

Join global Earth Hour movement

In solidarity for the future of the environment, the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) is inviting the local community to join in supporting the global Earth Hour movement by turning off all non-essential lights on March 26 from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm. In addition, the ESO is supporting the World Wildlife Fund for Nature's (WWF) Earth Hour movement theme for 2022, 'Shape Our Future'. **DETAILS ON P3**



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ROYAL CAMEL CORPS REVEALS FINAL RACE PROGRAMME



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ASYAD PORTS SETS NEW MILESTONE WITH IMS CERTIFICATION



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A UNIQUE TESTIMONY TO ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO PAKISTAN PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Arif Alvi of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Alvi. His Majesty also wished the people of Pakistan further progress and prosperity. — ONA

HM GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT OF IRAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Ebrahim Raisi of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Iranian New Year (Nowruz). In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Raisi. His Majesty also wished the people of Iran further progress and prosperity. — ONA

READ IN

OPINION



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HM, JOHNSON REVIEW RELATIONS



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday received a phone call from Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. During the phone call, the two sides reviewed the relations between the two countries and means of enhancing them in all spheres. They also exchanged views on several regional and international matters of common interest. — ONA

‘Dilshad’ shortlisted for Arab Booker

MUSCAT: A novel titled “Dilshad: A Biography of Hunger and Satiation” by Omani writer and novelist Bushra Khalfan was shortlisted for the 15th edition of International Prize for Arabic Fiction (Booker 2022).

The novel “Dilshad” presents social tales overlapping in a bygone era and foreshadowing a social reality mirroring the history of Muscat, its villages and its people from different backgrounds under seemingly harsh conditions. As usual, the writer Bushra Khalfan traces footsteps of history to explore more realistic details for the reader by navigating in the worlds of history and geography.

The writer has not neglected to interweave the narrative with



customs and traditions of those social backgrounds that emerge in the novel's plot creating harmony of the events.

In recent years, Omani literature has been taking the world stage and garnering nominations and prizes.

In 2019, Omani author Jokha al Harthi won the Man Booker International Prize for Celestial Bodies, jointly with its translator

Marilyn Booth.

Similarly, when the French translation of Celestial Bodies won the 2021 Prize for Arab Literature granted by the Institute of the Arab World in Paris last November, the judges described it as a “captivating and poetic novel that allows us to discover an Omani society in full transformation.”

One reader, award-winning Kuwaiti author Saud al Sanousi, said that ‘Dilshad’ was as “magnificent as Oman itself.” When asked about the reason for the wide interest in Omani literature, particularly works of historical fiction, Khalfan said, “Omani history is cloaked with mystery, and that makes people curious about it.” — ONA

Trail runner completes epic 560 km ‘Border To Coast’ challenge

MUSCAT: Hamed al Harthi, one of the Sultanate of Oman's most experienced trail runners, crossed the finish line in Sur at 5.30 pm on Monday after completing the epic 560 km ‘Border to Coast’ self-challenge in eight days.

Starting from Um Zumul, on the border of Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, on March 13, he was joined by local runners and well-

wishers throughout the journey and raised money for donate.om, the Sultanate of Oman's donations portal for charitable organisations.

After pushing the limits and going above and beyond age, Hamed confirmed his arrival in Sur by posting ‘mission accomplished!’ on his Instagram account where he had been charting progress throughout the challenge and sharing footage



of the run captured by his own team and those running alongside him. In total, he managed to raise donations from 107 people through the donate.om portal.

Speaking after completing the challenge, Hamed said: “The challenge was very tough and our plans had to change. I was hoping to finish in six to seven days, but the temperatures in the desert were hotter than expected and

that slowed down our progress. It was very hot and we could only sleep for three hours everyday, and this – as well as injuries – was the hardest part. Sometimes the wind was on our side so we could increase our speed, and catch up, and the support team was fantastic. Without them we could not have achieved our goal.

They kept us on track and motivated.”

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, MARCH 22

The Youth and Human Resources Committee of Majlis Ash'shura on Tuesday hosted Shaikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosni, Under-Secretary for Labour at the Ministry of Labour, and Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary for Human Resources Development at the Ministry of Labour, and a number of officials at the ministry, to discuss expressed desires under study by the committee.

The expressed desires included amending the standards of candidacy for the announced job vacancies in the public and the private sectors, specifying the Omanisation rate at the economic diversification sectors in line with the directive of Tenth Five-Year Plan and Oman Vision 2040, specifying the working hours for women in the private sector, amending the mechanism of funding work-related training and discussing the Ministry of Labour's decision No 97/2022 stipulating job contract for nationals occupying permanent jobs.

This came during the fifth regular meeting of the third annual session (2021-2022) of the Youth and Human Resources Committee of Majlis Ash'shura, held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Younis bin Ali al Mantheri, head of the committee.

The proposal referred to the currently applied mechanism of employment which is based on seniority principle rather than the principle of efficiency and equality. It underscored the

The mechanism gives priority to seniority in general and stipulates a specific age for job-seekers to fill the announced vacancies in particular, to achieve the principle of equal opportunities among job-seekers

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

importance of considering the human aspect of job-seekers, pointing that the current employment mechanism excludes fresh graduates.

The ministry's specialists referred to the mechanism followed by the ministry in sorting out applications for job vacancies in the public and private sectors. They explained the seniority criterion in general and stipulating a specific age for job-seekers to fill the announced vacancies in particular, explaining the results of this mechanism in achieving the principle of equal opportunities among job-seekers.

The officials discussed the ministry's policy in developing national human resources through training, qualification and financial cost in general, focusing on the ministry's work-related training policy and its results with regard to the mechanism for choosing the principle of seniority to fill job vacancies.





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Steps to ensure supply of cement in market

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion held a joint meeting in Muscat on Tuesday with departments concerned and related companies to discuss cement shortage in some governorates of Oman.

The meeting reaffirmed that the public and private partnership is the basis of integrative action. It also stressed that opening direct channels of dialogue will contribute in understanding the needs of the market and the challenges facing Omani cement factories.

One of the local factories suspended its production due to the hike costs of raw materials used in the production process. Accordingly, Oman Cement Company announced its readiness to boost its production capacity by 10 per cent to meet the local



demand.

The meeting was presided over by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry

and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, officials and CEOs of cement factories, as well as representatives of cement import companies and distribution companies were present.

Dr Saleh said that the ministry has always been keen on dealing

with challenges and finding suitable solutions.

He affirmed that the meeting resulted in taking several measures to ensure the availability of cement in the upcoming period in all governorates of Oman, while maintaining prices.

One of the local factories suspended its production due to the hike costs of raw materials used in the production process. Accordingly, Oman Cement Company announced its readiness to boost its production capacity by 10 per cent to meet the local demand

This can be achieved by ramping up the output of some local factories, as well as facilitating direct import of cement from other countries to cover shortage while adhering to the standards approved in Oman.

— ONA

Trail runner completes epic 560-km challenge

FROM PAGE 1

“I am grateful for their assistance throughout and very happy to have completed this challenge!”

The route took Hamed from Um Zumul close to the border area, through to Lekhwair and Fahud before reaching the Wilayat of Adam. From there, he ran to Sinaw, Al Mudhaibi, Al Qabil, Al Wasil and then through to the final destination in Sur. On each stage he was supported by a technical and logistics team to ensure his safety and maintain the correct course and cheered on by supporters.

Hamed, a 63-year-old runner, said that this achievement stands alongside the greatest accomplishments in his career and the challenge of different terrains, high daytime temperatures and cold nights in the desert was unlike anything he had encountered before.

Hamed competed in OMAN by UTMB and Ushuaia by UTMB in Argentina in 2019, UTMB Mont-Blanc 2021 and reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro the same year. He plans to continue taking on epic challenges all around the world and will now turn his attentions to recovery before making a step to another challenge.

— ONA

‘Finiqia: The legend lives on’ at ROHM on Thursday, Friday

MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) said Caracalla Dance Theatre will perform ‘Finiqia: The legend lives on’ at the ROHM House of Musical Arts on Thursday and Friday. The first part is set in ancient world, where neighbouring regions sit on the brink of warfare. Searching to solidify his kingdom, Phoenician King Ahiram’s only choice is to extend his hand towards the Dynasty of Egypt and its celebrated Pharaoh Ramses II and as an allegiance, offers his daughter Cedrus in marriage to Amun-her-khepeshef the son of Ramses II.



Cedrus must choose between honour and love as her heart belongs to another man. From ancient Finiqia, we travel through the sands of time, witnessed only by the once-majestic temples of Ahiram, now laying in ruins.

Locals gather in a typical village where feuding families struggle to keep the peace. Once again, a marriage is brokered to appease the stormy relations. The legend may influence the outcome. The Caracalla Dance Theatre is celebrating its 54th anniversary since its foundation in Lebanon in 1968.

One of the most prominent dance theatres in the middle east, it has established itself as a cultural institution, renowned for presenting vibrant artistic productions portraying the richness of Arabian cultural heritage.

Driven by the vision of the Caracalla family, its founder and artistic director Abdel Halim Caracalla, director Ivan Caracalla and choreographer Alissar Caracalla, the Caracalla Dance Theatre is a beacon of Dance Theatre from the Arab world defined by tradition, excellence and innovation.

— ONA

National Museum hosts ‘Oman: The Paradise of Archaeologist’

MUSCAT: The National Museum organised a symposium titled ‘Oman: The Paradise of Archaeologist’ under the auspices of Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, in Muscat on Tuesday

The symposium, which coincides with activities of the fourth edition of the French Week, aimed at highlighting the most prominent discoveries made by the French-Omani research teams, as well as reviewing the relevant scientific publications and museum’s activities. Further, the symposium discussed the development of research and the need to preserve the archaeological sites and discoveries.

The symposium included 6 working papers with the participation of a group of academics and researchers from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad. The first working paper touched on the Historical Atlas of the Ancient Near East presented by Martin Savage, an archaeologist and engineer at the French National Centre for Scientific Research, co-director of the French

Archaeological Mission in Central Oman (FAMCO).

The second working paper dealt with the Omani-French cooperation in the archaeological research in the Sultanate of Oman. It was presented by Salim al Hajri, Assistant Director-General of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The third working paper dealt with the work of the French archaeological mission in central Oman: a new research in the Besia region” by Mathilde Jean, archaeologist and ceramicist, FAMCO Co-Director.

The fourth paper was titled The Archaeological Expedition of Khor Grama: Towards the Discovery of a New Prehistoric Culture in Oman, delivered by Christophe Sevan Alloy, Archaeologist and Deputy Director of the International Design Bureau Epha (responsible for developing projects in the Middle East and Southeast Asia).

The fifth paper titled ‘From Majan to the Kingdom of Oman “3rd century BC — 3rd century CE’ was presented by Munir Arbash, writer and historian researcher at the National Centre for Scientific Research specialising



in the ancient south of the Arabian Peninsula.

The symposium concluded with a working paper on ‘Efforts of the Sultanate of Oman to reduce the risks of natural disasters on heritage sites: Cyclone Shaheen as a case study’ was presented by Nada al Shukaili, Head of the Risks and Crises Department at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, said, “The

Omani-French cooperation in archaeological research in the Sultanate of Oman goes back more than four decades, whether in the field of archaeological excavations and surveys or the exchange of experiences, building national capacities and transferring knowledge in restoration of archaeological artefacts. Excavations in the field of archaeological studies began in 1980 in Sohar Castle, followed by more than 12 archaeological missions in Ras Al Hadd, Ras Al

Jinz, Khor Gramma, Al Aarid, Adam, Hasik and others.

Veronique Aulagnon, French Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, said: “This event, which brought together French and Omani archaeologists, has allowed to show the archaeological and heritage of the Sultanate of Oman and the level of the excellent cooperation between French and Omani researchers. The archaeological sites in the Sultanate of Oman are magnificent, and they receive thousands of French

tourists annually.”

The ambassador added, “The National Museum is considered to be one of the beautiful and significant cultural foundations in the Sultanate of Oman. It is a pleasure and an honour for the French Embassy to be able to strengthen its partnership with this emblematic place”. Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, pointed out that throughout its geography, the Sultanate of Oman is rich in important historical sites that made it a fertile environment for archaeologists to research and explore.

He added that hosting the symposium, coinciding with the fourth edition of the French week, is a good opportunity to shed light on various research and scientific aspects resulting from the efforts of the French archaeological missions in the Sultanate of Oman. We hope that the topics discussed by the experts participating in the symposium would be a significant reference for those who have an interest and a motivation to continue the efforts in this field.

— ONA



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Oman takes part in OIC meet

ISLAMABAD: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Ministry, is taking part in the two-day meeting of the Council of the Foreign Ministers of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Islamabad, Pakistan. Oman's delegation is led by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs.

Pakistan is hosting 48th session of the OIC-CFM. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan joined the gathering of the foreign ministers of the Muslim world at the session held at the Parliament House.

Hassoumi Massoudou, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Niger and also the Chair of the 47th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, in his speech focused on the objectives of OIC and emphasised the need for collaborated efforts to address the common challenges.

He handed over the chairmanship of the 48th session of the OIC-CFM to Pakistan



represented by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Secretary-General OIC Hissein Brahim Taha, President Islamic Development Bank, Dr Muhammad Suleiman al Jasser, Chinese State Councillor, and Foreign Minister Wangi Yi will

address the session.

More than 100 resolutions will be considered during the two-day session.

The meeting will also discuss developments in Afghanistan and its humanitarian consequences for the Afghan people and the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Many African issues will also be

on the meeting's agenda including the situation in Mali, the Sahel region, and Lake Chad, and the situation in Central Africa and the Republic of Guinea.

The OIC foreign ministers will also discuss developments in Yemen, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, and other regions.

— ONA

Support Earth Hour movement for sake of planet's future: ESO

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, MARCH 22

In solidarity for the future of the environment, the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) is inviting the local community to join in supporting the global Earth Hour movement by turning off all non-essential lights on Saturday, March 26, from 8:30 to 9:30 pm.

In addition, the ESO, a non-profit organisation, is supporting the Wildlife Fund for Nature's (WWF) Earth Hour movement theme for 2022, 'Shape Our Future', with a social media campaign which aims to engage and promote environmentally sustainable behaviours that people can take to preserve the planet.

"2022 is set to be a critical year for the future of our planet. We are calling on world leaders to take this unique opportunity and secure a nature-positive world by 2030 so that there is more nature by the end of the decade than there is today," explains Marco Lambertini, Director-General, WWF International. "Now is our biggest chance to course correct towards a safer and better future for all. We need transformational changes to the way we produce and consume food, energy and other natural resources. By taking part in Earth Hour, we want to do our part putting an end to nature being taken for granted."

"The idea behind Earth Hour goes beyond just turning off the lights for 60 minutes. It reminds us of our shared responsibility towards protecting



the environment. That's why, we encourage everybody to challenge themselves to think about the decisions they make in their daily lives and the actions they can take to contribute in its preservation, like saying no to single-use plastic, avoiding littering and looking for chances to recycle," said Sayyidah Tania al Said, President of ESO.

"We are proud to partner with WWF in our shared mission to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. This is our time to celebrate nature and help shape our future for generations to come."

Organised by WWF, Earth Hour is the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment. It has inspired worldwide initiatives for the protection of nature, climate and the environment, helping drive awareness, action and policy change. The movement also offers the opportunity for the global community to make their voices heard in this pivotal year and demand a nature-positive future.

Importance of water resources highlighted

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday marked World Water Day, themed "Groundwater: Making the invisible visible".

Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and other departments, attach great attention to the water sector since the advent of the modern Omani Renaissance.

The ministry has established 12 artificial rain stations to enhance the amount of rainfall, which will lead to an increase in the level of groundwater. The ministry said that in 2021, a project was implemented to connect 6 artificial rain stations through a microwave communications system.



The annual renewable water resources in Oman are estimated at 1,318 million cubic meters and demand for these resources is increasing, particularly in the agricultural field. The water deficit in Oman is estimated at 316

million cubic meters each year.

Groundwater represents 83 per cent of water sources in Oman, followed by desalination water at 10 per cent. Surface water constitutes only 5 per cent, while treated wastewater represents only 2 per cent.

The ministry pointed out that dam projects of various types were implemented in Oman due to their importance in feeding the aquifer and limiting the overlap of sea water with groundwater aquifer. The number of dams in Oman reached 174 by the end of 2021. The number of new permits issued in 2021 reached 1274, including 876 for digging new water wells. — ONA

Creating shopping history
in the heritage city

Barka gets its newest landmark today



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KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Millions of cyberattacks are reported in the world annually. So is the case in the region where children exposed to online activities are highly vulnerable to such constant threats.

With billions of Rials lost due to cyberattacks and valuable data stolen, the situation demands sustainable actions to curb such activities. Cyber experts advocate alertness at home and call upon parents to save children against cyberattacks.

A little alertness can save children from cyberbullying or other crimes due to vulnerability. “For me, educating families should be the first step towards a safe virtual world. The policy of ‘none is safe until everyone is safe’ is highly applicable in this case,” says Tariq al Barwani, Oman’s IT expert. He further says that educating parents of children aged five and above is of prime importance. That can provide significant benefits for families. Kaspersky, a leading cybersecurity and digital privacy company, in its recent report, has identified seven digital practices that parents can teach their children to create a safe cyber world. It says that everyone needs to have specific skills to survive in today’s Internet world.

“I’m pretty sure all these steps are not easy to implement, but with persistence, nothing is impossible. As we see, adults around us will sooner or later acquire cyber skills as new technologies emerge on a daily basis. Today’s children are almost born with a smartphone in their hands. So parents need to be engaging themselves in constantly educating their children about these safe cyber practices,” said Al Barwani.

HABITS FOR A SAFE CYBER WORLD

The report, which combined many experts’ opinions, recommended building seven habits for parents to help their children adjust to the Internet

1 Parents need to create a device-free time zone. When children use technology for a long time, they can become addicted. According to experts, this addiction can cause sleep problems, mood swings, weight gain, poor self-image and body image problems. They further say that children’s screen time can gradually increase with their daily requirement of time in the online world.

2 Take control of the charger. Although technology develops in the wink of an eye, today’s devices still run out of power quickly, and it is advised to have kids leave their devices outside of the bedroom. So the device’s battery is always charged in the morning, and the kids won’t be able to watch videos or follow inappropriate channel trends before going to bed.

3 Pay attention to information security and similar issues. When children step into the virtual world, they are exposed to many dangers on the Internet and in real life. Start by telling them not to look at their phones while crossing the street or going up and down the stairs.

4 Educate them about online security, Internet threats such as fraud, personal data theft, viruses and much more. Tell your kids not to visit suspicious websites (and what that means), not enter passwords or any personal information on those sites, open weird-looking links, or download apps from anywhere but official app stores.

5 They should be taught netiquettes. They should be taught that following a particular set of etiquette in the virtual world is a part of unspoken rules, just like in the real world. While people often master these things simply by communicating online, children need help avoiding awkward situations. Parents should talk to them about some expectations before going online.

6 Teach them to organise information. It’s believed that a regular phone or computer reflects an organised mind. A messy locker may not affect the child’s life, but losing passwords or files or forgetting phone numbers can be a problem. Children need to learn to organise information from an early age.

7 A digital detox programme should be scheduled from time to time at a time when digital technology is entering almost every aspect of children’s lives, and it has become nearly impossible to avoid information overload. Hence, our children need to be able to take a step back and make the Internet a less important part of their lives, first with your help, then on their own.



A source of water and an archaeological site



TEXT& PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Wadi Al Mesqah, one of the tourist spots in the Wilayat of Samayil, is a perennial source of water which feeds artesian wells, aflaj and farms along the valley.

This valley also contributes to maintaining the growth of many plants, herbs and perennial trees in the wilayat. The flora attracts many types of wildlife such as birds, animals and butterflies. The valley is also an important centre for beekeeping and livestock breeding.

On both sides of the valley, one can find the ruins of dozens of archaeological sites such as tombs, houses and walls built of solid stone. These walls are spread over large areas in the heights of the mountains surrounding the valley, and can be easily seen during the exploration trip to the valley.

"These dwellings and homes were in earlier times full of life. People abandoned them after the droughts that the region has



suffered for many years, and some of them left these homes after the wave of mass migration that began in the middle of the last century," residents told the Observer.

"These archaeological sites constitute important evidence for some human settlements in the Wilayat of Samayil, and these sites attract dozens of tourists, especially those coming from Europe, who enjoy examining these sites and trying to find their geological history," they added.

The exploration trip to this valley requires stamina as the trip takes about two and a half hours of walking between the banks of the valley and the surrounding hills. The valley provides a great opportunity for swimming in some of the pools surrounded by the rock formations.

"There are a lot of tourists who camp in this valley, where they enjoy the tranquility and the beautiful scenery. We ask all tourists to pay attention to the cleanliness of the valley and not to throw waste, given that this valley is a source for the residents of the area," residents said.

Symposium throws light on ELT trends

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 22

The fourth English Language Teaching (ELT) symposium on 'Current and future trends in ELT' addressed the challenges and changes that have impacted the institutional teaching landscape in recent times.

The symposium was hosted by the English Language Centre (ELC) at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Salalah via Zoom platform.

Muna bint Salim Kashoob, chair of the

symposium's organising committee gave a brief introduction of the event and the committee's commitment in providing continuous support and professional development opportunities for the ELC staff, including interactions with other academics across Oman.

The Head of ELC at UTAS-Salalah welcomed the symposium attendees. In his opening remarks, Saeed bin Salim al Mashiki urged the participants to keep abreast of the current and future trends in ELT while addressing the challenges and repercussions brought by the pandemic. He also thanked the Vice Chancellor

of UTAS for honouring the event, and the symposium partners, namely, the National Geographic Learning, Galfar Gases and Labelle for extending their support.

Gracing as the patron of the symposium, Dr Al Rubaie spelled out the university's responsiveness, resilience and compliance to ensure that the core work of teaching and learning at UTAS remains undiminished. The V-C expressed his appreciation to the management and the staff of UTAS-Salalah for their continuous efforts in aiding the University to achieve greater heights of success.

13 agri projects worth RO 1.3m get nod

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund endorsed 13 projects to be set up in various governorates of Oman worth RO 1.3 million. The projects are in agriculture and fisheries. This was stated during the board meeting held under the chairmanship of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Chairman of the board. — **ONA**



OWWSC to recycle Oman Airport's green waste

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 22

Oman Airports signed a memorandum of understanding with Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company on Tuesday to supply green waste at Muscat International Airport to the compost factory "Kala", affiliated to the Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company.

The MOU was signed by Shaikh Aimen bin Ahmed al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports and Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, CEO of the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC).

Al Hosni said that "Oman Airports is working within the national efforts aimed at promoting environmental sustainability, emphasising its role in the circular economy of cities and maximising the sustainable value of environmental resources, which confirms the concept of green economy and green cities. In this context, we are pleased to welcome the agreement that we have signed with the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company, one of the national companies that has a long history in consolidating the concepts of recycling, according to the latest practices worldwide."

The CEO of Oman Airports

added saying, "Airports in the countries worldwide compete to be a model that expresses the efforts of their countries in the search for environmental sustainability solutions and their implementation, as one of the obligations due in the short and long term equally." In this regard, the specialised international organisations allocate international certificates and accreditations within specialised programmes. Oman Airports has achieved great progress in this field, as our endeavours are directed to enable this kind of bilateral agreements that we consider to support our position as a national institution has its contributions in various societal directions.

Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, CEO of Oman Wastewater Services Company, said that: "This agreement comes within the series of initiatives achieved by the company to implement the concept of sustainability, through preserving the environment and maximising the economic value of our products and services; as recycling and investment of available resources have an utmost priority in the company's operations and natural compost factory "Kala", affiliated to the company, which is a model for these practices."



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non- refundable)
16/2022	Consultancy services (design and supervision for construction of hydrotherapy units at (Al-Buraimi - Dhank)	Consultancy offices registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Monday 11-4-2022 02:00 PM	Sunday 1-5-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
17/2022	Consultancy services (design and supervision for construction of hydrotherapy units at (Sur - Al Mudhaibi and Jalan Bani Bu Hassan)	Consultancy offices registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Monday 11-4-2022 02:00 PM	Sunday 1-5-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Wednesday 23/3/2022.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry , please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry "

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Tender Number

T-16-2022

Tender Name

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Project Summary

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Tender Fee

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Start date for tender document distribution

WED, 23 MAR 2022

Last date for tender document distribution

Monday, 04 APR 2022

Last date for submission

THU, 21 APR 2022

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00AM - 2:00 P.M.

Tenders are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email.

All Tenderers shall submit with their offers a Tender Bond in the amount of not less than one percent (1%) of the Tender Value, valid for (90) days from the date of Tender Submission obtained from a locally registered Bank, drawn in favor of The Chairman of Minor Tender Committee, Oman National Transport Company S.A.O.C."MWASALAT". Any bid without tender bond will be rejected.

The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.

Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head-quarter Oman National Transport Company S.A.O.C."MWASALAT" at Ghalia, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor). Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.

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Lebanon plans tender for Indian wheat: Minister

BEIRUT: Lebanon is planning a tender to import 50,000 tonnes of wheat from India but the timing depends on the Lebanese central bank opening the necessary credit line, the economy minister said, as Beirut seeks alternatives to Ukrainian grain.

Lebanon bought the bulk of its wheat from Ukraine until Russia attacked, and the World Bank has warned it is one of a number of developing countries that face near-term wheat supply shortages as a result.

The Lebanese government has asked the central bank for a \$26-million advance to launch the tender, Economy Minister Amin Salam said, adding that the tender would be launched very quickly once the credit line was opened.

“India is the first state to give me a final answer on quantities and tomorrow it will give me answer on the price,” Salam said.

Lebanon was still waiting to hear from the United States and Kazakhstan on specifications and prices, he said.



India is the first state to give me a final answer on quantities and tomorrow it will give me answer on the price

AMIN SALAM
Economy Minister

“We still have a few purchases that are coming in the next week (from Ukraine),” he said, adding that 26,000 tonnes was on its way. “But after that we are not sure

what we can get from Ukraine.”

Meanwhile, a Lebanese judge charged central bank chief Riad Salameh with “illicit enrichment” and money laundering after he failed to attend a court hearing for the fifth time, a source said.

Judge Ghada Aoun also charged Salameh’s brother Raja with “facilitating money laundering” after he was arrested last week over financial misconduct, the source said.

The same charge was filed against Ukrainian national Anna Kosakova, who jointly owns a company with Raja Salameh.

Aoun is investigating whether a number of residential apartments in Paris belong to Riad Salameh.

Earlier this year, Aoun slapped the central bank chief with a travel ban for alleged financial misconduct and ordered security forces to forcibly bring him in for questioning. The judge is overseeing several legal cases against the central bank governor, who has repeatedly failed to show up at hearings. — AFP



A worker stands near freshly baked bread at a bakery in Beirut. – Reuters

Navalny given new nine-year sentence

MOSCOW: Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was sentenced to nine years in prison after a Russian court found him guilty of large-scale fraud and contempt of court on Tuesday, and police detained both of his lawyers immediately after the hearing.

Navalny was already serving a two-and-a-half sentence at a prison camp east of Moscow for parole violations related to charges that he says were fabricated to thwart his political ambitions. His current sentence will be incorporated in the one handed down on Tuesday.

After his sentence was pronounced, Navalny reacted on Twitter: “I want to say: the best support for me and other political prisoners is not sympathy and kind words, but

actions. Any activity against the deceitful and thievish Putin’s regime. Any opposition to these war criminals.”

Navalny was jailed last year when he returned to Russia after receiving medical treatment in Germany following an attack with a Soviet-era nerve toxin during a visit to Siberia in 2020. Navalny blamed President Vladimir Putin for the attack.

The Kremlin said it had seen no evidence that Navalny was poisoned.

Russian authorities have cast Navalny and his supporters as subversives determined to destabilise Russia with backing from the West. Many of Navalny’s allies have fled Russia rather than face restrictions or jail at home.

— Reuters



Lawyers Olga Mikhailova and Vadim Kobzev speak to the media after a court hearing in the case of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny outside the IK-2 corrective penal colony in Vladimir Region. – Reuters

Police seek motive in deadly Sweden school attack

MALMO: Police in Sweden were on Tuesday attempting to determine why an 18-year-old student allegedly killed two teachers at a high school a day earlier in an attack that has shaken the country. The two victims, both women in their 50s, were teachers at Malmo Latin, a large high school in Sweden’s third-biggest city, police said at a press conference on Tuesday.

Media reports said the suspect, whose name has not been disclosed, was armed with a knife and an axe, though police have not confirmed that information. Police chief Petra Stenkula said police had seized “several weapons that are not firearms” at the scene.

Investigators were now trying to determine whether the suspect specifically targeted his victims or chose them at random, and whether he had planned to attack more people.

“We don’t know yet if he had any connection to these employees,” Stenkula told reporters. The student “has no criminal record”, she said, adding that police were looking into his background and movements prior to the attack. Investigators were on Tuesday searching the suspect’s home in the nearby town



Swedish Chief of Malmo Police Stenkula (2nd L) and Director of High School and Adult Education Schwartz hold a press conference at the Malmo Latin School in Malmo a day after two women were killed. – AFP

of Trelleborg, she added. Police were alerted to the attack at 5:12 pm and a first patrol was able to enter the school minutes later. About 50 students and teachers were inside at the time, and news footage showed heavily equipped and armed police inspecting the interior of the building.

The suspect was arrested on the third floor just 10 minutes after the first alert, putting up no

resistance, Stenkula said. His two victims were lying on the floor nearby, she added.

The teachers were rushed to hospital for treatment but their deaths were announced later in the evening.

According to daily Aftonbladet, the alleged attacker called emergency services to say where he was and that he had laid down his weapons, and confessed to the

killings. Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson on Tuesday expressed her “sadness” and “consternation” over the attack.

At the high school, which was closed on Tuesday, a support group has been set up for teachers and students, local authorities said.

“Everyone is deeply shocked. Devastated,” a teacher at the school who didn’t want to be identified said on Tuesday.

“It’s an awful crime, it’s impossible to take it all in,” she said, standing outside the school where a group of about 20 students stood hugging and crying, some with flowers to lay down on the ground.

School attacks are relatively rare in Sweden, which has in recent years grown more accustomed to shootings and bombings in underworld settlements of scores that kill dozens of people each year.

But several serious incidents have taken place at schools in southern Sweden in recent months. In January, a 16-year-old was arrested after wounding another student and a teacher with a knife at a school in the small town of Kristianstad.

— AFP

COLOMBO

Crisis-hit Sri Lanka sends troops to fuel stations

Sri Lanka posted soldiers at hundreds of state-run gas stations to help distribute fuel after a sudden rise in prices of key commodities and accompanying shortages forced tens of thousands of people to queue for hours.

The Indian Ocean nation is battling a foreign exchange crisis that forced a currency devaluation and hit payments for essential imports such as food, medicine and fuel, prompting it to turn to the IMF for help.



“The government has to provide solutions,” said Seetha Gunasekera, 36, who lives with her husband and two children in Colombo.

— AFP

MANILA

US, Philippines to hold ‘largest-ever’ war games

The Philippines and the United States will kick off the largest-ever joint military drills in the archipelago nation next week, US officials said.

Nearly 9,000 Filipino and American soldiers will take part in the 12-day war games on the main island of Luzon, which are usually an annual affair but were cancelled or curbed during the pandemic.

The exercises, which start on March 28.

This will cover among other



things maritime security, live-fire training, counterterrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, the US Embassy said in a statement.

— AFP

WUZHOU

No survivors found after China plane crash

Chinese aviation authorities said they had found no survivors so far from a crashed China Eastern jet nearly 36 hours after it plunged into a mountainside with 132 people on board.

“Up to now, search and rescue work has not found any survivors,” Zhu Tao, director of the aviation safety office at China’s aviation authority told reporters in the first official comments on the likelihood all of the passengers dying in the air disaster. About 600 soldiers,



firefighters and police marched to the crash site, a patch of about 1 sq km in a location hemmed in by mountains on three sides, after excavators cleared a path, state television said. — AFP



Russian journalist Zhanna Agalakova during a photo session. — AFP

Ex-Russian state TV reporter: I quit over war

PARIS: Zhanna Agalakova, until her resignation this month, a journalist with Russia's state-controlled Channel One broadcaster, said on Tuesday she quit in protest at the war being waged by Russia in Ukraine. Agalakova, a former Channel One newsreader who at the time of her resignation was the station's correspondent in Paris, told a news conference in the French capital, "When I spoke to my bosses, I said I cannot do this work any more."

"I left Channel One precisely because the war started."

She said she believed Russian television was being used to pump out Kremlin propaganda, and that the authorities had for years been stifling independent media.

She said she wanted Rus-

sians to hear her message, to stop allowing themselves to be "zombified" by propaganda, and start seeking out alternative sources of information.

Agalakova said she anticipated Russian officials would dismiss her as a foreign agent, but she said she was working for no one, except in the interests of her own country. The Kremlin did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on Agalakova's remarks.

Earlier this month, Marina Ovsyannikova, an editor at Channel One, burst into the station's Moscow studio during a live news bulletin to denounce the war in Ukraine. She said she hoped her protest, for which she has since been fined, would open Russians' eyes to state propaganda. — AFP

Ukraine rejects ultimatums as conflict intensifies

MARIUPOL/LVIV/KYIV: Ukraine said on Monday it would not obey ultimatums from Russia after Moscow demanded it stop defending besieged Mariupol, where hundreds of thousands of civilians are suffering through Russian bombardments laying waste to their city.

Mariupol has become a focal point of Russia's attack on Ukraine, but attacks were also reported to have intensified on the country's second city Kharkiv on Monday.

The conflict has driven almost a quarter of Ukraine's 44 million people from their homes, and Germany predicted the refugee number could reach as high as 10 million in coming weeks. Europe said Russia was using refugees as a tool and that it was prepared to take more action on top of existing sanctions to isolate Russia from global finances and trade.

Russia's military had ordered residents of Mariupol to surrender by 5 am local time on Monday, saying those who did so could leave, while those who stayed would be handed to tribunals run by Moscow-backed separatists.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's government responded that it would never bow to ultimatums and said cities such as the capital Kyiv, Mariupol and Kharkiv would always defy occupation. "There can be no question of any surrender" in Mariupol, said Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's military warned the public on Tuesday of more indiscriminate Russian shelling from bogged-down Russian troops, and US President Joe Biden issued his strongest warning yet that Russia is considering using chemical



Women from Kharkiv are reunited with their friend from Chernihiv in Ukraine after fleeing to Romania, following Russia's war on Ukraine, at the border crossing in Siret, Romania. — Reuters

weapons.

Amid the devastation caused by Russia's unceasing bombardment of Ukrainian cities, President Zelenskiy highlighted the death of a 96-year-old survivor of Nazi concentration camps, killed in his flat by shelling in Kharkiv. Nearly four weeks into their attack, Russian troops have failed to capture any major Ukrainian city and have been halted on nearly all fronts, but are hammering residential districts with artillery, missiles and air strikes.

Russian forces were expected to continue to attack critical infrastructure with "high-precision weapons and indiscriminate munitions", Ukraine's armed forces said in a statement.

Russia has been saying in recent weeks that Ukraine might possess chemical or biological weapons. Biden said those accusations were not merely false, but a sign that President Vladimir Putin might

Biden says Russia considering using biological weapons

Thousands of civilians trapped in Mariupol

Russia orders residents of besieged city to give up

be planning to use such weapons himself.

Russia's attack, now in its fourth week, has largely stalled, failing to capture any major city, but causing massive destruction to residential areas.

Mariupol, a port city on the Sea of Azov that was home to 400,000 people, has run short of food, medicine, power and water.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said its "heroic defenders" had helped thwart Russia elsewhere.

A part of Mariupol now held by Russian forces, reached by Reuters on Sunday, was an eerie wasteland. Several bodies lay by the road, wrapped in blankets. Windows were blasted out and walls were charred black. People who came out of basements sat on benches amid the debris, bundled up in coats.

Some, though, are managing to escape. A total of 8,057 people were safely evacuated on Monday through seven humanitarian corridors from towns and cities under fire, said Vereshchuk. Among those brought to safety were 3,007 residents of Mariupol.

Russia calls the war, the biggest attack on a European state since World War Two, a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and protect it from "Nazis". — Reuters

UN chief says time to end Russia's 'absurd war'

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged an end to the 'absurd war' started by Russia's attack of Ukraine one month ago, warning that the conflict is "going nowhere, fast" and that the Ukrainian people are "enduring a living hell." "Continuing the war in Ukraine is morally unacceptable, politically indefensible and militarily nonsensical," Guterres told reporters.

Polish priest prays for peace as he takes in refugees

LUBACZOW: A Polish priest who has taken 24 Ukrainian refugees into his home says he hopes prayer can bring an end to the war, as Poland struggles to accommodate more than 2 million new arrivals fleeing a Russian attack of their homeland.

"After the outbreak of the war, our parish has turned into a house for refugees," said Roman Karpowicz, a Catholic priest in the town of Lubaczow, around 13 km from the Ukrainian border. "There are people who are staying here permanently, that is nine women and 15 children," Karpowicz said, adding that the youngest among them was just two weeks old.

With men of conscription age obliged to stay in Ukraine, the exodus has consisted primarily of women and children, many wanting to stay in countries near Ukraine to be closer to loved ones left behind. Karpowicz said his parish was helping refugees search for flats and helping them with travel to other parts of Poland. "I think that only prayer and the Lord God can end this war," Karpowicz said.

War leads Czechs to cancel Tchaikovsky opera

PRAGUE: The Czech National Theatre in Prague has cancelled a planned premiere of the opera Cherevichki by Tchaikovsky on account of the war in Ukraine, the theatre's spokesman said. "We have understanding for the decision taken by the creative team not to stage the work, which could have called forth negative feelings," Tomas Stanek said.

He pointed to parts of the work by the Russian romantic composer that referred to the "great Russian Empire." Staff at the theatre backed Ukraine's struggle for independence, he said. The change to the National Theatre's programme for the next season also drew criticism. "Tchaikovsky has nothing to do with the current conflict," was one comment on an online portal. Stanek made clear that not all Russian works would be withdrawn from the programme.

Refugee crisis strains Moldova's healthcare system

WARSAW: The arrival of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees in Moldova is putting huge pressure on its healthcare system and it has appealed for help from the European Union and UN agencies, the country's health minister said.

More than 331,000 refugees have entered Moldova since Russia attacked Ukraine and of them 100,000 are still in the country, Ala Nemerenco told a joint press conference with the WHO, streamed live from Chisinau. "Obviously the resources of the country are limited and we wouldn't want this to affect or become a burden for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova," Nemerenco said.

"That is why we have addressed all our partners to ask for support in this situation," she said. "Unfortunately these events without any precedent here are really very serious and put our health system under very big pressure." — Agencies

WARSAW/BUCHAREST: More than 3.5 million people have fled abroad from the war in Ukraine, United Nations data showed on Tuesday, leaving Eastern Europe scrambling to provide them with care, schools and jobs even as daily numbers crossing borders ease.

The millions who have left Ukraine since Russia's attack began have made their way on foot, by rail, bus or car to neighbouring countries such as Poland and Romania before some travel on across Europe. Most, however, have not done so.

While fewer have crossed borders over the past week, the scale of the task of providing homes to those seeking safety in the European Union is becoming increasingly apparent, above all in Eastern and Central Europe.

Poland, home to the biggest Ukrainian Diaspora in the region even before the war, has taken in more than 2.1 million people and while some plan to head elsewhere, the influx has left



French Health Minister Olivier Veran speaks with French Red Cross workers as 20 Ukrainian children who suffer from cancer and leukemia arrive at Orly airport in

public services struggling to cope.

"The number of children of refugees from Ukraine in Polish schools is increasing by about 10,000 per day," Minister of Education Przemyslaw Czarnek told public radio, saying 85,000 children had enrolled in Polish schools.

Czarnek said authorities were organising courses in basic

Polish for Ukrainian teachers so they could be employed in local schools and teach preparatory classes for Ukrainian children before entering the school system.

With men of conscription age obliged to stay in Ukraine, the exodus has consisted primarily of women and children, many wanting to stay in countries near Ukraine to be closer to loved

Schools in Eastern Europe seek to accommodate children as many refugees need mental health support

ones left behind.

In a video posted on Twitter, Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski said 10,000 Ukrainian students had enrolled in Warsaw schools and that a variety of options, including Ukrainian online classes, were needed to avoid a collapse of the city's education system.

"We will be flexible, we will act, because we want all those young people who are in Warsaw to be able to study, whichever option they choose," he said.

More than 500,000 people have fled to Romania, the second most after Poland. Authorities there are trying to accurately size up the task at hand while seeking to recruit Ukrainian teachers from among the refugees. — Reuters

Europe struggles to meet mounting needs of fleeing millions

Climate goals take second place as states cut petrol prices



GAVIN JONES

The writer is a senior correspondent with Thomson Reuters

A growing number of European countries are cutting fuel taxes to lower surging pump petrol prices. The move brings respite to motorists but environmentalists say it flies in the face of commitments to curb global warming. Rising international oil costs, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, have driven petrol above \$2.21 per litre in much of Europe for the first time, placing a huge burden on car owners and industry. Fuel costs triggered France's "yellow vest" protest movement in 2018. They are always a sensitive political issue and governments, keen to head off motorists' anger, are now taking action. Italy said it would cut the price of petrol and diesel by 25 cents per litre until the end of April, funding the measure with a one-off tax on energy firms whose profits have surged in the last six months. France has promised a rebate of

15 cents per litre for four months from April 1 at a cost of almost €3 billion for state coffers and Sweden has announced similar measures. Both countries face elections this year. However, climate activists and some economists criticise the approach, saying politicians are reneging on pledges to cut fossil fuel subsidies and are responding to the fuel price emergency at the cost of the climate crisis. "What governments are doing clearly goes in the wrong direction, they should be reducing subsidies that hurt the environment and instead they are increasing them," said Michele Governatori of the Italian climate and energy think-tank ECCO. He said countries should offer financial incentives for people to use public transport, car-sharing or other means of ecological mobility. Alternatively, simple cash

ENVIRONMENTALISTS SAY MOVES GO IN WRONG DIRECTION AS ISSUE SPARKS POLITICAL TENSION IN GERMANY

handouts would provide support for the needy which they can spend on petrol if necessary, but without directly encouraging car use and therefore greenhouse gas emissions. The EU policy think-tank Eurointelligence called the moves "misguided" and "regressive" because they subsidise middle-class car users instead of helping households least able to bear the brunt of energy price rises. The petrol price cuts have seen virtually no political push-back in Italy or France, where environmentalists have little weight in parliament, but in

Germany the question has exposed the first signs of tension in the three-month-old government. Finance Minister Christian Lindner from the pro-business Free Democrats has proposed a petrol and diesel rebate worth €6.6 billion over three months but the plan is resisted by the Greens, reluctant to back state subsidies for fossil fuels. The frictions are undermining the unity of Olaf Scholz's coalition government ahead of an election this month in the state of Saarland, the first since last year's national ballot. The Greens and some lawmakers from Scholz's Social Democrats say a universal rebate is unfair given that car ownership is prevalent among high earners whereas, the spike in energy prices is squeezing low-income households, many of whom have no cars. Economists such as Clemens Fuest, president of the high-profile

Ifo institute, have also questioned the cost-effectiveness of the measure. Jens Suedekum, who advises Germany's economy ministry, said it amounted to "throwing money out of the window". The stakes for the environment are high. In its latest report last month the UN climate science panel warned that climate change was impacting the world far faster than scientists had anticipated. "Denial and delay are not strategies, they are a recipe for disaster," US climate envoy John Kerry said in a statement accompanying the report, which was largely overshadowed by Russia's attack on Ukraine just four days earlier. Simultaneous heatwaves last weekend at the north and south poles saw temperatures 30-40 degrees Celsius above normal for the time of year. — Reuters

Ukraine's cultural crucible embraces the art of war

JOE STENSON & CLARA MARCHAUD

A brick-sized printer head scoots back and forth, spraying a furled plastic banner with the silhouette of a mythical fighter pilot. Next door a drying glossy poster shows a tractor carting off a crippled Russian tank. A nearby computer is loaded with a caricature of a slain invader. From his skeletal remains sprouts the stem of a sunflower, a national emblem of Ukraine. Since Russia attacked Ukraine three weeks ago, the Zovnishnya Reklama print works has been a publishing hive for unashamedly patriotic billboards, posters, banners and stickers. The back alley studio -- enveloped in the heady odour of ink -- is one of many outlets flooding the western city of Lviv with wartime messaging urging Ukraine on to victory. "For us it is not propaganda," says manager Volodymyr Kotovych, 26, clambering over reams of industrial paper stacked like logs on the workshop floor. "These are patriotic slogans that motivate our people and our soldiers to have a better fighting spirit." Lviv is known as the cultural capital of Ukraine. Residents gamely concede the capital Kyiv is the heart of the country but contend their hometown houses the nation's soul. In peacetime the city advertised its artful anima everywhere. Walls were plastered with invitations to stage performances and gallery exhibitions. The tunes of musical buskers overlapped in the cobbled streets. But since Russia launched its attack on February 24, the city of 700,000 has been decked with graphic and triumphant calls to arms -- from official channels, private enterprises and guerilla artists. One billboard depicts Russian President Vladimir Putin's crumpled face in the dirt under a sketched boot emblazoned with the Ukrainian trident. Another apes the style of World War II propaganda -- a snarling Russian bear is torn asunder by a smaller vicious badger sporting the yellow armband of the Ukrainian armed forces. "Whoever attacks us with the sword will die by that sword," it declares, soliciting donations for the war effort.

— AFP

The Russia I know is being erased. What's coming next is darker



VARIA BORTSOVA

The writer is the founder of @SovietVisuals, a platform that shares content from the former Soviet Union

When the first McDonald's restaurant appeared in the Soviet Union in 1990, my parents bundled my 9-month-old sister up and waited in line for hours in the brisk Russian winter so that they could get their first taste of a Big Mac and those famed French fries. The line snaked all around Moscow's iconic Pushkin Square: Reports say that 30,000 people showed up on opening day alone. It was a very exciting moment, my parents tell me: the first taste of liberty, a glimpse of what eating out could be like beyond the Iron Curtain, a symbol of bigger change to come. Less than two years later, the USSR ceased to exist, opening the door to all kinds of democratic freedoms. The Russia I grew up in came with dubbed Disney cartoons and Argentine soap operas. Everyone suddenly had a crush on Leonardo DiCaprio. My mom's new eye-shadow palette encompassed every shade of neon. I went to concerts, bought posters and cassette tapes and, unlike my parents, did not have to wear a five-pointed-star badge with a portrait of Vladimir Lenin on my chest every day at school. Of course, there was an insidious side. With new freedoms came new challenges: a deep economic crisis and a sharp rise in inequality, an explosion of organised crime. After decades in

THE SANCTIONS HAVE MOSTLY CUT RUSSIAN CIVILIANS OFF FROM THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

which the state dictated nearly every decision for its subjects, from housing to place of work to taste in movies and music, the new era also brought with it uncertainty and chaos. Still, I felt lucky to grow up in a vibrant, thriving society; I certainly didn't want to go back to Soviet times. The stories my family told me were bleak. They spoke about prohibited literature (anything perceived to go against Soviet values or written by émigré writers who had fled Soviet Russia), the difficulties of travel (impossible without the party committee's blessings), the incessant shortages of food and consumer goods. I'm too young to remember, but my parents would line up for hours for the rare furniture supply that appeared at shops every few months. In 1990, when consumer items were still only sporadically available, my

mom bought us a pair of tights sized for every age up to 16 because she assumed they would no longer be in supply as we grew older. Films were censored, foreign radio stations jammed. I was fascinated by these stories but also relieved I never had to experience them. I was eager to unearth the trivial elements of Soviet people's day-to-day existence, the ones that did not make it into the history books: a long-forgotten home music video, an awkward wedding photo, a leaflet, a questionable fashion choice. I started collecting remnants of the Soviet era, rummaging through old VHS tapes, friends' photo albums, magazine cutouts and obscure flea markets to gather visual artifacts from a country that was no more. In 2016, while living in Singapore, I created a Twitter account, @sovietvisuals, to share my makeshift Soviet archive with the world. Others started contributing their own photographs, videos and personal stories and the project became a repository for our shared past. It also provided an opportunity to reflect critically on the social and cultural norms of the time while acknowledging the brutalities of the USSR's ideological constructs and oppressive practices. I never imagined how prescient it would be. Vladimir Putin's cynically named "special military operation" on Ukraine has thrust my country into pariah status — rightly, given the atrocities, human rights violations and brazen disregard for sovereignty that he has unleashed on Ukraine. Impossibly, in the past few weeks it's felt as if we'd been yanked back to the Soviet era, except this time it's even more horrifying, more repressive than we could have imagined. Russia is not just losing the comforts that Western capitalism offered, owing to severe sanctions, but Mr Putin is also doubling down on closing off any expression of dissent. — The New York Times



Ukrainian children play in a makeshift playground at the BOK sports hall where a new transit shelter for Ukrainian refugees was installed in Budapest. — AFP

Another food insecurity crisis looms



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

With no let-up in the Russia-Ukraine war, impacts of rising food prices and shortages of staple crops are being felt in most parts of the world. And the current fallout comes at a time when the global food security system has already been shattered by the lingering disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing devastations wreaked by climate change.

Farmers, food processors and supply chains all are already badly hit. Their incomes are expected to be further affected by the rising cost of inputs, reduced food supplies and disrupted markets. This is also likely to have distressing and long-term impacts on their nutrition and food security.

As leading producers of energy and agricultural products, Russia and Ukraine together make up nearly a third of global wheat exports and about 80 per cent of sunflower oil exports. Russia is also a major player in the global energy market, accounting for 18 per cent of coal exports, 11 per cent of oil and 10 per cent of gas.

Since the conflict began, their exports have essentially dried up and the impacts have been felt around the world, with food prices rising and stockpiles diminishing. These catastrophic developments come amid mounting concerns by the international community that the ongoing conflict will escalate global hunger and poverty.

WHAT IS CLEAR AND IMMINENT IS THAT THE WORLD FOOD ECONOMY IS ON THE VERGE OF ANOTHER MAJOR CRISIS, BRINGING REMINISCENCE OF, PERHAPS, THE DISRUPTIVE IRAQ WAR AND THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS IN 2007-08

According to Gabriel Ferrero de Loma-Osorio, head of the Committee on World Food Security, a UN body, an estimated 161 million more people are suffering from hunger than before the pandemic, totalling 821 million.

What is clear and imminent is that the world food economy is on the verge of another major crisis, bringing reminiscence of, perhaps, the disruptive Iraq war and the global food crisis in 2007-08.

At the height of the Iraq war, a UN agency reported that over 800,000 people were becoming hungry every night and more than half of the population at the risk of food scarcities.

In the face of the 2007-08 food crisis, wheat and rice prices nearly doubled, triggering a shortage that particularly affected developing nations. Although prices fell swiftly after peaking in 2008, they rose again. The current situation is likely to remain high for the foreseeable future.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, global prices of wheat and barley, for example, rose 31 per cent over the course of 2021. Rapeseed oil and sunflower oil prices rose more than 60 per cent.

Countries reliant on wheat imports are likely to ramp up levels, adding further pressure on global supplies. Reports indicate that countries in the Middle East and other like Egypt, Turkey, China, Bosnia, Sudan, Nigeria, Iran and those beyond Asia and South Asia are already in talks with India for wheat imports.

The UN agency warns that there are close to 18 million people facing acute food insecurity and famine in Ethiopia, a crisis that has been primarily triggered by regional conflict. In this case, the stakes are even higher, potentially pushing millions into hunger far beyond the borders of Ukraine and Russia.

In war or any other calamities, the governments all over the world should ensure that no stone is unturned in their efforts to protect the production and marketing activities needed to meet domestic needs of food items.

They should also ensure movement of supply chains, which means protecting standing crops, livestock, food processing infrastructure, and all logistical systems. The governments must also expand social safety nets to protect vulnerable people, in addition to helping countries dependent on food imports from Russia and Ukraine to find alternative supplies to absorb the shock.

They should also rely on existing food stocks and diversify their domestic production to ensure people's access to healthy diets.



PLASTIC ART

People walk through an art installation made from plastic water bottles as part of an awareness drive on World Water Day in Malang, East Java, Indonesia, on Tuesday. - AFP

Going nuclear against rising cancer cases



Rafael Mariano Grossi

The writer is Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Advances in cancer care have yielded enormous benefits and saved millions of lives. Between 2000 and 2015, high-income countries cut cancer patients' probability of dying from the disease by 20 per cent.

But this progress has eluded much of the rest of the world, thereby deepening longstanding global inequalities. And the problem is getting worse. Seven of every ten people who will die from cancer in the coming two decades will be in low- and middle-income countries, many of which lack even the basic tools to address the crisis they face. By 2040, cancer will kill 11 million people annually in these countries.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there were nearly 1.5 million cancer cases in 2020. By 2040, annual cases are expected to rise by almost one million, with annual deaths increasing from 713,000 to 1.25 million. Likewise, Africa, which already has a cancer death rate 30 per cent above the global average, will experience a surge in cases in the coming decades.

Changing that trajectory must become a higher global priority. A profound epidemiological shift is underway, and it is in everyone's interest to stay ahead of it. As standard-of-living improvements lead to longer lifespans, deaths from cancer are outpacing those from communicable diseases. In Africa, cancer now kills more people than tuberculosis and at least as many as malaria. Since late 2019, six times more Africans - and ten times more Asians - have died from cancer than have died from Covid-19.

The allocation of healthcare spending has yet to account for this shift. In many low- and middle-income countries, funding to combat non-communicable diseases like cancer is still a small fraction of what is spent fighting communicable diseases. With 23 countries in Africa lacking even a single radiotherapy machine, over 70 per cent of the continent's population does not have access to this treatment, even though more than half of all patients will need it. The annual per capita expenditure on radiotherapy in Africa is \$0.53; in North America, where radiotherapy needs are fully met, the figure is 35 times higher (and a similar comparison can be made with Europe).

Global cancer mortality rates reflect this inequity. In high-income countries, seven in ten children with cancer survive; in Africa, fewer than three in ten children do. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where 10 per cent of the world's childhood cancer cases arise, more children and adolescents die of the disease than of any

other cause.

These inequalities need not persist. Investments in fighting cancer can yield significant returns. Expanding and improving treatment, imaging, and quality of care could increase the five-year survival rate by tenfold in low-income countries, and more than double it in lower-middle-income countries. Scaling up access to nuclear medicine (specialised radiology) and medical imaging services could avert nearly 2.5 million cancer deaths worldwide by 2030, yielding global lifetime productivity gains of some \$1.3 trillion - a net return of \$180 per \$1 invested.

Some readers may wonder why the head of the world's nuclear proliferation

DESPITE THE PANDEMIC, DEATHS FROM NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES LIKE CANCER HAVE BEEN OUTPACING DEATHS FROM COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, PARTLY OWING TO A LACK OF ACCESS TO RADIOTHERAPY IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

watchdog is writing about the gap in global cancer care. In fact, the International Atomic Energy Agency has a multifaceted mandate and was created to bring peaceful applications of nuclear science to the people who need them. Because nuclear medicine plays a leading role in fighting cancer, one of our primary tasks is to help member states avail themselves of this technology.

From Niger to Uzbekistan, we have been helping countries expand their capacity to fight cancer for more than six decades.

While each country must determine its own priorities, the international community can and does play a valuable supporting role. Last month, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and I pledged to scale up our organisations' long-standing collaboration in helping countries fight cancer.

At the IAEA, we have put a lot of thought into how to do this, mapping cancer assets and needs across developing countries and calculating the positive returns on investment in a range of local scenarios. This work led us to launch Rays of Hope, an initiative that brings together donor governments, technical and medical experts, international organisations, public-finance institutions, and the private sector. Together, all can help countries with little or no capacity to build the necessary infrastructure, procure new equipment, support innovation and provide the required training. Moreover, countries that are further along in these areas can become regional anchors, helping to widen access to care and training.

With the number of cancer cases increasing, standing still means going backwards. Covid-19 interrupted cancer care around the world. In Africa and Latin America, the number of nuclear medicine procedures initially fell by 69 per cent and 79 per cent, respectively.

Policymakers worldwide now must reassess their priorities accordingly. Doing so will help to address a deep injustice, and it will put us on track to ensure that the progress made in fighting communicable diseases is not offset by the rise of non-communicable ones, particularly cancer.

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The number of cancer cases are on the rise in sub-Saharan Africa. - Reuters file photo

SPORT

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Royal Camel Corps reveals final race programme

2 2 C A R S A N D 1 6 I C O N S T O B E A W A R D E D I N F I N A L R A C E

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MARCH 22

The Royal Court Affairs, represented by the Royal Camel Corps (RCC), revealed the programme for the final race on Tuesday. Ten qualifying races were conducted ahead of the final race. The season programme started on September 22, 2021 and the last qualification race was on January 25, 2022 in different regions in Oman.

The concluding race will held from March 28 to 31 at RCC camel racing track at Al Felaij in Barka. On the opening day (March 28), six cars and two icons will be awarded for 'Hagayeg' category, two years old, female (bkar) and male (Geadan), for 4 km in 16 rounds. The first two main rounds will have the prizes of icons and cars, the next four rounds with prizes of a car, the remaining 10 rounds with cash prize of RO 700

for the first place. Four cars and two icons will be the prizes for second day on March 29, which is for 'Lagaya' category, three years old, female (bkar) and male (Geadan) in nine rounds for 5 km. The first two rounds with prizes of cars and icons for the first place, the next two rounds with cars and RO 700 as cash prize for the remaining 5 rounds. The third day, March 30, will be allocated for old category. In

the early morning the race will start with 'Elythaa' category, four years old, female (bkar) and male (Geadan) in five rounds, the first two main rounds with prizes of cars and icons, the third round with a car, the remaining two with cash prize of RO 700. Also there will be two rounds for 'Althnaya' category, five years old, female (bkar) and male (Geadan) for 8 km. The first round with a car and icon, the second round with

icon plus cash prize of RO 700. In addition, three rounds will be present for 'Alhool' category, above five years old, female (bkar) and male (Geadan), the first and third rounds with prizes of icon plus cash prize of RO 700. In the second round the winner will get an icon plus a car. The final round will be for human rider (2 km) and the top rider will get a car. The concluding day on March 31 will be held under the auspices

of Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Mashani, Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court. The qualified camels from previous RCC races only can participate in the final rounds. The winners will have cup and a car, one main round from each category, 'Hagayeg' for 4 km, 'Lagaya' for 5 km, 'Elythaa' for 6 km, 'Althnaya' and 'Alhool' for 8 km. The last round will be for human rider (2 km). All top 10 placed camels will get cash prizes in the entire festival.



OOC takes part in GCC Executive Office meeting

MUSCAT: Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) participated in the 94th meeting of GCC Executive Office in Saudi Arabia on Monday. The OOC was represented by Taha bin Suleiman al Kishry, OOC Secretary-General, and Abdullah bin Muhammad Bamkhalaf, OOC Treasurer. During the meeting, the topic of GCC games tournaments to be organised during the coming period was discussed, represented by the third GCC Games that will be hosted by Kuwait next May, GCC Games for youth and

juniors, GCC Beach Games, and the gymnastics and martial arts tournament. The attendees approved the GCC Games for youth and juniors in UAE in 2023, and the venues for the rest of the courses will be determined at the end of this year. In the light of the preparations made by the Kuwait Olympic Committee and the Supreme Organising Committee for the Gulf Games, the attendees approved the date of holding the tournament from May 12 to 31, 2022. The official opening will be on May 22.

Strong Omani team ready for GCC Sailing Championship in Kuwait

MUSCAT: Sixteen of Oman Sail's best young prospects will compete against sailors from across the region at the 11th GCC Sailing Championship which is taking place from 22-26 March, 2022 at Messilah Beach in Kuwait. The Omani squad includes sailors under the age of 17 in the Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 classes, all of whom earned their place in the team by finishing in top positions a recent rankings race event held in Musannah.

The Omani team comprises: Tameem bin Suleiman al Balushi (Optimist), Abdul Latif bin Zeyad al Qasmi (Optimist), Hassan bin Nasser al Wahaibi (Optimist), Feras bin Haitham al Nabhani (Optimist), Alaa bin Hassan al Hinai (Optimist), Hood bin Saad al Nofali (Optimist), AbdulRahman bin Khalid al Hadi (Optimist), Aous bin Maher al Busaidi (Optimist), Elyas bin Bader al Fadhly (ILCA 4), Nebras bin Ahmed al Owaisi (ILCA 4), Salim bin Ali al Hamdani (ILCA 4), Ahmed bin Hassan al Balushi



(ILCA 6), Zakariya bin Suleiman al Wahaibi (ILCA 6), Musaab bin Mohaed al Hadi (ILCA 7), Abdulmalik bin Gharib al Hinai (ILCA 7) and Al Moutasem bin Hamood al Farsi (ILCA 7). The sailors will be joined by Nawaf bin Yaqood al Ghadani (team leader), Sultan bin Abdulaziz al Zadjali (Optimist coach), Muthir bin Issa al Kindi (ILCA 4 coach) and Hashim bin Hamed al Hashmi (ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 coach). Nawaf bin Yaqoob al Ghadani, Oman's Team Leader, said, "This is

a great opportunity for our rising stars to test themselves against the best young sailors in the region. It allows each sailor a chance to gain experience of high level competition, how to handle the pressure and put into practice the technique we have been working on in training. We have a strong squad and we're looking forward to the Championships in Kuwait." Sultan bin Abdulaziz al Zadjali, Optimist coach, said, "The GCC Sailing Championship is an important step in the journey towards becoming an elite sailor.

Everyone representing Oman has earned their place by excelling in ranking races and we are hopeful of a good showing during the week. Each day is a new opportunity to improve, learn from the day before and help the sailors to reach their potential while enjoying the feeling of competition." Abdulmalik bin Gharib al Hinai, member of the ILCA 7 fleet heading to the event, said, "I am looking forward to the opportunity in Kuwait. We have all trained very well in the build-up to the event and feel well prepared." Over the four days, sailors from Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE along with the team from Oman Sail, will battle for position in races taking place each day before the fleet splits for the final day when the medals will be decided. In total, 12 races are scheduled for each class, except the Optimist class where a maximum of nine will be held. An overall prize will be awarded for the most successful nation at the championships.

India boost semi hopes as Australia crush S Africa

HAMILTON, New Zealand: India boosted their Women's Cricket World Cup semifinal prospects with a crushing 110-run win over Bangladesh on Tuesday, as a century from Australia captain Meg Lanning powered the tournament favourites to a five-wicket victory over South Africa.

India set Bangladesh a target of 230 in Hamilton and then skittled them for 119 in 40.3 overs to keep alive their play-off hopes.

In Tuesday's other match, in Wellington, Lanning smashed an unbeaten 135 as Australia cruised past South Africa's 271-5.

It leaves previously unbeaten South Africa in a scrap for the three other semifinal berths with India, the West Indies and England. Australia were already into the last four.

India chose to bat and appeared to be cruising at 74 without loss in the 15th over when Smriti Mandhana was dismissed for 30.

It sparked a mini-collapse which saw India lose two wickets in successive balls without adding to the score as Shafali Verma was stumped on 42 and Mithali Raj caught for a first-ball duck.

India entered the last 10 overs at 165-5 and their scoring momentum appeared to have stalled when Yastika Bhatia was dismissed for 50. But Pooja Vastrakar and Sneha Rana came together for a useful 48-run stand that helped give India's bowlers a respectable total to defend.

Bangladesh's run chase never



India's Sneha Rana (C) takes a successful catch on her own bowling to dismiss Bangladesh Nahida Akter during the 2022 Women's Cricket World Cup match at Seddon Park in Hamilton. — AFP

ignited in the face of tight bowling from India highlighted by four wickets for 30 from Rana.

There was some middle-order resistance from Salma Khatun, who made 32, and Lata Mondal, 24, but they never looked like reeling in India's target.

The match between Australia and South Africa brought together the only two undefeated teams at this year's tournament.

With Australia already through to the semifinals, South Africa had more to play for as a win would have sealed a spot in the top four.

They set a solid target of 272 off the back of 90 from Laura Woolvardt but Australia's formidable batting line-up easily overhauled the target with 28 balls to spare. "We had a great first innings and 270 was par, on another day the bowling attack would have defended it," said South Africa captain Sune Luus.

"We just lost it a bit on the field and probably lost a bit of focus... it won't happen again."

Australia put South Africa in to bat but struggled to make early inroads as Woolvardt and Lizelle

Lee put on an 88-run opening partnership. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES

RSA v AUS
South Africa 271-5 in 50 overs (L Woolvardt 90, S Luus 52, M Kapp 30 not out; A Sutherland 1-26)
Australia 272-5 in 45.2 overs (M Lanning 135 not out, T McGrath 32; S Ismail 2-33, C Tryon 2-44)

IND v BAN
India 229-7 in 50 overs (Y Bhatia 50, S Verma 42, S Mandhana 30; R Moni 3-37, N Akter 2-42)
Bangladesh 119 all out in 40.3 overs (S Khatun 32, L Mondal 24; S Rana 4-30)

Oman, Qatar post contrasting wins

MUSCAT: In the second game of Day 2 of the GCC Women's T20i Championship Cup, Oman recorded a 182-run victory over Saudi Arabia at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground.

Batting first after losing the toss, Oman's openers erected a 50-run stand to place their side in firm control of the tie. Sakshi Vijaya Shetty looked good for her 14-ball 22, but was dismissed in the fifth over after a running mix-up with her partner. Unfortunately for the visitors, the next wicket did not arrive until the 14th over, at which point the scoreboard read 167.

Stand-in skipper Fiza Javed led from the front with a brilliant 76-run knock and was ably supported over the course of a 115-run partnership by the equally destructive Nayan Anil. The latter made 55.

Priyanka Mendonca followed up her player of the match performance from Sunday with a 28-run cameo that saw Oman post a first innings total of 234-3 — the eighth highest total in Women's T20I history.

Saudi Arabia, playing only their second-ever T20 International, gave away 50 extras and looked generally helpless against an in-form Oman batting unit. There were far too many dropped catches and misfields and the hosts took full advantage to all but seal the victory before the innings break.

The second phase of play saw the visitors bundled out for 52 with 25 balls to spare. Cheryl Sewsunker was the only batter to reach double figures.

Kashish Deep Jayawant was Oman's best bowler, picking up 3 wickets while giving away just 2

runs. Afida Aftab, Bhakti Shetty, Sameera Khan and Sushanthika Ashok Sathiyappa claimed 1 scalp apiece. The home side inflicted 3 run-outs too, showcasing their superiority in all aspects of the game.

Speaking after the contest during her Player of the Match award presentation, Fiza Javed said, "I'm very happy that the team supported me, which is very important. It (the match) was a good show. As a team we have learnt a lot, put in a lot of hard work and so I'm very happy with the win."

QATAR PREVAIL

Earlier in the day, Qatar edged Bahrain by 4 runs in a closely-contested match.

Batting first after winning the toss, Qatar made 124-6 after 20 overs. Their innings was powered by a 55-run opening stand between Shahreen Nawab Bahadur and Hiral Agarwal, who made 31 and 22 runs respectively.

Bahrain's openers Tharanga Gajanayake and Rasika Rodrigo bettered those totals, making an identical 43 runs each. However, the bowlers for Qatar kept their cool during crunch moments and pulled the game back in the final 7 overs to secure a much-needed win.

BRIEF SCORES

Qatar 124-6 in 20 overs (Shahreen Nawab Bahadur 31 (38b, 1x4); Pavithra Shetty 1-16) beat Bahrain 120-3 in 20 overs (Tharanga Gajanayake 43 (46b, 6x4) Rasika Rodrigo 43 (50b, 3x4); Aleena Khan 1-15) by 4 runs.

Oman 234-3 in 20 overs (Fiza Javed 76 (57b, 9x4), Nayan Anil 55 (30b, 10x4); Amna Khan 1-35) beat Saudi Arabia 52 all out in 15.5 overs (Cheryl Sewsunker 14 (10b, 3x4); Kashish Deep Jayawant 3-2) by 182 runs.



Al Zubair receives International Sports for All Federations chief



MUSCAT: Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, President of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), received Issa bin Mohammed Abdul Rahim, President of the Bahraini and International Sports for All Federations, at his office on Tuesday.

Issa is currently visiting Oman with regard to the International Sports for All Federation's efforts to communicate with National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and sports bodies and to oversee their programmes.

The body is monitoring the

technical and administrative needs to promote sports and instil the concept among various segments of society.

Also present was Dr Juma bin Ahmed al Kaabi, Ambassador of Bahrain in Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, they discussed ways and prospects for cooperation between the International Sports for All Federation and the Oman Olympic Committee. Also discussed were some mechanisms and projects that would contribute to the development of sports.

Kingfisher to take on KCA in quarters of Grand cricket

MUSCAT: Kingfisher will take on KCA in the quarter-final of the Grand Challenge Cup cricket tournament at the Al Hail grounds during the upcoming weekend.

Other teams to qualify for the quarter-finals of the 48-team knockout tournament organised by the Grand Global Investment group are Proline Knight Riders and Matco XI.

In the pre-quarter-final clashes, MIS Fighters will meet Rebels XI, Mumbai Stars take on Tamil CC, Spartans meet Karla and Sun Shine International (SSI) take on Michael XI.

Chief organiser Ali al Alawi, CEO of Grand Global Investment, said there will be lucky draw for spectators during the weekend.

"The spectators will get a chance to take part in the lucky draw



during our final week of matches. We expect a good turnout for the final on Saturday as well," Ali said.

Tournament technical director Sanjit Kanojia said the quarter-finals will be held on Friday.

"We will conduct the quarter-

finals on Friday. The semifinals and final will be held on Saturday," Sanjit said.

On March 18, Spartans thrashed Kalanga Warriors by 10 wickets, SSI beat Bahmani CC by 15 runs, MIS Fighters prevailed over Kingsmen



CC by nine wickets, Kingfisher beat AHC 11 by eight wickets, Matco XI Barka got better of Beagles Cricket team by 52 runs, Ruwi Smashers thumped Muscat Thunder by eight wickets and Proline Knight Riders defeated Renaissance Rangers by

81 runs.

On March 19, Matco XI edged Adrak Blasters by 24 runs, Kingfisher prevailed over United Friends Club by eight wickets, Mumbai Stars posted an eight-wicket win over Kingstar Ghubra,

Proline Knight Riders beat Desert Warriors by 22 runs and KCA romped home by nine wickets against Ruwi Smashers.

In the Women's Cup, Indian Social Club (ISC) are the favourites to win the title after registering three wins from their matches so far.

However, they have a last match left against Sun Shine International on Saturday. S

SSI will conclude the round-robin league with a match against Aster Hospitals.

Wadi Kabeer Women are also in the reckoning with three wins from their four matches.

On March 19, all winning margins were seven wickets as ISC beat Seema Dance Academy (SDA) and Wadi Kabeer prevailed over SDA and SSI.

From 23rd March to 5th April 2022

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BP sees multi-billion dollar investment in Oman green energy project

Gigawatt project: Proposed venture, when eventually implemented, will position Oman among five major clean energy hubs planned by BP around the globe

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Energy major BP says a proposed green hydrogen project currently under study for potential development in the Sultanate of Oman is envisaged at several gigawatts (GW) of electricity generation capacity, with investment estimated in the “billions” of dollars.

Yousuf al Ojaili (pictured), President – BP Oman, said the project, when eventually implemented, will position the Sultanate of Oman among five major clean energy hubs planned by BP around the globe.

“BP is looking at Oman as one of five clean energy hubs worldwide that BP would like to establish. Why Oman? It’s the strong wind and strong solar capacity in the country, but also because BP has been a very successful investor, welcomed by the government, has an excellent relationship and good project delivery. Our project in Oman will be in gigawatts — we have not yet estimated the total capacity — but it will be significant hopefully, and in gigawatts, and therefore the investment will be in billions”, Al Ojaili stated.

Speaking during an Executive Plenary Session at the SPE



Conference held as part of the Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES) on Tuesday, BP’s top executive in Oman said the local venture is one of a large portfolio of clean energy projects of a total capacity of around 50 gigawatts (GW) planned for implementation around the world. A Final Investment Decision (FID) for these schemes s targeted by 2030, he stated. Earlier this year, BP and the Oman Ministry of Energy and Minerals signed a pair of initial agreements to support the potential development of a multiple gigawatt, world-class renewable energy and green hydrogen development by 2030.

As part of the Strategic Framework Agreement (SEA) and a Renewables Data Collection

Agreement, BP said it would capture and evaluate solar and wind data from 8,000km2 of land – an initiative that would support the Omani government in approving the future developments of renewable energy hubs at suitable locations within this area.

The first framework agreement, Al Ojaili said, would enable BP to cooperate with the Omani government on a wide range of renewables-related issues, such as clean energy and green energy hubs, related studies, regulations, policies and so on. The second agreement will focus on the identification of suitable land.

“We will look at some lands in Oman that we think are a target for wind and solar, study them,

estimate the electricity that we can generate from these, agree a location and an area, and then talk to the government on possible downstream projects in the form of green hydrogen or green ammonia in one of the areas or ports in Oman.”

Also as part of the latter agreement, BP is now preparing to install meteorological masts at a number of locations around the Sultanate of Oman for data gathering on the renewables potential of these areas.

“We are now procuring the equipment — these are 150-metre tall masts that we want to install in 14 locations in Oman”, said Al Ojaili. “We have submitted a request to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals for the installation of these masts in these 14 locations”.

BP is looking at Oman as one of five clean energy hubs worldwide that BP would like to establish. Why Oman? It’s the strong wind and strong solar capacity in the country, but also because BP has been a very successful investor, welcomed by the government, has an excellent relationship and good project delivery.

YOUSUF AL OJAILI
President, BP Oman

Agreement signed for RO 3m steel workshop in Samayil Industrial City



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 22

Samayil Industrial City – part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) – has signed an agreement with Gulf Petrochemical Services and Trading to set up a steel industries workshop at a cost of around RO 3 million in the first phase.

Samayil Industrial City has been designed as a cluster-based industrial park to help attract a variety of different investments, including food processing, plastics and petrochemical, steel and metals, marble, building materials, warehousing and other support services.

Adding to its investment appeal is Samayil’s integrated live-work-play model based on the latest international standards that take into account the environmental, civil defence, social and recreational requirements of investors and employees. Moreover, the Medical Fitness Examination project in the Industrial City will be opened next June in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

‘Made in Oman’ fairs to meet consumer needs during Ramadhan

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 22

Leading supermarket Carrefour at City Centre Muscat has become the latest retail outlet to showcase Omani brands as part of the ‘Made in Oman’ series of exhibitions organised by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

The six-day fair opened on Tuesday under the auspices of Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn. The exhibition, which will continue until March 27, aims at meeting the needs of the consumers for the blessed month of Ramadhan.

The series of ‘Made in Oman’ exhibitions in the various local hypermarkets and commercial centres play a key role in generating



awareness among the local and foreign community on the quality and competitive features of the locally manufactured products,

and emphasising on the significant role played by supporting the local made products in advancing the national economy.

NBO launches car finance with special Ramadhan offers



MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) launches car finance for new and pre-owned cars with special Ramadhan offers and rates starting at just 4.75 per cent p.a. on reducing balance, valid until May 31, 2022.

The bank launched the facility at a special event at its headquarters in Al Athaiba, which was attended by the bank's partner automobile dealerships from across Oman.

Adding to its portfolio of competitive financing solutions, NBO's new car loans offer attractive rates and are extended to salary and non-salary transfer customers, Omani nationals and residents.

Tariq Atiq (**pictured**), Chief Retail and Digital Banking Officer at NBO, said, "We are delighted to launch our new car financing facility and give our customers the chance to buy their dream car, at special rates. What's more, we are partnering with dealers across the country, to add to the exclusive deals available when signing up.

Meanwhile, we continue to enhance our suite of products and services, which are designed to support our customers to plan and manage their financial lives, while providing them with extra value and a superior customer experience."

NBO's car finance is part of the bank's commitment to delivering hassle-free, competitive financial solutions to fit all. Processed quickly and efficiently, the bank also provides borrowers a host of benefits including flexible payment terms, additional financing, and much more. In addition, NBO has partnered with V-Kool Oman and IamJohnson to offer their customers 25 per cent discount.

Tariq added, "What matters most to our customers is the convenience, affordability and benefits associated with the product. At NBO, we want to offer something for everyone when it comes to meeting customers' financing requirements whether auto, home or personal."

More details about NBO's range of products and services are available in-branch, online at www.nbo.om or by contacting the Call Centre on 24770000.

Nesto launches 'Made in Oman' campaign



MUSCAT: Nesto Hypermarket has launched a campaign to promote 'Made in Oman' products. The campaign to 'Be Omani, Buy Omani' was flagged off at Nesto Hypermarket Maabala, Monday, March 21, 2022.

The campaign aims to promote Made in Oman products in

the local markets and boost their consumption rate. It also introduces customers to national products in local and international markets as Omani products are always a preferred option for those who look for quality and excellence.

By promoting local products, "the campaign is an excellent

step towards marketing 'Made in Oman' products. It is one of Nesto's promotional campaigns that contribute to support local businesses, boost sales of Omani manufacturers, maintain better returns for the national economy, as well as contribute to providing direct and indirect job opportunities for locals."

Scratch and win Kia Pegas this Ramadhan

MUSCAT: Own a Kia Pegas and get an unbelievable opportunity to scratch and win 2 Kia cars at one time. Additional scratch & win prizes include, win your purchased Kia back, win all-new Sportage, win up to 20 per cent on display price, Win periodic service up to 100,000 kms and VAT is on us. The campaign is valid until May 1, 2022. (Conditions apply. Please visit Kia showroom for details.)

The Kia Pegas is powered by Kia's efficient 1.4-litre MPI (multi-point injection) gasoline engine which produces maximum output of 94PS at 6,000rpm and maximum torque output of 13.5 @ 4,000 rpm. It offers an impressive fuel-efficiency of 17.8 Kms/L.

For added convenience and safety the Pegas is also equipped with rear parking system and steering audio control. The Pegas offers buyers in



this class a uniquely stylish design, with sculpted body panels and bold character lines complemented by a striking colour palette and a carefully-balanced sedan silhouette.

The Pegas' profile is enhanced with a chrome radiator grille, body colour bumper and door handles, body colour outside mirrors, side repeater lamp in outside mirror, halogen lamps,

14" steel wheel, front fog lamp and rear fog lamp. Viewed from the side, the profile of the Pegas gives it a finely-balanced silhouette.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

Bank Nizwa congratulates first batch of leadership development programme



MUSCAT: Keeping pace with a dynamic market and cementing its position as Oman's most trusted Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa places utmost importance on employee skill enhancement as an indispensable part of its human capital development.

Acknowledging the role its employees play in helping realise the long-term ambitions of the bank, Bank Nizwa encourages continuous learning and a healthy competitive environment for employees in order to prepare them for more challenging positions.

In adherence to its fundamental values of promoting employee well-being and growth, the bank, last year, introduced a leadership programme, HiPo. This innovative programme was initiated to identify, target and promote middle management employees to executive management posts. Geared at high potential employees who had demonstrated their unfaltering dedication to achieving organisational goals, proven their abilities at different tasks and exhibited leadership traits by handling complex work scenarios, the programme was yet another strategic initiative to encourage employees to strive for excellence at the workplace. With the first batch of employees graduating on March 21, Bank Nizwa applauded their efforts and congratulated them on completing the programme.

Haifa al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Human Resources at Bank Nizwa said, "Bank Nizwa has always placed great emphasis on continued learning, charted well-defined

roadmaps for career progression and imbibed amongst its workforce the zeal to excel as leaders.

The HiPo leadership programme not only helps capable employees assume new leadership roles at the executive management level but also ensures healthy competition amongst the workforce, motivating them to perform at their optimum levels. By investing in our human capital today, we will be able to create visionary leaders and managers for tomorrow.

The Sultanate of Oman has an ambitious local workforce who have showcased utmost diligence in executing their responsibilities, reserve the skills to achieve sustainable results and possess an inherent enthusiasm to make a difference. Through platforms like HiPo, we want to support the long-term aspirations of our team and aid in their personal and professional growth."

To ensure an unbiased succession plan and transparency in the procedures, all participating employees were assessed by a third-party consultant. Highly qualified middle management employees were selected for the succession plan and underwent several assessments including the Hogan Leadership Assessment and Hogan Personality Test, as well as Maxwell international leadership training and development program. A number of areas are addressed which included industry awareness, communication skills, technological proficiency and soft skills.

All new Nissan Kicks 2022 gets a technology boost, now available in the Sultanate of Oman

MUSCAT: Nissan Oman has announced the arrival of the all-new Nissan Kicks 2022 in the Sultanate of Oman, refreshed with style and technology upgrades designed to meet the growing needs of urban customers in the country.

A senior official of Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) said, said: "We pleased to let fans of Nissan Kicks know the arrival of their favourite model in an all new avatar. The Nissan Kicks has always had a finger on the pulse of the young urban commuter, combining style and technology with a value for money that has made it a fast favourite in Oman.

The new Kicks 2022 dials up both connectivity and customisation while infusing it

with the latest Nissan Intelligent Mobility technology – making this an even more formidable model within the SUV-B segment."

He added, "The attractiveness of Kicks is reflective of the increasing customer demand for crossover SUVs, as they seek space and versatility akin to SUVs, with the size and practicality of a sedan. These expectations, coupled with growing desire amongst younger drivers to always stay connected, have helped us create a refreshed 2022 Nissan Kicks – and we are excited to see our customers across the region take this nimble model out on the streets."

Placing a large focus on enhancing connectivity, innovation and personalisation, the new Nissan Kicks allows drivers to further express their



personal style as they cut through the city with precise handling and available advanced driver assist features.

Since its introduction to Oman in 2017 as the entry model to Nissan's line-up of crossovers and SUVs, Kicks has attracted young,

enthusiastic drivers to the brand. It quickly established a reputation for offering an impressive array of class-leading features with equally attractive value – even securing 11 per cent year-on-year market share increase in the SUV-B segment during fiscal year 2020

(April 2020 – March 2021).

Maintaining that momentum, the new Nissan Kicks 2022 has been refreshed with updates to provide even more features, technology, customised style and value that buyers seek in a compact crossover.

The exterior sees an aesthetic upgrade with the integration of Nissan's Double V-motion grille, new front and rear bumpers and an array of bold new colours, including new two-tone combinations. The updated interior features a new centre console, new seating and trim materials, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility and BOSE headrest speakers.

For more details on Nissan vehicles visit their new website: www.nissanoman.com



Sustainability important as a driver of value: MENA CEOs



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 22

The EY CEO Survey 2022, part of the CEO Imperative Series, reports that sustainability is a key priority for almost all MENA executives, with 97 per cent naming environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles 'extremely or more important' as a driver of value over the coming years, more than other parts of the world. Of the respondents, 29 per cent see sustainability as an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage.

As such, a number of companies are looking to embed sustainability into their business strategies as they plan for the future.

One-third (33 per cent) of MENA respondents say that pressure from governments, regulators and society are the primary drivers of their sustainability strategy. And while MENA companies may be encountering resistance from some investors regarding their sustainability transition strategy, they also recognise that it is an important factor in attracting sustainability-minded investors and talent.

The survey also shows that 40 per cent of MENA CEOs have seen short-term disruption to their industries as a result of the pandemic, with one in five respondents (20 per cent) saying that it fundamentally reshaped their industry for the better.

Brad Watson, EY MENA Strategy and Transactions Leader, said: "Executives showing an increased interest in fast-tracking ESG principles can be attributed not only to

the pandemic, but to shifting consumption behaviours within the business community. Both government entities and private companies are looking at the sustainability habits of who they conduct business with and the long-term impact of such strategic collaborations."

The EY CEO Survey 2022 highlights that MENA executives are looking to optimise portfolios through deal-making. In a typical pre-Covid year, MENA companies engage in between 400 and 500 transactions across the region. In 2021, that number rose to approximately 650 as the pandemic accelerated portfolio optimisation.

As MENA businesses work to achieve long-term resilience, 64 per cent of MENA CEOs plan to pursue M&A within the next 12 months.

Brad added: "We expect above-average M&A activity to continue in 2022 as MENA companies and government-related entities acquire bolt-on operations to strengthen core areas of their portfolio while divesting of non-core assets.

In 2021, the majority of the acquisition capital was deployed within the region. However, according to our survey, MENA respondents also identify Italy and the UK as sources of deal activity over the next twelve months. It is also clear that MENA companies feel a particular need for diversification, with 57 per cent of MENA respondents saying that they are accelerating cross-border investments – significantly more than the 45 per cent global average."

Mazoon Electricity publishes sustainable finance framework

Green principles: First Omani company to publish its own sustainable finance framework in line with Oman Vision 2040

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 22

Mazoon Electricity Company, member of Nama Group, has published its Sustainable Finance Framework. This framework marks the next step in the company's ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) journey in supporting Oman Vision 2040, through its strategic purpose of lighting and enriching life through safe, reliable and sustainable electricity. Standard Chartered Bank supported Mazoon Electricity on the development of its framework as the company's sole sustainability structuring adviser.

Under the overarching framework, Mazoon Electricity will be able to access green, social or sustainability bonds, sukuk, loans and other debt instruments through the sustainable finance market. The framework has been designed to fully comply with the International Capital Market Association's Green and Social Bond Principles, as well as the Sustainability Bond Guidelines, and the Loan Market Association's Green and Social Loan Principles.

DNV, one of the world's leading certification bodies, provided



an independent assessment confirming that the framework was in line with these principles. Projects financed under the framework will support Mazoon Electricity's sustainability agenda.

Eligible activities range from improving energy efficiency through installation of smart meters, supporting the growth of clean energy by connecting renewable energy generation infrastructure and supporting socioeconomic development by providing electricity distribution infrastructure to those without previous access to electricity.

Salim bin Said al Kamyani,

CEO, Mazoon Electricity said, "We are delighted to have published our Sustainable Finance Framework and Second Party Opinion from DNV, making us the first Omani company to do so. This is testament to Mazoon Electricity's mission towards delivering the sustainability agenda of the Sultanate of Oman and the strategic goals of Vision 2040."

Ahmed Tufail al Rahman, CFO, Nama Group said, "Mazoon Electricity becoming the first company in Oman to publish a Sustainable Finance Framework is testament to Nama Group's commitment to sustainability.

Sustainable finance is key to meeting Nama Group's Vision and ESG agenda, including its Sustainability Plan and Strategy for Renewable Energy."

Hussain Yafai, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank, Oman said, "Standard Chartered is proud to support Mazoon Electricity in becoming the first Omani company to publish its Sustainable Finance Framework. As a bank, we are committed to supporting our clients across our dynamic footprint in achieving their ESG goals, as we ourselves look to become Net Zero from our financing activities by 2050."

Oil rises towards \$116 per barrel

LONDON: Oil rose towards \$116 a barrel on Tuesday, adding to a 7 per cent surge the previous day, supported by supply risks from a potential European Union oil embargo on Russia and concern about attacks on Saudi oil facilities. EU foreign ministers are split on whether to join the United States in banning Russian oil.

Brent crude rose 26 cents, or 0.2 per cent, to \$115.96 a barrel by 1140 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude slipped 10 cents to \$109.48. Both contracts had settled up more than 7 per cent on Monday. — Reuters

Asyad Ports sets new milestone with IMS certification



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 22

Asyad Ports, a member of Asyad Group, hits another mark in its journey towards operational excellence by securing the Integrated Management System (IMS) certification. Showing outstanding capabilities, Asyad Ports met all IMS certification requirements within less than one year, with multiple audits conducted internally and by an external body.

The integrated management system increases efficiency, effectiveness and optimises cost while minimising the disruption caused by repeated external audits. It also reflects a lid commitment to enhanced performance, higher employee and customer satisfaction and continuous improvement.

"Receiving the IMS certification is a testament to our continuous efforts to increase effectiveness, streamline business

processes and ensure the highest quality of services in our facilities", said Dr Ahmed al Abri, Chief Executive Officer of Asyad Ports. "Our extensive ISO certifications portfolio reinforces the faith our customers and partners place in Asyad Ports as a trusted name for consistency and customer satisfaction.

We will continue our quest to apply best sector practices and meet the highest international standards across all functions." "This achievement will play a major role in attracting new shipping lines and improving our operations", he added.

With the addition of the IMS certification, Asyad Ports managed to build an impressive record of international certificates that reflects its commitment to develop robust operations, ensure standardisation of management processes and apply diligent occupational health and safety practices.

MEDRC invites entries for Omani Young Water Researchers Award

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 22

MEDRC has opened applications for this year's Omani Young Water Researchers Award. Held under the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the award is designed to recognise young water researchers whose work contributes to advancing key areas of the water sector: Water management; Wastewater treatment and reuse; Water treatment technologies; Non-revenue water and Desalination and/or related environmental research.

This is the sixth year of the prestigious award first launched in 2017 to showcase the high level of water research being conducted in Oman by young researchers in the early stage of their careers. To be eligible to compete, applicants must be Omani nationals and between 20-35 years



of age.

Submitted applications will undergo two rounds of review. They are first screened for eligibility and compliance against the terms and conditions of the award, before being evaluated and

scored by the Judging panel.

The panel - formed of leading water experts from academic institutions and organisations in the public and private sectors - will call selected finalists to present their findings and assess them on

their ability to communicate and defend their research work.

Winners will be announced in both undergraduate and postgraduate categories. A total of four winners, 2 from each category will be awarded at an official ceremony at the end of the year.

The award is made possible through the generous sponsorship of Omar Zawawi Establishment LLC (OMZEST) and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Oman with support from the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company, MAJIS Industrial Services and the Oman Water Society.

MEDRC invites applications from eligible young Omani nationals via their website at www.medrc.org/apply. Further details can be found at www.medrc.org/research. Closing date for applications is July 7, 2022.

China’s property rebound is unstable

The recent relaxation of official pressure on the Chinese real estate sector is less reassuring than it seems. Battered property stocks surged last week on regulators’ promises to stabilise the sector. But bond investors are less confident and defaults continue apace.

Reassuring comments by China’s economic tsar Liu He, promising less policy volatility and more market-friendly measures last Wednesday, set off a massive, broad-based rally on Chinese bourses. The benchmark CSI300 index of the top companies listed in Shanghai and Shenzhen is up over 6% since the speech.

Liu also signalled more support for the housing market, and while he was thin on specifics, state media reported shortly afterward that the much-feared property tax trial has been delayed.

The Hang Seng Mainland Properties Index has popped up 30%; even shares in China Evergrande, the poster child for indebted mainland developers, are up slightly year-to-date – although trading has been halted since Monday.

Bond investors’ response was far more restrained. Indexes tracking high-yield Chinese developer issues have risen slightly but remain deeply depressed. That is sensible.

Minor easing steps at the municipal level, mostly focused on mortgage restrictions, have reheated speculative interest in top cities like Shanghai.

But tight funding conditions persist at the national level. Developers still need to service around \$32 billion of offshore bonds coming due later this year, say Moody’s analysts, and earnings are under pressure.

The root of the problem is the central bank’s “three red lines”, which cap developers’ debt-to-cash, debt-to-assets, and debt-to-equity ratios. They were introduced in 2020 to cut the industry’s eye-watering debt levels and they pushed developers like Evergrande into restructuring.

That crisis is not over. Liu’s comments might be a tacit call for more easing at the margins. But that won’t automatically bring buyers back to markets where prices are stagnant or falling, especially with Covid-19 resurging in mainland cities. — Reuters

The root of the problem is the central bank’s “three red lines”, which cap developers’ debt-to-cash, debt-to-assets, and debt-to-equity ratios



INTERNET FOR SMALL BUSINESS

US Vice-President Kamala Harris (L) speaks with small business owner Troy Bijeaux as she tours Armand J Brinkhaus Community Library while speaking about accessible Internet in Sunset, Los Angeles. Harris is visiting the State of Louisiana to highlight the administration’s investment in high-speed Internet for smaller communities. – AFP

Bankers fear end of \$130 bn deal boom



ANDY JALIL andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

IPOS HAVE SLUMPED BY 72 PER CENT GLOBALLY AND 84 PER CENT IN EUROPE TO JUST \$3.2 BILLION

The war on Ukraine by Russia is threatening to derail a deal boom that brought in a record \$130 billion in fees for investment banks in 2021 and helped to raise profits at the largest European and American lenders.

Senior bankers have said that the Ukraine conflict had led to a sudden pause in deal-making activity, which had the potential to turn into a longer-term slump if the impact of the crisis continues.

The head of M&A at a US bank who declined to go on record talking about the conflict, said: “The juxtaposition between where we were at the end of December – exhaustion having not stopped working for months on deal after deal after deal – to where we are weeks later is huge. I’ve never seen such an acute turn.”

There were already signs that the boom was slowing this year. M&A activity to March this year was down 27 per cent compared to the same period last year to \$754.7 billion, according to data provider Dealogic.

IPOs have slumped by 72 per cent globally and 84 per cent in Europe to just \$3.2 billion, as volatile markets have made transactions difficult to price and underperforming listings last year hit investor appetite.

“Investor appetite is shot to pieces”,

said the chief executive of one London investment bank focused on Europe. It was hard enough to get deals of the ground before the war, but the Ukraine-Russia situation has seen pretty much everyone pull back to wait and see how long the crisis lasts.”

In a sign of the growing concern over the impact of the conflict, electronics firm Spectris pulled out of its \$2.4 billion planned acquisition of Oxford instruments on March 7.

Chief Executive Andrew Heath said, the “world has changed” since the war and it brought “a high degree of uncertainty to the economic outlook around the world.”

Head of M&A at Numis, Stuart Ord, said, many companies were in a “wait and see” mode. “Confidence and certainty are paramount in M&A transactions, and so the macroeconomic pressures and geopolitical and developments that continue to evolve on a daily basis will inevitably weigh on the near-term deal-making outlook.”

There are around \$300 billion of outstanding M&A deals in Europe, according to Bloomberg. “We’re in the eye of the storm right now”, said one senior equity banker. “The change in mood is palpable. Appetite for deals has been hugely impacted, but there’s a big question mark about how long this pause will last.”

In the week after Russia’s invasion of

Ukraine, equity markets in Emea raised \$128m according to Dealogic, down from \$1.6 billion two weeks earlier.

Meanwhile, the \$9.4 billion of M&A deals announced in the region in the same week was down 38 per cent on the weekly average of 2022. Around \$10 billion of equity and debt fundraising has been pulled over the past two weeks, according to Bloomberg data.

The investment banking units of both European and American firms have helped bolster profits throughout last year, with Barclays, JPMorgan, Citigroup and Bank of America among those revealing record revenues.

Banks brought in a record \$130 billion in 2021 as M&A and equity capital markets fees surged, which has led to a battle for top talent that has prompted banks to raise bonus payments by as much as 50 per cent.

So far in 2022, revenues have already dropped by 37 per cent to \$15.2 billion compared to the same period in 2021, according to Dealogic.

However, dealmakers remain bullish that deal activity could bounce back in the longer-term.

Chief executive of a boutique in London said: “Private equity companies have a wall of cash, interest rates are low, and there are huge technological and ESG drivers that all remain in place to drive more M&A.”

Saudi Aramco will use jump in profits to invest more



STANLEY REED

The author, a London-based journalist, has been writing for The New York Times on energy, the environment and the Middle East since 2012

Saudi Aramco, the world’s largest oil company, said it plans to use its enormous profits from last year to double down on boosting oil output capacity and move into shale drilling, which has transformed the oil industry in the United States.

The company on Sunday reported net income of \$110 billion for 2021, more than double that of the previous year. The earnings mostly reflected higher prices as oil demand recovered from the steep falls in the early stages of the pandemic.

The rich earnings are allowing the company to invest in meeting what the Saudi leadership believes will be a strong global need for oil and natural gas in the next few years, as well as in technologies that could reduce the overall carbon content of the fuels it sells in the future. For instance, Aramco is investing in low-carbon hydrogen, a potential

multipurpose fuel, and in storing carbon dioxide underground. But oil and natural gas remain the key focus for capital spending, which is expected to rise to as much as \$50 billion in 2022 from \$31.9 billion in 2021.

On a call with analysts, CEO Amin H Nasser said oil demand was expected to continue to grow for the rest of the decade and that a major challenge for the world was finding the supply to meet that growth.

“Aramco will be a key part of the answer”, Nasser said. The high prices for oil and gas and concerns about supplies in recent months represent something of a reaffirmation that there will be a role for Aramco for the foreseeable future.

While many companies are wary of investing in oil and gas because of climate change concerns, Nasser portrayed Aramco as a company with the cash to pursue wide-

ranging growth opportunities in Saudi Arabia and beyond, mainly in Asian countries including China and India.

The price of Brent crude, the international bench mark, was trading at about \$112 a barrel on Monday, after hitting nearly \$140 a couple of weeks ago. It was about \$70 in December.

Nasser said Aramco had largely been able to keep operations going so far, but that with oil supplies tight, such attacks “are a real concern for the world.” The huge profits meant that Aramco was able to pay a hefty dividend of \$75 billion for the year. Most of the money goes to the Saudi government, which owns more than 98% of the company, including 4% that was shifted last month to the Public Investment Fund, a vehicle for government projects including those favoured by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom’s chief policymaker. Aramco also awarded

one bonus share for every 10 shares.

Aramco said it was on the way to increasing oil production capacity to 13 million barrels a day from the current 12 million, a level that should eventually encourage higher production.

Aramco also said it was beginning development of a large shale gas field called Jafurah in the eastern part of the kingdom, where there are large oil fields. Production of gas, which is used in generating electric power and in industry, has taken a back seat to oil in the kingdom, but Nasser has pushed to increase gas output.

Aramco anticipates investing as much as \$100 billion in Jafurah over time, and the company said gas flows could rise more than 50% before the end of the decade. The output from the new gas fields, Nasser said, will be, in part, used to make hydrogen and are likely to supplant oil used in power plants, allowing for an additional 1 million

barrels of oil a day for export.

Saudi Arabia has attracted criticism for keeping oil output low, contributing to sharp price rises over the last year. The company’s oil production was on average just 9.2 million barrels a day for 2021, as Riyadh strictly observed output quotas set by the Opec+ group of producing nations. Consuming nations, including the United States, have prodded the Saudis to increase production, with little success until now.

If current trends in the energy industry prevail, Aramco could be even more profitable in 2022. Neil Beveridge, an analyst at Bernstein, a research firm, estimated that Aramco could generate \$140 billion in cash in 2022, assuming that current oil prices of about \$110 a barrel for Brent crude continue through the year. Prices for Brent crude in 2021 were about \$70 on average

— The New York Times

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features



A unique testimony to architectural heritage

The hammam of Qalhat is an extremely interesting building. It is, first of all, the only one of its kind ever built in the Sultanate of Oman, past and present, and as such it is a unique testimony of the Omani architectural heritage...**P20**

READ

UGLY LOVE
BY COLLEEN HOOVER

When Tate Collins finds airline pilot Miles Archer passed out in front of her apartment door, it is definitely not love at first sight. They wouldn't even go so far as to consider themselves friends. But what they do have is an undeniable mutual attraction.

One of London's best in gastronomy now in Muscat to bring Michelin-star experience

WITHIN 10 MONTHS after opening Jamavar in London's Mayfair, Chef Rohit Ghai has earned, in record-breaking time, a Michelin star and also winning praises from celebrities and dignitaries, as well as some of Britain's most discerning food critics. Today, he is well-regarded worldwide for his innovative cooking techniques and ability to blend authentic Indian dishes with the contemporary fine-dining presentation.

After a decade on London's res-

taurant scene and becoming one of the culinary world's most in-demand Michelin-starred chefs, Chef Rohit is flying from London to Muscat for a five-night only event that will allow foodies in Oman an opportunity to taste his dishes. Happening at Sultanah, Shangri-La Al Husn's fine-dining venue from March 23 to 27, 2022 and paired with the enchanting live performance of a saxophonist and vocalist, Chef Rohit will present an exquisite culinary experience with a carefully

FOOD SCENE

curated menu featuring his trademark interpretation of Indian cuisine. He will treat Muscat diners to a series of elegant and bespoke dishes during his kitchen takeover. Chef Rohit's international career began in 2008 when he joined Michelin-starred Benares in London's Mayfair, where he developed an understanding of the British palate and French techniques. In 2013, as a talented rising star in the London restaurant scene, his created flair for cooking earned him a role as executive chef of two Michelin-starred restaurants, Trishna and Gymkhana. Chef Rohit opened his first solo site, Kutir in late 2018. Kutir is co-founded by Ghai and Abhi Sangwan who met during their time at Gymkhana, Bombay Bustle and Hoppers and translated from Sanskrit means 'a small cottage in the middle of nowhere.'

Kutir menu draws inspiration



from the royal tradition of hunting expeditions in the lush forests and jungles of the Indian countryside. The food is representative of the feasting-style, convivial and celebratory dining that occurs on these retreats and menus feature

highly seasonal ingredients with an emphasis on game and seafood and offer a tasting, or 'expedition' menu of 6 tasting courses. Chef Rohit brought Kutir to Dubai for the first time at Expo 2020 under 'The Never Been Seen Collection', which garnered amazing interest among visiting culinary enthusiasts and has been a resounding success. "We are excited to welcome an internationally acclaimed chef of this calibre to Shangri-La Al Husn. Chef Rohit Ghai brings to the kitchen and table a wealth of experience and creative vision which diversifies from traditional Indian cuisine," General Manager Sandro Mazza said of the chef's visit. "Our culinary team looks forward to learning from him in the pursuit of continuous growth and culinary excellence. Chef Rohit's visit will add new flavours and colours to our resort's dining scene as we continue delighting our guests with our series of immersive culinary experiences at Oman's exclusive cliff-top retreat."



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AROUND THE WORLD

ANIMAL PLANET

Fish waste become octopus food as farms expand amid captivity concerns



WHEN MEXICAN BIOLOGIST Carlos Rosas dips his hand into the water of a large open-topped tank and brings it to the surface, there is a tiny purple baby octopus, no bigger than a tennis ball, in his palm. It squirms and slithers before slipping from his hand back into the tank, the only home it has ever known.

This octopus, along with about 250 others, lives in captivity as part of a community project in Sisal, a fishing community in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, that started 15 years ago as a women's collective.

With guidance from Rosas, a professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the small octopus farm developed a patented food for the highly intelligent cephalopods. The farm expanded, now employing older fishermen and their wives, offering a way to earn money back on land when the grueling work at sea becomes too much.

Octopus are notoriously difficult to raise in captivity, but rising ocean temperatures due to climate change and overfishing is some parts of the world are reducing the population in the wild. Meanwhile a rise in disposable income and preference for international cuisine are making octopus a popular ingredient in tapas, ceviche and soups.

Scientists and activists, however, have raised ethical questions about breeding octopus. Researchers last year concluded octopus are sentient beings, capable of experiencing distress and happiness, and that high-welfare farming would be impossible.

After much trial and error, Rosas' team found success with a food made from fish waste - like heads - that would otherwise be tossed back into the sea.

They blend the waste in a machine, creating a paste-like substance that is then formed into pellets. The octopus seem to like it. It's a win-win, Rosas said. Fishermen earn extra money by selling their waste and the farm gets what it needs to feed the octopus.

"We are going to make the fishing industry a more efficient industry at the same time that we improve octopus production," Rosas said.

The farm's formula has attracted international attention. Spanish company Nueva Pescanova, which plans to open the world's first commercial octopus farm next year, wants to test the food, and even send its own fish waste to Sisal to have it made into food, Rosas said.

Nueva Pescanova, in a statement shared with Reuters, said a food for farmed octopus was being developed based on the UNAM model, which it described as "a circular economy solution." — **Reuters**

ART

Russian artist and Ukrainian in Bali collaborate on message of unity



A RUSSIAN ARTIST and a Ukrainian owner of a villa complex on the Indonesian resort island of Bali have come together to promote peace and unity through a giant work of art.

The piece of calligraphy - spanning 960 sq m (10,333 sq ft) across the rooftops of nine buildings - spells out "United World" in six languages: Russian, Ukrainian, English, Chinese, French and Indonesian.

"This work is not a political statement, it's a cultural statement, about people and the way ... we can unite together to create a future in harmony," Russian calligraphy artist Pokras Lampas said.

Lampas, who has been in Bali since December, said the idea was developed with a group of Ukrainian friends before the war started, but now the work has taken on even more meaning.

The 30-year-old Lampas, who describes his style as "Calligrafuturism" and says it encompasses modern calligraphy and elements of street art, spent three weeks creating the work.

Alex Shtefan, the Ukrainian running the villa complex,

to the world our idea that (the) world needs to be united," said Shtefan, who has been living in Indonesia for six years.



said the art work matches his values and sent an important message.

"We can show in our villas

Both men said they were shocked by the war in Ukraine.

"If we can find a way to stop it and find a peaceful way to negotiate, we need to make it now," Lampas said.

Even though the two countries have their own cultures, "Russia and Ukraine always was like a brother, we are always ... close, we always help each other and even we look similar," said Shtefan, 35.

"We cannot believe that it's happened," Shtefan said, adding that he was worried for the safety of loved ones back home.

Russia attacked Ukraine in February in a military offensive it describes as a "special military operation". — **Reuters**

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Strategy to stay ahead of the virus!

IT'S A COMMON occurrence these days that a rather healthy or strong person suddenly becomes sick and fall prey to a simple virus infection. Some, despite already taking the booster, are still being haunted by the virus with the malady knocking on the door whenever it wants. How many of us have seen this happen to our friends or close relatives daily?

For the virus to consistently evolve and change over time including its composition is stressful for us to discover. The fact that viruses and pathogens can change including their antibodies is not right many of us hope somebody can stop it. But in the same manner that these viruses are changing fast, why is society so slow in investigating people's immunity the same way that we investigate viruses to see how they evolve.

All I am saying here is that as we progress, we should also pay attention and should monitor our disease protection status that way we can predict in real-time that our immunity is waning and therefore can do the necessary action to boost our protection again.

Using antibody testing, for instance, to see how antibody levels change dramatically and rapidly over time and perhaps our communities can get a rough idea of which individuals are most vulnerable in the event of a virus mutation as we have seen with the coronavirus over the past period, so we prioritise them for immunisations and treatments.

Of course, when I go through several studies, I find that using antibody data to identify people at risk (and ideally vaccinate candidates) in a community is nothing new. But such a system would undoubtedly require huge financial investments and

is a fact much harder than viral surveillance or investigation!

In other words, as we look to the future and look into the depths of such science, all we need to know in the future is how and whether antibody levels will decrease at all. Some individuals, including the elderly, will inevitably experience a faster slowdown than others of their antibodies, for example, however, these are the people we would like to prioritise revaccination if a new wave of cases begins to rise-as is the case with the coronavirus pandemic. Not to mention that immunological surveillance can also detect still unknown viral mutations that may lower antibody numbers. As such, close monitoring of antibody levels in a community can even tell us who doesn't need the booster vaccine.

Here, it seems we and the communities around us are still learning about the factors that often motivate us to vaccinate again. Then we will see, as we have also seen before, how the virus mutates so quickly that we will need a reformulated shot every year. Or perhaps their development will slow and the drop in antibody levels will determine our immunisation boosters. However, I am confident that paying attention to both can help strike the right balance.

In the end, many medical institutions and laboratories globally follow how the virus changes and mutates over time. So why not monitor immunity, too? Will that future comes when our societies, in particular, adopt such a new strategy to stay one step ahead in the face of any virus... We'll see?!

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and a writer.



A unique testimony to architectural heritage

By Samuel Kutty

A shining jewel along the Omani coastline, the historic city of Qalhat, located in Sur in the Southern part of Al Sharqiyah Governorate has gained its significance over millions of years for its exceptional pieces of evidence of the greater international trade history of Oman.

Qalhat presents a unique testimony to the many characteristics of Omani civilisation and its history which dates back to the Bronze Age. With its unique and distinctive location, the port city enjoyed the advantage of attracting travellers, explorers and seekers after knowledge.

Qalhat was declared as a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2018 for its possession of historic and archaeological sites as well as for the discovery of artefacts from countries like Persia and other Asian countries.

Archaeological researches at Qalhat delivered the vestiges of a whole port city of the Middle Ages with all its main features, its various quarters and street networks, the fortifications and gates, the great Friday Mosque and other religious buildings, a souq and a warehouse, workshops and dwellings and several administrative and public edifices.

In addition, there is a hammam (Public Bathing), the only building of this kind ever found in the Sultanate of Oman, which was first discovered during preliminary excavations in 2003.

According to a research report in 'The Journal of Oman Studies', the hammam was most probably built, together with the north fortified gate of the ramparts, during the heyday of the city under the reign of the governor Sayf al Din Ayaz and his wife Bibi Maryam, around 1280-1320,

The hammam was probably in use throughout the 14th century, and at least during part of the 15th century, but the date of its abandonment remains unknown.

"The hammam of Qalhat is an extremely interesting building. It is, first of all, the only hammam ever built in the Sultanate of Oman, past and present, and as such it is a unique testimony of the Omani architectural heritage, and the main asset for our knowledge of the history of Qalhat", the researchers point out in

the report.

According to the report in the 'Journal', which is published by the Oman Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Qalhat underwent the main development during this period as the second capital of the Hormuz kingdom, which was then developing as a leader of the Indian Ocean trade.

As the structure of the hammam was planned to be conserved by a team of the Qalhat Development Project during its 2016-2017 season, a comprehensive study was launched in fall 2015 by the archaeological team.

The backfill which had been carefully placed over the entire surface in 2003 to protect the floors was first removed, a further room was discovered and excavated east of the building, additional excavations took place in the fire chamber and service area to the west, and a detailed architectural and technical analyse was performed.

"The Qalhat hammam differs from others in the Middle East, during the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, and it is therefore of great interest for our knowledge of this very specific type of buildings, and for the history of Islamic architecture as well", the researchers claim.

The bathhouse tradition in the Arabian Peninsula is rather recent and, at the moment, no example has been found yet for the pre-Islamic period in this area. However, the presence of baths is attested at that time in peripheral regions.

In Qalhat, the hammam has a centred plan on the hot rooms and a hypocaust, which could thus indicate a Seljuq architectural influence. As is the case for the nearby Bibi Maryam mausoleum, the Turkish origin of the Hormuzi governor Baha al Din Ayaz Seyfin and his wife Bibi Maryam possibly explains this influence.

In all cases, their Hormuzi background explains the presence at Qalhat of such a public facility, totally foreign to local traditions.

"Data on 14th-century Arabian hammams is therefore very scarce,



and this makes difficult the comparison work and the study of the architectural influences at work in the hammam of Qalhat", concludes the report.

The hammam is located near the northwest extremity of the site, on a

sloping terrace against the steep rocky bank of the Wadi Hilm, down the western tip of the town wall at the foot of the. It is only via this terrace, probably of natural origin, that the coastal track could connect the wadi bed and the plateau where the site stands, and this area was the main access to the city on its north side.

Rectangular in shape, its access was from the east, down from the upper terrace along the wadi wall, probably with steps, although this part is now eroded.

The height of the wadi wall superstructures above the level of the terrace is unknown, so we do not know whether the passage between this

wall and the hammam looked like a corridor, or if the view was open on the wadi side.

Picture courtesy: 'The Journal of Oman Studies'