

Study to protect Muscat from flood risk complete



Our Correspondent Muscat

The Municipal Council of Muscat held a meeting on Tuesday to discuss ways to reduce impact of inclement weather and heavy rains that hit the governorate from time to time.

The meeting addressed efforts undertaken to reduce the risk of floods, effects of climatic conditions, and projects to protect against the dangers of overflowing wadis, while benefitting from rainwater runoff in the governorate.

The meeting was led by H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat and Chairman of the Municipal Council, and attended by several officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and

The ministry has conducted a study on how to protect Muscat from floods through proposed dam projects that will reduce the direct impact of flooding

DR KHALID BIN SALIM AL MASHAIKHI

Water Resources (MAFWR) and Muscat Municipality.

The municipality took cognizance of the fact that the governorate recently witnessed impact of varying extent on public and private infrastructure caused by heavy rains.

Dr Khalid bin Salim al Mashaikhi, assistant director general for dams in MAFWR, stated that the ministry has made concrete efforts to monitor and analyse floods and reduce risks in the governorate.

"The ministry issued recommendations to complement these efforts. It has taken note that the governorate faced tropical depressions in recent years, which have caused financial losses and damage to infrastructure and property," Mashaikhi said.

He listed Wadi Samail (Al Khoudh), Wadi al Jifnain, Wadi al Ansab, Wadi Adai, Wadi al Maih, Wadi Majlas and a few others for affecting the governorate the most.

"The ministry has conducted a study on how to protect Muscat from floods through proposed dam projects that will reduce the direct impact of flooding," he said.

According to Mashaikhi, Muscat Municipality has also prepared a comprehensive and integrated study for rainwater drainage in the governorate. It includes information on the course of wadis, volume of water flowing in these, data on the existing drainage system, and a structural plan for surface water drainage.

"The study will help find sustainable solutions to the problems of flooding and drainage. Plans will be proposed based on the study and implemented according to the priority associated with the needs of the areas in the governorate," Mashaikhi said.



Omani recycling firm goes global, opens branch in KSA

Our Correspondent Muscat

In a sign of Omani entrepreneurship making a mark locally and globally, a local recycling company has opened a branch in Dammam, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Recycling Services specialises in the management and recycling of both hazardous and non-hazardous waste, converting these into raw material that can be used in innovative ways.

The opening of Recycling Services' plant in Dammam took place on Monday under the patronage of H H Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Ambassador of

Oman to Saudi Arabia. He described the opening of the plant as a continuation of the commercial cooperation between Oman and Saudi Arabia.

Murshid al Amri, CEO of Recycling Services, said, "We founded the company in 2014 and now we have opened our first international unit in Saudi Arabia, which will be the beginning of other stages of operations."

He informed that recycling in Saudi Arabia is a "promising sector" and that a trend of developing, improving and accelerating pace of work in this sector to meet the kingdom's Vision 2030 is clearly evident.

Locally, the company has three waste treatment plants - in Muscat, Buraimi and Duqm - with staff strength of 35.

"Recycling Services has a strategic vision to expand operations outside the sultanate, based on exploiting the potential of recycled waste to generate new products," Amri said.

According to Amri, the efforts of the Omani Embassy in Riyadh to help in coordination between the competent authorities of the two countries was instrumental in setting up the plant in Dammam. "The continued support is facilitating Omani small and medium enterprises start new projects in the kingdom."

Carnival to support handicapped children from March 17 to 19

Our Correspondent Muscat



The carnival is also an opportunity to raise awareness in the community. Some people look at those with disabilities as incapable

H H SAYYIDA HUJAIJA AL SAID

After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Association for the Welfare of Handicapped Children will host the Rainbow Carnival from March 17 to 19 at Azaiba Rehabilitation Centre in 18 November Street.

Speaking to Muscat Daily, H H Sayyida Hujaija Jaifer al Said, chairperson of the association, said, "We are happy to organise the Rainbow Carnival after a gap of two years."

The carnival will be held from 4pm to 10pm on the three days and will include games, art and crafts, jumping castles, magic shows, live zumba, pony rides, bike rides, food trucks and other attractions.

According to H H Sayyida Hu-

donated to centres of the association. We have set RO1 as entry fee."

The association has about 450 children - aged five to 14 - in nine centres in the wilayats of Seeb, Barka, Musannah, Azaiba, Quriyat, Jalan Bani Bu Hasan, Dhank, Yanqul and Saham.

"The carnival is also an opportunity to raise awareness in the community. Some people look at those with disabilities as incapable. I hope this attitude will change with more awareness in society."

H H Sayyida Hujaija called on private companies to provide financial support to the centres to help the children as the pandemic stopped most of the association's activities. "I also call on all families to attend the carnival with their children and participate in the festivities."

ROP takes part in World Police Summit 2022

Dubai - Royal Oman Police (ROP) is taking part in World Police Summit 2022 in Dubai, UAE. The summit began on March 14 and runs till March 17.

The ROP delegation is led by Brig Jamal Habib al Quraishi, Director General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations.

The summit will address common policing matters and aims at honing skills needed for crime control around the world.

EA plants 7,000 mangrove seedlings in Al Wusta

Our Correspondent Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) conducted a campaign to plant 7,000 mangrove seedlings in Al Wusta governorate on Tuesday.

An official of the Environment Department in Al Wusta informed that the mangrove planting campaign was held in Khor Ghawi, wilayat of Al Jazir.

In Al Wusta, the department conducts several awareness campaigns among members of



the community on the importance of mangrove trees and their numerous benefits. "Mangroves clean the atmosphere by removing harmful gases, especially carbon dioxide which is threatening the world. CO² is the fundamental element directly responsible for the phenomenon of climate change," the official noted.

"Our programmes also address the main factors needed for the growth and propagation of mangroves and the threats faced by these."

QATAR EXPERIENCE A WORLD BEYOND

WhatsApp: 92087552 @travelpointoman

INVITATION TO TENDER

Sohar Aluminium LLC (SA), PO Box 80, PC- 327, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman hereby invites qualified Suppliers/Contractors for the following tender:

Tender No. : 22-001

Tender Title : OPERATION & PROCESS CONTROL OF STP

Scope : The Contractor shall provide competent / qualified / trained Personnel to carry out works at Sohar Aluminium Company LLC Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) as specified in the Agreement.

Kindly send your email and company profile to: tender@sohar-aluminium.com

For list of active tenders visit: https://www.sohar-aluminium.com/en/content/tender-listing

WEATHER WATCH

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	37	20
Doha	27	16
Kuwait City	22	9
Manama	23	15
Muscat	33	22
Riyadh	22	9

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	5.00am
Sunrise	6.15am
Duhr	12.21pm
Asr	3.45pm
Maghrib	6.21pm
Isha	7.31pm

SULTAN'S SPECIAL FORCE MARKS ANNUAL DAY



The Sultan's Special Force (SSF) celebrated its annual day on Tuesday in a ceremony held under the patronage of H E Gen Sultan Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office. H E Gen Nu'amani and Maj Gen Muslim bin Muhammad bin Taman Jaaboub, SSF Commander, pinned medals of excellence in service and Royal Commendation on several SSF commissioned and non-commissioned officers (Supplied photos)



27 pacts for commercial projects, fuel pumps inked

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning signed 27 usufruct agreements for commercial and industrial projects and fuel stations on Tuesday at Oman Design & Build Week being held in Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

H E Dr Mohammed bin Ali al Mutawa, Undersecretary for Urban Planning in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, signed the contracts for projects in several governorates.

An agreement was also signed for construction of 30 housing units in the wilayats of Suwaiq and Khabourah for those affected by Cyclone Shaheen.

Fuel station agreements

Land usufruct agreements were signed to set up three fuel stations in Dhahirah, four in Dhofar,



three in Al Wusta, and two in South Sharqiyah on land exceeding 42,000sqm combined.

Commercial projects

Fifteen usufruct agreements were signed for commercial and industrial plots of land in the governorates of Muscat, South Batinah, Dakhliyah and Al Wusta on an area of more than 71,000sqm.

30 housing units

The 30 housing units in Suwaiq and Khabourah will be built at a cost of RO1mn. The project is part of the ministry's initiative to build 328 housing units for citizens impacted by Cyclone Shaheen in the North Batinah governorate.

Through its specialised technical teams, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has

conducted field surveys and studies of damaged homes belonging to poor families.

The teams also assessed damage to affected houses that were built with unsustainable materials and pose a threat to the lives of residents. The teams conducted technical and financial assessment and made recommendations for rebuilding these.

Oman Airports to get hydrogen cars

Continued from Page 01

"It is also in line with Shell's Powering Progress Strategy and our target to become a net-zero-emission energy business by 2050, in step with society," Hadi added.

The potential for the use of solar in electrolyzers to produce hydrogen builds on the success Shell has had with other renewables-based projects in Oman, including Solar into Schools and Sohar Solar Qabas.

"The recent Royal directive by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to grow the green hydrogen sector in the sultanate inspires our efforts. We look forward to taking the first tangible step in kickstarting this industry and we hope that this project will be a pace setter in renewables-based hydrogen," Hadi said.

According to Sheikh Aimen al



Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports, the company is looking to capitalise on Oman Shell's renewable energy initiatives and is "glad to be working together on the first phase of its Green Hydrogen for Mobility project".

He informed that environmental sustainability is top priority for Oman Airports and one of the main pillars of its strategic objectives.

"Since 2017, we have incorporated a carbon management programme to measure and

reduce our carbon footprint in a phased manner in Muscat, Salalah and Duqm Airports. Muscat International Airport received a Green Airports Recognition in 2020 from Airports Council International for our contribution towards a sustainable airport's environment in its category.

"We are committed and have a clear environmental policy to build a sustainable environment and become a green airport," Hosni said.

Hutchison Ports Sohar to manage Khasab Port

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Tuesday for the management, development and operation of Khasab Port with Oman International Container Terminal (Hutchison Ports Sohar).

The MoU will be carried out in two phases. During the first phase, the two parties will complete the draft agreement and then sign the final deal by early August. This will be followed by operations and management of the port by Hutchison Ports Sohar, starting from October.

The second phase includes the company preparing and completing studies and designs for the port's general develop-



ment in preparation for signing a concession agreement and starting long-term development work in 2025.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the ministry by H E Eng Saeed bin Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Anson Kim, CEO of Hutchison Ports Sohar.

In a press statement, H E Ma'awali said the MoU will serve the local community by developing the port to world-class standards, while preserving the identity of the place. He noted that a workshop will be held in May to discuss ways to develop Khasab Port with the relevant authorities and stakeholders.

be'ah to manage safe disposal of PDO's e-waste

Muscat - be'ah signed an agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) for the safe and proper disposal of electric and electronic waste produced by PDO operations on Monday.

The agreement was signed by Tariq Ali al Amri, CEO of be'ah, and Steve Phimister, managing director of PDO. The agreement will address the challenge of electronic and electric waste management.

"This undertaking contributes to our fight against pollution by transforming waste into a significant resource and extracting value from discarded equipment," said Abdul-Amir al Ajmi, PDO's director of external affairs and value creation. "We aim to leverage this agreement to ensure compliance with the applicable environmental rules and regulations, improve PDO's operations, and cooperate with be'ah to optimise the management of electronic and electric waste and minimise pollution."

Kumayl al Lawati, head of business development at be'ah, said, "be'ah is constantly seeking to ensure the sustainability of resources through such arrangements. Under this agreement, be'ah will store electric and electronic waste resulting from PDO operations and apply ecofriendly and sustainable storage solutions with the ultimate goal of implementing a commercially viable recycling system."

Citizens can now visit service centres for new and renewal of passports: ROP

Our Correspondent Muscat

Royal Oman Police (ROP) has announced citizens can now visit its service centres to complete procedures necessary for new or renew Omani passports after the

facility was temporarily suspended from January this year.

'Royal Oman Police draws the attention of citizens that it is now possible to go to service centres in the governorates of the sultanate to complete procedures for issuing and renewing Omani

passports, starting from March 15, 2022, for all age groups,' it stated on Tuesday.

On Monday, ROP clarified that there will be no change in the shape or colour of the Omani passport as was being wrongly circulated on social media.



Sultan Qaboos University

RETENDER NOTICE

The Investment & Revenue Department at Sultan Qaboos University would like to invite companies to submit their quotations for:

S/N	Type of Business	Mobile Café Truck Location	Duration of contract in years	Date of site visit	Class	Tender #
1	Renting and operating a site	Nearby the Main Library	1	23/3/2022 09:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 6/22
2	Renting and operating a site	Nearby the university hospital	1	23/3/2022 10:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 7/22
3	Renting and operating a site	At the Andalusia garden	1	23/3/2022 10:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 8/22

- * The priority will be for the Small and Medium Establishments (SME), which fulfils the quality requirements.
- * Tenderers who wish to participate in this Tender may collect Tender Documents from The Section of Revenue And Expenditures at the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University, during the working hours for an amount of OR.25 for each tender document (non-refundable). The last date for collecting the Document is 04/04/2022
- * The Site Visit for the selected Location is necessary. It will be on the above mentioned date and time. The assembly point will be at the Investment & Revenue Department.
- * The last date for submission of the quotations: 13/4/2022 The quotations should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Director of the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University and deposited in the Tender Box kept in the Department, before 10:00 a.m.
- * The exterior of the envelope should be marked with the name and number of the Tender being presented and should bear no identification or mark of the Tenderer.
- * The Tenderer should submit (enclose) with his tender a Bank Guarantee Document for sum of 1% of the total Duration of contract rental value quoted by the Tenderer and valid for 120 (One hundred and Twenty) days from the date specified for submission of Tender. Tender documents submitted after the deadline or without a Bank Guarantee will be excluded.
- * The Tenderer should prepare the Mobile Café truck in accordance with the health requirements of Muscat Municipality and the requirements of civil defense in cooperation with the concerned authorities.
- * Sultan Qaboos University reserves the right to reject any quotation not fulfilling the requirements and does not bid itself to accept the highest rent or any other quotations.

The Investment & Revenue Department
P.O BOX 50, P.C. 123, ALKHOD, SULTANATE OF OMAN
Tel: 24142691 - 24142682 – 24142684
Email: investment@squ.edu.om



MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,343.10
Sensex	55,776.85

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian Rs	198.42
Pakistani Rs	464.97
Bangladesh taka	223.17
Philippines peso	135.87
Sri Lankan Rs	707.35

*Rates as on March 15
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

India in talks to buy discounted Russian oil

India is exploring options for buying Russian crude oil, authorities said on Tuesday, with prices there plunging to record lows in the wake of a global backlash to the Ukraine conflict.

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the government was having conversations 'at the appropriate level of the Russian Federation' regarding the purchase.

"Discussions are currently underway. There are several issues to be gone into like how much oil is available," he said.

Puri added that the government was weighing issues related to insurance, freight and payment for the crude.

Cryptocurrency giant Binance gets licence in Bahrain

Cryptocurrency exchange platform Binance, one of the world's largest, said on Tuesday it had been granted an operating licence in Bahrain, its first in the Gulf.

The company, which was founded in China but has since been banned there, said it would provide crypto asset trading and portfolio management services under the supervision of the Central Bank of Bahrain.

Binance founder and CEO Changpeng Zhao praised the 'stringent criteria of the Central Bank of Bahrain' in terms of anti-money laundering, at a time when most regulators around the world are wary of cryptocurrencies.

Bahrain hopes to become a regional hub for crypto asset companies, as does Dubai.

The Emirate this month also announced the adoption of a virtual assets law and the creation of a crypto asset regulatory authority.

Oman Cables outlines greener future for manufacturing at OSW

Muscat - Oman Cables Industry, Oman's leading manufacturers of industrial cables, was present at Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) to share the company's vision for an energy efficient, de-carbonised and circular economy.

Exhibiting its mission to link the Middle East, Africa, Turkey (MEAT) region to a sustainable future by enabling the transition to sustainable energy, Cinzia Farisè, The CEO of Oman Cables and Prysmian Group MEAT Region, explained the company's commitment towards its economic, social and environmental responsibilities in producing and offering the most advanced cable technology, a press release said.

Farisè, said, "We take our role in preserving the environment and reducing human impact on the community incredibly seriously. It is important that every aspect of our business not only meets but exceeds targets and we continue to make progress towards our goals. The commitment of our leadership to develop an equal and diverse working environment and to positively impact the communities we operate in has led to a culture of innovation where employees are empow-



(Supplied photo)

ered to enact change within the organisation."

"Oman Sustainability Week provides the opportunity to share best practice with the industry and learn from others in the space. We are fully committed to reinforcing our business model to integrate economic, social and environmental responsibility in all aspects of our activities, making profit for the benefit of our shareholders and creating value for the community and the entire ecosystem," she added.

During the event, Oman Cables had the opportunity to invite H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said and H E Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals to the company's stand where Farisè gave a short presentation about the wide range of products and services offered by Oman Cables.

Oman Cables has developed

We take our role in preserving the environment and reducing human impact on the community incredibly seriously

CINZIA FARISÈ

process. The current priorities for Oman Cables include product circularity and recycling in order to reduce waste, develop efficiencies and maximise resources.

Guided by a vision of 'Empowerment, Innovation and Excellence', Oman Cables is driven by sustainable growth with a dualistic dimension: Climate ambition and social ambition.

The company's strategic partnership with the Prysmian Group, a member of the FTSE4Good Global Index, which recognises companies that demonstrate ethical and transparent governance practices, promotes shared values in the commitment towards environmental responsibility and reduction of carbon footprint.

a regional environmental, social, and governance (ESG) plan as well as a steering committee to ensure sustainability remains at the core of all operations.

The company is also conducting sustainability awareness training to empower all employees within every stage of the

Central Bank of Oman issues treasury bills worth RO39mn

Muscat - The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Tuesday announced the issuance of RO39mn worth of treasury bills to raise funds on behalf of the government.

A tender of government treasury bills (issue number 136), worth RO39mn was issued this week by the CBO.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The CBO acts as the issue manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (repo).



The total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO39mn, for a maturity period of 28 days, from March 16, 2022 until April 13, 2022. The average accepted price reached RO99.960 for every RO100 bill, and the minimum accepted price arrived at

RO99.960.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.52143 per cent and 0.52164 per cent, respectively.

The interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 0.5 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with the CBO is 0.75 per cent.

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates.

Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.

ONA

Oman's bank lending rises 3.9% in Jan; deposits up 4.5%

Muscat - Total outstanding credit extended by Oman's banking sector grew by 3.9 per cent to RO27.3bn at the end of January 2022, according to the latest statistics released by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

Bank credit to the private sector showed a moderate growth of 1.8 per cent at RO23.5bn in January this year compared to the same period of 2021, the data showed.

The shares of non-financial corporate sector and household sector (mainly personal loans) in total private sector credit stood at 46.7 per cent and 45.1 per cent, respectively, at the end of January 2022. The share of financial corporations was 4.5 per cent and other sectors received



(Muscat Daily)

the remaining 3.7 per cent of the total private sector credit.

The total deposits held with the Omani banks (conventional and Islamic) registered a year-on-year growth of 4.5 per cent to reach RO25.6bn at the end of January 2022. Total private sector deposits increased by 2.3 per cent to RO17.3bn.

In terms of sector-wise composition of private sector deposits, the biggest share goes to household's deposits at 51.7 per cent, followed by non-financial corporations at 30.5 per cent, financial corporations at 14.8 per cent and the other sectors at 3 per cent.

ONA

AMAN

Invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of AMAN Real Estate Investment Fund ("Fund")

The Fund Management Body of the Fund are pleased to invite the unitholders to attend the Annual General Meeting ("AGM"), which takes place on 29/03/2021, 7 PM to be held via the electronic platform to convene The General Meetings which is accessible through Muscat Clearing and Depository website (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum is not quorate, the meeting shall be re-scheduled to 6/04/2021 at 3:00 PM. To discuss the following Agenda:

- To consider and Approve the Chairman's Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2021.
- To consider the Audit's Report and to approve the financial statement Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account, for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
- To consider and approve the distribution of cash dividend to the unit holders as per the AGM date with a percentage of 3.58% (an amount of 3.58 baiza per unit), for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
- To approve sitting fees to the meeting of the Fund Management Body for the year ended and determine the fees for the forthcoming financial year.) Annex 1(
- To brief the General Meeting of the related party transaction entered into by the Fund during the financial year ended 31 December 2021.) Annex 2(
- To appoint an auditor for the fiscal year that will end on 31 December 2022 and determine their fees.

In accordance with the Fund's articles of association and the regulations for holding General Meetings, using modern technology issued by the authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A Juristic person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person, to attend the assembly meeting and vote on his behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in the MCD.
- Voting on any of the items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date of the Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting, and if the shareholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and he must re-vote again on the day of the meeting.

In case of any inquiries about the above agenda items, please contact Shaima Al Balushi at phone number 24625819 or send an email to s.albalushi@tharaglobal.com

Legal Advisor

Financial Auditor

Chairman of the Fund

Oman Insurance reports AED206.1mn profit

Muscat - Oman Insurance Company reported a net profit of AED206.1mn for the year 2021, which is a growth of 5 per cent compared to the prior year.

This result has been supported by a solid investment income, lower expenses and a well-controlled underwriting result despite the volatile environment, the company said in a press release.

Oman Insurance released its 2021 Integrated Report on Tuesday which includes full-year financial results along with environmental, social and corporate governance reports.

The company's net receivables ratio of 15.4 per cent is at its all-time high, which reflects its strong emphasis on generating free cashflows. On top of these results, Oman Insurance reached its highest customer satisfaction score, a key target for the company, with 89 per cent of its customers being satisfied or very satisfied with its services.

The company's solvency capital requirement before the proposed dividend reached its highest level of approximately 275 per cent (minimum regulatory requirement is 100 per cent). This is an increase of around 15 per cent compared to the last year, reaffirming their strong ability to meet policyholders' obligations.

Commenting on the results, Jean-Louis Laurent Josi, chief executive officer of Oman Insurance, said, "The results are a clear reflection of our industry-leading initiatives, robust financial strength to pay claims timely and our vision to be a reference for customer excellence. With the strong foundations, we will continue to focus our efforts on digital transformation, improving technical expertise, implementing lean initiatives and enhancing customer satisfaction."

The company continued to make strategic investments in its digital transformation. Cloud focus, the release of multiple APIs, Zero-code platforms, are some examples of these investments to empower business teams to build customer offerings quickly and independently, ultimately leading to a faster, leaner processes and more satisfied clients.

Oman Insurance also successfully worked on new key business initiatives like the selection of its new health insurance medical management system; the launch of a unique Middle East medical solution; the approval to launch the first Lloyd's Syndicate in the Gulf Cooperation Council; the launch of Straight Through Processing for its life insurance policies with partnering banks and brokers.

West must end Russian energy 'addiction': UK

London, UK - British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called on Tuesday for the West to end its 'addiction' to Russian energy, which he says allows President Vladimir Putin to 'blackmail' the world.

Western leaders made a 'terrible mistake' when they let Putin 'get away' with Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and became more dependent on Russian energy, Johnson wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*.

As a result, "when he (Putin) finally came to launch his vicious war in Ukraine, he knew the world would find it very hard to punish him", Johnson said.

"The world cannot be subject to this continuous blackmail."

Johnson's comments come ahead of a visit to Saudi Arabia for talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman amid skyrocketing fuel prices blamed on Russia's war in Ukraine.

"As long as the West is economically dependent on Putin, he will do all he can to exploit that dependence," he wrote.

"If the world can end its de-



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson (AFP)

pendence on Russian oil and gas, we can starve him of cash, destroy his strategy and cut him down to size."

The United States, itself a big energy producer, has already announced a ban on imports of Russian oil, the UK will do the same and the EU has agreed to do so 'as soon as possible', Johnson wrote.

He admitted that weaning the West off Russian energy 'will be painful'.

Johnson's spokesman said ahead of his Saudi visit that the

government 'wants to reduce the volatility and bring prices down for UK businesses'.

The UK government is to publish its British Energy Security Strategy later this month, and Johnson said there was a need for investment in renewables, including offshore wind farms and solar.

He also said there needs to be 'a series of big new bets on nuclear', including 'small modular reactors as well as the larger power stations'.

AFP

MSX rises 0.43% amid weak activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose by 0.43 per cent to close at 4,343.1 points on Tuesday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 46.2 per cent to RO3.68mn and volumes fell 18.64 per cent to 17.32mn shares.

While Industrial index fell 0.08 per cent, Financial and Services indices rose 0.3 per cent and 0.15 per cent, respectively. The MSX Shariah Index closed down by 0.2 per cent at 491.44 points.

Market breadth remained negative as nine companies closed up, while 13 companies closed down. The rest 20 traded



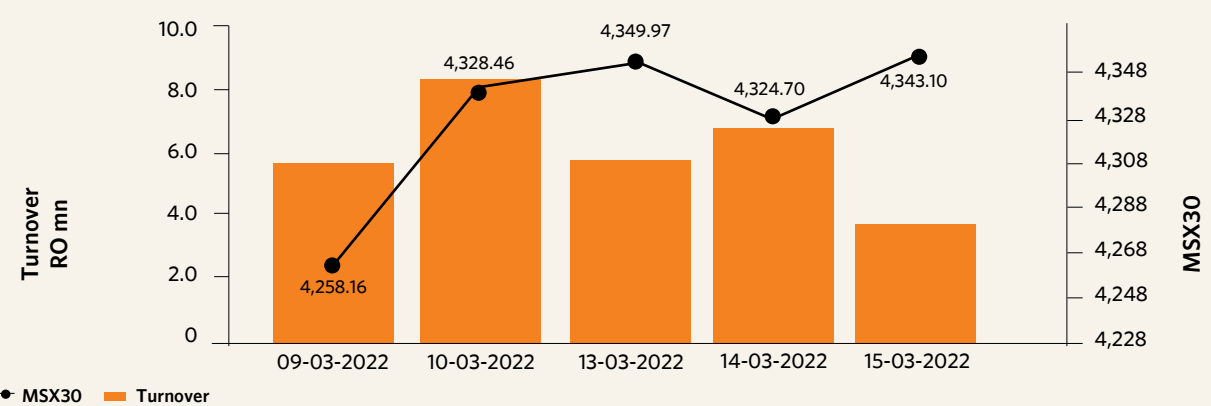
stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Voltamp Energy (7.45 per cent), Sohar International Bank (4.2 per cent), HSBC Bank Oman (3.33 per cent) and Global Financial Investments Holding

(2.86 per cent).

Top losers were Aman Real Estate (-8.08 per cent), Oman Arab Bank (-6.58 per cent), United Finance (-4.76 per cent) and Taageer Finance (-3.37 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Oil prices plunge on China virus lockdowns, stock markets slide

London, UK - Oil prices plunged more than 8 per cent on Tuesday on lower demand expectations with nearly 30mn people under COVID-19 lockdown in key consumer China.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was down by 8.2 per cent to close at US\$94.52 per barrel where as Brent North Sea crude was also down 8.1 per cent at US\$98.27 per barrel.

Crude futures slumped under US\$100 per barrel just a week after benchmark contract Brent North Sea soared to a 14-year high close to US\$140 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The downside correction in oil prices is sure a relief when it comes to the inflation expectations, but the new lockdown measures will continue worsening the supply chain crisis and add on the inflation worries," noted Swissquote Bank senior analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya.

Equity markets also slumped on Tuesday, with tech firms leading the collapse following the COVID-19 shutdown of China's tech hub Shenzhen.

London - FTSE 100 was down 0.9 per cent at 7,127.72 points and Frankfurt - DAX was also down 1 per cent at 13,794.75 points.

"The (stock market) negativity has spread beyond China's



borders with chip makers in Europe taking a hit," noted Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor.

Tokyo - Nikkei 225 was up 0.2 per cent at 25,346.48 and Shanghai - Composite was down 5 per cent at 3,063.97.

Global stock markets have been in a spiral since Russian troops marched into Ukraine, leading international powers to impose crippling sanctions on the country and numerous com-

panies to pull out.

The UK government on Tuesday imposed an additional 35 per cent import tariff on a swathe of Russian goods, including vodka, and banned exports of luxury products.

"We want to cause maximum harm to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's war machine while minimising the impact on UK businesses," the Department for International Trade said.

A series of powerful explo-

sions Tuesday rocked residential districts of Kyiv, killing two people, just hours before talks between Ukraine and Russia were set to resume.

"This double whammy of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, with the fresh chaos caused by COVID-19 in China is rattling nerves," said Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

Among the hardest-hit stock markets in recent days has been Hong Kong, which was already under pressure from China's regulatory crackdown on technology firms as part of the government's move to tighten its grip on the economy.

News that US authorities were also looking to crack the whip over Chinese firms listed in New York added to the selling pressure.

"In the short term we think overall Chinese equities will continue to face selling pressure. Longer term, the strong will survive and likely get stronger, bigger," predicted Sharif Farha at Safehouse Capital.

Hong Kong's main stocks index, the Hang Seng, dived more than six per cent at one point on Tuesday.

Afternoon selling wiped out a minor bounce from data out of China suggesting its economy started 2022 on a positive note.

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Disclaimer

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) would like to announce the following amendment for the tender which was announced on 28/02/2022:

Sr. No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	05/2022 (Extended)	Travel Agency Services for 4 years (2022-2026)	21/03/2022	12/04/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	236.250

Company Address:
Muscat - Al Mawaleh
Way No: 2153 - Building No. 4230
Web site: www.omangrid.com, E-mail: tenders@omangrid.com
GSM: 91777378

تنويه

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء بأنه تم تعديل المناقصة المذكورة أدناه التي تم الإعلان عنها بتاريخ ٢٨/٢/٢٠٢٢م

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	لمن الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (رغ)
1	٢٠٢٢/٠٥ (تعديل)	تقديم خدمات مكاتب السفر لمدة 4 سنوات (٢٠٢٢-٢٠٢٤)	٢٠٢٢/٠٣/٢١	٢٠٢٢/٠٤/١٢	الشركات المحلية المسجلة في هذا المجال والمسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول	٢٣٦.٢٥٠

عنوان الشركة
محافظة مسقط - الموالح
رقم السكة ٢١٥٣ - مبنى رقم ٤٢٣٠
البريد الإلكتروني tenders@omangrid.com موقع الشركة www.omangrid.com
هاتف: ٩١٧٧٧٣٧٨



OOMCO opens fifth service station in KSA

Under the patronage of H H Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) has commenced the operation of its fifth service station in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Located in the Eastern Province, Dammam, the one-stop-shop service station caters

to customers living in the metropolitan area. The service station features an exciting range of on-the-go shopping, and food and beverage offerings, in addition to essential automotive services that go 'beyond the pump', a press release said.

The latest addition is part of OOMCO's strategy to accelerate its expansion in KSA as well as its global expansion footprint. The

company will also add another five service stations around Jeddah to its portfolio in the Kingdom this year. The facility comprises a car care centre, a convenience store, cafeteria, a drive through coffee shop and ATM. Customers can further take advantage of the quick car services provided including oil change, car wash and tire services.

"With customers being the key players of our success, the launch of our fourth service station in Saudi Arabia demonstrates our unwavering dedication to offer convenient and flexible shopping experiences, while catering to our customers' refueling and car care needs," said Ali Muqabail, general manager - International Relations at Oman Oil Marketing

Company.

"In addition to the five operating stations, we secured 11 sites that are at different stages of development. We opened our first mega station in Dammam in 2019, and we continue to harness more opportunities to strengthen our service offerings in the Saudi market while always putting customer-centricity first-and-foremost," he added.

Earlier this month, Oman and Saudi Arabia have signed 13 memoranda of understanding for joint projects worth US\$30bn within the economic sector. The agreement continues to build on the strong bilateral relations between the two countries. Moreover, the road and border port linking Oman and Saudi Arabia was recently opened and is expected to provide easy access.

Ooredoo offers 'Win a Trip of a Lifetime'

Bundesliga Germany fans, this one is for you. In the fourth edition of its 'Hello World' campaign, Ooredoo is giving football fans the chance to win tickets to the upcoming Bundesliga Germany match.

Taking place on April 3, the draw is open to all Home Internet, Hala prepaid and Shahry post-paid customers. Easy as 1,2,3, customers can subscribe to a plan or recharge to be in to win a once-in-a-lifetime trip to watch two of Europe's most famous teams go head-to-head on 23 April, including match tickets, air travel and accommodation for the winner and a friend, a press release said.

As the Official Middle East and Africa Telecommunications partner for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Ooredoo is getting into the spirit of the game with a series of raffle draws, offering tickets to some of the biggest matches around Europe. Customers can look out for the upcoming draw for the final match in Paris.

All Home Internet customers have to do to enter the draw is activate/upgrade new connections.

Volunteers clean up Nufoon beach

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), represented by the Environmental Awareness Team in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), organised a clean-up campaign, 'Together for a Sustainable Environment in Duqm'. The campaign was aimed to clean Nufoon beach in the Wilayat of Duqm.

Over 300 volunteers participated in the campaign, representing the different companies operating in SEZAD and a number of government bodies. Members of the local community took part in the campaign, as well, to show their care for the environment. The 4-hour-long campaign manage to clean around 4km of Nufoon beach using a specialised machine, a press release said.

Mohammed bin Hamad al Mahrouqi, acting manager of Environmental Regulatory Department in OPAZ, pointed out, "The different types of waste have become a growing threat to the environment, causing the deterioration of land and marine ecosystems, and this has a neg-



ative impact on various aspects of life, including effects on economic sectors such as tourism, fishing and others. Therefore, we urge all, through these campaigns, to contribute to reducing the threat posed by single-use plastic waste on nature".

On the other hand, Marwa bint Hamdoon al Hashmi, an environmental inspector and head of the Environmental Awareness Team of the Environmental Monitoring Department at SEZAD, said, "The campaign focused on collecting plastic waste, being one of the most dangerous waste to environment, due to the difficulty of decomposing it. The

participants collected a number of damaged fishing nets from the beach".

She added, "This campaign, which comes as one of many other environment-friendly activities, reflects the partnership between SEZAD employees, the local community and corporates operating in the Zone, where preserving the environment marks a priority in the Zone. Likewise, OPAZ adopts many environmental initiatives such as hygiene campaigns and awareness programmes in collaborating with community members and companies operating in Duqm", she explained.



OFA organises breakfast meet for women

As a follow-up to International Women's Rights Day, the Omani French friendship association (OFA) organised a breakfast meet for about 15 women on March 13, moderated by Vanessa Humphrey, a French entrepreneur who just started her own company in Oman.

Numerous discussions allowed the women entrepreneurs and employees to brainstorm together on women strengths and how being a woman makes a difference in their professional environment, a press release said.

In small groups, they discussed the question on how to

break the glass ceiling, how to succeed as entrepreneurs and CEOs in Oman, what advice they could give to future generations, and concluding the session with a reflection about mentoring and how to develop professional women networking in Oman.

The main tips given to new

entrepreneurs were to be self-confident, build resilience, trust instincts, recharge one's batteries, and find sponsors. This gathering allowed these women to develop their professional network and to propose the launch of a platform to support women entrepreneurs.

Bank Nizwa wins prestigious bronze award for sustainability

Committed to achieving economic growth with minimal impact on the environment, Bank Nizwa has spearheaded several unique initiatives to promote sustainable practices in the local community.

In the recent Oman Sustainability Week Awards, the bank was recognised for its ongoing endeavours towards sustainability and was awarded a special award in the bronze category, a press release said.

The Oman Sustainability Week Awards was held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Fahad Bin al Julanda al Said, vice chancellor at Sultan Qaboos University to honour the efforts of local companies who had made significant contributions in areas

of sustainability. Khalid al Barwani, DGM Wholesale Banking of Bank Nizwa, received the award on behalf of the bank.

Expressing his delight in receiving the award, Barwani said, "This is a moment of great pride for Bank Nizwa. The OSW Awards is indeed an excellent platform to encourage organisations to move towards a green and circular economy. As an Islamic bank that places great emphasis on ethical practices, the concept of sustainability has always been deeply integrated with everything we do. The sustainability Linked financing initiative recently launched by the bank is another testament to our commitment to contribute towards the country's efforts to



transition to Net Zero emissions and attain a sustainable future.

"The programme will further incentivise companies to adopt

sustainable practices in their operations. At Bank Nizwa, we are in strong alignment with Oman Vision 2040 which favours in-

vestments in socially responsible businesses. By pledging our commitment to sustainability practices, we have been able to

support eco-conscious customers and investors and also contribute to community development projects."

While Bank Nizwa has attained significant growth in the past years, it has also remained steadfast in its endeavours to promote an all-inclusive financial ecosystem that factors in sustainable programmes. Focusing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as well as Oman's vision to be listed among the top 20 countries in the worldwide Environmental Performance Index, the bank has conceptualized innovative, sustainable and Sharia-compliant finance solutions for the benefit of its customers.

With a strong portfolio of

clients, Bank Nizwa has also played an instrumental role in helping companies from different sectors integrate environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria into their businesses.

The Oman Sustainability award further cements Bank Nizwa's position as a bank that is progressive, promotes transparent practices and has a keen focus on spearheading initiatives that have a sustainable, long-term positive impact on the community. The bank has not only set new benchmarks in sustainability in the Islamic finance industry but has also demonstrated unfaltering dedication in guiding companies to make more socially conscious investment decisions.

Oman Sustainability Week begins at OCEC



Under the patronage of H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) was inaugurated on March 14 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) in an elaborate ceremony that witnessed the presence of distinguished officials from various ministries, top-level delegates and industry leaders.

Hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and organised by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and CONNECT, OSW is an innovative programme that advocates the importance of adopting sustainable practices for the long-term progress of the country. The event is also supported and sponsored by ministries, government bodies, and leading local and international companies, a press release said.

Following the official ceremony that marked the commencement of OSW, H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and



Youth, inaugurated the OSW Expo at OCEC's Exhibition Hall 1, accompanied by several high-ranking officials.

Speaking about the event, Eng Abdul Amir al Ajmi, PDO's External Affairs and Value Creation director, said, "We would like to thank H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said for gracing this event and being a key patron of

sustainable development in the Sultanate. The scale of events at OSW emphasises the importance the sultanate places on sustainability and its commitment to integrate sustainable practices in every industry, leverage the rapidly evolving frontiers of knowledge and technology, and inculcate a sustainability mindset in the community.

"As we take monumental strides to shift towards a low carbon, green and circular economy, the need to develop an inclusive, coherent strategy to achieve sustainability has become more essential. We are confident that the series of activities at OSW will result in a dynamic shift in mindset and encourage even more businesses and individuals

to play an active role in contributing to the nation's sustainability goals."

With a keen focus on achieving sustainability in areas of energy and water demands in the sultanate as well in an endeavour to catalyse initiatives geared at the protection of the environment, OSW is in clear alignment with the United Nations Agenda

2030 for Sustainable Development and Oman Vision 2040.

By injecting international sustainability best practices into the local community, encouraging local businesses to spearhead innovation in the sector, and highlighting potential investment opportunities, the series of events at OSW aim to drive transformational change in the

country.

While the Oman Sustainability Week Expo is a dedicated exhibition, the International Sustainability Resources and Technology Conference (ISRTC) on the same dates is another key event that is geared at connecting local and global stakeholders to foster constructive debate and enhance cross-collaboration.

OQ strategic partner in Oman Sustainability Week



Ashraf al Mamari

As a global integrated energy company with its roots in Oman, OQ has integrated environmental conservation and sustainable development into its corporate strategy. Further attesting to this commitment, the company is currently participating in the ongoing Oman Sustainability Week (OSW).

As a keen advocate of sustainable development, through the event, OQ is focusing on achieving and delivering sustainability agenda based on three pillars which are environmental, social, economic and governance. In 2022, the focus is on decarbonisation and in-country value (ICV), a press release said.

Speaking about OQ's participation, Ashraf al Mamari, OQ's chief executive of People, Technology and Culture at OQ, stated, "OSW is a promising platform for industry leaders who have embraced sustainability to come together and share meaningful insights to influence, empower and drive others to follow suit. Along with a number of ongoing sustainable initiatives which are being showcased at OSW,

OQ is also highlighting its Alternative Energy (AE) business unit. AE is in strong alignment with Oman Vision 2040's objective of renewable energy, diversified sources of energy and rationalized consumption to achieve energy security."

He further said, "Sustainability is one of our main pillars that form the heart of our operations, and we will continue to advocate this concept in the community to achieve prosperity and development in the country.

At OQ, we also believe in setting new sustainability benchmarks in the industry to help realise Oman's sustainability targets. Meanwhile, our focus on energy optimisation and efficiency will remain our top priority as we embark on the path of decarbonisation.

"OQ has started assessing its carbon footprint across all its assets and has been publishing this data since 2019 in its Sustainability Report. Committed to the energy transition, OQ has also established operations in upstream renewable energy, collaborated on electrical transmission, deployed downstream green molecule projects and leveraged existing trading strength."

Najla al Jamali, OQ's CEO of Alternative Energy, who took part in the panel of speakers at the Gaia summit, offered her insights on the plenary session titled "Current Landscape of Sustainability in Oman - Opportunities & Challenges to Moving the Needle". She reflected on OQ's pioneering role in sustainability and the opportunities it offers.

Omantel 5G webinar delves into business potentials

Omantel hosted its second webinar to discuss 5G technology, its potential, and its impacts on Oman's information and telecommunication sector and consumers.

The company, which was the first to introduce 5G technology in the sultanate, is organising a series of webinars to focus on this frontier digital technology. The first webinar was held on

November 23, 2021, under the topic, '5G Beyond Speed', a press release said.

The second webinar received an unprecedented response, with the participation of heads of ICT/ IT departments of Omantel's government and private sector enterprise customers, stakeholders from the public and private sector and academia, journalists, and social media in-

fluencers. The webinar, was held under the topic '5G from Enterprise perspective', and hosted three speakers who shared their thoughts, strategies and insights into the latest developments and advantages of 5G technology.

Baha al Lawati - vice president of Enterprise Business Unit at Omantel, focused on the role of 5G technology in unlocking business potentials. Dr Abdul

Razaque Memon vice president of 5G & IoT Solutions at Huawei Middle East, shared his views on the importance of 5G for the 4th industrial revolution and the necessity of ultimate and fast connection without disruption. Fahad al Abri from Omantel Technology Unit presented a case study on the Use of 5G in Sohar Port to improve port operations (PoC).

Omantel has always been offering world-class services and access to the latest digital technologies for consumers and businesses in Oman.

Ever since its rollout of 5G technology in Oman in 2019, Omantel has grown its 5G footprint through infrastructure, network coverage and device compatibility, bringing the benefits of this technology to users.



Oman Sail, Sohar Port wrap up Sohar Works

Sohar Port and Freezone in collaboration with Oman Sail and celebrated the success of Sohar Works, a graduate development programme run in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, with a closing ceremony held under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Saif bin Hamir Al-Malek al Shuhi, Governor of Al Batinah North, at the Sohar Radisson Blu.

Sohar Works aims to develop a strong Omani workforce and fill job vacancies with skilled graduates within the Sohar Port and Freezone. In total, the course runs for one-year, delivered in three stages. The graduating class have now completed the programme delivered by Zimam, Oman Sail's learning and development programme and have been placed at the ASYAD Ports, VA Tech WABAG, Hutchison Ports Sohar and Sohar Port and Freezone.

Omaral Mahrazi, CEO of Sohar Freezone, said, "Sohar is firmly

committed to providing Omani graduates with employment and training opportunities so that they can develop skills, gain experience and take the first steps in a successful career.

"Sohar Works will continue to play an important role in meeting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 as we work together with tenants at Sohar to enrich the Omani workforce, fill gaps in the employment market with local talent and offer value to the growing range of companies choosing to base themselves at Sohar."

Mahrazi added, "Our aim to upskill young talent doesn't end with our own employees, but extends to our tenant companies. By opening Sohar Works up in this way we ensure that the Port and Freezone have a competitive Omani workforce that is skilled, empowered, and keen to contribute to industrial growth in the sultanate."



شركة الخليج للصناعات البلاستيكية (ش.م.ع.م)
GULF PLASTIC INDUSTRIES CO. (SAOC)
ب.ب. ٤٥، الرمز البريدي ١٢٤، الرسيل، منطقة صُحار، سلطنة عُمان، هاتف: ٢٤٤٤٦٦٩٩ / ٢٤٤٤٦٦٩٩، فاكس: ٢٤٤٤٦٦٩٩
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ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 Certified

Notice for Annual Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of GULF PLASTICS INDUSTRIES CO. SAOC (the "Company") has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Ordinary Annual General Meeting, which will be held at 3.00 pm on Thursday, 31/03/2022, at Safer Continental Hotel in Al Barakah Hall, Al Khuwair. If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting will be held at 03.00 p.m. on Sunday, 03/04/2022, in the same premises as above to discuss the following agenda:-

1. To consider and approve the Board of Director's report for the year ended 31 December 2021.
2. To consider the Auditor's report and to approve the Financial Statements of the company (Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account) for the year ended 31/12/2021.
3. To approve and ratify the sitting fees paid to the Board of Directors and Audit Committee members for attending meetings for the previous financial year 2021 and fixing it for the forthcoming financial year 2022 (as attached).
4. To consider and approve the transaction entered into by the company with related parties during the financial year ended 31/12/2021 (as attached).
5. To appoint the Auditors of the company and fix their remuneration for the financial year ended 31 December 2022.

According to the Company's Article of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

1. Legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through the technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
2. Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

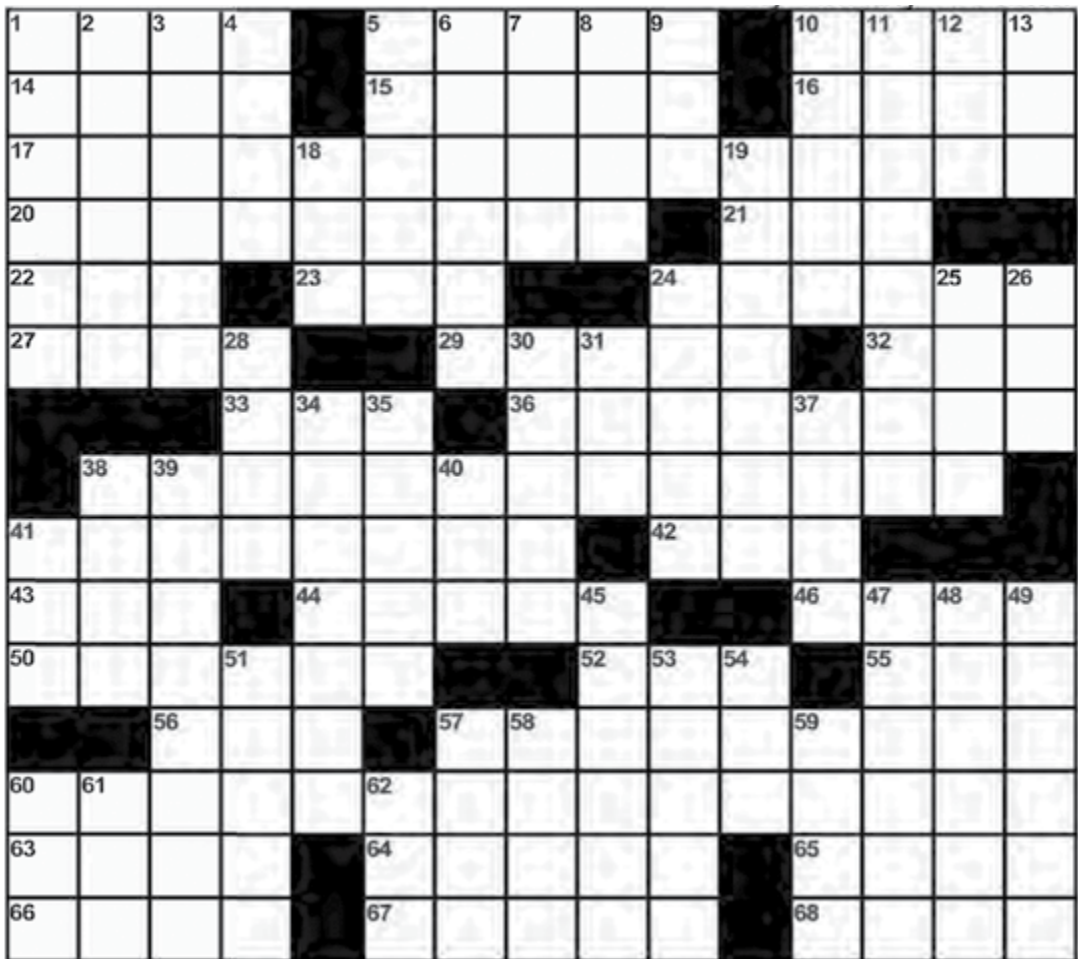
For further information please contact on Telephone No. 95053198 or email: abuhamed1414@hotmail.com

Chairman

Auditor

Legal Advisor

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
1) Old sorcerer
5) It's waved before musicians
10) Bounce back, in a way
14) Milky birthstone
15) ancient Greek marketplace
16) Blooper
17) It's attractive in cartoons?
20) Many French immigrants
21) It plays it
22) Under a doctor's care
23) Some widths for printers
24) Harangue
27) Some deer
29) Anklebone
32) Intense anger
33) "Right there, that's it"
36) Private, as information
38) Old-fashioned mode of transportation
41) Birthright
42) 'Neath counterpart
43) Important time
44) "You did_ nice job"
46) Dutch cheese
- 50) Detonating device
52) Smartphone program
55) Contraction before "seen worse"
56) Crumb on a dinner table
57) It prevents embarrassment
60) Activity seen at Pimlico
63) Miscellaneous assortment
64) Mysterious ancient letters
65) "Bus Stop" playwright
66) Unskilled working stiff
67) Daisy variety
68) They are chipped on golf courses
- DOWN**
1) Angora coat
2) Classic Harlem venue
3) Use mouthwash, e.g.
4) "... or_I"
5) It holds water
6) Horrified
7) Warner Bros. creation
8) Assayers' subjects
9) '60s conflict site
- 10) "Doctor Dolittle" actress Samantha
11) Participating in a certain line dance
12) Farmer's tool
13) Many a time
18) "___ he drove out of sight"
19) Under debate
24) Engine supercharger
25) Heavy cart
26) Slippery sea creature
28) Bombay dress
30) Sleeper's breathing problem
31) Trailed no one
34) Ancient goddess of fertility
35) Got wind of
37) Shrek, e.g.
38) "Catch!"
39) Handel bars?
40) Cause of wrinkles
41) Cool, old-school
45) Servile servant
47) Kind of inspiration
48) Exact retribution for
49) Integrates
51) Improper lighting?
53) As such
54) Letters of pressure
57) Imitation, as fur
58) Unflattering facial
- marks
59) Mine entrance
60) Bounce
- 61) "Bravo, bullfighter!"
62) Generic family nickname
- NOTE PAD**
- HEMP ANGUS CART
AVER SAUTE ALOE
RISE SOLAR VIBE
PLACE EMPHASISON
LORIS TATTY
AMOUNT ODOB
LAND OPIUM LAB
SITED DEVELOPMENT
ONO WRITS ASTI
BEAD CELTIC
SPIEL ECOLI
LOCATION UNKNOWN
ISIS SPARE GLEE
MEET MATEY FEELS
ERRS SLEDS ROTTS

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
After thinking about big changes for so long (and not breathing a word to anyone), the solution suddenly dawns on you. If you really want to change, you can force yourself out of your rut by moving long distance. It means you have to change your residence, your job, your relationships, and your habits. If it sounds refreshing rather than frightening, you need to get busy because it's past time.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
One side of you loves being on stage, with everything right out there for all to see. The other side equally loves secrets and intrigue, especially if there's some drama involved in keeping it all under wraps. You need to make a decision as to which side deals with today's situation. Choose between the outgoing, public side and the intense, personal side and stick with it.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
If anyone had predicted that by now you'd be totally ready to create a warm, cozy nest for someone you love, your utter shock would only have led you to advise them to seek professional help or brain-boosting herbs immediately. That just goes to show you what a difference a day makes, especially now that the time is right to focus on romance.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
After thinking about big changes for so long (and not breathing a word to anyone), the solution suddenly dawns on you. If you really want to change, you can force yourself out of your rut by moving long distance. It means you have to change your residence, your job, your relationships, and your habits. If it sounds refreshing rather than frightening, you need to get busy because it's past time.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Just when you decided that you'd never hear from that one person again, and just when you were starting to cope, things change. You see or hear from someone who mentions seeing the missing person in question and that they mentioned you. When we think of someone, it's often because they're thinking of us too. Prepare yourself for a meet-up, and don't pretend that you're not happy about it.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You're often thought of as the family historian, and while sometimes you're not so sure about that, it's a title you richly deserve. Your memory stores things that no one else can. Your archives are as completely up to date as anyone's could be. Your mementos could easily bring a tear to the eye. Now is the time to bring them all out and let the world see how good you are at this job.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You've never been the one to turn people down, no matter what they ask. You'd rather go without than let a loved one down. That's not something most people know, just those closest to you, really. Right now it doesn't matter who needs what. You'll find a way to make a wish come true for someone in a really tight spot. This is your speciality and they will definitely appreciate your help and remember you.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You're one of the few folks who truly considers their co-workers to be like an extended family. Now that you need career advice, it's only natural for you to turn to an elder from that family to ask for help. The best part of it all is that if you weren't already sure they felt that same kind of attachment toward you, you find out quite soon. This person will definitely help you in making the best decision in this crucial situation.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Being there for your people when they need you, no matter how inconvenient it may be, comes with some sweet benefits. You get the warm fuzzies that come from helping someone for no reason other than that it's the right thing to do. It's also nice to know that people trust you. It makes you feel good about yourself, and there's nothing wrong with that. A co-worker is about to thank you in a new way, which is another perk.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Something about your home life is about to change for the better! Whatever it may be, it should come about through your own initiative. That means you're in charge of the situation and not just trying to find a way to react. When you hear some great bit of news that prompts you to start dreaming of a new way of life, don't wait to put that plan into motion.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
It's far too easy to keep denying yourself the fun you've been wanting to have. Just keep telling yourself that you'll do it next week (or next month or next year). Luckily for you, there's someone in your life who can't let you get away with that kind of behaviour, at least not now. Don't argue with them, and make sure not to alienate them. You need to reward them! Take them along for the ride, whether it's a quick jaunt or around the world.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You absolutely adore romance along with all the dreams, memories, and little nothings that come along with it. Now, since that sweet subject is so very easily inspired by your great energy, it's up to you to get things started. Don't forget to make sure that while you and the one you love (or want to love) are having fun, that you encourage others to get out there and do the same!

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What is the longest known non-stop, non-eating migration flight south for the winter?

A. About 11,000 km
B. Up to 37,000 km
C. About 4,800 km
D. 2,400 km

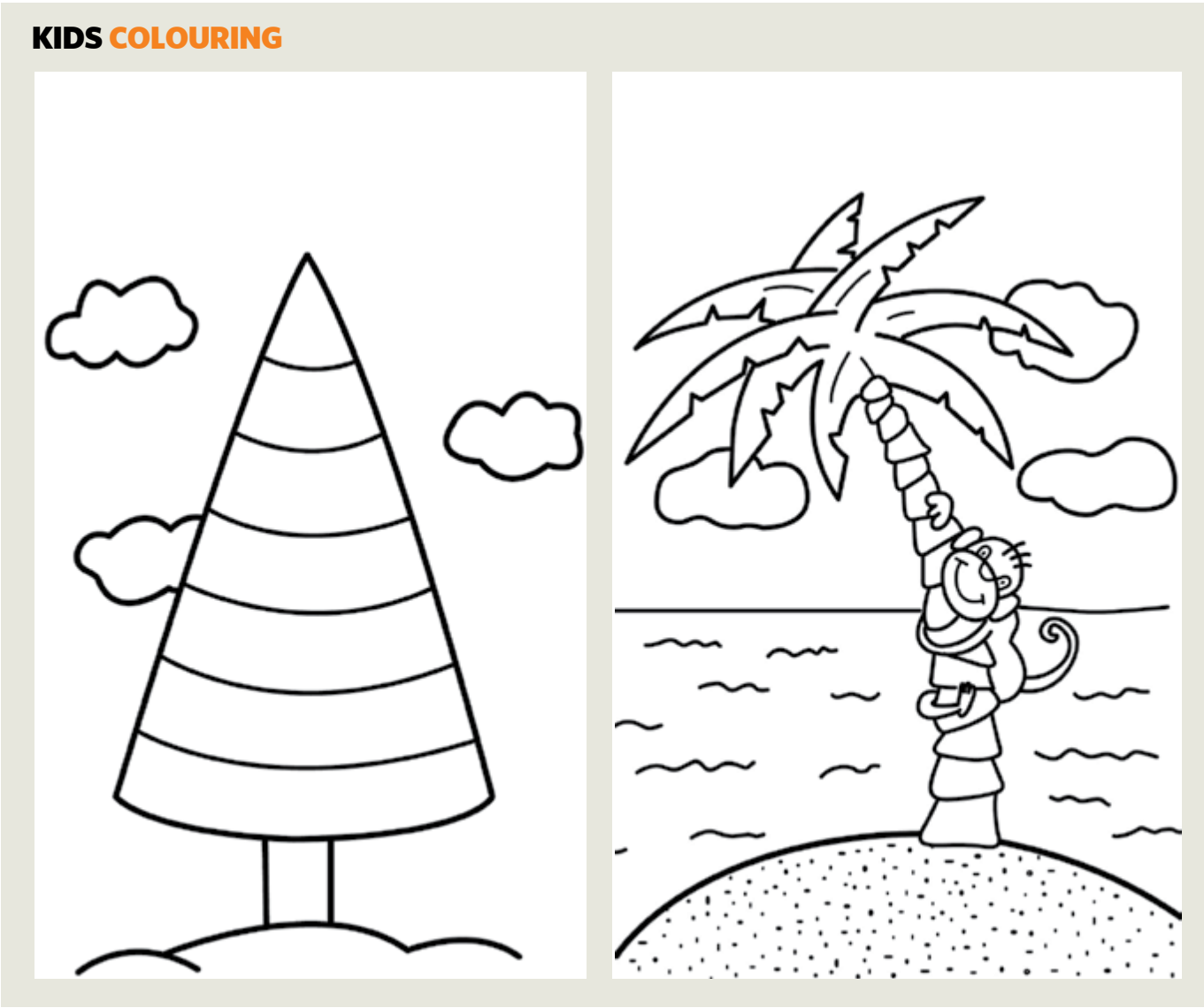
2. What is the word for the requirements demanded by celebrities before they will appear on a TV show or at a performance?

A. Mandatory
B. Rider
C. Preperf agreement
D. Road rules

3. Anna Wintour is famous in what field?

A. Fashion
B. Photography
C. Yachting
D. Music

Answers: 1. C 2. D 3. B



BOGGLER

G	O	S	U
N	A	W	E
N	U	D	M
G	O	M	L

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

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

Deadly blasts rattle Kyiv hours before talks

Ukraine’s capital turns into a war zone, with apartment blocks badly damaged from bombardments

Kyiv, Ukraine - A series of powerful explosions rocked residential districts of Kyiv early on Tuesday killing two people, just hours before talks between Ukraine and Russia were set to resume.

The airport in the eastern city of Dnipro also came under heavy bombardment overnight, as the leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia travelled to the besieged capital Kyiv in a sign of EU support for Ukraine.

Nearly three weeks into Russia’s invasion of its pro-Western neighbour, the human toll of the deadly conflict was increasingly laid bare, with more than three million forced to flee to neighbouring countries.

The United Nations said on Tuesday that nearly 1.4mn children have fled Ukraine since the conflict began on February 24 - nearly one child per second.

Ukraine’s capital has been transformed into a war zone, with apartment blocks badly damaged from Russian bombardments and half of the city’s 3.5mn people now gone. The city’s Mayor Vitali Klitschko said on Tuesday a 35-hour curfew would come into effect from 8pm on Tuesday after overnight attacks in the capital.

“Today is a difficult and dangerous moment,” Klitschko said.

“This is why I ask all Kyivites to get prepared to stay at home for two days, or if the sirens go off, in the shelters.” Four large blasts were heard from the centre of the capital early on Tuesday, sending columns of smoke high into the sky.

‘Are you alive?’

As dawn broke the damage became clear, with one strike hitting a large 16-storey housing block.

There, a fire raged and smoke billowed from the charred husk of the building, as emergency services and stunned locals navigated an obstacle course of glass, metal and other debris littering the road. Another residential building in the Podilsk area also came under attack.

“At 4:20 everything was very thunderous, crackling. I got up, my daughter ran to me with a question: ‘Are you alive?’,” Lyubov Gura, 73, told AFP minutes after rescuers let her and her daughter out of her 11th-floor apartment.



Firefighters extinguish a fire in an apartment building in Kyiv on Tuesday (AFP)



A fireman embraces a woman outside a damaged apartment building in Kyiv on Tuesday (AFP)

She was still waiting for emergency workers to lower her son-in-law and grandson to the ground. The district was once ‘a place to get coffee and enjoy life. Not anymore’, Ukrainian MP

Lesia Vasylenko said. The city is surrounded to the north and east, and authorities have set up checkpoints, while residents are stockpiling food and medicine. Overnight shelling also

‘2,000 cars left Mariupol via humanitarian corridor’

Kyiv, Ukraine - Some 2,000 civilian cars have been able to drive out of the besieged southeastern Ukrainian city of Mariupol along a humanitarian evacuation route, the city authorities said on Tuesday.

“As of 14:00 (1200 GMT) it is known that 2,000 cars left Mariupol,” the city council said on Telegram, adding that a further 2,000 vehicles were waiting to leave the city.

The statement did not specify how many people left in the vehicles.

Another 160 cars had left the city on Monday, the council has said.

The successful evacuations come after several failed attempts since Russian forces surrounded the port city on the Azov Sea early this month.

Heavy bombardment has left some 400,000 inhabitants

with no running water or heating and food running short.

More than 2,100 residents have been killed since the Russian invasion, according to the city authorities.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Tuesday the situation in Mariupol ‘remains dire’ and that it was not able to deliver aid to the city.

AFP

victory would not come on the battlefield. “They have already begun to understand that they will not achieve anything by war,” Zelensky said.

He said Monday’s talks were ‘pretty good... but let’s see. They will continue’ Tuesday.

The two sides are still far apart in the negotiations, with Moscow demanding Ukraine turn away from the West and recognise Moscow-backed breakaway regions. Ukrainian negotiators say they want ‘peace, an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of Russian troops’.

In an unprecedented show of solidarity with the embattled president, the Polish, Czech and Slovenian prime ministers boarded a train for Kyiv to meet Zelensky on Tuesday.

AFP

Russia seeks new jail term for opposition leader Navalny

Moscow, Russia - Russian prosecutors on Tuesday called for jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny to serve 13 years in prison on new fraud charges.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin’s most vocal domestic critic, was jailed last year after surviving a poison attack he blames on the Kremlin.

“I request that Navalny be sentenced to a term of 13 years and a subsequent two years of probation,” prosecutor Nadezhda Tikhonova was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

The prosecutor also requested ‘two years of restricted freedom’ for Navalny and that he pay a fine of 1.2mn rubles (US\$10,600).

In a trial held inside a prison colony outside Moscow where Navalny is serving a two-and-a-half-year sentence, Navalny is facing embezzlement and contempt of court charges.

It was not immediately clear if the 13 years include the sentence he is currently serving.

His corruption charges carry a maximum penalty of 10 years, while contempt of court is punishable by up to six months.

A key Navalny aide and former



Alexei Navalny (AFP)

head of his regional offices, Leonid Volkov, said that Russia is seeking to keep Navalny jailed for life.

“He was sentenced to life from the very start. So long as Putin is still in the Kremlin,” Volkov said on Twitter.

Navalny’s spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said his sentence depends on ‘how long Putin is in power’.

Calls to protest

“Then we will do everything so that he doesn’t stay in power long,” Yarmysh said.

Investigators accuse Navalny of stealing for personal use several million dollars’ worth of do-

nationalities that were given to his political organisations.

Before he was jailed, Navalny was Russia’s main opposition leader and his team frequently published investigations into the wealth of Russia’s elites that garnered millions of views on YouTube.

Navalny’s poisoning in 2020 with a military-grade nerve agent and arrest on his return from rehabilitation in Germany last year sparked widespread condemnation abroad as well as sanctions from Western capitals.

After his arrest, Navalny’s political organisations across the country were declared ‘extremist’ and shut down, while many key aides fled Russia fearing prosecution. Russia has also ramped up its pressure on independent media and NGOs with many declared foreign agents or shut down under fear of prosecution.

A string of closures followed after Russia passed a new law introducing up to 15 years in jail for ‘fake news’ about what Russia calls its military operation in Ukraine.

AFP

More than 3mn flee Ukraine war, half of them children: UN

Geneva, Switzerland - More than three million people have fled Ukraine since Russia invaded on February 24, nearly half of them minors, with a child becoming a refugee every second, the UN said.

“We have now reached the three-million mark in terms of movement of people out of Ukraine,” Paul Dillon, a spokesman for the United Nations migration agency (IOM), told reporters.

Less than three weeks into the invasion, ‘three million lives uprooted. Three million women, children and vulnerable people separated from their loved ones’, IOM chief Antonio Vitorino said in a tweet.

“We need an immediate cessation of hostilities.”

The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, meanwhile put the total number of refugees to date at 2.97mn.

More than half of them, 1.8mn, have fled to Poland, it said.

The UN children’s agency meanwhile said that more than 1.4mn of those who have fled are



A woman holds her two-months old baby in a temporary shelter in a gym of a high school in Przemyśl, near the Ukrainian-Polish border, on Tuesday (AFP)

On average, every day over the last 20 days in Ukraine, more than 70,000 children have become refugees. They are in desperate need of safety, stability

JAMES ELDER

minors. “On average, every day over the last 20 days in Ukraine, more than 70,000 children have become refugees,” UNICEF spokesman James Elder told reporters in Geneva.

That amounts to around 55 every minute, ‘so almost one per second’, he said.

“This crisis in terms of speed and scale is unprecedented since World War II, and is showing no signs of slowing down.”

“Like all children driven from

their homes by war and conflicts, Ukrainian children arriving in those border countries are at significant risk of family separation, of violence, of sexual exploitation and trafficking,” Elder warned.

“They’re in desperate need of safety, stability and child protection services, especially those who are unaccompanied or have been separated from their families,” he said.

Elder, who had just returned to Geneva after spending two weeks in Lviv in western Ukraine, described the immense suffering behind the numbers.

“Each one of those children by and large had their father explain to them that their father was staying behind,” he said.

He said the children he saw “didn’t cry. That’s not well-behaved children, that’s a sign of trauma.” Inside Ukraine, the situation is bleaker still.

Elder described heartbreaking scenes of paediatricians trying to manage the large numbers of children arriving with wounds of war.

AFP

Gulf bloc seeks to host Yemen govt, rebels for rare talks

Riyadh, KSA - Gulf Arab countries are seeking to host rare talks between Yemen's warring parties, including the Iran-backed Houthi rebels, in Riyadh at the end of the month, officials said on Tuesday.

Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, has been wracked by a devastating war since 2014, pitting the Houthis against the internationally recognised government.

Repeated diplomatic efforts to get the two sides to agree a peace deal have failed over the years. The Saudi-based Gulf Cooperation Council 'is considering holding talks between Yemen's warring parties to put an end to the conflict', an official

from the six-nation bloc, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said on Tuesday.

An official from the Saudi-backed Yemeni government, which has been embroiled in a seven-year conflict with the Houthis, said the conference would take place between March 29 and April 7.

"We don't have a problem if the Houthis attend the talks to try to find a solution to security, military and political issues," the official told AFP.

But he added it was unlikely the insurgents would accept the invitation to go to Riyadh, which has been leading a military coalition to back the government against the rebels since 2015.



Members of the Yemeni security forces affiliated with Houthi rebels take to the streets of Sanaa on March 7 (AFP)

Another official in Riyadh confirmed efforts for talks were underway, saying: "Saudi Arabia will not be party to negotiations." Efforts would be led by Oman, which hosts Houthi officials and has regularly played the role of mediator in regional conflicts.

A Houthi spokesman told AFP the rebels had yet to receive an invitation.

"Saudi Arabia wants to present itself as a neutral country... but this call (for talks) is for media attention, nothing serious," he said, without confirming whether or not they would take part.

The talks are scheduled to take place as the Saudi-led coalition marks seven years since its intervention in the Yemen war on March 26, 2015 - shortly after the rebels seized the capital Sanaa.

Riyadh has repeatedly called on the US administration to re-designate the Houthis as a terrorist organisation.

The grinding war has cost hundreds of thousands of lives, directly or indirectly, and displaced millions, in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Around 80 per cent of Yemen's population of nearly 30mn depend on some form of aid for survival.

AFP

Israel troops kill two Palestinians in deadly clashes in West Bank

Nablus, Palestinian Territories - Israeli troops killed two Palestinians in separate shootings in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday, the latest in a flurry of deadly clashes as a US envoy tours the region seeking to ease tensions.

A 16-year-old died in an exchange of fire with troops carrying out an arrest raid outside the northern city of Nablus, the Palestinian health ministry and Israeli security forces said.

Separately, a Palestinian in his twenties was killed in Qalandiya outside Jerusalem, the health ministry said.

Teenager Nader Haitham Rayan died in Balata camp near Nablus after being hit by bullets to the head, chest and hand, the ministry said. It did not give further details on the circumstances of his death.

A spokesman for Israel's border police confirmed a Palestinian attacker had been killed.

"An attacker fired at our troops who responded and killed him," the spokesman said.

The exchange of fire came as Israeli troops were leaving the camp after arresting a Palestinian fugitive wanted for terrorism offences.

"Just as they were preparing to exit the camp, an attacker arrived on a motorbike and fired towards them," the spokesman added.

The Palestinian health ministry said another nine people were wounded in the exchanges, one of them seriously.

The second death came in the town of Qalandiya on the northern outskirts of Jerusalem. The town hosts the main checkpoint between annexed east Jerusalem and the northern West Bank.



Relatives gather to mourn around the body of Palestinian Alaa Shaham at the morgue in Ramallah Hospital in the West Bank city on Tuesday (AFP)

A 16-year-old died in an exchange of fire with troops carrying out an arrest raid outside Nablus, the Palestinian health ministry and Israeli security forces said. Another in his twenties was killed in Qalandiya outside Jerusalem

Alaa Shaham, in his twenties, was killed by a 'live round to the head', the ministry said.

Commenting on the Qalandia unrest, the border police said riots erupted when forces entered the area to arrest 'two people involved in terrorist activities'.

"Hundreds of rioters threw

heavy objects from the roofs of houses endangering Israeli forces" who fired in response, a statement said, without mentioning the reported fatality.

Palestinian authorities said the two deaths bought to 20 the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces this year.

US visit

With violence flaring in the West Bank, US deputy assistant secretary of state Hady Amr was in the region for a tour aimed in part at trying to 'reduce tensions', a US embassy spokesperson said.

Hadr is also seeking 'to implement specific economic steps that will improve lives', the spokesperson added.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who opposes Palestinian statehood, has ruled out formal peace talks with the Palestinians during his tenure but has said he is committed to expanding economic opportunities in the West Bank.

Israeli officials have said they are specifically seeking to ease tensions ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins next month.

During Ramadan last year, clashes across east Jerusalem and the West Bank partly triggered an 11-day war in Gaza between Israel and armed Palestinian groups. Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid met Jordan's King Abdullah II last week to discuss maintaining calm through Ramadan and the Jewish holiday of Passover, which this year overlaps with the Muslim holy month.

AFP

Turkmenistan strongman's son to be at the helm

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan - The son of Turkmenistan's autocrat leader, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, decisively won the presidential election, officials said on Tuesday, paving the way for hereditary succession in one of the world's most tightly controlled countries.

Serdar Berdymukhamedov, 40, won the ballot held last Saturday with 73 per cent of the vote, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) said in a statement on its website.

Nine candidates stood in the poll in the isolated country of six million people, but few doubted that Berdymukhamedov's only son Serdar - who has pledged to pursue his father's course - would take over the country's top job.

Berdymukhamedov senior, who is now Turkmenistan's outgoing president, chair of the cabinet and senate chief, has been the regime's top decision-maker for the last 15 years.

The strongman known as the gas-rich country's 'protector' has dominated public life since the country's founding president, Saparmurat Niyazov, died in 2006 and he tolerates no dissent. Last month Berdymukhamedov said he would step aside and allow 'young leaders' to govern, triggering a snap vote.

In the end Berdymukhamedov junior obtained a victory margin far lower than the 98 and 97 per cent routs posted by his 64-year-old father in the hermit state's previous two elections.

No change to neutrality

Observers say his father will still be holding the reins, after the



Serdar Berdymukhamedov

Serdar, 40, won the ballot held last Saturday with 73 per cent of the vote, Central Electoral Commission said in a statement on its website

family patriarch pledged to remain in politics as head of the senate.

One thing that is unlikely to change is the republic's neutral status in international affairs.

Serdar Berdymukhamedov told journalists last Saturday that status would remain if he won because it 'allows Turkmenistan to develop fully-fledged relations with all states'.

The country that honours its leaders with ostentatious gold statues remains strongly dependent on China, which dominates purchases of its natural gas.

Smaller volumes purchased by Russia's Gazprom, meanwhile, could be threatened by the impact of sanctions targeting Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine - a conflict that Turkmen state media has all but ignored.

AFP

Iran foils Israel-linked 'sabotage' plot at underground nuclear plant

Tehran, Iran - Iran has arrested several suspected members of a spy network linked to arch foe Israel, foiling its attempt to sabotage a key underground nuclear facility, state media reported.

The announcement comes as Iran is engaged in talks with major powers on reviving a landmark nuclear deal abandoned by the United States in 2018.

Iran has accused Israel of repeatedly targeting its nuclear facilities and scientists, most recently in an attempt to undermine efforts to restore the 2015 agreement, which was bitterly opposed by the Jewish state.

The suspects 'planned on sabotaging the Fordo facility and were arrested by the intelligence services of the Revolutionary Guards', the official IRNA news



Russian FM Sergei Lavrov (right) shakes hands with Iranian FM Hossein Amir-Abdollahian following their talks in Moscow on Tuesday (AFP)

agency reported late on Monday.

Fordo is an underground uranium enrichment facility located outside the central city of Qom,

around 180km south of Tehran.

IRNA did not specify the identity of the suspects or say how many were arrested.

Received US guarantees on nuke deal: Russia

Moscow, Russia - Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday that Moscow had received guarantees from Washington on its ability to trade with Tehran as part of ongoing talks to salvage the Iran nuclear deal.

"We received written guarantees. They are included in the text of the agreement itself on the resumption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear pro-

gramme," Lavrov said during a press conference with his Iranian counterpart in Moscow.

More than 10 months of talks in Vienna have brought major powers close to renewing the landmark 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on regulating Iran's nuclear programme. The negotiations halted after Moscow earlier this month demanded guarantees that Western sanctions imposed following its military in-

cursion into Ukraine would not damage its trade with Iran.

Lavrov told reporters in Moscow on Tuesday that guarantees it had received from Washington would protect Russian involvement in Iran's sole Bushehr nuclear energy plant. Lavrov said Moscow and Tehran share the position that Western sanctions are imposed with the aim of overriding international law.

AFP

and digital currency so that no trace of it remains,' IRNA added.

An Israeli 'spy officer, in the guise of a Hong Kong company

and with the help of an intermediary', communicated with the Fordo employee, it said.

Iran has accused US or Israeli agents of carrying out an array of surveillance and sabotage operations targeting its nuclear programme over the past decade.

In August 2012, saboteurs blew up power lines supplying the Fordo plant. Two years later, Iran said it had arrested several 'spies' in Bushehr province, where its sole nuclear power plant is located. In 2020, Tehran accused Israel of masterminding the assassination of nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh in Tehran. The following year it claimed Israel was behind a 'small explosion' that hit its Natanz uranium enrichment plant.

AFP

Millions under lockdown across China

5,280 new cases on Tuesday, 13 cities fully locked down

Beijing, China - Tens of millions of people were under lockdown across China on Tuesday, as surging virus cases prompted the return of mass tests and hazmat-suited health officials to streets on a scale not seen since the start of the pandemic.

China reported 5,280 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, more than double the previous day's tally, as the highly transmissible Omicron variant spread across a country that has stuck tightly to a zero-COVID strategy.

That approach, which pivots on hard localised lockdowns and has left China virtually cut off from the outside world for two years, appears stretched to the limit as Omicron finds its way into communities.

At least 13 cities nationwide were fully locked down as of Tuesday, and several others had partial lockdowns, with some 15,000 infections reported nationwide in March.

Health officials urged people over 60 to get vaccinated - including the third booster jab - as soon as possible.

Around 80 per cent of people in that age group are double-vaccinated, according to



A police officer wearing personal protective equipment carries food and daily supplies for residents at a restricted area in Manzhouli in China's northern Inner Mongolia region on Tuesday (AFP)

official data - but Beijing is anxiously watching the situation in Hong Kong, which now has the world's highest virus death rates due to low inoculation among its oldest residents.

Official Jiao Yahui said at a

press briefing on Tuesday that 'the risk of severe illness is very high' for people in that age group.

'I panicked'

The northeastern province of Jilin has been worst hit by Omi-

cron with over 3,000 new cases on Tuesday, according to the National Health Commission.

Residents of several cities there including provincial capital Changchun - home to nine million people - are under stay-at-

home orders.

Health officials said that over 8,200 Jilin residents have been hospitalised, with the vast majority of them showing mild or no symptoms.

Shenzhen - the southern tech

hub of 17.5mn people - is three days into a lockdown with many factories closed and supermarket shelves emptying, while China's largest city Shanghai is under a lattice of restrictions.

City officials said at a Tuesday

press conference that 'it is not necessary to lock down Shanghai at present', instead opting for more 'precise' measures.

Scenes of closed neighbourhoods, panic buying and police cordons cast back to the early phase of the pandemic, which first emerged in China in late 2019.

Although cases from the chaotic initial outbreak in early 2020 are widely believed to have been under-reported, life since then had largely returned to normal in China under its strict zero-COVID approach.

But as lockdowns edge closer to Beijing, public venues have tightened their scrutiny of ubiquitous health QR codes.

From a 21-day home quarantine with her mother and three-year-old child, project manager Mary Yue said she was forced to isolate after cases were linked to a playground they had visited.

"I panicked when the health officials called... I was afraid they'd take us to a quarantine hotel," the 34-year-old told AFP.

"But this time they are letting people isolate at home. That's a huge relief."

Others expressed exasperation as the pandemic grinds on in China, while much of the world tries to return to normal.

"The control measures were doing pretty well before," Beijinger Yan told AFP, giving one name.

"And now it starts again, when will it ever end?"

AFP

Ex-HK adviser condemns leader over COVID storm



People walk through a train station in Hong Kong on Monday (AFP)

Hong Kong, China - A former top government adviser condemned Hong Kong's leader on Tuesday, calling for her to 'resign in shame' over a deadly COVID-19 wave that has clogged the city's healthcare system and sent elderly deaths soaring.

Former government adviser Wong Chack-kie joins a chorus of pro-Beijing loyalists in criticising Chief Executive Carrie Lam at a politically sensitive juncture for the city with a new leader to be selected by July 1. Key Chinese officials - including President Xi Jinping - are also expected to be in town by that date for the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's handover from Britain to China.

But Hong Kong's 740,000 plus cases and 4,300 deaths in under three months - mostly inside the city's care homes - have seen Lam's administration rebuked for its low vaccination rates and unclear messaging around potential lockdown and testing measures.

"If a leader is of any virtue, he or she should resign in shame

If a leader is of any virtue, he or she should resign in shame after seeing so many elderly people die of policy faults

WONG CHACK-KIE

after seeing so many elderly people die of policy faults," Wong wrote in an opinion piece published on Tuesday in the Ming Pao newspaper, calling the crisis a 'man-made calamity'.

"After the situation got out of hand, all the officials knew was to shirk the responsibilities by repeatedly emphasising that the outbreak had overwhelmed the government's capacity," the former top adviser to Lam's predecessor Leung Chun-ying said.

The outbreak hit as Beijing remoulds Hong Kong in its own authoritarian image after huge and sometimes violent democracy

protests erupted in 2019.

It imposed a sweeping national security law that criminalises dissent, and a new 'patriots only' legislature that vets anyone standing for public office for their political loyalty.

Hong Kong's fifth wave has been the first real test for the 'patriots only' government.

Researchers estimate the infection toll is significantly higher than official figures indicate, likely reaching half the city's 7.4mn population.

The head of the Beijing-based Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macau Studies think tank warned on Sunday that 'accumulated discontent... may lead to political instability'.

"That will undermine the authority of 'patriots ruling Hong Kong,'" Lau Siu-kai said on television. Senior counsel Cheng Huan and business mogul Allan Zeman, both openly pro-establishment, have also called on the government to provide a roadmap out of the crisis.

AFP

Court upholds school hijab ban in India's south

Bangalore, India - An Indian court upheld a local ban on the hijab in classrooms on Tuesday, weeks after the edict stoked violent protests and renewed fears of discrimination against the country's Muslim minority.

Southern Karnataka state was on edge for several weeks after a small group of girls in their late teens were prevented from wearing the garment on school grounds at the end of last year.

Demonstrations snowballed across the state and police used tear gas to disperse angry crowds as more schools imposed their own bans and radical Hindu groups staged boisterous counter-demonstrations.

After weeks of deliberations, Karnataka's high court ruled that the wearing of the hijab 'does not form a part of essential religious practice in Islamic faith'. Its judgement said schools had reasonable grounds to impose dress codes that forbade the head-dress in the interests of preventing divisions on religion.

"The aim of the regulation is to create a 'safe space'... and the



A woman wearing a veil walks past police guarding outside a school in Bangalore on Tuesday (AFP)

ideals of egalitarianism should be readily apparent to all students."

Hundreds of extra police officers were deployed around Karnataka on Monday ahead of the ruling, though there was no sign of fresh protests by mid-afternoon. As tensions came to a head in February, several violent confrontations in cities across

the state were broken up by police and schools were shut.

Article of faith

The hijab is an important article of faith in Islam and many in Karnataka say that Muslim girls have worn the it in schools for decades, just as Hindus, Sikhs and Christians have done with

symbols of their respective religions. Critics accuse authorities in Karnataka, which is ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, of seeking to drive a wedge between religious communities that have coexisted peacefully for generations.

AFP

Venezuela's risky world of small-scale coal mining

San Cristobal, Venezuela - Henry Alvarez says he began small-scale coal mining in Venezuela's western Tachira state out of 'necessity' due to the country's ongoing economic crisis which has deepened during the coronavirus pandemic. He leaves home early in the morning on motorbike for the 45-minute journey to the Los Parra mine in Lobatera, near the border with Colombia.

The Andean town has 50 small-scale mines run by 22 co-operatives, each made up of eight to 10 workers who earn no more than US\$120 a month.

From Lobatera, the mined coal is moved via clandestine routes over the border to Colombia or the neighbouring Merida state to be used primarily for generating electricity. The lack of oxygen deep inside the mines and little



A miner works to extract coal from the Los Parra mine in Lobatera, Tachira state, Venezuela, on March 3 (AFP)

emergency equipment, makes for precarious and 'exhausting' work conditions, says Alvarez.

"There are many blacksmiths and mechanics here but we cannot work in those" professions, he adds, citing the unprecedented economic crisis that has

plunged Venezuela into an eight-year recession. Bare-chested, pickaxe in hand, and helmet with a torch on his head, Alvarez quickly becomes covered in a mixture of sweat and black streaks.

He tries in vain to wipe off the

coal marks with a green cloth.

All three of his children have left the country, one each to Chile, Colombia and Ecuador.

"Thank goodness they've left," he said, adding that their only options in Lobatera would have been to join him in the mines.

Around 500 families rely on the Lobatera mines, which are located in a mountainous area only accessible by dirt roads.

Temperatures in the area can soar, with the mining pit often the only shelter from the sun.

"It's a pretty risky job because we have to use a lot of wood" to hold up the tunnels" and pray to God," said Jose Alberto Trejo, 38, who used to work in construction before finding employment in Colombian mines due to the lack of job opportunities.

AFP

QURESHI BAB-E-HIND

POWDER AND *Hot*

When you enter Qureshi Bab-e-Hind restaurant, be ready for some fireworks. The delectable Hyderabad

cuisine served here come with a bang - a bang that descends quite well - even though you expected

cannons to boom overhead. And you soon discover that 'spicy' doesn't really mean 'hot' or pungent



them are not aware of the traditional mixes as these are 'family secrets' of the Qureshis. That's what differentiates Qureshi from the other restaurants in town.

The chefs are all taught to create dishes that leave a lingering taste in the mouths of diners - something they cannot decipher, yet they know it is not found anywhere else. There is also a lot of emphasis on communication and the chefs guide diners into making the right choices and savouring food best suited to their taste.

Chef Kishore admits that recipes are not distorted to please diners who may not be able to stomach spicy stuff, rather they are kept closest to the original recipes which are used in restaurants in India. This is done with a view to make people appreciate the dishes in their most authentic form, and to keep coming back for more.

Also, equal importance is given to presentation, such that the dish on the table has a visual appeal that is in line with its taste. At Qureshi, a lot of diners love clicking pictures of the dishes presented as they are not just delicious but also appear appetising to the diner in the restaurant.

"We give 100 per cent to our presentation as well as 100 per cent to the taste, without losing the authenticity of the dish," Chef Kishore said, adding that the restaurant has also taken into consideration positive feedback from diners and tried to incorporate it

Hubert Vaz

The cutlery and glassware arranged over an immaculate tablecloth promise fine dining...there's no trace of a pipping hot tandoor propped up in any corner...neither do aromas of smoky kebabs interfere with the culinary dream taking shape in your mind. Where are you!

When you enter the neatly furnished Qureshi Bab-e-Hind restaurant, in Hormuz Grand hotel, the intricate wood panelling around arched motifs are the only tell-tale signs that you have walked into an arena once akin to the tastes and preferences of the Moghals. Then you see through one of the walls and discover an open kitchen concealed behind tinted glass panelling. And the vibrant activity around flaming furnaces yonder, you bet, is something soon to be delivered onto your table garnished with an element of awe.

"We want our diners to have an authentic experience of our Hyderabad cuisine. And at Bab-e-Hind, the chefs who churn out magic with the well-kept secret recipes of the popular Qureshi brothers ensure that every diner is not just satisfied but enlightened about the dish ordered and its origin," says Kishore Chamola who is in charge of not just this restaurant but also a string of other restaurants at Hormuz Grand.

Having worked in varied capacities in different restaurants in the middle east in the past, Chef Kishore admits that working at Qureshi in Oman has been a truly fulfilling experience. "It's not just about the food, it's about meeting people from around the world,

educating them about legendary Indian cuisine that has been appreciated all over the world and found its way in some esteemed restaurants worldwide, learning about the tastes of different diners and presenting them with food they can relish with ease," he says.

Dispelling one of the greatest myths about Indian cuisine that it is 'spicy', Chef Kishore explains that the word 'spicy' is not really understood. "Spicy doesn't mean 'hot' or pungent, it refers to the varied spices that are used and all of them are not 'hot' - rather they have pleasant aromas and add to the overall taste of the dish. A spicy dish need not be pungent, that's what Indian cuisine is all

We want our diners to have an authentic experience of our Hyderabad cuisine

CHEF KISHORE CHAMOLA

about - a clever and balanced use of spices in just the right proportion so as to create culinary magic!" he explained.

At Qureshi, most of the ingredients are locally sourced while certain spices are brought in from India. Also, the combination of mixed spices used for various dishes are marked with numbers and even the chefs who use



Photo: Syed Fasiuddin



into their service. One such was about adding more desserts, besides the regular ones, to the fare and the restaurant has, indeed, introduced many interesting desserts that are unavailable elsewhere.

Some of the popular dishes include the Dum Lamb Biryani, Murg Peshwari Tikka, Dhaab Chingri (spicy prawn curry), Afghani Hammour Tikka, Dal Qureshi (a signature dal curry), lamb Nihari/lamb chops, besides a range of Indian flatbreads, starters, salads and raitas, desserts, and beverages/juices.

In short, one visit is not enough to savour the whole range of delicious Hyderabad cuisine - ideal for family dining as well as corporate dining events - at Qureshi Bab-e-Hind.

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SUPER SALADS

Chicken Buddha Bowl

- Ingredients**
- 100g chicken breast - sliced thinly

1 clove garlic minced

½ lemon juiced

½tsp parsley fresh

1tsp coconut oil for cooking

1 - 2 boiled eggs

½ avocado - sliced

5 cherry tomatoes - halved

½ cucumber - chopped

A handful of greens

Honey Mustard dressing

1tbsp balsamic vinegar

1tbsp honey

½tsp dijon mustard

A pinch of sea salt and black pepper
- For sweet potato fries**
- 100g sweet potato - sliced into thin fries

½tbsp butter

½tsp garlic powder

A pinch of sea salt

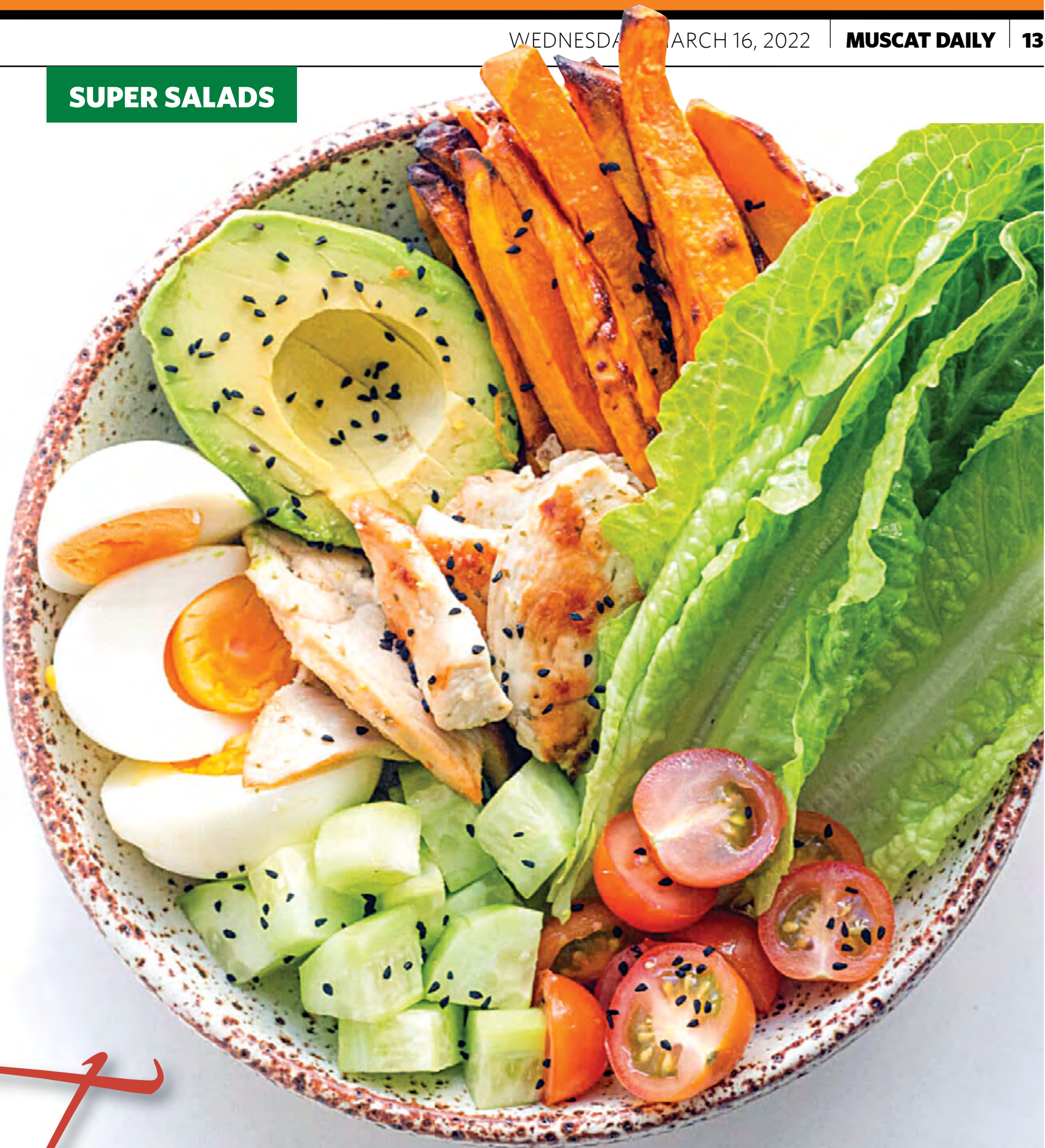
Method

Marinate chicken. Add the chicken to a bowl with the garlic, lemon juice and parsley. Marinate in the refrigerator for 30-60 minutes.

While the chicken is marinating, preheat the oven to 220° C and lightly grease a baking tray or sheet. Place sweet potato fries in a bowl. Next, add melted butter, garlic powder, sea salt and pepper in a small bowl and mix well. Pour over the fries, mixing well to combine. Place the fries in a single layer on the baking tray (or sheet), place in the oven and cook for 25-30 minutes or until browned.

When you have turned over the fries, pre-heat a small fry pan on medium high heat, add 1 teaspoon of coconut oil and cook chicken until golden brown. Then, to make the dressing, add the ingredients to a small bowl and whisk well to combine.

To assemble the Buddha bowl, first add the greens, then the cherry tomato, cucumber, avocado, sweet potato fries, eggs and finally chicken. Then, pour over the dressing and enjoy.



Tease
YOUR TASTEBUDS

Many people prefer light lunches, whether at home or the workplace. But, if you are literally fed up of sandwiches and pastas, how about some super salads that are light yet wholesome. And, what's more - add a little protein and you can make your tummy stay quiet...until supper. Try these super salads and brighten up your lunchtime:

Mediterranean Quinoa Salad

- Ingredients**
- 1½ cups dry quinoa

½tsp kosher salt

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

1tbsp balsamic vinegar

2 garlic cloves – crushed

½tsp dry basil - minced

½tsp dried thyme - crushed

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

3 cups arugula

1 can chick peas - drained

1 small jar roasted red bell peppers, drained and chopped

¼ cup olives - pitted and roughly chopped

¼ cup crumbled feta cheese

Method

Cook the quinoa according to package directions with ½tsp salt added to the water. Cool completely.

Mix together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, pressed garlic, basil and thyme. Whisk until well combined. Season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper and set aside.

To a large serving bowl, add the quinoa, arugula, chick peas, roasted red peppers, Kalamata olives, and feta cheese.

Drizzle with the dressing and garnish with basil. Season to taste. Serve at room temperature.

Thai Beef Salad

- Ingredients**
- 1tbsp vegetable oil

2 200g beef steaks

2-3 shallots

20 cherry tomatoes

2 small cucumbers

1 large red chilli - finely sliced

¼ cup sliced spring onion

½ cup mint leaves

¼ cup coriander leaves

More spring onion – to serve

Thai basil – for garnish
- For marinade**
- 1tbsp soy sauce

1tsp brown sugar

Cracked black pepper

For the dressing

3tbsp fish sauce

1tbsp brown sugar

2 limes (juiced)

1tbsp grapeseed oil

1red chili

Method

In a large mixing bowl, combine the marinade ingredients, soy sauce, sugar, pepper. Add the steaks and set aside to

marinate two hours. For the dressing, in a separate mixing bowl, add the fish sauce, lime juice, sugar and half finely chopped chilli. Whisk together until sugar has dissolved.

In a large mixing bowl, add the thinly sliced shallot and the cut cherry tomatoes. Slice cucumber in half, remove seeds and cut into pieces. Add finely chopped chillies, shredded mint leaves, chopped spring onion, Thai basil and coriander leaves. Add the dressing and mix well.

For the steaks, add oil to a frying pan or ideally use a griddle pan over high heat. Once oil is hot, sear the steaks for 3 to 4 minutes on each side cooked medium rare. Remove the steaks from the heat and leave to rest for 10 minutes covered with foil and kitchen towel. Slice the steaks, place over the top and drizzle the rest of the dressing.



FORMULA ONE 2022



HAMILTON VS VERSTAPPEN

as F1 soap opera returns with an all-new package

Manama, Bahrain - The 2022 Formula One season is about more than just the renewed battle between reigning champion Max Verstappen and the man he dethroned, Lewis Hamilton.

It will be a heavily-revised version of F1's high-speed soap opera, featuring new race management, all-new cars designed to create closer racing, and a reshuffled cast that will launch into the unknown at this weekend's season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix.

Fourteen weeks after the sour, contrived and controversial last-lap drama in Abu Dhabi that ended Hamilton's four-year reign as champion and ushered Verstappen to a first title crown, the curtain rises on a 'revolutionary' new show featuring the most sweeping technical rule changes in 40 years.

The return of 'ground effect' aerodynamics for the first time since 1983 with much bigger wheels and fatter tyres, a freeze on power unit development and a tighter budget cap, down to 140 million dollars (127.4 million euros) excluding drivers' salaries, may throw up arguments and shocks.

But below the surface, away from the gleaming visible alterations and the uncertainties brought by the COVID-19 pandemic,



You can turn these emotions into power and strength and that's what I am doing. If you think what you saw at the end of last year was my best, wait till you see this year.

LEWIS HAMILTON



He has no interest in selling himself, he is a very private guy. He loves what he does, fame can often sit uncomfortably with him. He just wants to drive a car, he just wants to race.

CHRISTIAN HORNER

demarc, mounting inflation and a European war, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the human drama will remain unchanged - at least for now.

Wounded Hamilton returns

Bitterly disillusioned, but now repaired, Hamilton, 37, returns from a hermetic off-season to resume his quest for a record eighth title 750 kilometres up the coast from the Yas Marina Circuit

where his hopes of winning last season's title battle with Verstappen were dashed.

As Hamilton's Mercedes team and Red Bull swapped heated claims and counter-claims, the architect of F1's greatest furore, Race Director Michael Masi, was muzzled and later removed from his role by the International Motoring Federation (FIA), which itself underwent an upheaval.

Masi had delivered an improvised

interpretation of the rules to avoid the race ending behind a safety car. That handed Verstappen, on new tyres, a clear advantage for the last-lap showdown and not only gifted him the title, but also "tarnished the image of F1", according to the FIA.

Within days, the FIA had a new president in Dubai-born Mohammed Ben Sulayem, who promised a review that came with a restructuring of race direction under two men, German

Niels Wittich and Eduardo Freitas from Portugal, aided by the return from retirement of the vastly experienced Briton Herbie Blash as a permanent advisor.

'Thrown under a bus'

Hamilton and Mercedes welcomed the changes - without which the Briton might have retired - but as pre-season testing began Verstappen declared that Masi had been "thrown under a

bus" by the FIA.

Maintaining his characteristically pugnacious style, the Dutchman last week mocked claims from his rival that he would be too slow to challenge for race wins in his new Mercedes. "It's always like that isn't it?" he said.

After spending most of the winter in retreat in Colorado, Hamilton re-emerged burning with "righteous fire", according to his team. "You can turn these

emotions into power and strength and that's what I am doing," he explained.

"If you think what you saw at the end of last year was my best, wait till you see this year."

At 37, Hamilton remains young and fit enough to compete again if he is motivated, but unlike Verstappen, he will have a new team-mate in fellow-Briton George Russell at Mercedes and, after early testing, a car that is "a handful to drive".

"There is potential within our car to get us there," said Hamilton. "We just have to learn to extract it - there are some hurdles to overcome."

If Verstappen is feeling any pressure his demeanour does not betray it. He was relaxed at pre-season testing in Bahrain last week, where he topped the times ahead of Mick Schumacher. "He has no interest in selling himself, he is a very private guy," said his Red Bull team principal, Christian Horner.

"He loves what he does, fame can often sit uncomfortably with him. He just wants to drive a car, he just wants to race. He is such an easy guy to work with, so passionate that 98% of the discussion is about racing. F1, esports, junior formulas, young drivers, karting, that's his mojo."

AFP



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TENNIS ROUND-UP

Upsets dominate Indian Wells: Medvedev, Tsitsipas crash out

Indian Wells, United States - Daniil Medvedev was sent crashing out of the ATP/WTB Indian Wells Masters in a stunning defeat to Gael Monfils on Monday that ended the Russian's three-week reign as world number one.

On a day of upsets in the California desert, Medvedev was the highest profile casualty to be sent packing, outfoxed 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 by veteran Frenchman Monfils. The shocks continued in the evening session as Greek fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas tumbled out to 21-year-old American Jensen Brooksby.

Brooksby, ranked 43rd in the world, advanced to the last 16 with a 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 win.

Earlier, the 35-year-old Monfils scored his first victory over a world number one since 2009 with a superb display to dispose of US Open champion Medvedev.

The defeat means Novak Djokovic will on Monday return to the top of the world rankings, three weeks after Medvedev became number one.

Monfils sealed victory in 2hr 6min after converting his sixth match point. "I'm in my zone and I'm a tough opponent for anyone," Monfils said. "It's been a long time since I've beaten a world number one, so I'm pretty happy."

Reigning US Open champion Medvedev had looked to be in control after taking the first set immediately after breaking Monfils for a 5-4 lead.

But after Monfils took the second set - clinching with a cheeky underarm serve - Medvedev's composure evaporated in the decider.

The Russian earned a code violation for smashing his racket in frustration after being broken in the first game, and Monfils raced through the gears to seal a deserved victory.

Nadal marches on

Monfils, the 26th seed, will face talented young Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz in the fourth round.



Gael Monfils of France plays a backhand against Daniil Medvedev of Russia in their third round match on Day 8 in Indian Wells, California (AFP)

Alcaraz, seeded 19, advanced to the last 16 with a confident 6-2, 6-0 demolition of compatriot Roberto Bautista Agut, the 15th seed.

Rafael Nadal's unbeaten start to 2022 continued with a straight-sets defeat of Britain's Dan Evans. The 21-time Grand Slam champion recorded his 17th straight victory of the year with a 7-5, 6-3 defeat of the 27th seed.

"Today was a step forward," Spain's Nadal said. "There is no

other chance but play very well the next day if I want to keep going. If not, I'm going to go home."

Nadal will play Reilly Opelka in the last 16 after the American 17th seed downed Canada's Denis Shapovalov, seeded 13, 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-4.

Azarenka tears

In the women's singles, Veronika Kudermetova advanced to the last 16 after her Czech opponent

Marie Bouzkova retired in the second set at 6-4, 0-2.

Greece's Maria Sakkari, looking to build on a breakout 2021 which included two Grand Slam semi-finals appearances, overwhelmed another Czech, Petra Kvitova, in straight sets.

After the tearful exit of four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka on Saturday, there was another emotional flash-point as Victoria Azarenka succumbed to Kazakh 17th seed

Elena Rybakina 6-3, 6-4.

Rybakina's victory was overshadowed by a bizarre incident which came while Azarenka prepared to serve while trailing 6-3, 2-2.

Play was held up for several minutes as the 32-year-old two-time Australian Open champion dissolved into floods of tears, waving away intervention from the chair umpire saying "I'm sorry, I'm really sorry."

AFP

Nadal says players should be ready for heckling after Osaka exit

Indian Wells, United States - Rafael Nadal on Monday expressed sympathy for Naomi Osaka following her tearful exit at Indian Wells, but believes players should learn to deal with hostile fans.

Four-time Grand Slam champion Osaka was reduced to tears by a heckler on Saturday as she crashed out of the tournament in a straight sets defeat to Veronika Kudermetova.

It was another uncomfortable moment for Osaka, who put mental health in the spotlight last year after revealing she had suffered from depression.

Speaking after his 7-5, 6-3 third round win over England's Dan Evans on Monday, Nadal said he felt sorry for Osaka, who



Rafael Nadal of Spain acknowledges fans as he celebrates victory over Daniel Evans of Britain at the Indian Wells tennis tournament

was subjected to a taunt of "Naomi, you suck" during her loss on Saturday.

However the 21-time Grand

Slam king said he believes that players should learn to be ready for hostile atmospheres.

Asked for his opinion about

athletes being subjected to negative comments from the crowd, Nadal replied: "These kinds of questions are tough to answer."

"The easy answer for me is 'I feel terrible about what happened, that never should happen.'"

However, Nadal added, "in the real world", abuse from spectators happens.

"Even if it is terrible to hear from that, we need to be prepared for that, no?" he said.

"We need to resist these kind of issues that can happen when you are exposed to the people, no?"

"I understand that probably Naomi, suffered a lot with these, probably kind of issues that she has, mental (health) issues. The

only thing that I wish her is recover well from that and wish her all the very best.

"But the life, nothing is perfect in this life, no? We need to be ready for adversities."

Nadal's comments echoed remarks from Scottish star Andy Murray, who was asked about Osaka following his singles exit on Sunday.

"Obviously I feel for Naomi, that obviously it upset her a lot," said Murray.

"But it's always been something that's been part of sport, I guess, as well. So you have to, I guess, be prepared for that in some ways and be able to tolerate it because it does happen regularly across all sports."

AFP



Henrik Stenson of Sweden plays his third shot on the par 4, 18th hole during the first round of The Players Championship

'Humbled' Stenson named 2023 European Ryder Cup captain

Paris, France - Henrik Stenson says he will do "everything in my power" to reclaim the Ryder Cup from the United States after being named as captain of the 2023 European team by golf chiefs on Tuesday.

The first Swede to be named European captain boasts an impressive Ryder Cup record, helping Europe to victory over the United States in three of his five appearances as a player.

The 2020 vice-captain will be looking to reclaim the Ryder Cup following victory for the USA at Whistling Straits in Wisconsin last September.

"It is a huge honour and I was humbled to get the call confirming the news," Stenson, 45, said in a statement released by Ryder Cup Europe.

He was selected by a five-man panel including the three

most recent European skip-pers - Pdraig Harrington, Thomas Bjorn and Darren Clarke.

"I would like to thank the selection panel for believing in me and will say to them, and every European golf fan, that I will do everything in my power and leave no stone unturned in the quest to get the Ryder Cup back in European hands," said Stenson.

The 2016 British Open champion added, "When I started out as a professional golfer, it was beyond my wildest dreams that, one day, I would follow in the footsteps of legends of the game such as Seve (Ballesteros) and be the European Ryder Cup Captain.

"But today proves that, sometimes, dreams do come true."

AFP

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