the drivers.

After around three and a half hours of further talks, they agreed to race. In a statement on their behalf, the Grand Prix Drivers' Association (GPDA) said "natural human concerns" had caused many to have doubts about taking part.

This was confirmed on Saturday morning by Ferrari team chief Mattia Binotto who admitted "I don't think we can say that they are 100 per cent happy and fully relaxed."

"I think they are still concerned, but they are listening to the assurances that we give

them, the understanding of the importance to stay here and somehow try to race because it's the best choice we can do.

"After that long discussion, (which) it was important to have, they simply understood and supported that it was important to stay and remain and continue the weekend and drive here in Saudi. By leaving the country, it would not have been simply the right choice and there were no right reasons to leave here, to leave the country after all the assurances we had got.

"I think they met. They had their own concerns and raised them, but all together we tried to get the assurances and got the right explanation as well."

Aston Martin team boss Mike Krack added that the Saudi authorities had helped convince drivers "that everything would be safe and under control".

AFP

I don't think we can say that they are 100 per cent happy and fully relaxed. I think they are still concerned but they are listening to the assurances that we give them

MATTIA BINOTTO

Iga Swiatek becomes new WTA World No1 with Miami win

Miami, United States - Poland's Iga Swiatek clinched becoming the new world number one in women's tennis on Friday by defeating Swiss player Viktorija Golubic 6-2, 6-0 at the WTA Miami Open.

Swiatek will move into the top spot vacated by Australian Ashleigh Barty after the three-time Grand Slam champion announced her retirement earlier this week.

"Pretty surreal," Swiatek said. "On one hand, these are the most special moments that you're going to remember for the rest of your life, but on the other hand, that match was just

another match."

The 20-year-old Warsaw-born star had to win her second-round match at the South Florida hardcourt tournament to ensure she would replace Barty in the next rankings next month.

After the victory, there was a brief on-court ceremony where Swiatek was cheered and honored by tournament director James Blake and former WTA number one Lindsay Davenport.

"I never really imagined that moment because, truth to be told, I was working day-by-day and playing tennis well, but I never had the strong belief that it can actually happen," Swiatek

said. "So it's even more surreal for me."

She didn't feel slighted by the manner of it all, coming suddenly after Barty's shock farewell.

"I loved every moment of it," Swiatek said. "It doesn't matter for me if there were fireworks. The crowd was really supportive. They were really excited. I'm just soaking everything in because I didn't have any expectations."

Swiatek will be the first Polish woman to reach the rankings summit, eclipsing the old mark for players from her homeland she shared with former world number two Agnieszka Radwan-

ska.

Poland's first Grand Slam singles title was won by Swiatek at the 2020 French Open.

Swiatek has enjoyed a blistering start to the season, winning WTA titles at Doha and Indian Wells, and is now on a career-best 12-match win streak.

She's also the first player since Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki in 2009 to win five or more titles before turning 21.

Paula Badosa could have taken over as number one had Swiatek lost, but the Spaniard would have needed to win the Miami Open title to do it.

AFP



Iga Swiatek celebrates her win against Viktorija Golubic during the Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium (AFP)



100% استمتاع، بدون سكر مضاف

100% INDULGENCE, 0% ADDED SUGAR



Distributed by



Please contact
+968 22060236/237



New-look ten-team IPL begins

No team starts as favourites; tournament will be played across four venues in Mumbai and Pune

Mumbai, India- The 10-team IPL has raised several talking points as the new season got underway on Saturday with Chennai Super Kings playing Kolkata Knight Riders at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

To minimise the exposure to the risks of COVID-19 while traveling across India, this time the IPL will be played across four venues in and around Mumbai and Pune. The four grounds to be used are the Wankhede Stadium and Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai, the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai, and the MCA Stadium in Pune. Let's look at potential trends and key factors that could have a bearing on results.

New rule, a potential game-changer

This IPL will not only see teams have two DRS reviews per innings, but also newly revised playing conditions that, if triggered, could have a potential impact on the match result.

It concerns the new batter taking strike regardless of whether the two players crossed or not in case of a catch being taken, unless it is the last ball of an over. Previously the new batter would head to the non-striker's end if the batters crossed, but the MCC recently revised the law and the playing condition was first tried out in the Hundred last year to give the bowler the advantage. While this



MS Dhoni (right) of Chennai Super Kings played a crucial knock of 50 not out in 38 balls with seven fours and a six against Kolkata Knight Riders

is applicable at any point during an innings, the effect will be felt the most in the end overs.

Fast bowlers could dominate powerplay

With the IPL returning to India from the UAE, batters should look forward to playing on smaller grounds and the potential for dew. But fast bowlers

could enjoy themselves as well, especially at the Wankhede Stadium. During the first half of IPL 2021, which was played in India, fast bowlers were dominant during the powerplay at this venue. As per ESPNcricinfo logs, in the first six overs, fast bowlers took 31 out of 33 wickets that fell here in 20 innings, the highest for all the seven venues last season.

7.30pm starts and the dew factor

Remember Dhoni fussing about 7.30pm starts because of the dew factor? He felt that with dew usually setting in around 8pm, teams batting first were under pressure to score 15-20 extra runs in the Powerplay. To add to their challenge, teams bowling second in dewy conditions then

had to also try and pick up early wickets. Dhoni hinted that the advantage was with the teams that bowled with a dry ball for the first 30-40 minutes of the match before dew kicked in. The 7.30pm starts were put in play to ensure matches didn't spill over past midnight, as had become the trend in previous seasons. The dew factor will be on the



straight boundaries would be to bowl very full and either at the heels of the batter or wide outside off stump. Why? To bring the longer square boundaries into play. However, teams will also need to keep in mind that one square boundary might be significantly shorter than the other.

Wristspinners vs fingerspinners

Surfaces at each of the four venues have different characteristics. While the numbers are strongly stacked against spinners of every variety, it can't be denied that spin will eventually play a part, mostly from the second half as pitches begin to tire. In the first half, though, wristspinners who are quicker through the air are likely to have an edge over traditional legbreak bowlers.

So expect the likes of Rashid Khan and Ravi Bishnoi to prosper as compared to, say, Kuldeep Yadav, who has struggled with his pace variations lately. The bounce, the short boundaries, and dew are all factors that could work against loopy wristspinners. Based on the history of the venues, the role of the fingerspinners would be to contain. Their role could change towards the business end as surfaces slow down considerably due to the heat and the volume of cricket played through the tournament.
Espnricinfo

mind of teams this time around, too, when they go out to toss.

Short straight boundaries, bigger square boundaries

All four venues have short straight boundaries, measuring around 70 yards. Surfaces at all four venues are also known for good bounce and carry.

The red-soil decks in Mumbai help the ball come nicely on to the bat. This means the par score could hover close to 170-180. Harshal Patel, IPL 2021's highest wicket-taker, believes bowlers can still dominate by using hard lengths on fresh pitches, as will be the case at all four venues. Harshal reckons another good strategy to counter the short

India plans women's IPL next year

New Delhi, India - India's cricket board is planning to launch the women's edition of the Indian Premier League Twenty20 tournament next year.

"It has to be approved by the (annual general meeting)," Sourav Ganguly, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) told reporters on Friday. "We plan to start it by next year hopefully."

IPL chairman Brijesh Patel said the process to launch the women's version has "started" and that it could be a five or six-team league.

The BCCI has organised a women's T20 challenge event since 2018, and Patel said this year there will be four matches involving three teams around the men's playoffs.

The 15th edition of the men's IPL begins Saturday, with holders Chennai Super Kings taking on Kolkata Knight Riders in Mumbai. Key decisions, including a move to float the media rights tender for the next five years for the men's edition, were taken in the IPL governing council meet-



File photo of Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur and Mithali Raj posing ahead of Women's T20 Challenge 2020

It has to be approved by the (annual general meeting). We plan to start it by next year hopefully

SOURAV GANGULY

ing on Friday in Mumbai.

Bids are expected to be invited separately for digital, TV and rest

of the world rights in a break-away from the previous term, when Star India paid \$2.55 billion

for five years of TV and digital rights up to 2022.

This time the collective base price from various categories has been kept at around \$4 billion, a senior official told BCCI on condition of anonymity.

The money-spinning league - which expanded to 10 teams to

include Lucknow Super Giants and Gujarat Titans and 74 matches this year - is a huge revenue earner for the BCCI.

Pre-pandemic, the IPL was estimated to have generated more than \$11 billion for the Indian economy each year.

AFP

SPECIAL DISCOUNT

RO 50 ONLY

31.50% discount

RO 20 ONLY

28.57% discount

- Hot & Cold Dispenser
- 2 Full Bottles
- 25 Refill Coupons

- White Tap Dispenser/ Tap Dispenser/ Manual Water Pump/ Cradle with Tap
- 2 Full Bottles
- 15 Refill Coupons

BUY & WIN

310 PRIZES

Get your raffle coupon on

- Purchase of RO 20 or RO 50 offer or
- Coupon book worth RO 20

- Gold Coins
- Gift Vouchers
- Oman Oasis Water Coupons

Register your raffle coupon number at www.omanoasis.com/discount2022 to win.

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

Special discount valid from 1st January 2022 to 31st March 2022. Conditions apply.

Scan QR Code to Register
C.R.No.: 1364/02

Nadhira Alharthy
FIRST OMANI WOMAN TO CLIMB MOUNT EVEREST

mai alkaline

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing

Toll-free **800 71 222**
or **9275 5522**

oman OASIS

C.R.No.: 1364/02



FESTIVAL *of* WINNING

BUY ANY OF MG'S STUNNING 2022 MODELS,
& WIN BIG

**WIN YOUR
CAR BACK
EVERY WEEK**

SCRATCH & WIN
MOBILE PHONE BUNDLE
OR FUEL CARD
— and —
30K UP TO 200K
SERVICE PACKAGES

FREE
INSURANCE
REGISTRATION



Offer valid from 22/3/2022 to 20/5/2022 only for customers buying MG 2022 vehicles from MHD dealership. Free Insurance 1st year (Oman & UAE). Free 1st year Registration. Scratch & Win Service – Customer entitled to win from 30,000 KM up to 200,000 KM Service. Scratch & Win Gift – Customer entitled to win Huawei mobile phone including, Huawei Freebuds 4, and GT3 Watch or Fuel card worth RO. 100. Win your car back is for the vehicle purchased by the customer. There will be a total of 8 draws (1 vehicle each) on 28/3, 4/4, 11/4, 18/4, 25/4, 2/5, 9/5, & 23/5. Images used for illustrative purposes only.

CR No. 1001990



Azaila | Wattayah | Sohar | Sur | Salalah
Al Manama | Ibra | Bidayah | Nizwa | Ibra | Sinaw

WhatsApp : 71557334

mg-om.com
/mgmotoroman
@mgmotoroman



THE LEGACY THAT KEEPS GIVING



Starts from
RO 225 Per month

THE JEEP® WRANGLER RANGE

FREE FIRST YEAR REGISTRATION

3 YEARS / 60,000 KM SERVICE

5 YEARS WARRANTY

5 YEARS ROADSIDE ASSIST

BOOK NOW

Jeep
THERE'S ONLY ONE

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