

World Down Syndrome Day

‘Participation and effective integration into society’

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman joined the rest of the world in the World Down Syndrome Day celebrations on Monday, which is marked annually on March 21, under this year's slogan 'Participation and effective integration into society'.

The slogan aimed at raising awareness regarding Down syndrome and recognising valuable contributions in this aspect across schools, rehabilitation centres, businesses, communities, public life and in all other walks of life.

According to statistics, the total number of 'Down syndrome cases' benefiting from the system of programmes and services provided by rehabilitation centres is 1,117, including 638 males and 479 females, who are distributed among various rehabilitation centres in various governorates of Oman.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Jabri, chairman of the Board of Directors of Omani Down Syndrome Society, said, "The association works to provide the main services for this category in Oman through methods of rehabilitation and education to contribute in achieving an actual and real integration of them in all areas of life and society."

He added that the association works according to a vision of humanitarian work and from the perspective of a society for all, and to create an integrated envi-



(ONA)

The Ministry of Social Development pays great attention to people with Down syndrome through continuous development in the services and programmes provided to them

HALA BINT MUSA AL WAHAIBI

ronment for people with Down syndrome who are an integral part of the Omani society as a whole.

He explained that the association aims to implement preventive strategies, whether to reduce the effects and their severity or overcoming them, or to overcome the results and negatives of Down syndrome through solidarity and integration, and to help families with newborns with the syndrome.

"The association works to provide training, rehabilitation and educational courses for affected children from birth to adulthood, provide induction and

awareness programmes about the syndrome, its causes and how to deal with it, and to strengthen relations with local, external, professional and civil associations, clubs and schools for children with disabilities, and to clarify and highlight the true image of the syndrome in the local and global environments. This is in addition to establishing an information centre to support and encourage studies, research and specialised services," he said.

Down syndrome is defined as a genetic disorder that occurs in approximately one child for every 700 natural births. Of the

46 chromosomes, this extra genetic material causes a change in growth, physical features and health problems which characterises as Down syndrome causing intellectual disability ranging from mild, moderate to severe and delayed development for life.

Hala bint Musa al Wahabi, director of the Al Aman Rehabilitation Centre of the Ministry of Social Development, said, "The ministry pays great attention to people with Down syndrome through continuous development in services and programmes provided to them to improve the quality of life and meet their needs and provide rehabilitation, support, guidance and empowerment services in various areas of life. This is done through rehabilitation centres equipped with appropriate equipment that helps to receive and enrol a number of cases of Down syndrome by specialists in various fields according to appropriate capabilities that help them achieve and develop their social, cognitive, kinesthetic and other skills."

She added that the Ministry of Social Development, with the participation of all partners, is working to implement the provisions of the 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', which stipulates the need for such persons to enjoy a dignified and purposeful life under conditions that guarantee dignity, encourage self-reliance and facilitate their effective participation in the local community, in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the executive work plan for the axis of persons with disabilities in the 'Social Work Strategy 2016-2025', which aims to advance persons with disabilities in various aspects of public life.

Muscat Municipality launches campaign to control mosquitoes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With an aim to reduce the spread of mosquitoes in the governorate, Muscat Municipality has launched a vector control campaign.

The campaign aims to combat mosquitoes, creating a healthier environment for citizens and residents in several parts of 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.

'We continue our mosquito control campaigns targeting breeding sites, and call on members of the community to adopt hygienic practices to eliminate the breeding environments.'

Mosquitoes are usually found in industrial areas and in places



where water collects due to improper drainage.

Muscat Municipality has urged people to take steps to eliminate mosquito-breeding sites, which include cleaning of water tanks, disposal of water collected from air conditioners, changing water used for foun-

tains, swimming pools and agricultural purposes every five days. It has also called for changing water kept in containers for animals and birds every five days.

All water tanks should be properly covered, stated the civic body.



ROP opens new Hatta land port

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Royal Oman Police (ROP) has announced the commencement of operations of the new Hatta land port.

'ROP would like to draw the attention of citizens and trav-

ellers to the start of operations at Hatta land port, which links the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, at its new location, as part of the plan of the security system to manage land, air and sea ports in a way that facilitates effective movement,' a statement said.

Expat arrested for human trafficking

Muscat - An expatriate was arrested by Royal Oman Police (ROP) on charges of human trafficking on Tuesday.

A statement issued by ROP said, 'The Directorate General of Inquiries and Investigations arrested a man of foreign nationality on charges of human trafficking of 16 persons of his nationality. The victims were made fake job offers in Oman.'

'The accused published an announcement about job opportunities in Arab restaurants in the sultanate to defraud victims. The accused was arrested and legal action has been taken against him.'



Dhofar International Development And Investment Holding Company (SAOG)

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Board of Directors' Report 2021

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Dhofar International Development & Investment Holding Company (SAOG), I am pleased to welcome you to the Annual Ordinary General Meeting to review together the annual report, the company's closing financial results together with the auditors' report for the financial year ended **31st December 2021**.

Economic Indicators:

During the year 2021, the Omani market witnessed great challenges, and thanks to the strength and diversity of the national economy and the clear vision of the state, it maintained its ability to withstand the company's work in an environment characterized by openness and continuous change, seizing the available investment opportunities and finding new investment opportunities in order to diversify the investment structure. The general index of the Muscat Stock Exchange ended the year 2021, an increase of 12.87% to the level of 4,130 points, compared to the level of 3,659 points at the end of 2020. The highest level reached by the index during the year on December 28, 2021 was 4,141 points, while the lowest level recorded by the index was on February 16, at point 3554. Thus, the difference between the highest point and the lowest point is within 587 points. The changes in the Muscat Securities Exchange are one of the most important challenges facing the company. The volatility of stock prices is one of the main factors affecting the company's investments and the volume of borrowing coverage.

The company, like most companies in 2021, suffered from the challenges that accompanied the extension of the effects of the spread of the Corona Covid-19 pandemic through the decrease in the volume of demand and the difficulties faced by all the activities of its subsidiaries and sister companies, which were reflected in the performance, and consequently on the size of the potential dividends for those companies, which it is the company's main source of cash flows that can be used to pay the company's obligations. The company has taken appropriate measures to maintain an acceptable level of good performance and the confidence of its shareholders.

The Financial Indicators:

The following is a summary of the Final Audited Financial Results for the financial year ended December 31, 2021: -

The following are the main performance indicators:

- The total assets of the parent company on December 31, 2021, reached to R.O 213,131,636 compared to the same period last year which was R.O 215,174,870, while the total assets of the group on December 31, 2021 amounted to R.O 224,425,770 compared to R.O 226,178,174 in 2020

- An increase in the shareholders' equity in the company from R.O 92,077,512 at the end of 2020 to R.O 120,794,942 on December 31, 2021 in the parent and group company, due to the increase in the

company's capital from R.O 25,872,000 in 2020 to R.O 54,472,000 in 2021, which led to the net assets of R.O 0.295 per share at the end of 2021 in comparison with R.O 0.356 on December 31, 2020.

The Profits (loss) during the period:

The parent and the consolidated company achieved a net profit of R.O 3,884,632 for the year 2021, compared to a net profit of R.O 43,402,631 in 2020. The Basic earnings per share in 2021 amount to 12 Baisas, compared to 168 Baisas in 2020. The main reason for the decrease in the profits is the one-time gain booked in 2020 as a result of the deemed acquisition of associate companies that resulted from the change in the Company's accounting policy from Investment Entity accounting to consolidation in that year.

Dear Shareholders,

The company works in a team spirit and this has enabled us to preserve the assets of the group by relying on sound and relevant analysis and strategies to achieve that aim as we aspire to continue preserving and diversifying these assets, which gives us optimism in the future, as the company continues to build on its capabilities by attracting cadres of efficient and qualified personnel to occupy leadership positions and implement the strategies in the coming period aimed at enhancing the company's ability to grow and prosper.

On this occasion, I cannot fail to record the Board of Directors' thanks to the Executive Management for their efforts, and we hope to further enhance our efforts to achieve the goals of the Company, the ambition of its Board and the aspirations of its shareholders.

The Company's Activities:

One of the company's objectives is to find new investment opportunities in the Sultanate and abroad, with the aim of increasing the volume of investments and implementing a balanced structure for it. The company has tried to maintain and develop its investment structure over the past few years by investing in the services sector, with the aim to diversify the investment structure by taking advantage of available opportunities.

During the year, the Company was able to successfully renegotiate the terms of the Agreement with its lenders amounting to R.O 91.79 million, resulting in a long-term loan repayment structure that is better in line with the Company's cash flow structure as well as a lower interest cost.

The shareholders' approval was to increase the company's authorized capital from OMR 50,000,000 to R.O 75,000,000. In addition to approving the increase in the issued capital from 25,872,000 riyals to R.O 54,472,000 divided to 409,246,316 ordinary shares of equal value, by the right issue in favor of the Company's shareholders in exchange for redeeming the unsecured subordinated bonds to the bondholders issued by the company on December 23, 2019, at the value of The nominal value of the bonds amounting to R.O 25,018,396, in addition to the entire cumulative

interest payable on the bonds until the date of closing the subscription for the right issue. And agreeing to pay the subscription value of the shares of the right issue to the shareholders of the bondholders from the value due to redeem the bonds, which is the nominal value and the accrued interest due on the bonds until the date of closing the subscription for the right issue

The Board of Directors confirms its commitment to continue seeking to invest in and develop feasible businesses that benefit shareholders and serve the national economy and the community at large in all regions of the Sultanate and the region in general.

Future Vision:

The company operates in a dynamic and changing environment with market fluctuations that have clear effects on the performance and results of our investments. To better manage the risk, the company consistently seeks to develop strategic cooperation with its subsidiaries and associates by building strong strategic alliances through which it can achieve common goals for all. The company also seeks, through constructive cooperation with our banking partners, to find the appropriate loan structures that position the company for growth while fulfilling all of its obligations within the specified timeframe, and on this occasion, we extend to our banking partners our gratitude and appreciation for their efforts and continued support.

The Board of Directors is committed to achieving the goals it sets and strives to follow up on their implementation in a manner that leads to the desired development and performance. The Board of Directors is committed to the realization of the stated objectives in a way that will enhance the company's performance and shareholder value.

Dear Shareholders,

Your confidence in assigning us this responsibility is one of the motives that we highly value and drives us in our efforts to fulfill your aspirations. Also, we would like to welcome the new board of directors, which will be elected during these days, and we hope that God Almighty will crown their endeavors with success. Additionally, we also extend our thanks to the executive management and the employees for their constant perseverance and tireless efforts, which we hope will continue.

Finally, we wish our country continued safety and stability under the wise leadership and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, may God protect him and prolong his life.

**Khalid Bin Mustahail Al Mashani
Chairman
March 2021**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	Group 2021 RO	Parent Company 2021 RO	Group 2020 RO	Parent Company 2020 RO
ASSETS				
Cash and bank balances	2,316,425	1,640,766	1,324,353	866,292
Receivables and prepayments	1,203,156	4,923,865	769,907	1,662,681
Inventories	21,349	-	21,118	-
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	43,415,824	28,639,953	37,925,000	25,643,928
- Investment in equities	1,830,000	1,830,000	10,680,000	10,680,000
- Investment in term deposits	-	-	-	-
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	10,047,171	-	10,199,779	-
Investment in subsidiaries	-	10,303,496	-	10,939,859
Investment in associates	160,015,991	160,015,991	159,544,758	159,544,758
Loan to subsidiary	-	4,950,000	-	4,950,000
Investment property	247,212	247,212	247,212	247,212
Property and equipment	5,328,642	580,353	5,406,047	639,940
Total assets	224,425,770	213,131,636	226,178,174	215,174,870
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	54,472,000	54,472,000	25,872,000	25,872,000
Legal reserve	9,612,463	9,612,463	8,624,000	8,624,000
General reserve	7,070,404	7,070,404	7,070,404	7,070,404
Investment revaluation reserve	(1,790,884)	(1,790,884)	(1,202,732)	(1,202,732)
Retained earnings	52,630,959	52,630,959	51,713,840	51,713,840
Total equity due to shareholders of the Parent Company	120,794,942	120,794,942	92,077,512	92,077,512
LIABILITIES				
Other liabilities	2,505,907	2,066,156	7,988,938	7,840,017
Income tax payable	9,383	-	9,383	-
Loans and borrowings	101,115,538	90,270,538	101,307,460	90,462,460
Subordinated bonds	147,367	138,537	162,132	146,364
Total equity and liabilities	224,425,770	213,131,636	226,178,174	215,174,870
Net assets per share	0.295	0.295	0.356	0.356

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

	Group 2021 RO	Parent Company 2021 RO	Group 2020 RO	Parent Company 2020 RO
INCOME				
Dividend income	1,498,725	1,209,239	1,784,950	1,360,941
Net revenue of a subsidiary	307,262	-	262,637	-
Realised (loss)/gain on sale of financial assets	(340,290)	(339,740)	9,991	-
Unrealised gain/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	4,735,711	4,360,988	(1,782,264)	(496,029)
Interest income	664,459	863,260	847,825	986,733
Other income	147,367	138,537	162,132	146,364
Total income	7,013,234	6,232,284	1,285,271	1,998,009
EXPENSES				
Administrative and general expenses	(1,860,504)	(1,429,689)	(1,763,516)	(1,289,971)
Depreciation	(176,298)	(69,973)	(190,330)	(84,979)
Total expenses	(2,036,802)	(1,499,663)	(1,953,846)	(1,374,950)
Operating profit/(loss)	4,976,432	4,732,631	(668,575)	623,059
Finance costs	(8,883,894)	(8,156,338)	(9,749,094)	(9,060,048)
Amortization of deferred finance cost	(518,746)	(518,746)	(332,481)	(332,481)
Share of loss from subsidiaries	-	(483,755)	-	(1,980,680)
Deemed acquisition gain of subsidiaries	-	-	772,128	772,128
Share of profit from associates	8,588,390	8,588,390	10,019,014	10,019,014
Deemed acquisition gain of associates	-	-	43,361,639	43,361,639
Share of loss from dilution of shares in associate	(276,301)	(276,301)	-	-
Profit for the year before tax	3,885,881	3,885,881	43,402,631	43,402,631
Income tax	(1,249)	(1,249)	-	-
Profit for the year	3,884,632	3,884,632	43,402,631	43,402,631
Other comprehensive income / (loss)				
Items that will not be subsequently reclassified to profit or loss				
Changes in fair value of financial assets through other comprehensive income	(152,608)	-	(417,538)	-
Share of other comprehensive loss of subsidiaries	-	(152,608)	-	(417,538)
Share of other comprehensive loss of associates	(435,544)	(435,544)	(785,194)	(785,194)
Other comprehensive loss for the year	(588,152)	(588,152)	(1,202,732)	(1,202,732)
Total comprehensive profit for the year	3,296,480	3,296,480	42,199,899	42,199,899
Basic earnings per share	0.012	0.012	0.168	0.168

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

OPES 2022 focuses on future of energy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Petroleum and Energy Show (OPES) was inaugurated on Monday by H H Sayyid Taimur bin Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of Central Bank of Oman, in the presence of key officials from various ministries, top-level executives of global companies and other industry leaders.

Under the patronage of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and hosted by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the event is taking place at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre from March 21 to 23. The exhibition is organised by PDO and features a special conference organised by the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE). This one-of-a-kind show will serve the entire oil and gas industry and focus on the future of energy.

Commenting on OPES, H E Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said, "The Oman Petroleum and Energy Show is a national event that has, over the years, become a respected platform for the oil and gas industry across the region. The theme of this year's conference reflects the major developments happening not only in the sultanate, but in the wider region. Oman has achieved significant advancements in IOR/EOR methods, offshore drilling and field development, digitalisation and artificial intelligence, and



(Supplied photo)

these will be debated and shared by leading experts through panel sessions, technical discussions and presentations in the SPE conference at OPES."

While OPES will serve as an effective business and networking platform for energy professionals, oil and gas companies, policy and decision-makers, and

and drive engagement through informative discussions and technical presentations on key topics shaping the current and future needs of the energy industry.

The conference agenda will feature an Industry Dialogue Session themed 'Shaping the Future of the Energy Industry',

Oil and Gas Zone featuring Digital Oil and Gas Talks that will bring together senior executives, service providers, contractors and related suppliers, technology innovators, and industry experts to develop business ideas and exchange thoughts on revolutionising the oil and gas industry with an emphasis on increasing profitability through sustainable measures.

The sultanate has made significant progress in line with its energy vision to attain a green and circular economy that places sustainability at its core. Through national level, industry-leading events like OPES, the country will continue to stay committed to its goal of achieving energy independence while effectively developing resources such as renewable energy to lower production costs and enhance competitive elements in economic sectors.

A special pre-conference seminar on current and advanced Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) took place on March 20.

while an Executive Plenary Session will focus on 'How the Petroleum Industry is Preparing itself for the Era of Decarbonisation and Energy Transition'. Other engaging features of the conference agenda include four panel sessions, an Energy Think Tank session, 28 technical and knowledge sharing e-poster sessions, and an OPES Awards Showcase Pavilion.

OPES will also host a Digital

The theme of this year's conference reflects the major developments happening not only in the sultanate, but in the wider region

H E SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUFİ

stakeholders, a key highlight of the event is the conference that is organised by SPE. Themed 'Shaping the Future of the Energy Industry', the conference will be chaired by Saleh al Anboori, Director-General of Exploration and Production of Oil and Gas, Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

With a fine selection of highly acclaimed experts, the participants will convene to exchange ideas, share industry insights,

CPA launches campaigns to monitor prices, promotions

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has carried out several inspection visits to shops and commercial centres in various governorates in efforts to monitor markets before Ramadan.

Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of CPA, visited a commercial centre in Muscat on Monday to ensure stability of prices and availability of goods before the holy month begins.

According to a CPA official, the authority's departments in the wilayats of Rustaq and Barka in South Batinah have conducted an intensive campaign in commercial centres and issued notices against violators of the Consumer Protection Law.

"Inspection teams in North and South Sharqiyah governorates also conducted several inspection campaigns at commercial centres, shops and markets to monitor prices, promotions and discounts for Ramadan. Inspection teams made sure that value-added tax is levied on applicable items," the CPA official said.

Additionally, the Consumer Protection Department in the wilayat of Khasab, Musandam governorate, visited commercial



(Supplied photo)

centres and issued notices of illegal practice on defaulting suppliers and merchants.

On March 14, CPA issued a decision - No 1/2022 - amending some provisions of the Executive Regulations of the Consumer Protection Law.

According to the decision, businesses must follow regulations when making promotional offers, including obtaining approval of the concerned authority and co-ordinating with the latter to ensure there is no misleading information in advertisements.

Citizens welcomed the decision.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* Sultan al Rawahi, a private sector employee, said the decision

came at the right time - before the beginning of Ramadan - as shops and businesses are known to make promotional offers at this time of the year.

"The inspection campaigns to monitor markets and the new consumer protection decision will prevent any manipulation of prices," Rawahi said.

Nasser Saeed, a government employee, was happy with the new decision because it would give confidence to consumers and prevent any manipulation in prices of products on promotional offers.

"I hope these inspection visits continue during occasions such as Ramadan, Eid al Fitr and Eid al Adha," said Saeed.

WEATHER WATCH

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	31	18
Doha	30	19
Kuwait City	26	17
Manama	28	19
Muscat	32	21
Riyadh	34	18

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.54am
Sunrise	6.09am
Duhr	12.19pm
Asr	3.45pm
Maghrib	6.23pm
Isha	7.34pm

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'Drowning incidents high among children under five years old'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Incidents of drowning in Oman are very high, more so among children less than five years of age, according to H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sae'edi, Minister of Health.

The Governorate of Dakhliyah has the highest number of drowning deaths among young and the elderly due to the presence of numerous wadis.

H E Dr Sa'eedi made the statement on Monday as he presided over the concluding ceremony of the Aman Campaign launched by Oman Pediatric Society (OPS) in collaboration with the Woman and Child Health Department and the Education and Health Awareness Programmes Department of the Ministry of Health.

The campaign highlighted the risks of drowning, and the need of training health workers as well as from other sectors in providing first aid and performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on victims.

Addressing the gathering, H H Sayyida Dr Khawla al Julanda al Saeed, president of OPS, informed that the society has endeavoured ceaselessly to enhance the welfare of children

through dedicated efforts and available resources to raise health services in the sultanate.

OPS lays great emphasis on social issues, the most important of which is negligence being a cause of paediatric mortality and morbidity.

The Aman Campaign focused on the issue of drowning among children and organised several activities across Oman to raise awareness about protecting children from drowning.

Launched in 2019, the campaign continued through the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 via social media platforms.

Unit Rate announcement

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company S.A.O.C Invites Interested Companies To Participate In The Following Tender:

Description	Last Date to Participate	Date of Submission Request of Participation Letter	Grade	Tender Price (R.O)
Unit Rate Contract for Primary Substation Maintenance, Repair and Emergency	07/04/2022	One week obtaining UR document	• Manufacturers and agents • Qualified companies of Grade-C DCRP	105

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5 % VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - For payment procedure and to obtain the document, please contact us via e-mail Contract@medcoman.com 24588600 – Ext: 8577 - 8726
Purchase timing	document can be purchased at the official working time between 08:00 – 13:00 hours please contact us via e-mail Contract@medcoman.com
Enquiries	Any inquiry can be sent using clarification available in the tender documents , within 3 days from obtaining UR document
UR Submission	- The contractors should stamp all the unit rate contract pages - The contractors, after reading and accepting the prices, terms, and conditions of the contract, shall submit a "Request of Participation Letter" addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION CO - A list of proposed staff with their Identity documents and Qualification/ experience documents and CVs. - A list of bidder details in manufacturing and repair work /or major maintenance projects similar to our scope. - Participants must provide a company profile that clarifies the business definition with information about the company's ability. The company's expertise and ability to provide high-quality service must also be provided - Valid registration from Tender Board, Ministry of Commerce, and Industry, ESR certificate, Testing certificate from DCRP, DCRP and VAT Certificate - All the required documents should be submitted only through email Contract@medcoman.com
Terms and Conditions	- Final decision of acceptance of participation, and assignment distribution will be held with MEDC - MEDC have the right to close the participation date on or before 07/04/2022.

INVITATION TO TENDER	
Tender Ref.	TAIO 001/2022
Tender Title	Digital Insurance Portal Tender

Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 8:00 AM on Tuesday 22/03/2021 Until 4:00 PM Thursday 23/03/2021. Tenderers to follow the steps below in order to obtain the electronic tender document;

Step 1: Interested parties should send an email to the following email address Procurement@takafuloman.om expressing their interest in the Tender and request for the Tender Pre- Requisite document.

Step 2: Tenders should populate the Tender Pre- Requisite document and send it to the following email address Procurement@takafuloman.om

 **تكاful عمان للتأمين ش.م.ع.ع**
TAKAFUL OMAN INSURANCE SAOG

Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG.
P.O. BOX 207, Postal Code 134,
Bareeq Al Shatti, Sultanate of Oman
Tel.: 00968 22303061, Fax: 00968 24699511



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MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,302.38
Sensex	57,292.49

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian Rs	198.08
Pakistani Rs	468.87
Bangladesh taka	223.48
Philippines peso	136.08
Sri Lankan Rs	727.40

*Rates as on March 21
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Lagarde sees no signs of eurozone stagnation

The eurozone is not showing signs of economic stagnation despite the fallout from the war in Ukraine, European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde said on Monday.

The conflict has fuelled increases in already-high energy prices and threatened to worsen a global supply chain crunch, raising concerns that economies could face stagflation - a period of high inflation but weak growth.

"We do not currently see elements of stagnation," Lagarde said. "Given the recovery that was underway, we do not see stagnation of the economy in 2022, neither in 2023 nor in 2024," she said.

Lebanon central bank chief charged with enrichment, money laundering

A Lebanese judge charged central bank chief Riad Salameh with 'illicit enrichment' and money laundering after he failed to attend a court hearing for the fifth time.

Judge Ghada Aoun also charged Salameh's brother Raja with 'facilitating money laundering' after he was arrested last week over financial misconduct, the source said. The same charge was filed against Ukrainian national Anna Kosakova, who jointly owns a company with Raja Salameh.

PDO signs contract extension agreements with SLCCs at OPES



Muscat - Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) on Monday 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 Tarik al Said, chairman of the Central Bank of Oman board of governors. The prestigious event is organised under the patronage of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and hosted by PDO.

The contracts extended with Al Baraka Oil Services,

These contracts will provide these companies with high-tech electric hoists in order to reduce their environmental impact and reduce greenhouse gas emissions

ENG ABDUL-AMIR AL AJMI

Shawamikh Oil Services and Al Sahari Oil Services are to provide well maintenance services, according to a press release.

Eng Abdul-Amir al Ajmi, PDO external affairs and value creation director, said, "The importance of this event lies in the fact that it establishes a new stage for SLCCs which have reached a high level of merit and efficiency in their various areas of operations. These contracts will contribute to providing these

companies with high-tech electric hoists in order to reduce their environmental impact and reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

The company also signed the second contract with Sakan Facility Management, an SLCC consortium, to build an integrated station to provide land transportation services for employees working in the concession areas.

Ajmi added, "The signing of the contract to establish an inte-

grated station for land commuting to serve the employees of the concession areas is part of our efforts to reduce traffic accidents and raise the level of safety, to which PDO attaches utmost importance."

"This extension comes as an affirmation of PDO's continued efforts in maximising the economic benefit for the local communities in which it operates and increasing the value retained within the national economy," he said.

As part of PDO's support to SLCCs and their continuous growth, PDO has recently awarded additional hoists to Al Baraka Oilfield Services and Al Shawamikh Oil Services bringing the total for each company to ten hoists.

Corporate culture the secret sauce?

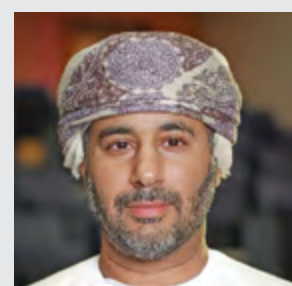
Muscat - Post-COVID corporate culture and its many challenges - from the Great Resignation sweeping global companies of all sizes to hybrid working and more - is the topic up for discussion at the next edition of Tejarah Talks.

Organized by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) in association with Oman Business Forum and supported by HSBC and SOHAR Port & Freezone, Tejarah Talks is scheduled for 7:30pm on March 30 at the Civil Aviation Authority Training Centre in Al Hail North.

H H Sayyid Dr Adham al Said, founder of The Firm will act as the moderator. The panel line-up includes Sir Charles Shaw, CEO, Bondoni; Shatha al Maskiry, managing director, Protiviti Oman; Dr Ghalib al Hosni, chief people officer, Omantel; and Saif al Manji, managing consultant, Quintal Ventures.

Speaking ahead of the event, Maymuna al Adawy, MoCIIP director and Tejarah Talks organiser said, "Clearly the pandemic has impacted the way we all work and our attitudes to our jobs and careers, bringing significant changes to corporate culture in its wake. While this might seem initially to mean things like different approaches to business hours and office set up, it also extends to areas around manufacturing practices, employment conditions, privacy regulations, or environmental commitments. And these changes are having a significant impact on business results."

"In fact, a recent LRN Corporation survey of 8,000 executives across 14 countries and 17 industries found that companies with the strongest culture outperform by ap-



H H Sayyid Dr Adham al Said

proximately 40 per cent across all measures of business performance, including customer satisfaction, employee loyalty, innovation, adaptability as well as growth."

Maymuna added, "While the LRN data provides a strong and compelling case for Omani businesses to invest in building a stronger corporate culture, it is important to acknowledge that culture change in any organisation, irrespective of size is not easy."

Commenting on the importance of corporate culture, H H Said remarked, "A strong corporate culture does not magically appear and to understand its real impact Omani business leaders need to think about it more holistically. We have to understand how culture can fundamentally shift the way a company operates, in a way that generates better outcomes for the business, employees and customers. If the challenges of the past two years have taught us anything it is that corporate culture truly counts. Needless to add, it will take an effort to change things, but given the potential rewards it is clearly worth it."

To reserve your place at Tejarah Talks email your name and contact details to TT@tejarah.gov.om

Al Omaniya posts RO2.56mn net profit for 2021

Muscat - Al Omaniya Financial Services announced a net profit of RO2.56mn for year 2021 at its annual general meeting (AGM) held on Sunday. The meeting was presided by Sheikh Khalid Mustahil al Mashani, deputy chairman of the company.

Sheikh Mashani, said that the shareholders have given their approval for the audited financial statements of the company as well as for the 12 per cent dividend comprising 7 per cent cash dividend and 5 per cent unsecured non-convertible redeemable bonus stock bonds.

The board of directors appre-



ciated the measures taken by the Central Bank of Oman and the Capital Market Authority with a view to strengthening the financial sector in the sultanate, according to a press release.

Aftab Patel, chief executive

officer added that the company's loan book stood at RO117mn at the end of year 2021. "The total revenues of the company stood at RO15.67mn for the same period. The pre-tax profit stands at RO3mn and the net profit is

RO2.56mn. The Earnings per share is RO0.009, and net worth of the company stands at RO70.6mn. The book value of the share is RO0.223," he announced during the AGM.

Patel stated that the company has been at the forefront of, issuing innovative financial instruments and has pioneered the issue of bonus stock convertible bonds as dividends over several years. "This year, the company's dividend comprises unsecured non-convertible redeemable bonus stock bonds which is the first time for any financial institution in Oman," he emphasised.

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SUMMARY OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021					
(Amount in RO'000)					
ASSETS	2021	2020	LIABILITIES	2021	2020
1 Cash on hand	1,724	1,149	1 Capital and reserve	4,691	4,104
2 Deposit with Central Bank of Oman	120	110	2 Borrowings from banks	-	-
3 Precious metals	-	-	3 Balance due to branches	-	-
4 Balance due from banks	2,774	3,039	4 Balance due to money changers	60	129
5 Balance due from branches	-	-	5 Loans and advances payable	-	-
6 Balance due from money changers	636	589	6 Cheques and drafts issued outstanding	-	16
7 Cheques and drafts purchased	-	-	7 Other liabilities	1,097	1,173
8 Fixed assets	250	202			
9 Investments	-	-			
10 Other assets	344	333			
Total	5,848	5,422	Total	5,848	5,422
We certify that the above balances are in agreement with the books and records of the company as at 31 December 2021.					
HAMDAN EXCHANGE LLC VICE-CHAIRMAN		Auditors: CROWE MAK GHAZALI LLC, CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS		24 FEBRUARY, 2022	

Oman oil price up by \$3.71

Our Correspondent
Muscat

At the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME), Oman crude contract price (for May delivery) on Monday reached US\$110.36 per barrel, comprising a rise by US\$3.71 from the price of Friday, which was US\$106.65 per barrel.

The average price of Oman oil (March Delivery) has stabilised at US\$83.62 per barrel, thus US\$10.48 per barrel higher than February Delivery 2022.

Meanwhile, Brent North Sea crude surged 6.1 per cent to US\$114.55 per barrel with West Texas Intermediate (WTI) rising 5.5 per cent to US\$110.48 on Monday.

MSX falls 0.29%; volumes down

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) fell by 0.29 per cent to close at 4,302.38 points on Monday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 0.86 per cent to RO3.18mn and volumes fell 0.54 per cent to 9.65mn shares.

All the sectoral indices closed in red territory. Financial index fell 0.29 per cent, Industrial index declined 0.08 per cent and Services index fell 0.39 per cent. The MSX Shariah Index closed down by 0.49 per cent at 488.82 points.

Market breadth remained negative as 11 companies closed up, while 17 companies closed down. The rest 53 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

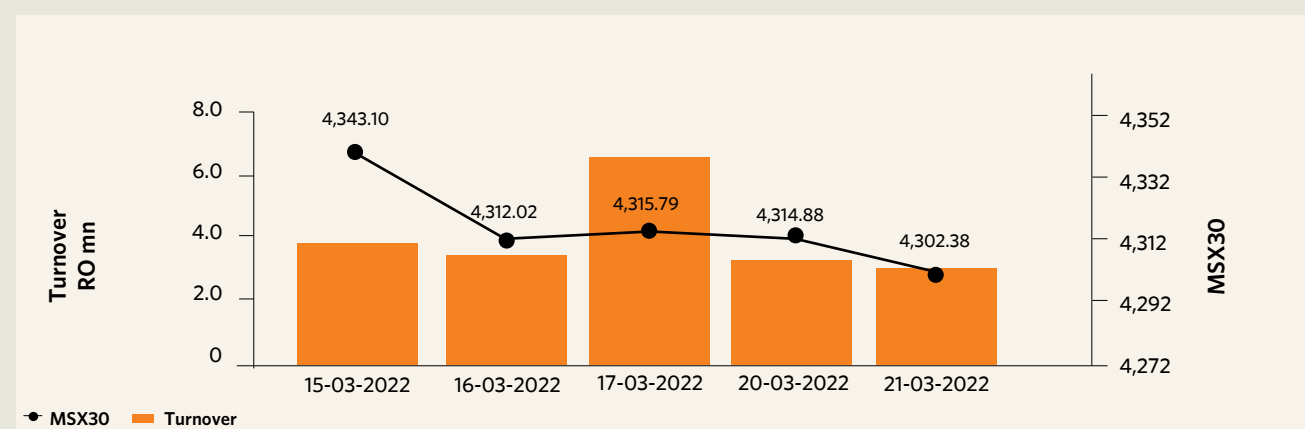
Top gainers were Vision Insurance (5



per cent), Al Sharqia Investment (4.71 per cent), Dhofar Generating Co (1.79 per cent) and Oman National Engineering and Investment Co (1.77 per cent).

Top losers were A'Saffa Foods (-4.8 per cent), Ooredoo (-3.47 per cent), National Gas (-2.14 per cent) and Al Suwadi Power (-2.04 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Saudi Arabia says Yemen rebel attacks 'threat' to oil supplies



Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Top crude exporter Saudi Arabia warned on Monday that Yemeni rebel attacks on the kingdom's oil facilities pose a 'direct threat' to global supplies.

Saudi Arabia 'will not incur any responsibility' for shortages in oil supplies in light of the Iran-backed Houthi attacks, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

These cross-border assaults are a 'direct threat to the security of oil supplies in these extremely sensitive circumstances witnessed by the global energy markets', it added.

The statement comes a day after the kingdom acknowledged a temporary drop in production after the Houthis attacked a refinery with an armed drone.

It urged the international community to 'stand firm' against the Houthi insurgents.

Oil prices have repeatedly spiked above US\$100 per barrel lately, driven by supply concerns

Saudi Arabia will not incur any responsibility for shortages in oil supplies in light of the Iran-backed Houthi attacks

FOREIGN MINISTRY

centred on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

They rose higher again on Monday. Brent crude was up more than 4 per cent at more than US\$112 per barrel at one stage.

Analysts said the main mover of the market was news of the EU considering a ban on Russian oil imports, although the Houthi attacks on Aramco were also cited.

The drone assault on the YASREF refinery in Yanbu Industrial City on the Red Sea 'led to a

temporary reduction in the refinery's production', the Saudi energy ministry said on Sunday.

It added that the drop would 'be compensated for from the inventory', but did not provide numbers.

The Iran-backed Houthis, against whom Saudi Arabia leads a military coalition in Yemen, have repeatedly targeted the kingdom, including sites belonging to energy giant Aramco.

The Yemeni insurgents said on Sunday that they launched cross-border drone and missile attacks that targeted a number of 'vital and important' establishments.

Oil-rich Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, have been under pressure to open the supply taps, but have so far held firm, stressing their commitment to output cuts agreed by the OPEC+ alliance of oil producers led by Riyadh and Moscow.

AFP

Japan presses UAE to pump more oil

Dubai, UAE - Japan on Sunday urged the United Arab Emirates to pump more oil to calm markets rocked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the latest major consumer to lobby Gulf producers.

The plea by Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi came during meetings with Emirati officials which coincided with a visit by Germany's economy minister, three weeks into the Russian offensive.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson also flew to the UAE and Saudi Arabia to push for more oil this week in a bid to ease prices of over US\$100 a barrel and se-



Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi (left) shakes hands with UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan (right).

curer non-Russian supplies.

Hayashi asked 'the UAE to contribute to the stabilisation of the international oil market by

supplying a greater amount of oil, securing spare productive capacity as a leading member of OPEC+', a Japanese Foreign

Ministry spokesperson told an online briefing.

The UAE supplies about a third of Japan's oil imports.

There was no promise of more production from the UAE, which has stressed its alignment with the OPEC+ oil alliance that includes Russia.

Hayashi's talks with UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan and Industry Minister Sultan al Jaber come after Prime Minister Fumio Kishida made the same request in phone calls with the Emirati and Saudi leadership this week.

AFP

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tender:

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	07/2022	Provision of Printing Services for 5 years	07/04/2022	17/05/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	105.000

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity of sending a valid Tender Board certificate in the same required field.
Buying the Tender:	The documents required for the purchase of the tender are sent by e-mail to the Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department, to ensure the authenticity of the documents before purchasing the tender during the official working days from 8.00 hr am - 01.00 pm hr.
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document. (Payment Through Bank Transfer)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	Each bid should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to The Chairman of tender committee mentioning Tender Number and Name on the top of the envelope.
Terms and conditions:	- No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The complete bid documents should be deposited in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 423 0 Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 99105413
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com

إعلان طرح مناقصة

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصة التالية :

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	لن الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (ارغ)
1	٢٠٢٢/٠٧	توفير خدمات طباعة لمدة 5 سنوات	٢٠٢٢/٠٤/٠٧	٢٠٢٢/٠٥/١٧	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال والمسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول .	١٠٥٠٠٠

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة مع ضرورة إرسال شهادة مجلس المناقصات سارية المفعول وفي نفس المجال المطلوب .
طريقة الشراء	يتم إرسال المستندات المطلوبة لشراء المناقصة عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني إلى دائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود . وذلك للتأكد من صحة المستند قبل شراء المناقصة وذلك في أيام العمل الرسمية من الساعة ٨:٠٠ ص - ١:٠٠ م .
الرسم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد - (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العروض	تقدم العروض في مظاريف مغلقة ومعونة بإسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات مع تحديد رقم وعنوان المناقصة فقط
الشروط و الضمانات	- عدم تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف. - أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . - إرفاق تأميناً في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (١٪) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ومعنوياً بإسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء . - كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه . - الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر.
العروض المقدم	يجب وضع العروض في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات.
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - الموالج رقم السكة ٢١٥٣ - مبني رقم ٤٢٣٠ - تفاصيل التواصل ٩٩١٠٥٤١٣
البريد الإلكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com
الموقع الإلكتروني	www.omangrid.com



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Mumbai Stars, Muscat Thunder move to 2nd round of Grand T20

Mumbai Stars, Muscat Thunders, Kingsmen CC and Renaissance Rangers registered wins in the first round of the Grand cricket T10 Challenge Cup tournament organised by Grand Global Investment (GGI) at the Al Hail Cricket Club grounds on March 11 and 12.

Mumbai Stars thrashed Dar-sait XI by nine wickets and Muscat Thunders beat NEI Warriors by five wickets on March 11 to advance to the second round, a press release said.

On March 12, Kingsmen CC prevailed over Petrofac XI by eight wickets and Renaissance Rangers defeated Misfah Strikers by 50 runs to move into next round.

In other matches on March 11, Sunshine International posted a nine-wicket win over ISWK, KCA easily beat Pakistan XI by nine wickets, Michael XI thumped Rising Phoenix by 10 wickets, Kingfisher Cricketers registered a 29-run win over AKCT and Kalinga Warriors came better against RC Melco by six runs.

Mattco XI beat Aster Hospital by 24 runs and United Friends



Club posted a 16-run win against Boom Boom CC in the other matches of the Challenge Cup on March 12.

Chief organiser Ali Humaid al Alawi, chairman of Grand

Global Investment, said, "Since all matches were knockout, we witnessed very intense competition between the teams," Ali said.

In the women's Cup, Indian

Social Club Oman claimed the opening win in the round-robin tournament by beating Wadi Kabir Women by 14 runs on March 12.

In the other matches, Sun-

shine International beat Seema Dance Academy by 10 runs, Wadi Kabir Women thumped Aster Women by 59 runs and Seema Dance Academy beat Aster Women by 12 runs.

Bank Muscat's mBanking and Internet Banking provide convenience

Bank Muscat has been launching new features and services on its digital channels on a continuous basis over the years. Subsequently, the bank's e-channels have been recording a massive rise in popularity with over 1.3 million customers using the Omni-channel Mobile and Internet Banking currently to conduct a wide variety of banking transactions and requests. Both Mobile and Internet Banking are available 24x7, 365 days a year and provides customers the convenience of banking without having to visit a branch or worry about branch timings.

Over the past few months, the bank has launched many new features including bill payments to Awasr and instant Debit Card linkage to one's account along with applying for prepaid cards through Internet banking and mBanking app.

Also, linked Floosi and children's accounts are now visible in their parent's accounts for better transparency and oversight. Bank customers can also benefit from other useful features like the instant opening of additional savings account for existing customers, generation of PIN for debit cards, credit cards and prepaid cards, download of SWIFT advice for international transactions, blocking of prepaid card as well as charity contributions.

The mBanking app and Internet banking also allow customers to disable or enable their debit card for international usage adding an extra layer of security for the benefit of customers.

The bank's mBanking and Internet services include real-time bill payments for utilities in Oman, fund transfers within the



Abdullah al Jufaili

bank and in Oman, fund transfers across the world via the SWIFT network; speed transfers to a number of countries including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka; Zakat calculator and charity payments. It also provides bill payment facilities for a variety of utility services such as electricity, water, telecom, mobile top ups, instant credit card bill payments, and school fees payments.

Speaking about the continuous launch of new services on Internet Banking and the mBanking app, Abdullah Hamood al Jufaili, assistant general manager, Digital Banking, Bank Muscat, said, "We are delighted to see our customers quickly adopting our digital banking solutions like mBanking and Internet Banking. In line with our customer-centric vision, Bank Muscat will continue to launch new features to further enhance banking convenience for its customers. The consistent rise in active customers on our e-channels is a reflection of the popularity of both Mobile and Internet Banking."

Bank Muscat's Mobile Banking app, which offers maximum convenience to customers, is highly secure.

Ramadan at Kempinski to feature celebrity chef Joe Barza

Kempinski Hotel Muscat will be presenting Ramadan this year with celebrity master chef Joe Barza.

Known for his on-air appearances in several popular cooking shows, such as *Top Chef* and *Chopped*, Chef Joe returns to Kempinski again, this time to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan. He will be featured at The Kitchen restaurant and at Zale 'Arabesque Lounge' bringing his expertise in Levantine cuisine to Oman.



Joe Barza

The Kitchen will feature the city's standout Iftar buffet every day with live cooking stations and culinary wonders from the Levant.

Zale will be transformed into an Arabesque Lounge, the perfect backdrop to spend Layali Ramadan every night, from sunset onwards. Chef Joe will present his signature creations, influenced by homemade Lebanese dishes and delectable specialties in an exclusive a la carte menu. Zale Arabesque Lounge will also offer suhoor, in addition to refreshing Ramadan mocktails, to the accompaniment of Arabesque tunes.

At Bukhara restaurant, a 3-course Indian Iftar will be available, including a selection of North Indian dishes prepared by Chef Ashish Tiwari.

For suhoor, the opulent Amwaj Lounge will feature an a la carte menu every night, perfect to gather with friends and family.

Whether it's a small or large Iftar function, Ramadan this year will be a memorable one as the hotel prepares to craft beautiful dining experiences that embody the true spirit of this special occasion. Special group packages are available, too.

Ooredoo updates its Digital Tutorial

Empowering the future generation and providing them with the necessary tools to succeed, Ooredoo has upgraded its popular Digital Tutorial application, adding even more study material.

The new update includes additional biology, physics, chemistry and maths content for students in the eleventh grade to guide and support them with their studies, a press release said.

The app offers a variety of resources, also for students from fifth to twelfth grade who can use the unique mind-maps, an additional features designed to guide them with their studies.

To further motivate university students and job seekers, the app gives access to four new courses, certified by some of the most prestigious universities, such as Harvard University.

At the forefront of digital educational technology since its launch in 2018, Ooredoo's Digital Tutorial App has received more than 170 million views in the last year. The average number of active users on a daily basis was approximately 14,000 during peak hours, with an average view time of 21 minutes per student.

Ahli Islamic Credit Card holders to get 50 % off on Talabat app

Ahli Islamic continues its promotional campaign in collaboration with Talabat app, the region's leading food delivery and q-commerce app, to provide an exciting Shariah-compliant discount to its Credit card holders.

The bank had announced earlier that the offer would continue for six months, from January to June. The 50% discount offer is available for all Ahli Islamic customers making their purchases on the app through

credit cards and is applicable at all restaurants and food outlets on the Talabat app. Customers can not only avail lowest prices on several local and international beverages and cuisines, but also benefit from Ahli Islamic's distinctive, Shariah-compliant banking experience.

Describing the offer as an exclusive opportunity for credit card holders, Yousuf al Rawahi, DGM - head of Ahli Islamic, said, "We are pleased to associate

with the Talabat app to present such an exciting promotion for our customers. It is reflective of our relentless efforts to exceed our obligations through value added services.

As one of the fastest-growing Islamic banks in the country, we are committed to create and implement banking solutions that are secure and swift, and are suited to meet the needs of our customers and the global banking environment."



OOC participates in coordination meetings

Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) participated in the coordination meetings held in Konya, Republic of Turkey, which will host the 5th Islamic Solidarity Sports Games, to be held from August 9 - 18.

OOC was represented in the meetings by Hisham bin Salem al Adwani, Chef de Mission, and

Hana bint Saeed al Batashiya, head of the Coordination and Follow-up department and responsible for the procedures for registering Oman sports missions in foreign sports tournaments.

The delegations toured the sites of the competitions and the Olympic Village, while the

sports facilities and the coordination meetings were attended by the delegation managers from all the countries that will participate in the competition to clarify the procedures to be done before the start, the system, the mechanism for registering sports delegations, and other topics.

'Womantel' - The art of being a working mother

Motherhood is no cake walk. It is a challenging task for mothers to maintain a good balance between professional and familial responsibilities, especially when life throws high demands at them. Many of the mothers today make immense sacrifices to maintain an ideal work-life balance.

On Mother's Day, Omantel acknowledge the sacrifices made by mothers to make people around them feel happy and special. However, the pressure on working mothers to be perfect both at work and at home is never easy, a press release said.

Working mothers desperately need thoughtful and robust support from their partners, societies and from the organisations they work for. Therefore, Omantel is ahead of the curve in dealing with this and strengthens its support for working mothers.

Omantel attaches great significance to creating an environment that facilitates a well thought out and executed work-life balance. Omantel has created a work environment that reinforces the value of creating the perfect balance between job and home.

Mothers at Omantel have the privilege of taking the necessary time off for their children without worrying about putting their careers at risk. This initiative is a boon for working mothers across Oman who wear multiple hats while balancing personal and professional responsibilities.

On this occasion, some of the inspirational women at Omantel



Fatma al Raisi



Muna al Lawati

were asked what they love the most about being a working mother.

"I love the feeling when my kids welcome me when I am back home from work. All my fatigue vanishes that very second. It's the best feeling in the world," said Muna al Lawati, a leader in the HR unit at Omantel.

Muna stated that the Day Care facility provided by Omantel in the same premises was of great help for her son while she was at work. She also expressed her gratitude towards her teammates for their unconditional support.

"My manager has always

stood by me and offered me all the necessary guidance and support," she said. With a highly supportive team, I always felt comfortable and confident to face any challenges at work".

In addition to the assistance, Muna also stressed on the importance of making children understand the commitment at work.

"I want my children to understand my work schedule. They should be able to know my whereabouts just the way I know what they do at school. This helps in creating an intimate bond with them," she said.

Fatma al Raisi, a working mother in the HR department at Omantel, also shared what she enjoys the most about being a working mother at Omantel.

"At Omantel, we all are a family. We understand each other, our families and the responsibilities we share," said Fatma.

During the pandemic lockdown, 'work from home' schedules made work a lot easier for Fatma, as completing tasks became more flexible. Fortunately, even after the lockdown was over, employees were allowed to work remotely.

Fatma also pointed out how her children were part of her work schedule. "During our bi-weekly virtual meetings, our children were allowed to be part of virtual contests, which was a great way for them to interact and create a great bonding experience with parents." She explained how this helped ease a lot of stress related to work.

Madayn organises Omani products exhibition at Nesto Hypermarket, Mabela

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates - 'Madayn' on Monday opened an Omani Products exhibition at Nesto Hypermarket in Al Mabela South, under the auspices of Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn. Organised as part of the 'Made in Oman' campaign, the five-day exhibition aims at meeting the needs of the consumers before the blessed month of Ramadan begins.

Hilal al Hasani, CEO of Madayn, affirmed that Omani products enjoy a strong presence in the commercial centres and the local market, thanks to their high quality and international standards and specifications which have made them expand and thrive in the GCC, regional, and international markets.

Hamood Al Balushi, assistant director general of Madayn, stated that the Omani Products exhibition at Nesto Hypermarket comes to achieve the objectives of Madayn in disseminating awareness among local and foreign consumers on the locally manufactured products and em-



Hamood al Balushi

phasises the importance of buying local for the national economy. Balushi added that such events reflect the government's continuous support to the factories and companies operating in the sultanate.

The series of 'Made in Oman' exhibitions are being held to motivate consumers, individuals and institutions to support locally made products, enhance loyalty to the Omani products, and generate further awareness on the positive economic effect of purchasing these products.



ARA Petroleum celebrates achievements during 2021

ARA Petroleum, one of The Zubair Corporation's companies specialised in the oil and gas sector, celebrated its achievements over the past year at the Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort. The event was conducted in the presence of Al Zubair Mohammad Al Zubair, vice chairman of the Board of Directors of The Zubair Corporation.

During this celebration, Sultan al Ghaithi, CEO of ARA Petroleum, shed light on the various milestones of 2021, despite the challenges the company faced and stated, "First and foremost, we would like to congratulate all employees of ARA Petroleum and its subsidiaries for the excellent results achieved, whether in the field of exploration and production or occupational health and safety. We look forward to achieving more of our objectives during the coming period to serve the company's future vision."

The celebration included a



number of competitions and events aimed at promoting the common corporate culture and values among employees. This stems from the company's plans to enhance and strengthen positive relationships between all

employees of the company in order to improve the work environment to contribute directly to the development of employees' skills. Ghaithi also stressed, "This celebration is a part of the company's keenness to share its

achievements and results achieved over the last year with its employees."

ARA Petroleum was established in 2016 and owns several companies, namely ARA Petroleum Exploration and Production.

beIN SPORTS secures rights to broadcast AFC Asian Qualifiers

beIN MEDIA GROUP (beIN) and its flagship channel beIN SPORTS have announced securing the live rights to broadcast the remaining matches of the AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to Qatar in 18 countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

beIN SPORTS has secured the live rights to broadcast the matches in Algeria, Bahrain, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

To showcase the new AFC rights, beIN SPORTS will launch four new dedicated AFC channels - namely beIN SPORTS AFC, beIN SPORTS 1 AFC, beIN SPORTS 2 AFC, and beIN SPORTS 3 AFC. Every game will be broadcast live across all four channels and feature the best-in-class studio analysis presented by beIN's top punditry team using beIN's state-of-the-art studio facilities.



The highly anticipated AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to Qatar will reach its climax on Thursday 24th and Tuesday 29th March, as the Continent's top teams set their sights on the concluding Match-days nine and ten encounters.

In Group A, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Korea Republic have already guaranteed their progression and will now battle it out for top spot. Below them, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Iraq remain in the mix for third place and the playoff ticket.

Meanwhile in Group B, three teams will battle for two auto-

matic qualification places at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, with Saudi Arabia leading the way but with Japan hot on their heels; while Australia - who still have to play the top two - remain firmly in the running as the group gears towards a thrilling finale.

The AFC rights will be available across all beIN's subscription packages.

The new AFC rights add to beIN SPORTS unparalleled sports portfolio across the MENA region. beIN SPORTS is the official broadcast partner of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 across the entire MENA region.



Muscat-based homemaker crowned Mrs India International

Muscat-based homemaker Anita Dhande was crowned Mrs India International at the Mrs India pageant held in the Indian city of Jaipur recently. She won the coveted award among 22 participants from across the country.

Anita, who has been living in Muscat for past 11 years, thanked her family for the support she received, a press release said.

Wife of Dr Ram, a consultant at Sultan Qaboos University

Hospital, and mother of two kids, Anita was delighted to have won the crown.

"It was a good event with contestants from across nations. I am happy to have been crowned the winner in the category (platinum) I entered in the pageant," she said, back in Muscat.

Organised by Mrs India Universe Organisation (Divalicious Group), the winner secures a berth in Mrs International and Mrs World pageants.

Oman Oasis announces 5 gallon special discount offer to over 222 raffle draw winners

Oman Oasis recently announced the conclusion of two of three draws held for the Oman Oasis 5 Gallon Special Discount with 222 winners being awarded various gifts and vouchers.

Offering customers more value for their purchase, the Discount Draw will see a total of 310 prizes given away over the course of three draws.

In the raffle draw, customers won a variety of prizes, including 8 winners received 22 carat 8 grams gold coins, 14 winners walked away with 22 carat 4 grams gold coins, 140 winners received 10 Oman Oasis 5-gallon water coupons and 60 customers won gift vouchers from Lulu worth RO10. The scheme will see one final round of draws with 88 more winners after March 31.

With a plethora of raffles, draws, and rewards, Oman Oasis has ensured that their customers stay loyal to the brand. With a customer-centric approach to all



its campaigns, it has strengthened its ties with its customers while increasing its reach across the sultanate.

Complementing its creative marketing strategies with its

state of the art production line that ensures adherence to international standards, Oman Oasis has also won Oman's Most Trusted Brand Award once again for the year 2021. This marks a

prestigious fifth win in a row by the survey conducted by Muscat Daily and voted by the people of Oman.

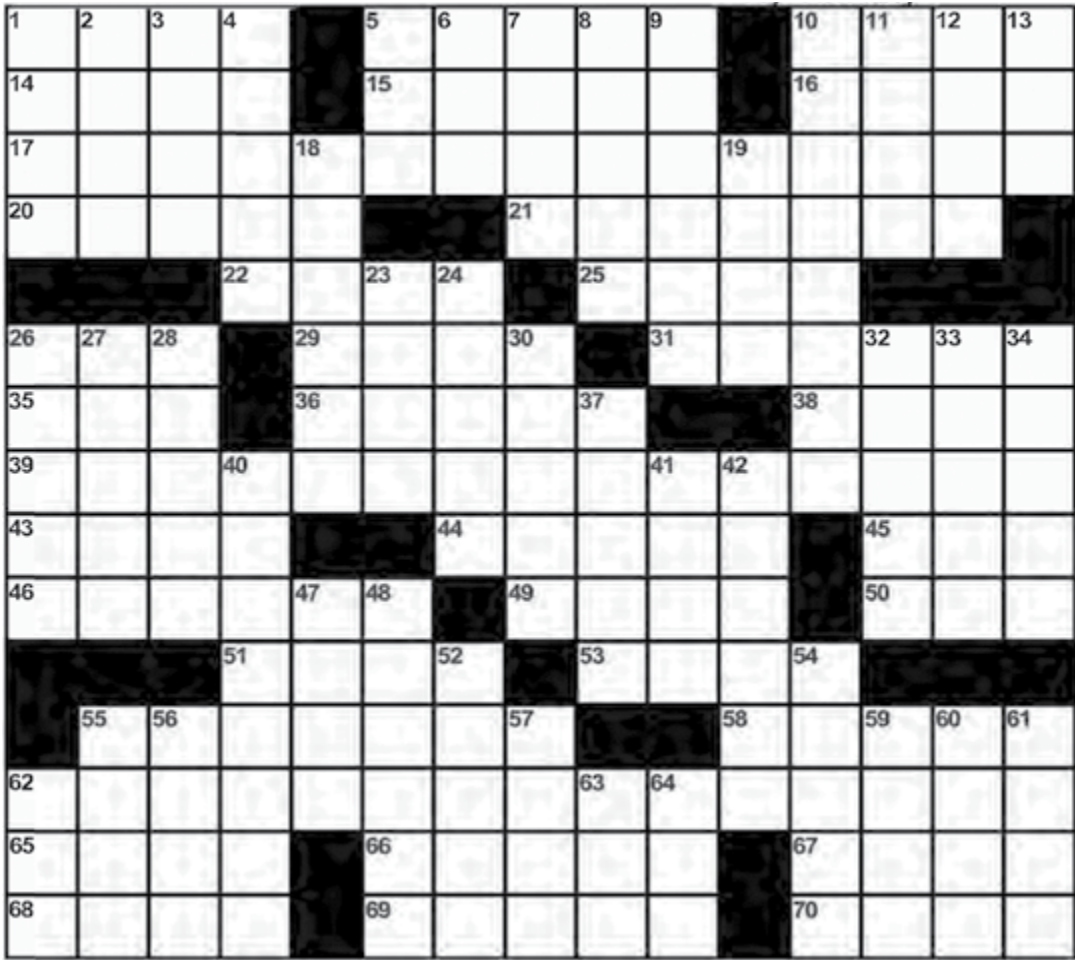
Oman Oasis has always ensured the quality of its prod-

ucts by adhering to stringent quality control, maintaining international standards and production practices, securing numerous regional and international awards and certifications. It is this unflinching commitment to the highest quality standards that has now also earned them the title of Oman's Most Trusted Brand.

Oman Oasis has been steadfast in coming up with creative ways to engage with their consumers and reward them for their loyalty. By rolling out innumerable promotions, contests, and awareness campaigns that are shaped, keeping the consumers' benefits in mind, Oman Oasis has become the preferred choice and a household name.

Also complementing its marketing strategies and excellent levels of customer service are its international product quality certifications like the IBWA membership, NSF, ABWA, and WQA.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Problems for directors
5) At a quick rate, poetically
10) Some precipitation
14) Eye layer
15) '70s White House name
16) Shoppers' bag
17) Easily achieved goals
20) Dark
21) Aspen features
22) Whacks
25) Insult but good
26) After-hours school gp.
29) Common welcomers
31) Last name for an unbalanced egghead?
35) _ Gabriel
36) Very angry
38) Buffalo's canal
39) It may be needed to be an NFL player
43) Cause of some shivers
44) Begin an Internet session
45) 3-D hospital procedure
46) Pungent condiment

49) Duck's domain
50) Stereotypically stubborn animal
51) Minnow variety
53) Bygone despot
55) Some kind of nut
58) Pigeon's perch
62) Weaponry that's neither large nor small
65) Black cat, to some
66) Chose not to dine out
67)_vera
68) British title
69) Year-end tunes
70) Some evergreens

sentence
12) Mayberry's self-jailer
13) Moist
18) Type of energy
19) German wife
23) "Legal" prefix
24) Drag one's feet
26) "Don't give me that!" old-style
27) Evergreen-forested landscape
28) Black_ (cattle breed)
30) Posture problem
32) Donna's intro?
33) Stadium features
34) Abominable creatures
37) Cereal grain killer
40) It's designed to get your attention
41) Charged particles
42) Ultimate object
4 7) Hindu Mr.
48) "The_ Cometh"
52) A Muse
54) Pass on in a race, as a baton
55) Disaster relief grp.
56) Footnote word
57) Leaves home?
59) Take-out order?

60) Shoot up
61) Storm centers
62) Like hip Brits in the '60s
63) "Shop_ you drop"
64) _ and outs

NOTE PAD

RESAW MOMMA BOB
IRATE AVION ARE
BATTERYACID TIE
ENABLE INTER
WEBSITE TROLLS
ORATES STOOGES
ORTS BYRON CAR
DOH HORNETS RNA
SRI ONICE SIGN
NONCES PAMELA
SIGNEE BEMUSES
ESSAY STARED
TAU BATHUBGINS
TAI UBOAT AERIE
OCT NEWTS EDEMA

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Making a good first impression is extremely important right now. Appearances can swing a situation in your favour. Content is important, but first you need to take care of the style. Be sure to look professional if you want to get that new account or promotion. You'll be doubly impressive when you get around to showing off your brainpower, but you have to get your foot in the door first.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Whatever wild, impulsive thing you were about to do can probably wait. You're feeling a different kind of energy now, and you wouldn't mind simply sitting at your desk and taking care of less exciting business. This is your moment to balance the accounts and make sure you're not spending more than you have. Maybe you could pay those outstanding bills and take that weight off your mind.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

You have a bit of an attitude these days. Used judiciously, this could help move some old obstacles out of the way. Just make sure you don't step on any toes you might need later. Walk away from anyone who tells you your free spirit is shaking things up too dramatically. It's not worth arguing about. The world is wide and your talents are many. Before too much longer, you'll find a place that fits you.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You're the master of ceremonies. You're a fountain of cheerfulness. You're slated to have big fun no matter what you end up doing with yourself. Since you probably went over all the possibilities in your last slow moment, you're ready to move as soon as the mood hits you. Maybe you're up for a fresh attack on a project that once defeated you. Maybe you'll paint bright colours all over something that usually bores you to tears.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Stand up from your hiding place and walk into the heart of the game. Throw away the mask that so often hides your feelings. Even if everyone here isn't an old friend, you can certainly call them your equals. Maybe you'll take this proud moment to work on that project of all projects: Yourself. This might make you unavailable for now, but there's always later. Anyone could ask what you're doing, and you'd respond openly.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You're interested in the ethics of this situation. The question may be obvious at first, but the answer is deep. Even if you're not a scholar or an attorney, you feel equipped to dissect this matter down to the bones. A new decision pushes some familiar old buttons although you might never have been here before. You learn something all over again once you revisit the beliefs instilled in you from early childhood.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

None of the usual strategies seem to work in a family argument. Everyone here knows each other too well. Ultimatums ring hollow when you can never completely turn your back and walk away. It doesn't help that those who love you the most may also be the quickest to find fault. Since everything is personal, your best hope is to communicate clearly without raising your voice. You score big points with your visible effort to be reasonable.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

If you're looking for an emotional connection, you could miss it unless you keep your eyes peeled. The more people are gathered in any one place, the more likely the signals will cross in this dense, confusing environment. What can you do about it? Be as present as you possibly can be during this time of great opportunity. The odds are in your favour, especially if you're very clear about what you want.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

For someone who usually likes to go with the flow or delegate the course of events, it's not like you to be so fixated on the details. Others are confused by your reactions. You might not even be aware that anything is different. Listen to what they're telling you instead of laughing it off. Although you weren't planning for a day of self-examination, this may be the time for looking at the whole picture instead of all its parts.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Technophobes take heart. Your dark ages are coming to an end in an era of user-friendliness. Meanwhile, technophiles get an open budget or find amazing sale prices. The equipment you coveted for so long can finally be yours. An increased computing power connects you to a whole new world. Even if you're not set up by this time tomorrow, you'll gain extra mileage with your sudden ability to make sense of unintelligible manuals.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Be open and prompt. Whether you're among friends or in a roomful of strangers, your wishes are relevant. Your hopes might line up perfectly with someone else's possibilities. Emotional candor is part of your cosmic profile even if you sometimes think of yourself as guarded or evasive. A bold gambit is worth the risk. You might be surprised when you see all the people who appreciate your forthcoming style.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Membership comes with responsibilities. If you're part of a team or half of a relationship, your time may not be entirely your own, at least right now. In fact, the other half of your partnership may be asking for your help at the moment. Dig deep. You really do have the both inner and outer resources to deal with this. Later, you can attend to your personal to-do list. There's room for everything if you time it right.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which is the world's most populous country to have a Muslim majority of over 85%?

A. Indonesia
B. Pakistan
C. Bangladesh
D. Iran

2. When the Simplon Tunnel opened it was the only permanent road access between which two countries?

A. Switzerland and Germany
B. Italy and Switzerland
C. Italy and France
D. Austria and Italy

3. Which of these was the title of a single by Peter Andre that was not released off the album "The Long Road Back" in 2004?

A. Mysterious Girl 2004
B. Flava
C. The Right Way
D. Insania

Answers: 1.A 2.B 3.B

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

Y	I	I	R
B	E	D	S
U	I	R	S
A	G	A	A

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

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

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

Ukraine rejects ultimatum to give up Mariupol

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine rejected a Russian ultimatum to surrender the besieged southern city of Mariupol on Monday, as renewed overnight shelling killed at least eight people at a shopping mall in the capital Kyiv.

Almost 350,000 people are trapped without water and electricity in the port city of Mariupol, which has been bombarded by Russian troops for almost a month in what has been described as a 'massive war crime' by EU policy chief Josep Borrell.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, Russian bombs struck targets overnight, allegedly damaging a chemical plant in the north of the country causing an 'ammonia leakage' that sparked a temporary alarm.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky urged Europe to significantly dial up pressure on Moscow to halt its nearly month-long invasion, saying the continent must cease all trade with Russia.

"No euros for the occupiers. Close all of your ports to them. Don't export them your goods. Deny energy resources. Push for Russia to leave Ukraine," Zelensky said in his latest video address.

Ukrainian leaders also stressed they were standing firm against invaders in Mariupol, which is suffering a critical humanitarian crisis.

Defenders of the port city



A man stand looking at the burning and destroyed Retroville shopping mall after a Russian attack on the northwest of Kyiv on Monday (AFP)

have 'played a huge role in destroying the enemy's plans and enhancing our defence', said Ukraine's Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov.

"Today Mariupol is saving Kyiv, Dnipro and Odessa. Everyone must understand this."

The Kremlin's military command had warned authorities in Mariupol had until '5am... on

March 21' to respond to eight pages of demands, which Ukrainian officials said would amount to a capitulation.

Rejecting the ultimatum by Russia to surrender Mariupol, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said Moscow should instead allow the trapped residents to escape.

"We can't talk about surren-

dering weapons," Vereshchuk told the Ukrainska Pravda online newspaper.

Mariupol is a pivotal target in Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine - providing a land bridge between Russian forces in Crimea to the southwest and Russian-controlled territory to the north and east.

A Greek diplomat who re-

mained in the city through the bombardment said the devastation would rank alongside history's most ruinous wartime assaults.

"Mariupol will be included in a list of cities in the world that were completely destroyed by the war, such as Guernica, Stalingrad, Grozny, Aleppo," Manolis Androulakis, believed to be the

last EU diplomat to leave the city, as he arrived back in Athens late on Sunday.

Oil embargo warning

Russia marched on its neighbour on February 24, pressing on despite sweeping unprecedented sanctions imposed by Western allies.

Its bombs hit several targets across the country overnight, laying waste to a shopping mall in Kyiv, whose mayor announced a new curfew from late on Monday to Wednesday morning.

In the north, Ukrainians were told to temporarily take shelter after an ammonia leak at a nearby chemical factory, amid intense fighting with Russian forces in the area.

Sumy regional governor Dmytro Zhyvytsky said 'Russian artillery shelling' had hit the Sumykhimprom fertiliser plant as he warned residents within a 2.5km radius to seek shelter before an all-clear was sounded mid-morning.

Away from the frontlines, foreign ministers of the European Union gathered in Brussels to mull fresh sanctions against Russia.

Some members within the bloc are pushing for an embargo on Russian oil and gas, but Germany has rejected the call outright, warning it could spark social instability.

The Kremlin on Monday heaped on the warnings against such a ban, saying it would have a direct impact on everyone.

"Such an embargo will have a very serious impact on the world energy market, it will have a very serious negative impact on Europe's energy balance," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

Energy prices and supply security issues will be on the table at an EU summit on Thursday in Brussels, to be also attended by President Joe Biden.

The US leader will also join in a NATO summit and G7 talks in Brussels, before travelling to Poland on Friday.

There he is expected to hold talks with President Andrzej Duda to discuss a joint response to the humanitarian crisis that has seen more than two million Ukrainians flee to Poland alone.

Humanitarian conditions continued to deteriorate in the mostly Russian-speaking south and east, where Russian forces have been pressing their advance, as well as in the north around Kyiv.

Aid agencies are struggling to reach people trapped in besieged cities.

Around 10mn Ukrainians have fled their homes, roughly one-third going abroad, the UN refugee agency said.

AFP

Children's hospital in Kyiv faces 'terrible' trauma of war

Kyiv, Ukraine - The horrors of the war in Ukraine can be seen in 13-year-old Volodymyr's empty expression as he lies in the Okhmatdyt children's hospital in Kyiv, playing with a green balloon dog.

His father and his cousin were killed when their car was hit by gunfire two days after Russia's invasion. Volodymyr was shot in his jaw, his back, his arm and his leg.

"He can't walk yet, but the doctors told him that he'd be able to step on his feet later," says his exhausted-looking mother, Natalia, 34, sitting on a bed next to her son in a darkened room.

Before the war, he loved the things that teenagers anywhere in the world might do - playing on his phone and taking their dog for a walk, she says.

Now he sits listlessly in bed, a livid scar running all the way up from his jaw to the dyed blonde streak of hair that hangs limp over his face.

He whispers that today he is doing 'good', but doctors say that after three weeks in hospital, Volodymyr still faces more surgery.

They show AFP journalists a graphic picture on a mobile phone of the wound in his face when he was brought in.

The war was only two days old when the family's blue Lada car was caught up in a gun battle when Russian reconnaissance forces tried to push into Kyiv.

"We didn't realise who was shooting. As soon as everything ends, we will find out the details. They will be punished," his mother says, compulsively rubbing her arm.

She was also wounded. "My injuries will heal, but I can't revive my husband, and I can't revive my nephew too. He was six years old."

'Really terrible'

Ukraine's largest children's hospital is feeling the trauma of the war.

"It is really terrible, it is challenging, it is awful," says paediatrician Svitlana Onysko.



Volodymyr sits in a hospital bed in Kyiv on Saturday (AFP)

"We live in the hospital, we don't go home; we are available 24/7, at any time - day, night, morning, evening, we hurry up to help the kids, and it's really terrible and difficult."

"It is difficult psychologically and morally because these are children. But, for us, adults, it is also difficult because it is war."

Russian President Vladimir Putin said his invasion was meant to 'demilitarise and denazify' Ukraine, but the toll on the country's civilians has been heavy. Kyiv has so far been spared the worst of the Russian bombardment, however the city administration says four children have been killed and 16 wounded in the capital.

Most are brought to Okhmatdyt for treatment. The staff say the memories haunt them.

There was the mother called Olga who shielded her one-month-old baby daughter after a shell hit their apartment building and caused damage to a nearby kindergarten in Kyiv.

Doctors removed multiple pieces of shrapnel from Olga's body and treated her husband's injured leg.

There was the blonde four-year-old boy who suffered severe shrapnel wounds from a strike in Kyiv, rushed in on a stretcher. And the six-year-old girl whose legs were injured in a

blast whose mother died in a missile strike in Hostomel, a town just outside the capital.

'Isolate our feelings'

The hospital's neonatal unit itself was hit by shrapnel by one strike.

In the early days of the war mothers and babies were even forced to take shelter in the basement whenever air raid sirens rang out.

The hospital's hardworking staff are trying to put on a brave face as they deal with what orthopaedic surgeon Vlasii Pylypko calls 'terrible injuries'.

"Since the war started, we treat injured, wounded people. It's children and adults also, with injuries from missiles, from bullets, from rockets," he said.

Most of the hospital's staff had no real experience of war.

"Many of my colleagues who treat with surgery, we try to abstract, to isolate our feelings," said Pylypko. "And maybe after the war some of us will need psycho-support, but now we only focus on people's treatment, children's treatment."

One of them will be Volodymyr, who still faces a long road to recovery.

"He has to have another surgery, another treatment, he has bullets lying near the vertebral column."

AFP

Two trains collide in Tunisia, 95 people injured

Jbel Jelloud, Tunisia - A head-on collision between two passenger trains injured 95 people on Monday in the south of the Tunisian capital, emergency services said.

"The injured were taken to hospitals and there were no deaths," civil defence spokesman Moez Triaa told AFP, adding that only one of the trains was carrying passengers.

Most of the injured suffered bruises or fractures, none of them life-threatening, he said.

Many passengers were in shock, he added, saying around 15 ambulances had been dispatched to treat the wounded or take them to hospital.

The collision happened at 9:30am local time (0830 GMT) in the Jbel Jelloud area, on the



Police inspect the damage to one of the locomotives in a train collision in the Jbel Jelloud area in the south of Tunis on Monday (AFP)

approach to a terminus in central Tunis.

An AFP reporter at the site saw the front of one of the trains had been caved in.

The cause of the accident was

not yet clear and the SNCFT national train company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Transport Minister Rabi Majidi visited the site of the accident

but did not speak to journalists.

Tunisia's ageing railway system has seen several deadly crashes in recent years.

Between 2017 and 2021, the country saw 173 train accidents which killed 229 people and injured 345, said Achraf Yehyaoui, spokesman for a governmental agency for preventing transport accidents.

At least five people were killed and more than 50 injured in late 2016 when a train slammed into a public bus near the site of Monday's crash.

An official said signals and safety gates had been out of service at the time of the crash.

The 2016 accident prompted the sacking of SNCFT chief Sabiha Derbal.

AFP

US Senate poised for hearings of first Black woman to sit on Supreme Court

Washington, US - The US Senate takes up the historic nomination on Monday of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to become the first Black woman to sit on the Supreme Court.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is to hold four days of confirmation hearings beginning on Monday for President Joe Biden's choice for the highest US court. Senate hearings for Supreme Court nominees have become an acrimonious partisan battleground over the past few years between Republicans and Democrats. "Every court appointment is significant because so many vital matters are decided there," said Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics.

"Plus, many of these matters are hot-button social issues that move votes or motivate voters" such as abortion or gun rights, Sabato told AFP.

Jackson has been nominated to replace another liberal justice, 83-year-old Stephen Breyer, who is retiring, and her confirmation will not ultimately change the composition of the court, Sabato noted. "The conservatives still have a 6-3 majority," he said.



Ketanji Brown Jackson (AFP)

"That alone lowers the stakes and should make for a smoother confirmation."

Democrats have the votes - if barely - to confirm Jackson, a 51-year-old Harvard-educated jurist who once served as a federal public defender for indigent clients, if they stick together.

The 100-member Senate is evenly split 50-50 Between Democrats and Republicans and Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris holds the tie-breaking vote.

'Playing to the Republican base'

"Inevitably," Sabato said, "a few Republican senators will go after Jackson on a wide variety of topics. Not because they think they

can derail her - they can't - but because they'll be playing to the Republican base," he said.

At the end of the day though, "Why upset the apple cart in a fight they can't win with a Black woman jurist who is unquestionably well qualified?" Sabato said.

What's more, several moderate Republican senators voted just a year ago to confirm Jackson to the US Circuit Court of Appeals.

Several Republican lawmakers have criticised Biden for following through on his election-year pledge to select an African-American woman for the court. "Black women are, what, six per cent of the US population?" said Texas Senator Ted Cruz. "He's saying to 94 per cent of Americans, 'I don't give a damn about you.'"

Jackson has impeccable credentials, however, and another Republican senator, Susan Collins of Maine, warned her colleagues to tread carefully.

"Given that Democrats, regrettably, have had some success in trying to paint Republicans as anti-Black, it may make it more difficult to reject a Black jurist," Collins said.

Although a frontal attack on Jackson could potentially backfire against Republicans seven months ahead of the midterm congressional elections, Senator Josh Hawley, a conservative from Missouri, has been laying the groundwork.

'Alarming pattern'

"I've noticed an alarming pattern when it comes to Judge Jackson's treatment of sex offenders, especially those preying on children," Hawley said in a series of tweets. "This is a disturbing record." Hawley's comments drew a rebuke from White House deputy press secretary Andrew Bates.

"This is toxic and weakly-presented misinformation that relies on taking cherry-picked elements of her record out of context," Bates said, noting that Jackson has received the backing of several police unions, which tend to lean to the right.

Senator Mitch McConnell, the leader of the Republican minority in the Senate, dismissed Jackson's 2005-2007 experience as a public defender, which has been touted by her supporters.

AFP



Passengers sit in front of the self-service machines of China Eastern Airlines in Kunming Changshui International Airport in Yunnan province on Monday (AFP)

Plane carrying 132 crashes in China, Xi orders probe

Beijing, China - A China Eastern passenger jet carrying 132 people crashed onto a mountainside in southern China on Monday causing a large fire, shortly after losing contact with air traffic control and dropping thousands of metres in just three minutes.

There was no immediate confirmation of the number of casualties, but the disaster prompted an unusually swift public reaction from President Xi Jinping who said he was 'shocked' and ordered an immediate investigation into its cause.

The Boeing 737 flight from Kunming city to the southern hub of Guangzhou 'lost airborne contact over Wuzhou' city in the Guangxi region on Monday afternoon, according to the Civil

Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).

"It has been confirmed that this flight has crashed," the CAAC said, adding that it had activated its emergency response, while hundreds of fire-fighters were dispatched to the scene.

The plane was carrying 123 passengers and nine crew members, the CAAC said.

Fears for the fate of the jet spread on Monday afternoon as local media reported that China Eastern flight MU5735 had not arrived as planned in Guangzhou after taking off from Kunming shortly after 1pm (0500 GMT).

Flight tracking website Fligh-tRadar24 showed no data for the flight after 2:22pm.

The tracker showed the plane had sharply dropped from an altitude of 29,100 feet to 3,225 feet in the span of three minutes, before flight information stopped.

State broadcaster CCTV said the crash 'caused a mountain fire' which was later extinguished, as rescuers poured to the scene in Teng county near Wuzhou.

One villager told a local news site that the plane involved in the crash had 'completely fallen apart' and he had seen nearby forest areas destroyed by a fire caused when the plane crashed onto the mountainside.

China Eastern changed its website to black and white colours on Monday afternoon,

and opened an emergency assistance phone number.

Debris

President Xi called for 'all efforts' towards the rescue and to find out the 'cause of the accident as soon as possible', according to state broadcaster CCTV. "We are shocked to learn of the China Eastern U5735 accident," he said.

A villager surnamed Liu told state-run China News Service that he had driven a motorbike to the scene after hearing a loud explosion.

He said he saw debris on the ground, including an aircraft wing and fragments of clothing hanging from trees.

China had enjoyed an envi-

able air safety record in recent years as the country was criss-crossed by newly built airports and serviced by new airlines established to match breakneck growth over the last few decades.

A Henan Airlines flight crashed in northeastern Heilongjiang province in 2010, killing at least 42 out of 92 people on board, although the final toll was never confirmed. It was the last Chinese commercial passenger flight crash that caused civilian casualties.

The deadliest Chinese commercial flight crash was a China Northwest Airlines crash in 1994, which killed all 160 on-board.

AFP

Israeli PM wishes Iranians 'regime' change for Persian New Year



Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett holds a weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, on Sunday (AFP)

Jerusalem - Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Sunday said he hoped for a change of political regime for the people of arch-enemy Iran, in a message marking the Persian New Year, or Nowruz.

"Nowruz literally means 'new day. And that's my greatest wish to you, the Iranian people: that you will see a new day - a day of freedom from the cruel Iranian regime,'" he said in a video message in English.

Israel considers Iran an 'existential threat' and the two countries have been at loggerheads since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that toppled the Western-backed shah. Bennett's remarks also come as Israel has vehemently opposed the revival of a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

The deal granted the Islamic republic much-needed sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear programme, but started unravelling after the US unilaterally pulled out in 2018.

On Friday, Bennett had appealed to the US not to remove Iran's Revolutionary Guards from its blacklist of foreign terrorist organisations as part of a

renewed deal.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps 'is a terrorist organisation that has murdered thousands of people, including Americans', he said in a joint statement with Foreign Minister Yair Lapid.

The United States had said on Wednesday that Washington and Tehran were close to agreement on restoring the 2015 accord.

"We are close to a possible deal, but we're not there yet," said State Department spokesman Ned Price. "We do think the remaining issues can be bridged."

Sources close to the talks have said outstanding issues included Tehran's demands for Washington to delist the Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist group.

At a Cabinet meeting on Sunday, Bennett denounced what he said was a desire to sign the Iran deal 'at almost any price, including saying that the largest terrorist organisation in the world is not a terrorist organisation'.

"That is too high a price to pay," he added.

AFP



Federico Martin Aramburu (AFP)

Suspect detained over Paris killing of Argentina rugby star

Paris, France - A woman suspected of taking part in the killing of former Argentina rugby international Federico Aramburu in Paris was being questioned by police on Monday after being arrested late on Saturday, sources close to the inquiry said.

The attack occurred in the chic Saint-Germain district on the Left Bank of the French capital where Aramburu and some friends were having burgers and about to call it a night at around 6am (0500 GMT) on Saturday. They got into a heated argument with another group of patrons at a cafe before being separated by

bouncers, but the other group later returned in a car and fired several shots, one police source said. The 24-year-old woman is suspected of driving the vehicle for two other men who opened fire, the source said.

Police are still searching for the other two suspects, another source close to the inquiry told AFP, one of whom is known for being a far-right activist. Aramburu, 42, was a back who won 22 Argentina caps and played in the 2007 World Cup in France, scoring a try as the Pumas beat the hosts in the third-place playoff.

AFP

US genocide designation brings little comfort to camps of Rohingya refugees

Yangon, Myanmar - The US decision to brand a crackdown by Myanmar's military against the Rohingya minority as genocide is a victory for human rights campaigners but will do little to alleviate the suffering of those still languishing in camps, activists say.

Hundreds of thousands of the mostly Muslim Rohingya community fled the Buddhist-majority country for Bangladesh in 2017, bringing stories of rape, murder and arson, while another 600,000 remain in refugee camps in junta-ruled Myanmar.

On Sunday, Washington said the violence amounted to genocide and crimes against humanity, with media reporting the decision could be followed by further sanctions and limits on aid, among other penalties against the already-isolated junta.

Thin Thin Hlaing, a Rohingya rights activist welcomed the move. "I feel like we were living through a blackout but now we see a light, because they recognise our suffering," she told AFP.

But she added: "My parents, my sister and my niece still have to live in camps in bad conditions and with no standard of human rights."

More outrage towards Myanmar's military - already an international pariah - will do little to change the wretched conditions many Rohingya live in, said David Mathieson, an analyst formerly based in the country.

"It's hard to see how it (the designation) will improve the



This file photo shows a Bangladeshi man helping Rohingya Muslim refugees to disembark from a boat on the Bangladeshi shoreline of the Naf river in Teknaf on September 30, 2017 (AFP)

lives of people who have suffered from crushing state repression and extreme violence," he said.

"The Myanmar military didn't care about the accusations when they started, and given they're now fighting almost everyone else in the country, I doubt this finding will affect them in any way."

Since ousting Aung San Suu Kyi's government last year, the junta has doubled down on widespread perceptions that the Rohingya are interlopers from Bangladesh and continues to deny them citizenship, rights and access to services.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing

- who was head of the armed forces during the 2017 crackdown - has dismissed the word Rohingya as 'an imaginary term'.

Any sanctions that may follow Washington's designation are also unlikely to damage or dislodge the generals behind the crackdown, Mathieson added.

"Short of the US either actively blocking arms sales... or supplying anti-aircraft assistance to the resistance as they're doing in Ukraine, then Washington has little leverage or punitive options it can exert," he said.

Suu Kyi

The designation also makes un-

comfortable reading for a shadow 'National Unity Government' (NUG) dominated by lawmakers from Suu Kyi's ousted party, which is working to overturn the coup.

Her National League for Democracy was in power during the 2017 crackdown and her government's handling of the crisis deeply tarnished her reputation abroad.

Her office denied claims that fleeing refugees had suffered rape, extrajudicial killings and arson attacks on their homes by Myanmar troops.

When a genocide case opened at the Hague-based In-

ternational Court of Justice (ICJ) in December 2019, the Nobel laureate travelled to the court to defend the generals, who a little over a year later would oust her government and plunge the country into turmoil.

Last year, the NUG invited Rohingya to 'join hands' to end military rule, promising to repatriate those who fled to Bangladesh and grant citizenship to the minority.

But it holds no territory and has not been recognised by any foreign government, leaving hundreds of thousands of Rohingya at the mercy of authorities on either side of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border.

"Unfortunately, the determination itself by the United States won't help bring Rohingya home," Manny Maung, Myanmar researcher at Human Rights Watch told AFP.

"But I hope this is an indicator that the Rohingya will finally have a path towards seeking justice for what has been done to them."

The determination 'should have been done way before', said one Rohingya at a camp for those displaced by the crisis near Sittwe, the capital of Myanmar's western Rakhine state.

"I believe the US decision will help" the Rohingya's case at the ICJ, he said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Asked about the impact on day-to-day life in the camp of wooden huts at the end of a potholed road, he replied: "I don't know."

AFP

HK to lift ban on flights from 9 countries

Flights from the US, Britain and seven other countries will resume from April 1: Government

Hong Kong, China - Hong Kong is set to resume international flights from the United States, Britain and seven other countries, the government said on Monday as it announced a loosening of some of the world's toughest COVID-19 restrictions. The finance hub has struggled to maintain China's zero-COVID policy during an Omicron-fuelled outbreak.

After the highly transmissible variant fuelled a fresh wave of cases in January, authorities quickly put in place flight bans from eight countries deemed high-risk - including the United States, Britain, France and India - and in February added a ninth, Nepal.

But infections climbed rapidly, with Hong Kong recording more than a million cases and 5,600 deaths, with the bulk of the toll among its unvaccinated elderly population.

On Monday, Lam said starting April 1, Hong Kong will lift flight bans - referred to as a 'circuit-breaker' - for the nine countries.

"The circuit-breaker...is inoperative now," she said during a press conference.

"The epidemic situations in



An employee sits in an empty travel agency in Hong Kong on Monday (AFP)

those countries are not worse than Hong Kong's, and most arrivals did not have serious symptoms. To extend the circuit-breaker will add to concerns and anxieties of Hong Kong residents

stranded there."

The quarantine period for vaccinated arrivals will also be reduced to seven days in a designated hotel, followed by another seven days of at-home

monitoring - though Lam did not specify what date the change will begin.

Currently, Hong Kong residents trying to return from most destinations face a two-week

quarantine stay in expensive hotels. Lam also announced that starting April 19, kindergartens, primary schools and international schools will resume in-person teaching.

Beginning April 21, restaurants may stay open after 6pm for dine-in services - currently banned - while public gatherings can include four people, up from the current two.

The epidemic situations in those countries are not worse than Hong Kong's

CARRIE LAM

Suspended mass testing

Lam's administration has been excoriated for its handling of the COVID-19 crisis, with critics calling it unprepared despite two years of breathing room due to the low number of cases before Omicron hit in January.

Once the variant broke through, hospital wards were flooded with patients and morgues overcrowded with bodies - leading to a coffin shortage last week.

Hong Kong currently has one of the highest death rates from COVID in the developed world.

Unclear public messaging from the government over mass testing and city lockdown measures has also fuelled bouts of panic-buying - leaving supermarkets shelves stripped bare.

Known as 'Asia's World City', Hong Kong has also seen a record exodus of both foreign and local residents, with a net outflow of more than 134,000 people by mid-March.

Travel warnings were also issued by the United States over the potential for children to be separated from parents if they were to test positive for COVID-19 upon arrival. On Monday, Lam said that a previously floated plan to mass test Hong Kong's 7.4mn residents was 'not appropriate' at this stage, given the city's limited resources.

"Our current opinion is to suspend it and whether we will do it depends on the development of the epidemic," the leader said. Hong Kong's deepened international isolation and lack of a roadmap to normality have incited complaints from business and diplomatic communities, even prompting some major international banks to accelerate relocations. AFP



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (AFP)

UN chief flays world for 'sleepwalking' on climate disaster

Paris, France - UN chief Antonio Guterres said on Monday the world is 'sleepwalking to climate catastrophe', with major economies allowing carbon pollution to increase when drastic cuts are needed.

The planet-saving goal of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius is already 'on life support', he told a sustainability conference in London.

Keeping 1.5C in play requires a 45 per cent drop in emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by mid-century, according to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

But even if nations honour newly revised pledges under the Paris Agreement, emissions are still set to rise 14 per cent before the decade ends.

"The problem is getting worse," Guterres said in a pre-recorded video message. "We are sleepwalking to climate catastrophe. If we continue with more of the same, we can kiss 1.5C goodbye," he added. "Even two degrees may be out of reach."

His comments came only hours before the 195-nation IPCC kicks off a two-week meeting to validate a landmark report on options for reducing carbon pollution and extracting CO2 from the air. The report is expected to conclude that CO2 emissions must peak within a few years if the Paris temperature targets are to be met. Guterres described COVID recovery spending as 'scandalously uneven' and a missed opportunity to accelerate the turn toward clean energy.

The Russian invasion of

Ukraine, he added, could further derail climate action with importers locking in fossil fuel dependence as they scramble to replace Russian oil and gas.

'Addiction to fossil fuel'

"Countries could become so consumed by the immediate fossil fuel supply gap that they neglect or knee-cap (climate) policies," Guterres said. "This is madness. Addiction to fossil fuels is mutually assured destruction."

A bombshell report last year from the intergovernmental International Energy Agency (IEA) concluded that a 1.5C world was incompatible with any new oil or gas developments, or new coal-fired power plants.

Breaking with the usual practice of not singling out countries, Guterres called out Australia and a 'handful of holdouts' for failing to lay out 'meaningful' near-term plans to slash emissions.

He also said the development needs and economic structures of China, India, Indonesia and other 'emerging economies' prevent them from making similar commitments, especially on coal. Rich nations should provide money, technology and knowhow to help these emerging economies purge coal from their energy portfolios, he added, pointing to a pathbreaking deal for South Africa unveiled at the COP26 climate summit last November in Glasgow.

"Our planet can't afford a climate blame game," he cautioned. "we can't point fingers while the planet burns."

AFP

Brazil Supreme Court judge removes ban on Telegram

Brasília, Brazil - The Supreme Court judge who had ordered messaging app Telegram blocked in Brazil reversed the ruling on Sunday, after the tech company complied with an earlier decree to make changes to the platform.

"Considering that the (court's requested changes) were fully attended to, I revoke the decision to fully and completely suspend the operation of Telegram in Brazil," Judge Alexandre de Moraes wrote in a document released by the court.

Citing what he called Telegram's failure to comply with orders from Brazilian authorities and remove messages found to contain disinformation, Moraes had ordered the app blocked immediately in Brazil.

Following the suspension



This file photo shows the Telegram logo on a smartphone screen in Moscow on November 8, 2021 (AFP)

order, Telegram founder Pavel Durov apologised to the Supreme Court and blamed a 'communication problem' that he said was due to misplaced emails. He asked the court to postpone the order to allow time for Telegram to appoint a representative in Brazil and improve communications with the court.

The judge on Saturday gave Telegram 24 hours to enact changes so he could lift the ban.

On Sunday, Moraes said the company informed him it had adopted several anti-disinformation measures, including the 'manual' monitoring of the 100 most popular channels in Brazil.

It now also will tag specific

posts as misleading, restrict several profiles that disseminated disinformation and promote verified information. Friday's order to block the app throughout the country never actually went into effect and Telegram had continued to function normally throughout the weekend. Mobile operators like TIM, however, were alerting customers via text message that the app would be blocked from Monday.

'Violated local laws'

The judge had also asked for the removal of an August Telegram post by Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro in which he questioned, without evidence, the reliability of Brazil's electronic voting system, which has been in use since 1996. By Saturday, the post had

disappeared. "This message cannot be shown" because "it violated local laws," a notification said in its place. Bolsonaro had called the app's suspension 'inadmissible', saying it threatened the freedoms of Brazilians.

The judge 'failed to act against the two or three people that according to him should be blocked, so he decided to affect 70mn people... What is at stake is our freedom,' said Bolsonaro.

The kerfuffle came as far-right Bolsonaro, who has been gearing up to seek re-election in October, faces a slump in popularity.

Bolsonaro, who has had various posts blocked on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube for violating their rules on misinformation, has been encouraging his base to follow him on Telegram.

AFP

Leading Turkish activist back in court, remanded again

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey's leading activist Osman Kavala, who at the weekend marked his 1,600th day in prison without conviction, appeared before court on Monday for the first time in months, only to have his case adjourned and his detention extended.

The philanthropist is accused of financing 2013 anti-government protests and playing a role in a coup plot against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The case has strained Turkey's ties with the West and become a symbol of Turkey's sweeping crackdown on government opponents.

Kavala has been detained since 2017 in a huge prison complex on the outskirts of Istanbul, in defiance of a European Court of Human Rights ruling to release him.

Last month, the Council of Europe (COE) launched rare disciplinary action against Turkey over the case, which Ankara denounced as interference.

Kavala, who had snubbed court hearings since October, on Monday attended the latest hearing in Istanbul's main court Caglayan via a video link from his prison in Silivri - about 60km west of Istanbul.

His presence had built up expectations that the three judges



People walk past the Caglayan Justice Palace courthouse in Istanbul on Monday (AFP)

overseeing his trial could be poised to deliver a final verdict.

Many Western observers, including diplomats from France and the United States were present in the packed courtroom, an AFP journalist reported.

Erdogan has been trying to salvage battered ties with the European Union in recent months, a bid which intensified after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

'Completely baseless'

But on Monday, the judge accepted the prosecutor's demand

to extend Kavala's remand and set the next hearing for April 22.

"My ongoing imprisonment is completely baseless," Kaval told court on Monday.

He denies the claims and has branded the charges 'politically motivated'.

If convicted, Kavala faces an aggravated life sentence, which has tougher terms of detention.

On March 4, the prosecutor delivered his final opinion, demanding that Kavala be found guilty of 'attempting to overthrow' Erdogan's government.

Erdogan has openly targeted Kavala and accused him of being an agent of George Soros, a Hungarian-born billionaire US financier and pro-democracy campaigner.

Last October, Kavala said he would not defend himself in court because he lost faith in a fair trial after his case sparked a diplomatic spat.

Erdogan nearly expelled 10 Western envoys, including from the United States and major European powers, after they appealed for Kavala's release last

October.

'Nothing legal'

Tolga Aytore, Kavala's lawyer, said the indictment was penned with an 'enthusiastic political ideology', adding: "There's nothing legal there."

Kavala is on trial with 16 other defendants over the 2013 protests. Nine out of the other 16 are abroad. The remaining seven were in court on Monday.

Human rights organisations have criticised the case.

"Despite committing no internationally recognised crime, he remains arbitrarily detained on baseless charges in a facility far away from his family," said Nils Muiznieks, Amnesty International's Europe director.

Muiznieks accused the prosecutors of seeking but failing 'to conjure a crime out of thin air'.

"Each tortuous twist in this politically motivated prosecution has further exposed the hollowness of the Turkish justice system," he added ahead of Monday's hearing.

Turkey faces infringement proceedings by the COE, the second time the body has taken such action, the first occasion in 2017 against Azerbaijan over its refusal to release a dissident.

AFP

BOOTCAMP



Chrysalis Academy offers a path from scenic Cape Town's ganglands

A troupe of 160 young women in cobalt blue uniforms and sand-coloured bucket hats march across a vast courtyard in lockstep. Two more face the group to give military-style salutes, say prayers and hoist the South African flag high into the air.

The scene looks like a military conscription, but is actually a sought-after programme that takes young people from Cape Town's toughest streets and sets them on a path to employment.

"I felt that my life had no direction, but since the moment I got here, I got to experience everything that's happening, and a lot has changed," said Siphokuhle Kapa, 23, a student at Chrysalis Academy.

Despite Cape Town's reputation as a holiday paradise, its streets rank among the deadliest in the world. All of South Africa has a horrific crime problem, but in 2021, Cape Town's murder rate was by far the highest in the country, at 64 killings per 100,000 people. Johannesburg's rate, by comparison, was 37 while New York's was 5.5.

The crime is driven by rampant gangs, combined with high unemployment - things Gibson Jannecke wanted to escape.

"I have no history of drug abuse, no history of gangsterism, but it was a big factor in my life that affected me heavily," Jannecke said, recalling his upbringing in the Western Cape town of Macassar.

"I couldn't walk to school without being mugged. I could not go out in the street without my parents being worried about gunshots." In 2011, he came to Chrysalis to study youth development. A decade later, he's teaching there.

Unleashing potential

The academy was set up in 2000 by local government, in the shadow of the high-security Pollsmoor Prison - a jarring contrast to the leafy surrounding suburb of Tokai.

When young people come here, we don't look at them as drug addicts or poor people. We look at them as whole human beings, human beings who have lived difficult lives

LUCILLE MEYER



courses for men and one for women. Anyone meeting the criteria can apply online. Restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, has hit all the courses and the current intake of 162 women also has reduced numbers.

The bootcamp-style courses have strict 4.30 am starts each day, with a 9.30 pm bedtime. They focus on fitness and discipline, as well as mental wellbeing and vocational skills. Mobile phones, drugs and cigarettes are prohibited.

Chrysalis runs three three-month courses each year for people aged 18 to 25 - two



An instructor supervises the morning parade at Chrysalis Academy in Tokai, near Cape Town



Students attend a training session at Chrysalis Academy

Due to the pandemic, outside visits are not allowed but students can phone their family members two or three times, and write to them.

The intensive courses cover leadership and self-discipline, as well as mindfulness and emotional intelligence.

Students spend two weeks offsite in nature, where they go camping, hiking and swimming in Tokai and on neighbouring Table Mountain. They also have to fast for 24 hours in solitude on the academy grounds.

The course ends with four weeks of vocational training, where students study areas such as cooking, firefighting or police training.

Chrysalis then works with the provincial government, which largely funds the programme, to find each student a 12-month career placement.

Making a difference

Zenande Hambiso is looking to go into law enforcement. The 24-year-old is from Kraai-

fontein, one of Cape Town's domestic violence and murder hotspots, and had struggled to support her family despite working long hours at the supermarket.

Hambiso initially found Chrysalis tough. "I was struggling waking up at 4 o'clock. I don't like waking up early, but as time went on, I got used to it," she said. "Sharing a room with a lot of people with difficult backgrounds and behaviours, it was very difficult, but now we get along."

Hambiso would not say more about her background but says she wants to help make her community a safer place with the skills she's learnt at Chrysalis.

"One day, I want to open my own investigation company to help women who are being sexually harassed, raped, and abused," she said.

"There are abused women, and there are a lot of people who are being raped everyday, and killed. It's really not a good thing what we are living through, so I am really trying to improve where I'm coming from."

AFP

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Hubert Vaz

The 'cradle of Christian culture and civilisation' and one of the most visited cities in the world, Rome - the capital of Italy - hopes to showcase its growth and grandeur to the world with renewed vigour over the next eight years and beyond.

Having presented its candidacy to host the Expo 2030 (during Expo 2022 Dubai), this bastion of culture and science, propped up by the Italian government, the citizens of Rome, the private sector, and the academic and scientific community, is committed to embarking on this ambitious journey with unflinching support from its ministry of foreign affairs, its diplomatic and consular network in the world, as well as international cooperation.

"Romans are a very special category of citizens in Italy and in the world. They are inordinately proud of their city, near to the point of arrogance," asserted H E Federica Favi, Ambassador of Italy to Oman. "In the past, Romans never called Rome as Rome - they just called it the 'City' because they took it for granted that it was the only real city and the rest were just villages."

Taking special interest in doing her bit to paint a very beckoning picture of Rome, especially for tourists from Oman who would spend every moment spent in Rome, H E Federica said it was important for people to get insights into the past of the city of Rome to understand its evolution and present day appeal, making it one of the most visited cities in the world every year.

Underlining the impact of ancient Rome on modern civilisation, she said, "For example, Roman law was qualified in 1449 B C by a group of distinguished lawyers and senators and written on 12 tablets of bronze that have now been preserved. This provided the fundamental principles of the current legal system in Italy. This was meant to guarantee substantial stability of the state for millenniums."

She also pointed out that modern parliamentary governance was also inspired by ancient Rome while civic water supply systems as well as infrastructure, like roads in some areas, are still the same as was provided centuries ago by the ancient Romans. "All this was intended to facilitate commerce in the Roman empire as well as improve the standard of living," she said adding that the technology used then was unbelievable as it lasted for so many centuries.

Inclusive society

Drawing attention to inclusiveness as one of the key characteristics of Rome, H E Federica said, "The ancient Roman empire had three basic categories of inhabitants - citizens, foreigners and slaves. However, one did not have to be born in Rome to become a citizen, one never remained a slave forever and many foreigners could reach higher positions and even become senators. This was surely a form of inclusiveness that we need to learn from."

Inter-religious dialogue, too, has always been present in Rome. In Rome, one can see the dome of St Peter's Cathedral - the house of the Catholic church, as well as the Tempio Maggiore di Roma - the largest synagogue in Rome. Also, the first mosque of Italy - Moschea di Roma - with its white minarets is also dominant in the landscape of Rome and is the largest mosque in the western world, she disclosed, adding that people of different cultures reside harmoniously in Rome.

Asserting that Rome offers a very Arab-friendly environment, and for Muslim tourists from around the world, H E Federica assured that Muslim tourists can rest assured of a happy stay in Rome, enjoy cuisine that suits their taste best, have access to halal food/prayer rooms, as well as visit cultural/historic/educational and scientific institutions, besides avenues for entertainment.

ETERNAL CITY
WHEN
IN
ROME...

ROME, ESTEEMED GLOBALLY AS THE 'ETERNAL CITY' FOR CENTURIES ON END, NOW BECKONS THE INTERNATIONAL TOURIST LIKE NEVER BEFORE. A FORMIDABLE CANDIDATE SEEKING TO HOST EXPO 2030, THIS THRIVING METROPOLIS HOPES TO RENEW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLES AND TERRITORIES



Happy Arabia

About the historic links between Rome and the Arab world, she said, "As a matter of fact, the coast from Bab el Mandeb to Duqm was known to us as Arabia Felix - which means 'Happy Arabia' - due to the brisk trade in frankincense and spices. This is the way we knew this region, and the relationship with this part of the world has always been very peaceful because our main link was commerce."

She further said, "Rome today is very active as the capital of Italy and populated with people of different nationalities. In fact, before the pandemic, Rome hosted tourists to the tune of 30 million per year. For the past 28 centuries, it has been a capital of art, culture, science, dialogue, creativity, in a constant process of regeneration, yet everything from ancient times is still there for the current generation to see."

Referring to Sigmund Freud's metaphorical reference to Rome as an entity comprising different layers, just like the human memory, H E Federica said this description fits well for the nature of Rome - one that is intimate, regenerative, adapting, flexible and open.

Lamenting that Rome, as many other cities in the world, lost out on tourism due to the pandemic during the past two years, she said, since March, the city has opened up to tourists. And with all COVID-19 protocols in place, fully vaccinated tourists have been flocking to Rome just like before.

Leave like Romans

When asked how tourist-friendly is the populace of Rome, or do they expect visitors to follow their dictated behaviour - in line with the popular saying 'When in Rome, do like the Romans', H E Federica stressed, "The Romans are very much used to seeing tourists in their city since centuries and they don't expect any change in their behaviour. In fact, it is quite the opposite - those who come to Rome like to leave Rome like Romans."

To catch the soul of the city, it would be ideal for tourists to go around Rome with a citizen who can show them the right places to visit, dine, relax or get entertained. However, it may not be always possible for people to stay with locals within Rome to get an authentic experience as that would be possible only in the nearby villages that surround the city.

Recalling how Italy was among the first countries to face the wrath of the current pandemic during the early stages, H E Federica emphasised that Rome currently has undertaken a very important project to renew itself and to be a sustainable city of the future.

"We can't just remain stuck in the past or the present. So, we are now investing in the future and the candidacy of Rome to host Expo 2030 is an initiative in that direction - to be different yet inclusive, and to be sustainable and link the city with its surroundings," she said, hoping that Oman would support its candidacy, too.



CRICKET ROUND-UP

Khawaja and Smith miss milestones as Australia crawl to 232-5 in 3rd Test

Lahore, Pakistan - Opener Usman Khawaja missed a century by nine Monday and Steve Smith fell short of completing 8,000 runs as Australia ended the opening day of the third and final Test on 232-5 against Pakistan in Lahore.

Khawaja followed up his 160 in the drawn Karachi Test with a sedate 91, while Smith scored 59 as the pair helped Australia recover from pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi's double strike at the start of the match.

At the close, Cameron Green was on 20 and Alex Carey eight, surviving the second new ball until bad light brought closure two overs early.

Australia, who won the toss and chose to bat on a brownish Gaddafi Cricket Stadium pitch, owed their recovery to a third-wicket stand of 138 between Khawaja and Smith.

Shaheen had Australia in trouble at 8-2 in the third over when he trapped David Warner lbw for seven and then had Marnus Labuschagne edge behind to wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan for a duck two balls later.

But Pakistan-born Khawaja batted in the same vein that earned him scores of 97, 160 and 44 not out so far in the series before he fell agonisingly short of a 12th Test century.

Khawaja edged spinner Sajid Khan to slip where Babar Azam dived to his right to take a brilliant one-handed catch.

Khawaja batted for 328 minutes, hit nine boundaries and a six.

"I am happy at the way I batted today," said Khawaja. "It was tough scoring runs because I think there are cracks on the pitch which are good for us."

"The one I got out, it's like sometimes you miss it and sometimes you edge it."

Smith pushed spinner Sajid for two to reach his 36th Test half century but fell in the second

over after tea when he was trapped leg-before by pacer Naseem Shah.

He fell just seven short of completing 8,000 Test runs.

Naseem then had Travis Head caught behind for 26 to finish with 2-36, while Shaheen had figures of 2-39.

Naseem said he will cherish the wicket of Smith, regarded as one of the best in world cricket.

"He is a great player, no doubt," said the 19-year-old. "His wicket has given me confidence, and I was trying to restrict his

I am happy at the way I batted today

USMAN KHAWAJA

scoring and in that process got him out.

"I will come back tomorrow and bowl better."

The three-match series is tied at 0-0 after the Tests in Rawalpindi and Karachi ended in draws.

Australia are touring Pakistan for the first time since 1998, having previously refused to play in the country because of security fears.

The match marks the return of Test cricket to Lahore for the first time since a 2009 terror attack on the Sri Lanka team bus.

AFP

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA 1st INNINGS

David Warner	lbw b S S Afridi	7
U Khawaja	c B Azam b Sajid Khan	91
M Labuschagne	c M Rizwan b S S Afridi	0
S Smith	lbw b Naseem Shah	59
T Head	c M Rizwan b N Shah	26
C Green	not out	20
Alex Carey	not out	8
Extras:	(b 13, nb 8)	21
TOTAL:	(88 Ov, RR: 2.63)	232/5
Fall of wickets:	1-8, 2-8, 3-146, 4-187, 5-206	
Bowling:	S S Afridi 15-3-39-2, Hasan Ali 14-5-28-0, N Shah 19-9-36-2, N Ali 15-2-51-0, S Khan 25-4-65-1	



Australia's Usman Khawaja walks back to the pavilion after his dismissal during the first day of the third and final Test cricket match between Pakistan and Australia at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore on Monday (AFP)



Pakistan Nida Dar (left) and Nashra Sandhu (centre) celebrate the wicket of West Indies Shemaine Campbelle during the 2022 Women's Cricket World Cup at Seddon Park in Hamilton on Monday (AFP)

Pakistan stun West Indies to end their World Cup drought

Hamilton, New Zealand - Pakistan ended an 18-match losing streak at Women's Cricket World Cups with an eight-wicket win over the West Indies in Hamilton on Monday, blowing open the race for the semi-finals.

In a rain-shortened match with innings of 20 overs, Pakistan bowled superbly to contain the West Indies' potent batting line-up to 89-7 then overhauled the modest target with seven balls to spare.

It was their first win at the World Cup since the 2009 tournament in Australia, where they also beat the West Indies.

"This was desperately needed, we all wanted that win," said spinner Nida Dar, who took a career-best 4-10.

"This one goes to all the Pakistani fans who are watching and supporting us."

Pakistan remain out of the semi-finals reckoning with one win in five matches but the shock result will boost the West Indies' rivals in a tight race for the final four.

The West Indies can still make the semi-finals but need to beat South Africa and have results involving India and England go their way.

"It's a do-or-die situation now and we have to come out banging," West Indies captain Stafanie Taylor said of her team's match against South Africa on Thursday.

Taylor admitted the total against Pakistan was sub-par, crediting Pakistan's spinners with choking her side's big hitters.

"We knew that we had to rotate strike to go big but we couldn't get going," she said.

Pakistan won the toss and opted to bowl first after a deluge saw the start delayed by five hours.

Pakistan limited the West Indies to 23-1 in the first five overs, then 38-2 at the halfway mark.

Dar ended her spell with a flourish, taking two wickets off successive balls to finish the 16th over.

Nashra Sandhu then took another with the first ball of the 17th to make it three wickets off three deliveries for Pakistan.

The West Indies ended on 89-7, with Deandra Dottin top-scoring on 27.

Pakistan made a slow start to the chase but managed to preserve wickets, reaching 57-2 in the 13th over when Muneeba Ali was caught for 37.

They kept up pressure on the West Indies with quick singles, chipping away at the total as Bismah Maroof and Omaima Sohail saw Pakistan home with 20 and 22 respectively.

AFP

Stubborn Brathwaite sets up decider in series finale

Bridgetown, Barbados - Kraigg Brathwaite's celebrated obduracy was again necessary after his first innings marathon 160 as the West Indies captain's unbeaten second innings half-century ensured another draw on the final day of the second Test against England at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Sunday.

Needing to survive two sessions having been set the improbable target of 282, Brathwaite's unbeaten 56 made sure a stumble to 93 for five just after tea did not result in a complete collapse as he got the nec-

essary support from Joshua da Silva (30 not out) with the skipper and wicketkeeper negotiating 21 overs without being separated. Having opted to declare his team's second innings at 185 for six at the end of a rain-interrupted first session, England skipper Joe Root took two catches with the home side sliding into early trouble at 39 for three at the start of the afternoon session.

Left-arm spinner Jack Leach struck in his very first over when opener John Campbell was caught off bat and pad by Alex

Lees at silly point. However it was Saqib Mahmood, one of England's two debutants in their bowling attack, who claimed the other two wickets with assistance from his skipper. Shamarh Brooks hung his bat outside the off-stump and Zak Crawley juggled with the chance at second slip before an alert Root completed the catch. There was no such drama though when Mahmood drew an edge from Nkrumah Bonner's bat four overs later for the captain to make no mistake at first slip.

Brathwaite and Brooks ex-

tended their fourth-wicket stand to exactly 50 when Leach drew a defensive prod for Jonny Bairstow to take the catch on his knees at gully. When new man Jason Holder wafted loosely at the specialist spinner and Dan Lawrence took a diving catch at short extra-cover, West Indies were very much in danger of capitulating. But the captain found determination in the shape of Da Silva as the pair saw the West Indies to safety to leave the series open going into the final Test in Grenada on Thursday.

AFP



Kraigg Brathwaite (right) of West Indies hits a four and Ben Foakes (centre) of England watches during the final day of the 2nd Test (AFP)

SCOREBOARD

England 1st Innings 507/9d

West Indies 1st Innings 411

England 2nd Innings 185/6d

WEST INDIES 2nd INNINGS

K Brathwaite	not out	56
John Campbell	c Lees b Leach	10
S Brooks	c Root b Mahmood	4
N Bonner	c Root b Mahmood	3
J Blackwood	c Bairstow b Leach	27
J Holder	c Lawrence b Leach	0
J Da Silva	not out	30
Extras:	(b 1, lb 2, nb 2)	5
TOTAL:	(65 Ov, RR: 2.07)	135/5
Fall of wickets:	1-14, 2-23, 3-39, 4-89, 5-93	
Bowling:	C Woakes 4-0-11-0, M Fisher 2-1-4-0, J Leach 25-13-36-3, S Mahmood 8-2-21-2, J Root 6-3-15-0, B Stokes 7-2-9-0, D Lawrence 13-4-36-0	

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TENNIS ROUND-UP

Fritz hands Nadal first 2022 defeat to lift Indian Wells trophy

Indian Wells, US - Taylor Fritz stunned Rafael Nadal 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) on Sunday to win the ATP Indian Wells Masters and end the 21-time Grand Slam champion's perfect 20-0 run to start 2022.

Fritz, ranked 20th in the world, claimed his second career title and his first at the elite Masters 1000 level while denying Nadal a record-equalling 37th Masters crown.

The 24-year-old American achieved his biggest triumph despite an injured right ankle that was so painful when he tested it Sunday morning he didn't think he'd be able to play.

"This is just one of those childhood dreams, winning this tournament especially, Indian Wells, this is one of those childhood dreams you never even think can come true," the Southern California native said, fighting back tears.

"It was just an emotional roller coaster all day," said Fritz, who spent hours leading up to the match receiving treatment to numb his ankle after "basically almost crying because I thought I was going to have to pull out."

"It was a game-time decision," Fritz said. "A lot of members of my team wanted me to not play the match. I'm never going to let them forget that because I went on the court and it was a complete non-issue, didn't feel it at all, didn't hinder me at all."

The 35-year-old Nadal, meanwhile, was pushing himself through pain, twice receiving treatment on his upper body for a yet-to-be diagnosed problem

that not only hurt but also affected his breathing.

"I don't know if it's something on the rib, I don't know yet," Nadal said. "It's a kind of pain that limit me a lot."

Nadal had already said he would skip next week's Miami Masters to give his body a rest and prepare for the claycourt season.

After fearing a foot injury that halted his 2021 campaign might end his career, the Spaniard claimed a record-setting 21st Grand Slam singles title with an epic comeback victory over Daniil Medvedev in the Australian Open final, then won the

in a tense tiebreaker that decided it all Fritz proved too much.

After Nadal spun a forehand wide to give up another match point, Fritz put it away with yet another of his big forehand winners.

Fast start for Fritz -

Fritz's fitness concerns were at the forefront when the American fell on the very first point of the match.

But he seized a 4-0 lead in the opening set in just 19 minutes.

Nadal, coming off a draining three-set semi-final victory over 18-year-old compatriot Carlos Alcaraz, appeared to have found

This is just one of those childhood dreams, winning this tournament especially, Indian Wells, this is one of those childhood dreams you never even think can come true

TAYLOR FRITZ



title at Acapulco.

Fritz said he was aware that there was "stuff going on" with Nadal even before the match began.

"I can't imagine how banged up someone's body must be after 20-something straight matches, playing as much as he has," Fritz said.

"I didn't let it change how I was going to play at all. I treated it like I was playing the Rafa that I know, that everybody knows."

Battling to the end, Nadal saved one match point in the 10th game of the second set, but

his range when he held at love to make it 4-1.

But he was unable to make any inroads on Fritz's serve until the American served for the set at 5-2 and Nadal converted his only break chance of the set when Fritz sent a forehand long.

However, Nadal was unable to build any momentum, immediately surrendering the break and the set after 39 minutes.

Nadal took a medical timeout between sets and gained the first break of the second set for a 2-1 lead.

AFF



Taylor Fritz celebrates his win against Rafael Nadal of Spain during the men's final of the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, California on Sunday (AFP)

Iga Swiatek wins WTA Indian Wells title

Indian Wells, US - Former French Open champion Iga Swiatek beat Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-1 on Sunday to win the WTA Indian Wells title and move to a career-high ranking of number two in the world.

Swiatek's fifth career title was her second in as many tournaments after her triumph in Doha last month, and pushed her WTA match win-streak to 11.

It also ensured the 20-year-old from Poland, who shot to prominence with her victory at Roland Garros in 2020, will climb two spots to supplant Barbora Krejickova at number two in the rankings behind Australian Ashleigh Barty on Monday.

"I'm really overwhelmed and honestly my mind is blown," Swiatek said, explaining that coming into the tournament she didn't think it was "realistic" to think she could maintain the level that saw her win Doha for a second straight tournament.

"I wouldn't think of myself as someone who's ready to play two tournaments in a row and win it," she said.

However, now that she's fol-



Iga Swiatek of Poland holds her winners trophy after her straight sets victory against Maria Sakkari of Greece in the women's Final on Day 14 of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Sunday (AFP)

lowed Agnieszka Radwanska as the only Polish players to reach number two in the world, she's

aiming even higher.

"I feel like getting the number one is closer and closer," she

said.

Greece's Sakkari, who came into the tournament ranked sixth in the world and also had a chance to get to number two with a victory, will rise to a career-high third.

Both players struggled to find a rhythm on another breezy day in the California desert, where their first set featured six breaks of serve in what Swiatek called "crazy" conditions.

"For sure you could see that we are, at the beginning, a little bit stressed, and the wind is also not helping," Swiatek said.

"But I'm pretty glad that I played better and better every game, and I managed to somehow find little bit of balance even in these conditions."

"It was pretty hard to actually play the tactics that I wanted because of the conditions. But I wanted just to stay consistent and really solid because that's the most important thing when the ball is going, you know, in weird directions."

Trailing 5-4 in the first, Sakkari led 40-30 but sent two backhands into the net to give

Swiatek a set point, which the Greek saved with forehand winner.

Sakkari came up with a service winner to save another set point, then double faulted to give Swiatek a third chance, the Pole taking the set when Sakkari stroked a backhand into the net.

With a set in hand, Swiatek dominated in the second. Although she couldn't convert two break points in the second game as Sakkari made it 1-1, Swiatek roared through the next six games to close it out in 80 minutes and remain unbeaten in five career WTA finals.

Sakkari fell to 1-4 in finals, her only title coming in Rabat in 2019.

But she said she leaves the tournament with increased confidence.

"I really believe I took a step forward this week, even though I lost today," she said.

"I'm disappointed. I'm not going to hide that. I'm very disappointed I did not win today. But there are a lot of positive things that I'll take with me."

AFF

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Oman’s Tawqi qualifies for FIA Rally Star Training 2023

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Oman's Abdullah Masoud al Tawqi earned a life-changing place in the FIA Rally Star Training Season in 2023 after he came out on top of two days of rigorous assessment and evaluation presided over a five-person jury.

Meanwhile, Farah Zakaria qualified for the FIA Rally Star Women's Final, which is due to take place in North America later this year, by completing the FIA Rally Star MENA Final as the leading female competitor.



In qualifying for the FIA Rally Star Training Season, Tawqi moves a step closer to a dream

drive in the FIA World Rally Championship. At the end of 2023, the best four FIA Rally

Star Team members are rewarded with a season in the FIA Junior WRC in 2024. For 2025, three drivers go forward into a second Junior WRC season. And if one of the FIA Rally Star Team members wins the title, they secure a WRC2 campaign in a Rally2 car for 2026 with a Rally1 drive their next target.

Tawqi joins Estonia's Romet Jürgenson, the winner of the FIA Rally Star European Final in January, in the FIA Rally Star Training Season with four places still up for grabs at the remaining

Continental Finals.

The seventh spot will go to the Women's Final winner where MENA qualifier Zakaria will join Maja Hallén Fellenius (Sweden) and Katie Milner (United Kingdom), the joint top female performers in the European Final in Germany.

Day three of the FIA Rally Star Middle East and North African Final was held in warm and dry conditions with the 12 qualifiers from Saturday's stages in action on a purpose-built gravel course.

Clasico demolition vindicates Barcelona

Madrid, Spain - A Clasico that was supposed to mean very little, in the end, meant an awful lot as Barcelona gave a resounding answer to questions about their revival and instead left Real Madrid shrouded in doubt.

Most believed there was no result on Sunday that could derail Madrid's march to the La Liga title but even that feels less certain now. A defeat like this, 4-0 at home, and against Barcelona, was perhaps the only kind that might prompt a collapse.

In that regard, Madrid will be relieved, not only that Barca are still points 12 points adrift, albeit with a game in hand still to play, but that a two-week international break gives them some breathing space, time to stabilise and recover.

It will allow Karim Benzema

time to recover too, with the Frenchman's absence undoubtedly a factor in Madrid's spinelessness against Barcelona, who took advantage to devastating effect.

Barca's place in the top four is surely now secure, which will be celebrated by the club's accountants as much as anyone else.

For all the excitement and enthusiasm generated by Xavi's team on the pitch, the harsh reality is the club's financial ills will take longer to cure. Only last week La Liga set Barcelona's spending limit at -144 million euros.

They will certainly believe second place is now a realistic target, particularly given Sevilla's stuttering form.

They might even look at Madrid's remaining fixtures to

come against Sevilla at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan and Atletico Madrid at the Wanda Metropolitano and wonder if the comeback could yet be on.

"If there is the slightest option to take advantage, we will go for it," said Sergio Busquets.

More likely, though, is the consequences of this result for both clubs will be longer-term and wider-reaching.

As Barcelona celebrated at the full-time whistle, saluting their fans up in the highest corner of the Santiago Bernabeu, one or two of the younger players began to jump and dance. Before others could join, a huddle was formed and when the players emerged, it was noticeable the celebrations were more restrained.

As Xavi said after the match,

it had been a statement victory, one that will go down with even the most dramatic Clasico hammerings, but the table alone shows there is more work to do.

"We have not won a trophy here," Xavi said. "We must keep working with humility."

Yet Gerard Pique, never one to hide his opinions on social media, could not resist. "We are back," he tweeted, while inside the changing rooms the players were ecstatic, among them Ousmane Dembele, who did not look like a player about to leave for free in the summer.

The problem for Barcelona is, for all the attractiveness of Xavi's project, they will be restricted again to the kind of opportunistic deals that they struck in January with such success.

AFP



Barcelona's Gabonese midfielder Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (second from left) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid CF and FC Barcelona (AFP)



Al Omaniya Financial Services (SAOG)

Values stronger than money



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2021



On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to present our 24th Annual Report, for the year ended 31st December 2021.

Economy:

As we usher in the year 2022 amidst a rebound in oil prices with 84% of the targeted population having completed their vaccination doses and a launch of the booster program, Oman is set to look forward to achieving the objectives of the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025). Oman is projecting a fiscal deficit of OMR 1.5 billion in 2022 budget, down 32% year-on-year, as growth in state spending is outpaced by a stronger growth in revenues. The uptick in expected oil and gas revenues comes as a result of both higher oil prices and higher oil production in line with the ongoing Opec+ deal. The IMF has projected a medium term global economic growth of 3.3% and forecasted Oman's GDP to grow around 2.5% in 2021 and about 3% average growth over medium term. The country's outlook has been improved by the three rating agencies. The country is well poised to achieve fiscal sustainability and reduce the ratio of public debt to GDP.

Financial Highlights

In the year 2021, the company has achieved net operating income of RO 10.98 million as compared to RO 10.16 million in the previous year. The profit before ECL provision for the year 2021 is RO 6.514 million as compared to RO 6.115 million. The company achieved a Net Profit after tax of RO 2.563 million compared to RO 1.449 million for the same period last year. The company's net installment finance receivables stood at RO 105.6 million as of 31 December 2021.

The company has made a charge of RO 3.498 million towards estimated credit loss for the year 2021. The non-performing assets coverage including the specific reserve for non-performing assets stands at 373.8%. The company continues to maintain its No 1 position for the NPL coverage in the industry.

The company has followed a conservative and pragmatic policy in writing new businesses with focus on maintaining the asset quality and keeping the non-performing loans under control. We believe that this approach is prudent and will allow the company to dynamically build asset size when market emerges into its growth mode.

Proposed Dividend

It is the intention of your company to continue the sustainable dividend policy that the company has been following since inception. Your directors have proposed a dividend of 12% for the year 2021, after considering the CBO guidelines, comprising 7% cash and 5% unsecured non-convertible bonus stock bonds with a face value of RO 0.100 redeemable after 60 months, thus maintaining its track record of paying consistent dividends without interruption since inception. This takes the cumulative dividend paid to shareholders to 466.33% since inception. The unsecured non-convertible redeemable bonus stock bonds will be issued from Company's Retained Earnings account.

Capital Enhancement

The company's equity capital stands at RO 29,193,517/- which is well above the regulatory requirement. The company is well capitalised, and the capital adequacy stands at a healthy 35.77%. One of the existing convertible bonus stock bonds will be converted to Equity Shares in 2022 resulting in further Capital enhancement.

Concerns

The Major concern is the current COVID 19 pandemic, which has completely devastated the world. Oman's Covid-19 situation continue to worsen since the emergence of the new Omicron variant towards the end of the year. As per directives of the Supreme Committee to combat COVID and as per directives of the CBO, the company has processed requests from the COVID affected borrowers to delay the installments which had an impact on the cash flows of the company. The reduced cash flow at the individual and corporate borrower's level could also impact delinquencies and result in dilution of the NPA coverage. The company has a strong liquidity buffer in the form of liquid deposits with local commercial banks and the company is confident of sailing through this crisis.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Company continues to contribute for social causes as part of its Corporate Social Responsibilities. In line with the corporate objectives during the current year under CSR, the company has contributed towards National Day Celebrations, Sponsorship to cultural & sports events.

Prognosis

We continue to foresee a challenging year ahead. The company is resilient and cautiously optimistic of posting satisfactory performance in 2021. The company is well aware of the current economic scenario and has initiated proactive mitigating measures. The company is fundamentally strong with solid net worth, clean loan book, lowest Non-Performing Loans, high NPA coverage and is in a formidable position to leap as the opportunities unfold.

We assure the shareholders that, as outlined in the Report on Corporate Governance and the Management Discussion and Analysis Report by the Chief Executive Officer, the company has adequate internal control systems and processes and has good governance systems in all the areas of management and has the ability to continue as a going concern and has the ability to operate competitively to post satisfactory performance in the coming years. The Board also understands its responsibility for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with IFRS and the relevant requirements of the Commercial Companies Law 1974 and the Capital Market Authority of the Sultanate of Oman.

Board of Directors' Appraisal:

As per the regulatory requirement, the company has conducted the Board of Directors' appraisal for the year 2018, to cover the remaining tenure of the Board, through an independent consultant M/s. Crowe Mak Ghazali LLC and the report is satisfactory. Since there is a change in the directorship in the year 2021, we have obtained quotations for conducting the Board appraisal and this will be placed for approval at the AGM.

Acknowledgement

On behalf of the company and the Board of Directors, I would like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to continue to lead the Sultanate on the path of development and prosperity.

We are also grateful to the Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority and other regulatory authorities for their guidance and support. We also thank our shareholders, bankers, dealers and customers for their continued trust, confidence and support. Last, but not the least, we acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the management and staff of the company.

Khalid Said Al Wahaibi
Chairman

AUDITED FINANCIALS FOR THE YEAR 2021

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For The Year Ended 31 December 2021

	2021 RO	2020 RO
Interest income on finance lease, working capital finance and other advances	11,649,591	11,856,961
Interest expense	(4,684,518)	(6,060,770)
Net instalment finance income	6,965,073	5,796,191
Finance income	3,656,894	3,701,965
Other income	364,813	663,591
Operating expenses	(4,326,886)	(3,920,202)
Provision for expected credit loss, net	(3,498,275)	(4,705,916)
Loss on derivative	(23,640)	-
Depreciation	(121,992)	(126,087)
Profit before tax	3,015,987	1,409,542
Income tax	(452,398)	39,920
Profit and total comprehensive income for the year	2,563,589	1,449,462
Basic earnings per share	0.009	0.005
Diluted earnings per share	0.009	0.005

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As At 31 December 2021

	2021 RO	2020 RO
Assets		
Cash and Bank balances	89,585,385	73,477,589
Deposit with the Central Bank of Oman	250,000	250,000
Net investment in finance lease, working capital finance and other advances	105,557,952	105,697,820
Other assets and prepayments	1,201,943	1,011,171
Property, equipment and right-of-use assets	951,762	1,016,788
Total assets	197,547,042	181,453,908
Liabilities and equity		
Liabilities		
Short term loans	18,000,000	33,500,000
Deposits	3,000,000	2,000,000
Term loans	93,873,250	68,874,370
Compulsorily convertible bonds	5,569,143	5,569,143
Other liabilities	11,313,457	7,356,045
Income tax payable	701,921	460,927
Total liabilities	132,457,771	117,760,485
Equity		
Share capital	29,193,517	29,193,517
Share premium	112,272	112,272
Legal reserve	9,731,173	9,731,173
Exchange reserve	3,616,822	-
Special reserve for non-performing assets	4,997,937	4,997,937
Retained earnings	17,437,550	19,658,524
Total equity	65,089,271	63,693,423
Total liabilities and equity	197,547,042	181,453,908
Contingent liabilities	-	549,589
Net assets per share	0.223	0.218

Note : The complete report is available with the Muscat securities Market. The Complete financial statements of the company together with the financial statements of any subsidiary company required to file financial statements would be available to any shareholders or interested party on request in Arabic or English within seven days as of the date of request.

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