

SURAT AL BAQARAH, VESRE 185

The month of Ramadhan (is that) in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever sights (the new moon of) the month, let him fast it; and whoever is ill or on a journey - then an equal number of other days. Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship and (wants) for you to complete the period and to glorify Allah for that (to) which He has guided you; and perhaps you will be grateful.



P10

OMAN GEAR UP FOR FIBA ASIA CUP QUALIFIERS



P13

MOVE TO PILOT GREEN HYDROGEN USE IN SUHAR STEEL PRODUCTION



P20

YUSRA'S LADIES ONLY MINI-MUSEUM OFFERS INSIGHT INTO OMAN'S HISTORY



MUSCAT

FINES ON RESIDENT CARD RENEWAL WAIVED

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Tuesday said that establishments and individuals will be exempted from paying fines pertaining to delayed renewals of resident cards. The ROP said on its Twitter account: "In implementation of His Majesty's Royal directives, establishments and individuals will be exempted from paying fines pertaining to the delayed renewal of resident cards effective from Wednesday (April 6, 2022), provided that the current situation is rectified before September 1, 2022."

CRUDE PRICE AT \$105.24 A BARREL

Oman oil price for June delivery on Tuesday reached \$105.24, comprising a rise by \$3.21 from the price of Monday, which was \$102.03. The average price of Oman oil for April delivery has stabilised at \$91.96, thus \$8.34 per barrel higher than March delivery. World oil prices extended gains on Tuesday on the prospect of further sanctions on Russia for alleged violations in some occupied Ukrainian cities, while equities edged up after a rally in New York and Europe.

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RAMADHAN 1443 AH

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr 04:38 AM

Dhuhr 12:14 PM

Asr 03:42 PM

Maghrib 06:29 PM

Isha 07:41 PM

INSIDE



Give us our stolen money back

LANKA PRESIDENT LOSES PARLIAMENT MAJORITY

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THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF RECOVERY

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RECITING HOLY QURAN



Omani boy reciting Holy Quran during the month of Ramadhan. PHOTO BY NASSER AL SAQRI (Courtesy @weatherOmanya)

Call to address peak-hour traffic blues

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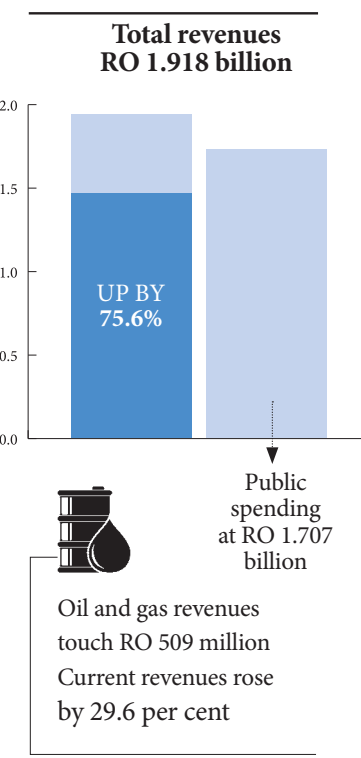
Many people, especially employees, complained about huge traffic congestion in some streets of the Governorate of Muscat, whether the main street (Sultan Qaboos) or the Expressway. The crowding grows during office hours in the morning and when travelling back in the

afternoon, witnessing long lines of vehicles in all directions in the capital city. Through various social media platforms, motorists have called on the authorities to find necessary solutions to alleviate this congestion, especially during Ramadhan, expressing their dissatisfaction and calling on the authorities concerned to take quick measures to reduce the time spent on the streets

while travelling to workplaces. Prior to the holy month, the Ministry of Labour has announced Ramadhan working hours for employees in the units of the administrative apparatus of the state and others from 9 to 2 in the afternoon. Marwa bint Salim said: "The situation is very tiring because it usually takes 20 minutes to reach home, but these days, especially since ...

Oman achieves RO 210 million budget surplus

MUSCAT: Total revenues earned by the Sultanate of Oman till the end of February 2022 stood at about RO 1.918 billion, up by 75.6 per cent over revenue standing in the corresponding period in 2021. This was unveiled by the Financial Economic Bulletin issued by the Ministry of Finance, which attributed the high surplus to a surge in oil price averaging \$81 a barrel, as well as a rise in oil production as gas revenues touched RO 509 million. This is in addition to the fact that current revenues rose by 29.6 per cent by the end of February 2022 (over the corresponding period in 2021) due to the collection of revenues of the Value Added Tax (VAT) and other fees, according to the bulletin.



Public spending until the end of February 2022 registered about RO 1.707 billion, and this was driven by a rise in the repayment of loan interests, total investment expenditures (development and capital) of civil ministries, and expenses of gas transport and procurement. The Budget continued to achieve financial surplus at the end of February 2022, amounting to about RO 210 million, a far cry from RO 457 million financial deficit in the corresponding period in 2021. The government embarked on a public debt reduction programme targeting a RO 19.46 billion mark by the end of April 2022. Recently, as part of its Debt Management Strategy, the Ministry of Finance said will cut down its public debt by more

than RO 2.85 billion (\$7.4 billion) at the end of April. This is in addition to the ministry's efforts to utilise fiscal surplus (emanating from the uptake of oil prices average rates) to minimise fiscal deficit and shrink the public debt portfolio's cost and risks. Budget 2022 earmarked RO 1.3 billion for the refund of interests on loans, but without prejudice to a commitment to repay maturing premiums to the tune of RO 2.7 billion. The ministry has pointed out that steps are under way to tap other fiscal surpluses to inspire economic growth in line with the Royal directives to implement more development projects that support the private sector, notably by augmenting the Developmental Budget's allocations to RO 1.1 billion. — ONA

Ministry flags violation of Covid-19 rules in mosques

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs urged worshippers at the mosques to follow Covid-19 protocols for the sake of public health. It said many of those visiting places of worship for prayer do not bring own prayer mat or wear face masks. "We have noticed that some worshippers do not abide by the decisions of the Supreme Committee while performing prayers especially during the Friday and Taraweeh prayers," a spokesperson said quoting a

circular sent to the mosques. The Supreme Committee decisions that allowed Taraweeh prayers and earlier, Friday prayer, have clearly stipulated strict adherence to the existing Covid-19 rules. Accordingly, those who go to the mosques for prayers must, most importantly, abide by five rules, besides making sure they have taken both doses of the vaccine. "One must carry his/her prayer mat and wear a face mask throughout the prayers. Besides, keep social distance while standing for prayers and avoid



gathering or hugging each other," he said. One shouldn't share his prayer rug with another for any reason which is a clear violation of the rule. During the holy month of Ramadhan, mosques shall be open for Taraweeh prayers but there should be a mechanism to check the vaccination certificate of two doses and temperature checks at the entrance. The guidelines further says that children below 12 shouldn't be allowed inside the mosques. Mosques are at liberty to report directly to the ministry in case any violation is noticed.



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Shura Office discusses review of social insurance

MUSCAT: The Office of Majlis Ash'shura held its 12th regular meeting for the third annual session (2021-2022), under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman, on Tuesday.

The Office discussed a report submitted by the Service and Social Development Committee on an expressed desire regarding the imposition of fees for the connection and disconnection of water supply. The committee said in its report that it had agreed to the content of the expressed desire requesting the revocation of an amount of RO 60 levied on consumers as fees for connection or disconnection of water supply.

The Office also reviewed the committee's report on an expressed desire for rectifying the monthly pension disbursed to social security families and the discussed the committee's suggestion for a comprehensive review of the Social Insurance Law.

The meeting discussed the Services and Social Development Committee's report on increasing the salaries of citizens who are eligible to housing grants and its report requesting substitution of land plots granted to citizens in areas lacking the basic services.

The Office of Majlis Ash'shura reviewed a number of government responses including from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to a briefing request regarding



attracting investments in light of international competition. In its response, the ministry explained that it had identified a number of markets and countries targeted for attracting foreign investments during the upcoming period. The ministry said that and it is currently preparing a detailed study to identify the necessary needs. The Ministry of Health responded to the question about the unavailability of the most important medicines in government hospitals. In its response, the ministry said that there is a sufficient stock of the medicines in question and that lack of medicines sometimes happens temporarily but the medicines are made available later. It said that the ministry makes emergency

purchases in case of supply delays.

In addition, the Office reviewed the response provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to a question about the reasons behind high fish prices. The ministry explained that higher fish prices have something to do with the state of fish stock and production, foreign trade and the level of local consumption. The Office also reviewed the response of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, with regard to a question about education colleges graduates from 2010 to 2021. The ministry provided statistics of education graduates from local and international universities for the years between 2015 and 2019.

The Office reviewed a response from the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources on the circulars issued by the ministry regarding laboratory tests for agricultural shipments. The ministry explained that the circular No (1-2021) is correct and it doesn't involve any violations to the laws and regulations applied in Oman as the ministry aims to tighten control over agricultural imports and exports. However, the ministry has restricted lab tests to high-quality laboratories with (ISO) certification to ensure the efficiency of laboratory testing. The ministry denied monopoly of laboratory of agricultural imports through Sohar Port by one laboratory only, affirming that it

deals with several laboratories that include, but not limited to, Atyab Laboratory.

Also disused during the meeting was a briefing request submitted to the Minister of Social Development regarding the payment of monthly assistance to Omani housewives as well as a briefing request submitted to the Minister of Finance regarding the allocating a financial grade for the job of a school guard.

The Office reviewed an expressed desire to set a limit for remittances of expatriates not exceeding 75 per cent of salary or annual return with the exception of the retired workers. This is in addition to an expressed desire regarding the introduction of Omani youth

into the retail trade under the protection of large retailers and firms. It also included a request for addressing the issue of national job-seekers and laid-off workers by providing job opportunities and improving their standard of living. The Office reviewed a question for the Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on the role that can be played by public transport in reducing traffic congestion in Muscat.

The Office of Majlis Ash'shura decided to refer a number of briefing requests to the concerned authorities including the briefing request submitted to the minister of housing and urban planning regarding usufruct lands, and the briefing request to the minister of finance about old retirees receiving minimum pension salary. The also include a briefing request submitted to minister of labour about the employment contract and its impact on citizen and a briefing request submitted to the minister of commerce, industry and investment promotion on improving Oman's non-oil trade balance

The Office referred a number of reports of the standing committees to the upcoming meeting of Majlis Ash'shura including a report of the Legislative and Legal Committee on draft amendments of some provisions of the Notary Public Law.



■ AGREEMENT INKED TO TRAIN 3,000 JOB-SEEKERS



The Ministry of Labour started a programme of cooperation with the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) to fund on-the-job training programme for available jobs in SMEs operating in various sectors. The agreement was signed by Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development and Halima bint Rashid Al Zariyah, Chairperson of ASMED, in Muscat on Tuesday. They agreed to ramp up cooperation in training-related fields to create sustainable work environments. As per the agreement, 3,000 job-seekers will be trained in several fields.

Call to address traffic blues during peak hours

FROM PAGE 1

Ramadhan has started, it is taking about an hour or more", and asked "Why managements don't adopt 50 per cent work system as we were doing during the peak of the pandemic? This downsizing had proven to be beneficial; employee productivity has increased and work was done smoothly", she said.

Muslim al Kathiri said: "We notice that the public transport route is not activated. Public transport works as an alternative to cars and reduce crowding on roads."

Adel al Yahyai mentioned: "Heavy traffic is seen most of the time at the entrances and exits to Sultan Qaboos

Street. There is only one exit from Al Khoudh to Al Mawaleh, as well as at City Centre and Al Sahwa Tower roundabout, and there is no way to enter the main street except these entrances."

Hamed al Derei said that there must be flexibility for the exit of employees in the public sector, and that not everyone is bound to leave at the same time. He pointed to another long-term solution, which is decentralisation. "Changing workplaces from Muscat to other governorates so that employees are distributed equally in the region and this will reduce traffic jam on Mucsat streets", he suggested.

Mohammed Saeed said: "I have

divided work in three shifts — starting at 7, 8 or 9 and ending successively 2, 3 or 4. Also, it is important to educate people about the importance of public transport to reduce crowding. This could be done by opening a line on the far right for this type of transportation. Also, controlling roads by electronic billboards, alerting people of congested roads and taking alternative routes if needed."

Hajar al Maani appealed to administration to make work timings flexible, especially for women and homemakers whose day does not end by returning home. They have to prepare iftar and other meals for their families.



■ EGYPTIAN GOOSE IN AL ANSAB WETLAND



Egyptian Goose were spotted in Al Ansab Wetland, which belongs to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Haya-Diam). This bird is native to Africa. A total of 310 birds were spotted in Al Ansab Wetland including 300 bird species and 10 sub-species.

Al Rahma Association launches ‘Your Rial a Million’ drive

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

With the advent of Ramadhan, Al Rahma Association for Maternity and Childcare launched the charity challenge ‘Your Rial a Million’ to collect money to build the Al Rahma Charitable Centre in Al Khoudh.

Institutions, community groups and residents can contribute to the project. Details of donors and donations will be broadcast live through various media and digital platforms.

Various activities and programmes will also accompany the campaign.

Al Rahma Charitable Centre, which is under construction, will include some shops, the proceeds of which will be allocated to finance the various programmes of the association. It is not limited to sponsoring needy families, supporting low income families, and providing supplies and foodstuff to families affected by climatic conditions.

Furthermore, the aid is to repair and equip homes, provide assistance to people with special needs and provide support for education by the association



during the month of Ramadhan, Eid al Fitr, Eid al Adha and the beginning of the school year.

Fatima al Subhi, supervisor of the marketing committee, said on Oman Radio: “Al Rahma Association launched its digital campaign entitled Your Rial a Million, as the campaign is a simple and spontaneous societal challenge in itself. When we say Your Rial a Million, we symbolises the simplicity and ease of donating, especially in the holy month of Ramadhan, in which people rush to do charitable and voluntary works.” The campaign seeks to raise

Al Rahma Charitable Centre, which is under construction, will include some shops, the proceeds of which will be allocated to finance the various programmes of the association

public awareness and promote a culture of social solidarity so that this is not limited to emergency

situations only. The campaign also aims to develop the charitable work system in the Sultanate of Oman by focusing on initiatives that provide sustainable solutions and stable income that contribute to achieving positive results on the ground, improving the social situation and transforming some well-off families into productive and self-reliant families.

Donations can be made through Oman Digital Platform of the Al Rahma Association and banking apps or any online platform affiliated with the Al Rahma Association.

Corporates, good Samaritans offer Iftar kits

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Those who lament the ban on public Iftar as a precaution against Covid-19 have an option of ‘take away’ Iftar kits offered by a section of people who aim to support the believers to break their fast on time.

It has become a common sight towards the sunset in the capital city as well as other governorates where corporates and good Samaritans offer Iftar kits.

They stand with the kits containing delicious food items at various city corners and hand them over primarily to pedestrians and motorists who pass by.

“Iftar kits for those people on the move is a brilliant idea to show the people that we care and it’s a manifestation of how corporates and social workers take care of those who fast from morning till sunset,” says the GM of Mustafa Sultan Exchange which offers Iftar kits for the public at its twenty branches every day.

The Supreme Committee monitoring the developments of the pandemic worldwide stayed the ban on social Iftars along with public Iftar tents. It limited the Taraweeh prayers to those who have taken two doses of the Covid vaccine.

Mass Iftars, special supplications, social gatherings and familial get-together have

been a part and parcel of the holy month as this month is all for cementing human to human relations and soul purification. Such gatherings also aim at bridging the gap between the rich and the poor besides reinforcing human bonds.

But the ‘Iftar on the go’ concept, implemented by those who cared for those people on the move, has been a hit catering to the people of diverse backgrounds as the holy month entered the fourth day.

“I find it not very realistic to reach my room for Iftar in Mawaleh, because I work in Ruwi. I find the corporate Iftar kits a good idea that gives me confidence about fasting the next day,” Abdul Shukkoor, an expatriate labourer, told the Observer.

Social Iftars were held in every hotel where companies offered networking opportunities for their stakeholders and well-wishers in the past, which has been replaced by a miniature version of the Iftar as restrictions on such fathering still exist.

While almost all mosques, Saud Bahwan Mosque in Wadi Kabir, the vast parking lot inside Muttrah Souq, the clock tower area, and many other places hosted the public for Iftar in the past, hotels welcomed corporate guests to their Iftar gatherings which were an attempt to reinforce the bonding with their stakeholders.



‘Iftar on the go’ concept, implemented by those who cared for those people on the move, has been a hit catering to the people of diverse backgrounds as the holy month entered the fourth day.

Children introduced to heritage and tourism

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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Tourism, one of the most promising sectors in the Sultanate of Oman, has attracted the youth engaged in the field. In recent years they have successfully established enterprising businesses and many have come up with heritage tourism projects.

Now the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is taking the initiative to introduce younger children to tourism in the Sultanate of Oman to add value to the sector.

Addressing the issues related to tourism, the department of tourism and heritage in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate conducted an interactive heritage and tourism workshop titled —

‘Tourist Site for All’.

The two-week workshop’s objectives centred on introducing students to heritage and tourism components and spreading culture and tourism knowledge about the heritage and historical sites in all the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

According to the ‘Experience Oman’ campaign, the region, including the governorates of North and South Al Sharqiyah, is the geographical jewel of Oman because of the stunning coastlines, ecosystem of Rimal al Sharqiya — an attraction for explorers and adventurers, but regular visitors to both governorates are also water enthusiasts as well as nature lovers.

Some of the attractions include the pebble beach, Wadi Shab,



Wadi Tiwi, City of Sur’s ship yards, camping and fishing sites, turtle watching of Ras al Hadd and kitesurfing Masirah Island and not to forget are archaeological sites such as the ancient town Qalhat.

The workshop also focused on developing the students’ awareness of the importance of preserving the Sultanate of Oman’s salient tourism and heritage features.

Meanwhile, the department of heritage and tourism in the Governorate of South Al Batinah organised an introductory tour for school students to the most important tourist sites in the Wilayat of Rustaq. This also included the visit to Al Maysir Falaj, one of the ‘aflaj’ included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.



Ramadhan Mubarak

TRADITIONAL VS ONLINE: WHAT SHOPPERS WANT



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

For many years, Ramadhan in the Middle East and the wider Arab world has been known for the bustling nightlife, especially with shoppers visiting the traditional souqs. These traditions have been continuing for ages despite the flourish of commercial malls and hypermarkets that offer thousands of prizes worth thousands of dollars to entice shoppers to buy anything from household appliances to daily groceries, necessary or not. The last two years of Ramadhan were spent in lockdowns that restricted traditional shopping, but it also showed the emergence of e-commerce or online shopping. While traditional shopping is back in Oman with a vengeance, e-commerce has come to stay. According to some estimates, consumers in the Middle East are expected to spend over \$5 billion on online purchases, which include travel tickets and hotel bookings. As per the trends, the popular social media platforms in the Sultanate of Oman are Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and even Amazon. According to industry experts, companies that can manage to supply and deliver products in a quick time will have an advantage over the others.

Speaking to the Observer, a trader at Muttrah Souq, said, "Businesses have been encouraging this year and we are witnessing some rush in the evenings. It is not the same as it

was ten years ago, but the trend is impressive as we are just recovering from the pandemic with caution." He added, "We do face competition from malls, hypermarkets and online platforms, but there are some traditional kinds of stuff like spices, clothes and tailors that are found only in such traditional souqs." Online platforms may not give the personal touch as the in-person interaction in stores, but they do offer the convenience of comparing the prices and reviews of various products without hesitation. "In say 'No' to the merchant especially if you have been visiting them for years or know them personally. But for hesitancy there is no need the shopping process or even cancel the process anytime," said Mustafa al Balushi, a customer.

There was this fear that food commodities will be costlier due to rising costs of imports following the war in Ukraine and oil prices. But with the authorities in Oman ensuring that food prices are kept under check, shoppers are keen to make up for the slackness of the last two years. "Online shopping has been widely accepted by some young buyers but as retailers, we make changes as per emerging trends," said a senior official of a multi-brand retail group in the Sultanate of Oman. While e-commerce sales continue to show steady growth, they too face challenges from traditional stores and souqs that try to keep up the pace.



Students to get training in IoT

MUSCAT: The Centre of Excellence for Advanced Telecommunications technology and IoT (CoE) has announced the commencement of an extensive technical mentorship programme for a selected group of talented students from Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) last week at Innovation Park Muscat.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary for Research and Innovation at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), and in the presence of Dr Abdullah al Balushi, President of Ericsson Oman, general managers from the Ministry of Finance and a number of programme participants from SQU. The programme aims to mentor students in developing IoT use cases using the latest 5G and IoT technology as part of the Centre of Excellence for Advanced Telecommunications technology and IoT (CoE), established by the Ministry of Finance in partnership with Ericsson and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The students will be mentored by Ericsson's academic professionals and experts in Internet of Things (IoT), teaching them about the basic concepts and use cases of IoT all the way up to the realisation, implementation and testing. The programme includes a total of 15 students ranging from various undergraduate and postgraduate levels from different academic disciplines such as mechatronics engineering, telecommunications engineering, computer engineering, agricultural engineering, architecture engineering, electronic instrumentation and control, and communication and



The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary for Research and Innovation at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) in the presence of Dr Abdullah al Balushi, President of Ericsson Oman.

signal processing. The students, who will be involved in the mentoring programme for 2-3 months, will be working on three main IoT use cases related to the nation's agriculture and water sector. The main learning outcome of the programme is to work in teams of multi-disciplinary, deliver a prototype with industry standards and manage a project using agile development principles.

Ericsson has already equipped the CoE with state-of-the-art 5G Radio DOT technology from the Ericsson Radio System portfolio and a sophisticated IoT platform, which is extremely suitable for educational research and development purposes. To further show Ericsson's commitment towards the CoE, Ericsson has conducted comprehensive knowledge transfer sessions for 5G Operations & Maintenance and have demonstrated the system capabilities to

selected engineers from the technical team of Innovation Park Muscat (IPM).

Dr Al Balushi, President of Ericsson Oman, commented: "We believe academia plays a significant role in the technological advancement of a nation by serving as a platform that encourages innovation and creativity. As we map the digital future of Oman through the CoE, we look forward to working alongside the talented students of SQU and having them develop industry-wide use-cases that propel the realization of Oman Vision 2040." Hajar al Balushi of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation said: "We are pleased to establish this Centre of Excellence alongside Ericsson, in which the centre will provide a great environment for people from different age groups and expertise in the field of 5G and IoT to come together to learn, test and upskill their skills."

OAC and CEDR sign cooperation agreement

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre (OAC) in Muscat and Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) in London signed an agreement of cooperation to develop research and education cooperation and facilitate exchanges between professionals involved in ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) programmes and specifically in mediation, facilitation and negotiation processes.

OAC was established by Royal Decree as an independent legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy in its operations. The OAC aims to provide an institutional mechanism to ensure the expeditious, cost effective and totally neutral administration of arbitration, mediation and other forms of ADR to local, regional and international parties. The Centre also offers state-of-the-art virtual and physical hearing

facilities from its modern premises located in the heart of Muscat's legal centre.

CEDR has been promoting and shaping the use of ADR in commercial disputes in Europe and around the world for over 30 years. It is the largest independent conflict management and resolution consultancy in the world and offers internationally recognised accreditation and training for mediators and provides access to expertise in a range of commercial problem-solving disciplines to resolve differences and conflict in business.

A key first step is that OAC has partnered exclusively with CEDR to offer high quality mediation skills training to a new generation of mediators within Oman as well as the wider region, ensuring that those with commercial disputes in the jurisdiction can be confident in using the mediation process. The first training programmes are due to take place over six days between 14 and 21 June 2022.

Agreement on pvt training organisations

Muscat: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation signed an agreement of cooperation with Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability and PDO for the governance in private training institutions. It was signed by Dr Muna bint Salim al Jardaniyah, Under-Secretary for Vocational Training, Sayyid Hamid al Busaidi, CEO of OCGS and Mohammed al Ghareebi, External Affairs and Communication Manager of PDO.

— ONA

Majan University College
كلية مجان الجامعية

Majan College SAOG

BOARD REPORT FOR THE SECOND QUARTER ENDED 28 FEBRUARY, 2022

Respected Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Majan College SAOG (Majan University College), I am pleased to present this report on Majan's financial performance and the accompanying unaudited interim condensed financial statements for the six-month period ended 28 February 2022.

Financial Performance

Majan financial performance was affected in the core business due to the impact of change in entry criteria of postgraduate students. However, that was counter balanced through controlling the expenses. In comparison to the same period in previous financial year, total income has decreased by 11% to be OMR 2.18 Million mainly from decrease in returning postgraduate students. Total expenses have decreased by 6% to be OMR 1.83 Million mainly from the decline in postgraduate fees income and corresponding reduction in affiliation fees and from the agreed reduction in affiliation fees rate with the academic partner for undergraduate programmes. Therefore, net profit before tax decreased by 29% to be OMR 0.35 Million, however, Taxation has increased by 161% to be OMR 0.05 Million mainly because of deferred tax income on provisions on the impairment of fee receivables & fair value adjustment of investments FVPTL during prior period. Consequently, overall net profit after tax has decreased by 48% to be OMR 0.3 Million. Earnings per share has decreased from 6 Baiza per share to 3 Baiza per share.

Appreciation

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to his Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his unlimited support and guidance to higher education. Our sincere thanks to the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for its support to the private higher education sector. This resulted in tremendous

growth in the sector. It is our intention that Majan College SAOG (Majan University College) continues to support to achieve the vision of his Majesty by continuously improving and enriching the standards of its academic programmes and its resources.

Dr. Salam Salim Al Mur Al Kindi
Chairman

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Category	28TH FEB 2022 OMR	28TH FEB 2021 OMR	Audited 31ST AUG 2021 OMR
Assets			
Non-current assets			
Property and equipment	3,608,484	3,897,968	3,751,026
Deferred tax asset	303,482	265,888	260,883
Investments at fair value through other comprehensive income			
Total non-current asset	3,911,966	4,163,856	4,011,909
Current assets			
Receivables & prepayments	2,230,201	4,576,005	802,394
Cash & bank balance	787,437	1,426,942	1,163,403
Investments at fair value through profit and loss	956,525	889,639	1,329,682
Investments at amortised cost	6,618,671	4,249,044	6,660,453
Total current assets	10,592,834	11,141,630	9,955,932
Total assets	14,504,800	15,305,486	13,967,841
Equity			
Share capital	9,000,000	9,000,000	9,000,000
Legal reserve	1,500,644	1,393,533	1,470,584
Retained earning	708,472	1,049,465	437,931
Proposed Dividend			1,305,000
Fair value reserve			
Total Equity	11,209,116	11,442,998	12,213,515
Liabilities			
Non-current liabilities			
Deferred government grant			
Employees end of service benefit	629,281	616,704	610,360
Students security deposits	281,905	362,505	327,805
Deferred tax liability			
Total non-current liabilities	911,186	979,209	938,165
Current Liabilities			
Payables & accruals	2,291,539	2,786,090	556,271
Dividends Payable			
Tax payable	102	78	17,580
Provision for tax	92,857	97,111	242,310
Total current liabilities	2,384,498	2,883,279	816,161
Total liabilities	3,295,684	3,862,488	1,754,326
Total Equity & Liabilities	14,504,800	15,305,486	13,967,841
Net assets value per share	0.125	0.127	0.136

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Category	SEP 21 - FEB 22 OMR	SEP 20 - FEB 21 OMR
Income		
Fee Income	2,001,494	2,356,965
Other Income	178,530	22,751
Investment Income	-1,156	64,946
Total Income	2,178,868	2,444,662
Expenses		
Salaries & related cost	-1,167,129	-1,165,888
Administrative & general expenses	-450,926	-554,082
Expected credit losses	-25,404	-18,750
Depreciation	-176,427	-197,661
Foreign Exchange	-7,556	-11,299
Total expenses	-1,827,442	-1,947,680
Net profit before tax	351,426	496,982
Taxation	-50,826	83,422
Total comprehensive income	300,600	580,404
Basic earning per share	0.003	0.006

Note: The complete accounts are available on Muscat Stock Exchange (www.msx.om)



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tender: -

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
172/2022/MAFWR/HQ-16	Maintenance works of Food Safety & Quality Center	25/-	Third	Wednesday 20/4/2022	Tuesday 10/5/2022

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402200** or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.
- Note: Bid Submission will be online only. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
ROYAL HOSPITAL

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDER

THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF ROYAL HOSPITAL INVITE SPECIALIZED COMPANIES TO SUBMIT TENDER

TENDER NO	DESCRIPTION	LAST DATE FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENT	CLOSING TIME/ DAY/DATE	ELIGIBILITY	TENDER FEE (NON- REFUNDABLE)
707/2022/MOH/DGRHP/56	PROVIDING PRINTERS SERVICES WITH MAINTENANCE AT ROYAL HOSPITAL	14/4/2022	BEFORE 10 AM ON TUESDAY 26/4/2022	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Tenders should be submitted on line on the given website signed and sealed. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee before one day of date submission.
- The Original Bank Guarantee should be submitted to the office of Director of Finance-Royal Hospital one day before the submission date for all Tenders.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Any Clarification, you may contact via
Telephone: 24166670
Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om



Sri Lanka president loses parliament majority

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's president lost his parliamentary majority on Tuesday as former allies urged his resignation, following days of street protests over the island nation's crippling economic crisis.

Severe shortages of food, fuel and other essentials — along with record inflation and crippling power cuts — have inflicted widespread misery in the country's most painful downturn since independence from Britain in 1948.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's once-powerful ruling coalition is in turmoil after a string of defections, capped on Tuesday by the new finance minister's resignation just one day after taking office.

Public anger is at a fever pitch, with crowds attempting to storm the homes of several government figures since the weekend and large demonstrations elsewhere.

"If we don't act now, there will be a river of blood in the country," said Wijeyadasa Rajapakse, a newly independent lawmaker who broke ranks with the president's party and joined calls for the leader to step down. "We have to forget party politics and ensure an interim government."

Tuesday's parliamentary session was the first since dozens of MPs withdrew their support for Rajapaksa's government, including 16 lawmakers from the president's own Sri Lanka Podujana



Demonstrators during a protest against the surge in prices and shortage of fuel and other essential commodities near the parliament building in Colombo. — AFP

Party (SLPP).

The government is now five short of a majority in the 225-member house, but there has been no clear signal that legislators will attempt a no-confidence motion that would compel it to resign.

Opposition parties have already rebuffed Rajapaksa's call to join a unity administration helmed by him and his elder brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Their government imposed a state of emergency last week in an effort to quell rising street protests, but the ordinance is set to expire next week unless ratified by parliament.

Rejecting calls for a vote on the emergency decree, the government cut short Tuesday's parliamentary session more than two hours before its scheduled finish.

Nimal Lanza, a former minister who has also abandoned Rajapaksa's administration, conceded that

the ruling party no longer had a mandate to govern and threw his support behind the crowds calling for the president's resignation.

"I beg and appeal to you to take the side of the protesters," he told parliament, addressing the prime minister, who attended the session but remained silent. Every member of Sri Lanka's cabinet except the president and prime minister resigned late on Sunday.

Former justice minister Ali

Sabry was appointed to helm the finance ministry on Monday, replacing the president's brother Basil Rajapaksa, but abruptly resigned after just one day in office.

"Whilst I regret the inconvenience caused, I believe I have always acted in the best interests of the country," Sabry said in a statement. The ministry's top civil servant also resigned on Tuesday, a day after the central bank governor quit.

Public anger is at a fever pitch, with crowds attempting to storm the homes of several government figures

Boisterous demonstrations have spread across the country of 22 million despite the emergency laws allowing troops to detain participants and a weekend curfew that lapsed on Monday morning.

Crowds have attempted to storm the homes of more than a dozen government figures, including the president's house in Colombo.

Protesters there torched the vehicles of security forces, who responded by firing rubber bullets and tear gas.

Most demonstrations have been peaceful, with Catholic clergy and nuns led by Sri Lanka's Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith leading a procession in the capital.

"This is a valuable country with intelligent people. But our intelligence, the people's intelligence, has been insulted by corruption," Ranjith said.

"Therefore now we call out... please now listen to the cry of the people and step down." — AFP

Pakistan apex court adjourns again

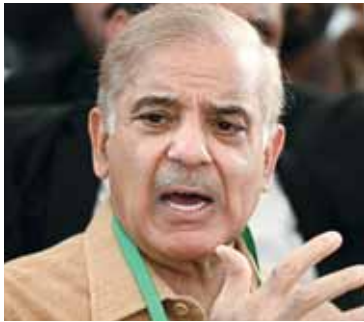
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's supreme court adjourned on Tuesday without ruling on the legality of political manoeuvres that led Prime Minister Imran Khan to dissolve the national assembly and call fresh elections.

The court, which will resume on Wednesday, must decide if the deputy speaker of the assembly violated the constitution by refusing to allow a no-confidence vote against Khan at the weekend.

Had the vote taken place Khan was certain to have been booted from office, but the move allowed him to get the presidency — a largely ceremonial role held by a loyalist — to dissolve parliament and order an election, which must be held within 90 days.

President Arif Alvi upped the ante on Tuesday by issuing a letter to the opposition saying if they did not nominate a candidate for interim prime minister, the process would continue without them.

Shehbaz Sharif (pictured), who would have replaced Khan



had Sunday's vote taken place, said he would not participate.

"The main issue is that the constitution has been abrogated," he told reporters outside the court. "If we don't get a remedy then Pakistan will, God forbid, become a banana republic." Khan has already nominated former chief justice Gulzar Ahmad for the role.

There had been high hopes for Khan when he was elected in 2018 on a promise of sweeping away decades of entrenched corruption and cronyism, but he has struggled to maintain support with soaring inflation, a feeble rupee and crippling debt.

— AFP

IITK develops bone-regeneration tech

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

@patkaushal

A ceramic-based mixture developed by an IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) Kanpur professor has come as a boon for those who suffer from bone ailments. According to the professor, the mixture can regenerate bones that can be hugely helpful in treating joint disorders.

Ashok Kumar, a professor in the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering, IIT Kanpur, says that an artificial bone will function as a natural bone with the new technology, thus bringing a paradigm shift in the treatment of bone diseases.

"The bioactive molecules generated by the ceramic-based mixture will help in bone regrowth," said Prof Kumar during an interaction with the media.

"It would not be less than a revolution in medical science from India's point of view, and the technology is one of its development in the medical world," he said.

Even though the microporous gel has the ability to become as



hard as a bone in 15 minutes of reaching the affected area, it does not affect oxygen supply and blood circulation in the body. Due to a regular supply of oxygen and blood in the affected area, tissue formation becomes easy, which helps the body's ability to heal normally.

Commenting on this unique development with the help of some other faculty members of IIT-Kanpur, Prof Kumar said generally doctors had no option

New technology to bring in paradigm shift in the treatment of bone diseases

but to amputate affected limb of a patient suffering from Bone TB, where the affected area has no scope for regrowth.

"In the new technology, the bioactive molecules generated by the ceramic-based mixture will help in bone regrowth. It will also

be helpful in bones being shattered after an accident and in the case where doctors are left with no option but to amputate that limb. The new technology will also be helpful in not disturbing any other bone part of the body to do an implant," the professor said.

Generally, an implant is done by removing a piece of the thigh bone or bone from any other body part. In such situations, there are chances of infection or disease that make healing of a patient difficult. Since the ceramic-based mixture under the new technology generates bioactive molecules, there is no need to remove a healthy bone for an implant.

According to Prof Kumar, bone-regeneration technology is equally helpful in treating joint problems, as the body starts excreting nano-hydroxyapatite and calcium hemihydrate after bone formation. "It helps a patient get rid of joint problems," he said.

A licensing agreement has been signed between IIT Kanpur and Ortho Regemics to use the new technology to treat bone and joint disorders in patients.

BAGHDAD

Mines kill, injure more than 500 children in Iraq

At least 519 children have been killed or injured by landmines and unexploded ordnance in Iraq in the past five years, UN agencies have warned. "More than 80 per cent of children affected are boys," the rights groups Unicef, the world body's children's agency, and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) said. They added that boys were "disproportionately impacted due to incidents of child labour, such as grazing animals or collecting scrap metal



to sell".

The statement said although Iraq has not "suffered from open conflicts" over past years, "the effects of explosive weapons will reverberate for years to come".

TUNIS

Tunisian parliament plans to continue sessions

Tunisian lawmakers plan to continue holding sessions online despite the president's decision to dissolve the legislature, Parliament Speaker Rached Ghannouchi said. President Kais Saied ordered the dissolution of parliament last week, eight months after his decision to suspend it.

His announcement came hours after lawmakers held a meeting and voted to revoke the president's exceptional measures.

Ghannouchi is the head of



Tunisia's largest political party, the Ennahda Movement, which is Saied's main opponent.

Saied described the parliament meeting as a "failed coup attempt" and a "conspiracy against the security of the state."

BEIRUT

Pope Francis to visit Lebanon in June

Pope Francis is scheduled to visit crisis-hit Lebanon in June, the country's presidency said in a statement on Tuesday. "Apostolic Envoy Joseph Spiteri informed President Michel Aoun that Pope Francis will visit Lebanon next June," in a trip long-awaited by Lebanon's population, the statement said.

The Pope had invited representatives of Lebanon's Christian community to the Vatican on July 1 last year for a day of prayer and reflection "about the worri-



some situation in the country." He had announced saying the aim was to "pray together for the gift of peace and stability." He asked for prayers ahead of the meeting and for Lebanon itself so the country can enjoy "a more serene future."



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EU allies expel around 150 Russian diplomats

ROME: Italy, Spain and Denmark joined EU allies on Tuesday in expelling Russian diplomats amid increasing outrage over the Ukraine conflict, with around 150 sent home in the last 48 hours. The expulsions — many for alleged spying — follow international condemnation of killings in the town of Bucha, near Kyiv, where dozens of bodies were discovered after Russian troops withdrew.

Moscow has rejected Western accusations that its forces were responsible, suggesting the images are fake or that the deaths occurred after they pulled out.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

told reporters on Tuesday that the mass expulsions of its diplomats was “a short-sighted move”. “Narrowing down opportunities for diplomatic communication in such an unprecedentedly difficult crisis environment is a short-sighted move that will further complicate our communication, which is necessary to find a solution,” he said.

“And this will inevitably lead to retaliatory steps,” he added.

The expulsions come as the EU discusses a fifth round of sanctions on Russia for its war of Ukraine on February 24, with member states expected to sign off on it this week or next. — AFP

Zelensky urges UN Security Council to ‘act immediately’

WASHINGTON: Ukraine’s leader Volodymyr Zelensky urged the United Nations on Tuesday to “act immediately” on President Vladimir Putin’s war of his country, calling for Russia to be expelled from the UN Security Council.

Zelensky called on the 15-member council, which aims to ensure international peace and security, to “remove Russia as an aggressor and a source of war, so it cannot block decisions about its own aggression, its own war.”

“The United Nations can be simply closed. Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready to close the UN? And the time of international law is gone? If your answer is no, then you need to act immediately,” he added in his video address.



Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky addresses a meeting of the United Nations Security Council in New York City. — AFP

Sweden on Tuesday opened an investigation into suspected war crimes in Ukraine, encouraging witnesses and victims to come forward in order to secure evidence for potential future prosecutions, prosecutors

said. “Given the information that is available about the situation in Ukraine, there is reason to believe that grave war crimes are being committed,” the Swedish Prosecution Authority

said in a statement, adding that preliminary investigation had been opened. The authority said that currently no individual was suspected of a crime.

“The purpose is to as early as possible secure evidence that could be available in Sweden so that it could be used in future legal proceedings, either in Sweden, another country’s court or in an international court such as the International Criminal Court, ICC.”

Last month, the ICC launched its own probe into possible war crimes in Ukraine.

“I have notified the ICC Presidency a few moments ago of my decision to immediately proceed with active investigations in the situation” in Ukraine, Karim Khan wrote in a statement. — AFP

Australia landslide kills 2 UK tourists

SYDNEY: Australian police on Tuesday recovered the bodies of a British man and his nine-year-old son, killed when a rockslide hit their family while walking in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney.

The landslide struck the holidaying family of five on Monday, killing the 49-year-old father and his son and critically injuring the 50-year-old mother and another 14-year-old son, police said.

The injured mother and son, who were winched out of the scene at Wentworth Falls by helicopter, underwent surgery and remain in “critical conditions”, a police spokeswoman said.

Rescuers treated the couple’s 15-year-old daughter for shock and transferred her to a Sydney children’s hospital, where she remained under observation on Tuesday.

She was being assisted by the British consulate and welfare services.

Blue Mountains police were investigating the landslide and a report would be prepared for the coroner on the two deaths, police said.

The identity of the family has not been released.

Sydney has experienced heavy rains in recent weeks, with many suburbs in the city’s west devastated by flash flooding and heavy storms.

The New South Wales national parks and wildlife service said the track the family was on had been inspected in the days before the rockslide.

All tracks in the Wentworth Falls area were closed “until further notice”, it said in a statement.

— AFP

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Defence

ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors/consultant specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
008/2022	Consulting services (supervision) - roads work	First and Above	12 April 2022	18 April 2022	105/- R.O
009/2022	Quantity surveying consulting services (supervision) - roads work	Specialists/ registered in field of quantity surveying	12 April 2022	18 April 2022	35/- R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.

The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).

The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.

Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.

Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.

We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer.

You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.

1. Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Manpower (Updated Copy).

2. Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope and drawings.

3. Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as soft copy (USB) in two separate files:

A. Financial (bill 1&2 separated from bill3)

B. Technical files.

4. Confirmation of site visit.

5. All addendums and circulars.

6. List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.

7. List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.

8. Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.

9. Financial Statement for the last Three years.

Ministry of Social Development

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-retundable)
15/2022	General maintenance works for the building of the Department of Social Development at - Bidiyah	Companies specialized in building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Tuesday 19-4-2022 02:00 PM	Monday 9-5-2022 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 Thursday 31/3/2022.

❖ 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 though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om

Sultanate of Oman

The Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary

Tender Announcement

The Administrative Affairs Council of the Judiciary announces its desire to submit the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
17/2022	Maintenance Works at Rustaq Court Complex	9/4/2022	9/5/2022	First	RO. 25/-

Where you can buy the tender documents electronically via the link below website : (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders shall submit their bids electronically via the aforementioned website. An electronic bank guarantee certified by one of the banks operating in the country shall be delivered at a rate of (1%) of the bid value with each bid, valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission of bids and addressed in the name of the Chairman of the Internal Committee of Tenders in the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, and the latest updates to the electronic tender system.

1- **For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:**
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

2- **For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:**
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@ita.gov.om

جمعية المهندسين العمالية

Oman Society of Engineers

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 13 April 2022

Oman Society of Engineers is delighted to invite all its members to the Annual General Meeting which will be held on Wednesday 13 April 2022 at 11:30 AM

The meeting will be virtual and will discuss the following:

- Going through the final report of the year ended 31/12/2021

- Reviewing and approving the administrative and financial report of the year ended 31/12/2021.

24210099

events@ose.org.om

office@ose.org.om

Tolstoy descendant hosts Ukrainians in Switzerland



NINA LARSON

The writer works for AFP in Geneva

Under the intense gaze of Russian literary giant Leo Tolstoy, his great-granddaughter listens with concern as Anastasia Sheludko describes the horrors she experienced before fleeing Ukraine.

The attack on Ukraine by her ancestral homeland Russia nearly six weeks ago had come as a massive shock, Marta Albertini said, adding that she immediately realised she needed to help refugees.

“It was instinctive,” said the 84-year-old, who is lending Sheludko and her mother an apartment in the small village of Lens, near the plush Swiss Alps ski resort of Crans-Montana. Before they arrived, Albertini removed most of the family pictures that covered the wooden walls of the apartment, but a large painting of her great-grand-

father hangs in the living room.

The author of celebrated novels “War and Peace” and “Anna Karenina” would have viewed the conflict raging in Ukraine with “horror”, she said. Albertini, who last year published a book about three generations of Tolstoy women -- her great-grandmother, who gave the author 13 children, her grandmother and her mother -- pointed out that he was a renowned pacifist.

Tolstoy, who experienced the Crimean War and the siege of Sevastopol in the 1850s, would likely have been “completely devastated” by what is happening, she said.

Albertini, who grew up in Italy and France before making Switzerland her permanent home a few years ago, says she is among many Tolstoy descendants who

signed a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin saying the family opposed the war.

‘WE ARE AGAINST THE HORRORS THAT ARE BEING PERPETRATED NOW, THE INVASION OF AN INNOCENT COUNTRY’

“We are against the horrors that are being perpetrated now, the invasion of an innocent country,” she said, acknowledging that Putin had quite possibly looked at all the signatures “and thrown them in the trash”.

But it was important to speak up, she said. “Europe, the world, will not be the same after this war.”

For Sheludko, the world she knew just a few weeks ago has already evaporated. “Sometimes I think I am dreaming,” she said. “It is surreal.”

The 24-year-old arrived in the spectacular mountain landscape of Lens with her mother on March 13, more than a week after they fled their home in the southern Ukrainian city of Mykolaiv. They are among more than 23,000 Ukrainians who have arrived in Switzerland, out of more than 4.2 million who have left the war-ravaged country since the February 24 attack.

Albertini, who lives in a traditional chalet outside Lens, had purchased the apartment in the village a few years ago for family visits, and with an eye to moving there herself once she no longer feels safe driv-

ing. Through word-of-mouth, a local man working to bring in several Ukrainian families got in touch, and all was soon arranged.

Albertini was there when Sheludko and her mother arrived, along with another family that has since moved on. That first meeting was “very, very emotional”, she said.

Now, more than two weeks later, Sheludko, wearing a grey sweatshirt and large-rimmed glasses, seems to have settled in, and is already attending university classes in the nearby town of Sierre.

She had been studying to be a translator in Mykolaiv, but here, she has reverted back to a study path she left a few years ago.

“So now I am an aspiring IT specialist again,” she said with a laugh.

— AFP

Viruses that could save millions of lives

IRAKLI METREVELI

It may seem strange after a pandemic that has killed millions and turned the world upside down, but viruses could save just as many lives. In a petri dish in a laboratory in the Georgian capital Tbilisi, a battle is going on between antibiotic resistant bacteria and “friendly” viruses.

This small nation in the Caucasus has pioneered research on a groundbreaking way to tackle the looming nightmare of bacteria becoming resistant to the antibiotics on which the world depends.

Long overlooked in the West, bacteriophages or bacteria-eating viruses are now being used on some of the most difficult medical cases, including a Belgian woman who developed a life-threatening infection after being injured in the 2016 Brussels airport bombing.

After two years of unsuccessful antibiotic treatment, bacteriophages sent from Tbilisi cured her infection in three months.

“We use those phages that kill harmful bacteria” to cure patients when antibiotics fail, Mzia Kutateladze of the Eliava Institute of Bacteriophages said.

Even a banal infection can “kill a patient because the pathogen has developed resistance to antibiotics,” Kutateladze said.

In such cases, phagotherapy “is one of the best alternatives”, she added.

Phages have been known about for a century, but were largely forgotten and dismissed after antibiotics revolutionised medicine in the 1930s.

While phages-based medicines cannot completely replace antibiotics, researchers say they have major pluses in being cheap, not having side-effects nor damaging organs or gut flora.

“We produce six standard phages that are of wide spectrum and can heal multiple infectious diseases,” said Eliava Institute physician Lia Nadareishvili.

In some 10 to 15 per cent of patients, however, standard phages don’t work and “we have to find ones capable of killing the particular bacterial strain,” she added.

Tailored phages to target rare infections can be selected from the institute’s massive collection — the world’s richest — or be found in sewage or polluted water or soil, Kutateladze said.

The institute can even “train” phages so that “they can kill more and more different harmful bacteria.” “It is a cheap and easily accessible therapy,” she added.

A 34-year-old American mechanical engineer suffering from a chronic bacterial disease for six years said he “already felt improvement” after two weeks at the Tbilisi institute.

“I’ve tried every possible treatment in the United States,” said Andrew, who would only give his first name. — AFP

Will Putin kill the global economy?



PAUL KRUGMAN

The writer is an American economist and public intellectual

Economic commentators always reach for historical analogies and with good reason.

For example, those who had studied past banking crises had a much better grasp of what was happening in 2008 than those who hadn’t. But there’s always the question of which analogy to choose.

Right now, many people are harking back to the stagflation of the 1970s. I’ve argued at some length that this is a bad parallel; our current inflation looks very different from what we saw in 1979-80, and probably much easier to end.

There are, however, good reasons to worry that we’re seeing an economic replay of 1914 — the year that ended what some economists call the first wave of globalisation, a vast expansion of world trade made possible by railroads, steamships and telegraph cables.

In his 1919 book ‘The Economic Consequences of the Peace,’ John Maynard Keynes — who would later teach us how to understand depressions — lamented what he saw, correctly, as the end of an era, “an extraordinary episode in the economic progress of man.”

On the eve of World War I, he wrote, an inhabitant of London could easily order “the various products of the whole earth, in such quantity as he might see fit, and reasonably expect their early delivery upon his doorstep.”

But it was not to last, thanks to “the projects and politics of militarism and imperialism, of racial and cultural rivalries.” Sound familiar?

Keynes was right to see World War I as the end of an era for the global economy. To take one clearly relevant example, in 1913 the Russian empire was a huge wheat exporter; it would be three generations before some of the former republics of the Soviet Union resumed that role.

And the second wave of globalisation, with its world-spanning supply chains made possible by containerisation and telecommunications, didn’t really get going until around 1990.

So are we about to see a second deglobalisation? The answer, probably, is yes. And while there were important downsides to globalisation as we knew it, there will be even starker consequences if, as I and many others fear, we see a significant rollback in world trade.

Why is world trade taking a hit? Vladimir Putin’s botched war of conquest has, of course, meant an end to wheat exports from Ukraine, and it probably cut off much of Russia’s sales, too.

It’s not entirely clear how sharply Russia’s exports of oil and natural gas have already been reduced — Europe has been reluctant to impose sanctions on imports of products on which, fecklessly, it allowed itself to become dependent; but the European Union is moving to end that dependence.

Wait, there’s more. You mightn’t have expected Putin’s war to have much of an effect on auto production.

‘THERE ARE GOOD REASONS TO WORRY THAT WE’RE SEEING AN ECONOMIC REPLAY OF 1914, THE YEAR THAT ENDED WHAT SOME ECONOMISTS CALL THE FIRST WAVE OF GLOBALISATION’

But modern cars include a lot of wiring, held in place by a specialised part called a wire harness — and many of Europe’s wire harnesses, it turns out, are made in Ukraine.

Still, Russia’s decision to turn itself into an international pariah probably

wouldn’t by itself be enough to drastically reduce world trade, which plays a key role in many supply chains, could if it decided to turn inward.

Beyond that, what Putin has taught us is that countries run by strongmen who surround themselves with yes-men aren’t reliable business partners. So if you’re a business leader right now, surely you’re wondering whether it’s smart to stake your company’s future on the assumption that you’ll keep being able to buy what you need from authoritarian regimes. Bringing production back to nations that believe in the rule of law may raise your costs by a few per cent, but the price may be worth it for the stability it buys.

If we are about to see a partial retreat from globalisation, will that be a bad thing? Wealthy, advanced economies will end up only slightly poorer than they would have been otherwise; Britain managed to keep growing despite the decline in world trade after 1913. But I’m worried about the impact on nations that have made progress in recent decades but would be desperately poor without access to world markets — nations like Bangladesh, whose economic achievements have depended crucially on its garment exports.

Unfortunately, we’re relearning the lessons of World War I: The benefits of globalisation are always at risk from the threat of war and the whims of dictators. To make the world durably richer, we need to make it safer.

— The New York Times



A man walks near his house destroyed as a result of Russian troops shelling in the village of Dergachi, near Kharkiv. – AFP

How long will the current rate of inflation persists?



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

Prices of many goods and services today are higher than they used to be. While some rose by a little, others by a lot triggering high inflation rates across the world. Soaring prices are emerging as a feature of the pandemic-era recovery across the world!

In the United States, the Federal Reserve is tackling the highest ever inflation of 7 per cent while in the European Union, it is rising faster than at any time since the euro currency was

introduced.

In the United Kingdom, inflation hit 5.4 per cent in December, the highest in nearly 30 years and in the Asian economies, most of them are facing the threat of crippling inflation. In fact, prices are going up at their fastest rate since the early 1980s.

If the Covid-19 pandemic was blamed to be the primary factor driving inflation through demand and supply-side distortions, climate shocks and change in consumer habits till the beginning of 2022 coupled with massive monetary stimulus packages, that were rolled out over the last two years also contributed to increasing consumer prices, Russia-Ukraine crisis made it even worse.

IF THE PANDEMIC WAS BLAMED TO BE THE PRIMARY FACTOR DRIVING INFLATION THROUGH DEMAND AND SUPPLY-SIDE DISTORTIONS, RUSSIA-UKRAINE CRISIS MADE IT EVEN WORSE

Prices, which had already been rising, have shot up further in the recent weeks. Supply chains, already disrupted by the swift recovery from the pandemic recession, have started facing renewed pressure. And the global picture of prices has darkened further!

The International Monetary Fund in January raised its 2022 inflation forecasts for both advanced and emerging markets and developing economies, saying it expects elevated

price levels to persist. It now expects inflation to average 3.9 per cent in advanced economies and 5.9 per cent in emerging markets and developing economies in 2022, before subsiding next year.

The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman increased during the month of November 2021 by 3.56 per cent compared to the same month of 2020, and the rate increased by 0.12 per cent compared to October 2021. In January last, a Reuters poll of economists forecast that high inflation will haunt the world economy in 2022 on worries of slowing demand and the risk interest rates would rise faster than assumed so far.

According to Fitch Ratings' March 2022 Global Economic Outlook, global GDP growth has deteriorated significantly as inflation challenges intensified following Russian war on Ukraine that threatened global energy supplies.

"Global inflation is back with a vengeance after an absence of at least two decades. This is starting to feel like an inflation regime change moment," said Brian Coultou, Chief Economist at Fitch Ratings.

In March, S&P Global Economics lowered its real GDP growth forecast for emerging markets overall to 4 per cent for this year and 4.3 per cent in 2023, from 4.8 per cent and 4.4 per cent in the previous forecast, respectively.

The outlook for emerging markets in Europe, the Middle East and Africa has worsened due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict intensifying energy prices and weakening of trade, financing conditions, and investor and consumer confidence. The six largest Latin-American economies are set to see growth this year of 1.7 per cent, marking a downward revision from S&P Global Ratings' previous 2 per cent forecast.

Inflation has a greater impact on households in emerging economies than on those in developed economies, because spending on food, gas and transportation represents a larger portion of their disposable income. Rising energy costs, along with elevated food prices, raise concerns about potential social instability in several emerging economies, ultimately reducing policy predictability.

Now, the big question on everyone's lips is how long the current rate of inflation will persist. There's unfortunately no straightforward answer to this question. Countries around the world are all facing inflation, meaning that these countries need to find the right solution together, so as to not unfairly disadvantage other countries.



The infrastructure of recovery



Riccardo Puliti

The writer is Vice-President for Infrastructure at the World Bank

Physical infrastructure has a critical role to play in supporting the post-pandemic recovery and in laying the longer-term foundations for green, resilient and inclusive development. A growing body of evidence highlights its contribution to a wide range of development indicators, including employment, productivity, income, inequality, trade and human-capital formation.

Yet, across much of the developing world, infrastructure remains woefully inadequate. Some one billion people live more than a mile from an all-season road, 760 million lack access to electricity at home, and 450 million live beyond range of a broadband signal. Even where these services are available, they are frequently erratic and unaffordable. The disruptions caused by unreliable infrastructure cost individuals and businesses hundreds of billions of dollars annually, and the world's poorest and most fragile countries have the most expensive broadband, electricity and transportation services.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, investment in infrastructure was well below the levels needed to achieve global development goals. And since the pandemic, spending has been squeezed further. While many developed economies have implemented stimulus packages to support economic recovery – often with infrastructure components – the world's poorest states lack the fiscal space for such measures. The last G7 summit highlighted this issue, as leaders called for enhanced efforts to fund infrastructure development in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

To maximise infrastructure's contribution to the global economic recovery and support green, resilient and inclusive growth, additional investment must be channelled into effective programmes. Four imperatives stand out.

For starters, meeting global climate targets requires an unprecedented wave of investment in green infrastructure. Energy and transportation systems together account for around two-thirds of global carbon dioxide emissions, and LMICs will account for much of the projected increase in emissions in the coming years. Investments in renewable electricity, energy efficiency, charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, climate-smart urban transport systems and emerging green hydrogen supply chains are cost-effective options that simultaneously abate CO2 emissions and create jobs. In parallel with such new investments in green infrastructure, additional capital will be needed to support the accelerated retirement of coal-fired power stations.

Second, new projects must be designed to promote economic and social resilience to extreme weather and

other external shocks. Climate change is already causing severe damage to existing infrastructure. For example, in January, Tropical Storm Ana took out around half of Malawi's meager power-generation capacity. The following month, a volcanic eruption and tsunami disconnected Tonga's submarine Internet cable.

EVEN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, OVERALL INVESTMENT IN PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SUCH AS HIGHWAYS, POWER LINES AND INTERNET CABLES LAGGED BEHIND WHAT WAS NEEDED TO MEET DEVELOPMENT GOALS. TO MAXIMISE INFRASTRUCTURE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SUPPORT GREEN AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH, FOUR IMPERATIVES STAND OUT

Such direct infrastructure damage is already valued at around \$18 billion annually. Enhancing infrastructure resilience would add only a few percentage points to existing investment needs, but the anticipated benefits exceed the costs by a factor of four to one.

Despite Tonga's experience, digital infrastructure is key to making whole societies more resilient to crisis. During the pandemic, the number of Internet users globally jumped by 800 million, and data traffic in emerging economies increased by 25-50 per cent as more and more activities moved online. Digital applications that support online service delivery and remote work enabled firms and governments to continue operating. The third imperative is to invest in

sustainable infrastructure that promotes social inclusion and addresses different dimensions of inequality. Despite the surge in digital connectivity during the pandemic, as of 2021, 2.9 billion people remain offline, including more than 50 per cent of the population in LMICs and as much as 81 per cent in the least-developed countries. Substantial disparities between urban and rural areas, and between men and women in some parts of the world, also remain.

This digital divide has led to serious inequities in development outcomes. According to Unicef, lack of access to relevant technologies prevented at least 463 million, or 31 per cent, of schoolchildren worldwide from participating in digital and broadcast remote learning during the pandemic. Only 6 per cent of children in Sub-Saharan Africa were reached by Internet-based remote learning programmes.

Lastly, the overall effect of physical infrastructure on development depends on how investments are coordinated with each other and complemented by supportive policy measures. Across Africa, regional road corridors are critical for intracontinental trade. For example, an upgrade to the Lagos to Abidjan corridor could yield substantial economic benefits to countries along the West African coast. But a truck driver making the journey today can expect to spend 160 hours at border crossings. The benefits of the road upgrade could be doubled if border formalities are also streamlined.

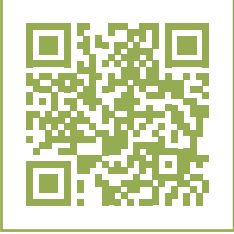
Different types of infrastructure can boost the benefits of others. Across fragile regions of rural Africa, investments in rural roads have accelerated the movement of workers out of subsistence agriculture into higher-wage jobs in manufacturing and services. But the economic impact of roads can be several times larger in communities where electricity also is available. ©Project Syndicate, 2021



Construction workers return to work under Covid-19 conditions.

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Oman gear up for FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

The Oman national senior basketball team is gearing up to take part at the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup qualification which will be hosted by Qatar's Doha city from May 31 to June 5.

The training sessions of the team began on Monday at the indoor hall at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex under watchful eyes of the newly appointed head coach Zouhair Shareef Ayachi from Tunisia and in attendance of his assistant, national experienced coach Mahmood Ambo Ali.

The first internal preparatory camp under supervision of the new coaching staff will continue

during Ramadhan month and will conclude on April 31. Another internal and external warm-up session will be followed ahead of 2025 FIBA Asia Cup qualification.

As many as 19 players have been opted by the Tunisian head coach for the training session. The selections were based on the players performance during the Oman Basketball League championship and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth's basketball shield championship. The head coach attended both top basketball domestic events and finalised the initial squad of the national team.

The warm-up training included various sessions which aimed to raise physical fitness levels besides implementation of different technical and tactical

exercises. The Tunisian coach focused during the training sessions to instruct the players on passing the ball, triple shooting, shooting from under the basket, passing skills with the ball and other desired skills when starting and building any attacks and also the players trained for defending against the rival moves.

The probables for the national senior basketball team featured: Hamood al Souli, Said al Saadi, Amjad al Hadidi, AbdulRahman al Sinani, Bassam al Busaidi, Hadid Bait Bakhit, Said Ghassan, Rasheed al Zuhai, AbdulRahman al Shuaibi, Marwan al Hadidi, Nouh al Amri, Mowaia al Harthi, Hassan al Faraji, Abdu Rezza al Battashi, Adil al Battashi, Ahmed al Halhali, Saif al Toubi, Faisal al Jamoodi, Osama al Riyami.

Al Bashayer earn promotion to Omantel League

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

Al Bashayer club sealed direct promotion to the top tier league in the next season after defeating Al Mudhaibi 4-0 late on Monday ahead of the first division league conclusion by two rounds. At Sur Sports Complex, Dyoob (two goals), Mahmood al Sawafi and Faisal al Aghbari scored the goals and confirmed the historic promotion for Al Dakhiliyah representative team to Omantel League for the first time ever.

Al Bashayer team, coached by national coach Hamed al Shaqsi, managed to reach 21 points and led the second group. In the first phase of the league, Al Bashayer club players led the fourth group and ended all the games on victory note.

Two more games are remaining for winners Al Bashayer in the first division league in second group. The team will meet Samayil on Sunday and the following fixture will be against Sur on April 16.

In the first group, Al Khabourah are inch closer to seal the second direct ticket to Omantel League as they registered a 2-1 crucial win over Bausher at Sohar Sports Complex on Monday.

The win helped the northern Batinah team to reach their tally to 18 points. Al Khabourah will take on Qurayat on Sunday and Al Oruba on April 16.

In the same group, Al Oruba edged Ibri 1-0 with the all-important goal scored by Danial Etor. With the win, Al Oruba's tally reached 16 points, two behind leaders Al Khabourah.



Bangladesh to complain over S Africa umpiring, sledging



Bangladesh's Ebadot Hossain (2nd R) banters with South Africa's Sarel Erwee (2nd L) during the fifth day of the first Test in Durban. — AFP

DHAKA: Bangladesh will formally complain to the International Cricket Council over claims of biased umpiring and “unbearable” sledging in the first Test against South Africa, officials said on Tuesday.

The side was furious after several close calls went against them in Durban, where they remained competitive for most of the match before a batting collapse saw them dismissed for 53 in the second innings.

Players have since taken issue with their opponents for on-field taunts they said crossed the line into abuse.

“You all have seen how biased the umpiring was. On the field, sledging was also unbearable,” Bangladesh Cricket Board cricket operations chief Jalal Yunus said.

“We will write a formal complaint to the ICC match referee manager,” he added.

Jalal said they raised similar issues to match referee Andy Pycroft after their 2-1 one-day international series win — their first on South African soil.

“Our manager spoke to him several times. But he paid no attention to our complaint,” Jalal said by phone from Durban.

“We want the ICC to appoint neutral umpires in Test series as soon as possible. We are also ready to welcome neutral umpires in our home series,” he said.

Umpires from host countries have been used exclusively since 2020, when the pandemic imposed worldwide travel restrictions, and South African umpires Marais Erasmus and Adrian Holdstock were standing in the Durban Test. — AFP

Konkani Boys enter final, FC Goa in semis



MUSCAT: FC Goa beat Basateen Transport by 16 Runs to enter the semifinals of the third Barka Champions League (BCL) at Maabela grounds. FC Goa will lock horns with UGB Barka in the second semifinal on Thursday.

Earlier, the first semifinal was played between Maharashtrian Konkani Boys and Men's Club Barka where Konkani Boys emerged as the winner in an one sided affair beating MCB by 145 runs.

The final and the second semifinal will be played under floodlights at the grass ground in Mabella on April 7.

Brief Scores (first semifinal): Maharashtrian Kokani Boys 237-1 in 12 overs (Wasim Abdul 118*, Guru Prasad 101*, Yasin 1-42) beat Men's Club Barka 92 all out in 10.4 overs (Manu Mohandas 36; Ali Akbar 3-30, Guru Prasad 2-6) by 145 Runs.



Lucknow's Avesh Khan celebrates a wicket with teammates.

Avesh's four wickets help Lucknow beat Hyderabad

MUMBAI: Fast bowler Avesh Khan returned figures of 4-24 as newcomers Lucknow Super Giants beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by 12 runs to register their second successive win in the IPL on Monday.

Avesh rattled the top and middle-order and fellow quick Jason Holder bowled a good final over to keep down Hyderabad to 157 for nine while chasing 170 in Mumbai.

Holder, the West Indian all-rounder playing his first game for Lucknow, took three wickets including two in the 20th over when Hyderabad needed 16 for victory.

Earlier skipper KL Rahul and Deepak Hooda hit half-centuries to guide Lucknow, one of the two

new teams added to the Indian Premier League this season, to 169-7.

Rahul, who made 68, and Hooda, who smashed 51 off 33 deliveries, put on 87 runs to lift Lucknow from 27-3 after being put into bat first.

Hyderabad skipper Kane Williamson said: “If you look at the performance, it was certainly much improved from our first outing.

“The start with the ball was outstanding. We were in a strong position...if we could just break that next partnership. Credit to Hooda and Rahul.”

Opener Quinton de Kock (one) and Evin Lewis (one) fell early to Washington Sundar's spin but Rahul and Hooda rebuilt the

innings.

The batting pair survived an express spell of pace bowling from Umran Malik, who bowled the fastest ball of the match at over 152 km/h (94 mph), before they took the attack to the opposition.

Hooda hit three fours and three sixes as he reached his fifty in 31 balls, but soon fell to Hyderabad's new West Indies import Romario Shepherd.

Rahul kept up the attack with Ayush Badoni, who got useful runs in the final two overs with his 19 off 12 balls, before being trapped lbw to T Natarajan.

Lucknow then pegged Hyderabad back with Avesh removing the openers including Williamson for 16.

Rahul Tripathi (44) helped put

the chase back on track before Nicholas Pooran (34) and Sundar (18) raised hopes of a win, but Lucknow's bowlers kept coming back with wickets.

Krunal Pandya took the wickets of Tripathi and Aiden Markram with his left-arm spin as Hyderabad suffered a second loss in as many games.

The expanded 10-team Twenty20 tournament will conclude on May 29 with league matches restricted to four venues in Mumbai and Pune with limited crowds. — AFP

Brief Scores: Lucknow Super Giants 169-7 (KL Rahul 68, Deepak Hooda 51; Washington Sundar 2-28) beat Sunrisers Hyderabad 157-9 (Rahul Tripathi 44, Nicholas Pooran 34; Avesh Khan 4-24) by 12 runs.

Vanderlande, Israr Ghala claim knockout T20 titles

MUSCAT: Vanderlande defeated Design Group Engineering Consultants by 8 wickets in the final of the Senior Knockout T20 season 2021-22, held at the Oman Cricket Academy on April 1.

Electing to bat first, Design Group made their way to 148-8 after 20 overs. Opener Jibin Kunnumpurath led the scoring with a well-made 39. Muhammed Althaf (33) and Karthik Rajappa (30) were the other batsmen with notable contributions.

With figures of 3-20, Aravindh Ramesh was the pick of the Vanderlande bowling unit. Mohamed Riyaz and Aasim Mohammed claimed 2 wickets apiece.

In reply, Vanderlande chased the target down in 16.4 overs.

Asfak Ahmed departed in the third over, but his fellow opener Prasanth Reddy Thonduru occupied the crease until the 14th over, and put on a batting clinic for the duration of his time in the middle. His magnificent 46-ball 73 run knock brought Vanderlande to the brink of victory.



Junior knockout winners Israr Ghala.

Prasanth was ably supported, over the course of that match-winning 96-run partnership by Barathwaj Vinayagam, who scored 46 runs. He remained unbeaten too and alongside Vignesh Kumar who kept him company during the game's closing stages, clinched the win for his side.

In the post-game presentation ceremony, Varun Khimji, Director of Khimji Ramdas, presented Prasanth Reddy Thonduru with the player of the match award.

Prasanth also finished as the competition's leading run-getter with 150 runs in 4 outings.

Hussain Satham of Design

Group occupied top spot in the wicket taking charts, with 8 scalps in 4 matches.

ISRAR GHALA CHAMPIONS

In the final of the Junior Knockout T20 season 2021-22 held at the same venue on the same day, Israr Ghala emerged victorious. They beat Earn Trust CT by 4 wickets.

Put to bat after losing the toss, Earn Trust CT negotiated the first 2 overs well, but proceeded to lose 4 wickets in the space of 5 balls to find themselves reeling at 20-4.

However, a 59-run stand between Khurram Chaudhary and Ramesh Viswanathan stabilised



Senior knockout winners Vanderlande.

their innings in the middle overs.

Khurram top scored for his side with a brilliant 33-ball 47. Ramesh remained unbeaten for his 33. Thanks to the late but vital contributions of Mozzam Shah and Shameer Mohamed Khwaja, Earn Trust CT posted a first innings score of 145-7.

Asim Shaheen Muhammed was Israr Ghala's most effective weapon with the ball. He picked up 3 wickets in his 4 overs. Muhammed Saqib and Masih Arif claimed 2 apiece.

In response, Israr Ghala's top order was as ineffective as Earn Trust CT's had been, earlier in

the day. However, coming in at number 5, Ali Gul Agha scored half of the required runs on his own and set his side up for victory in the process.

With Ali anchoring the run chase, the other lower middle order batters played around him and chipped in with some valuable scores. Sagheer Muhammad in particular, looked excellent for his unbeaten 23. After Ali's demise in the 18th over, he stayed put and with Muhammed Saqib for company, took Israr Ghala over the finish line with 5 balls to spare.

Mozzam Shah and Zaheer Abbas were Earn Trust CT's top

performers in the second innings. They picked up 2 wickets each.

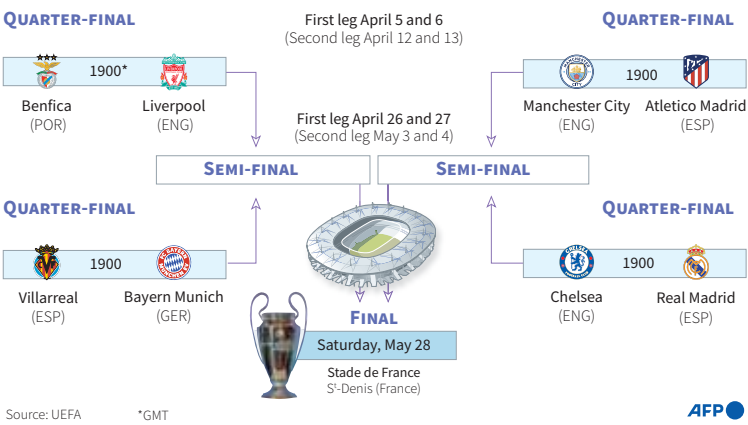
In the post-match presentation ceremony, Varun Khimji, Director of Khimji Ramdas, presented Ali Gul Agha with the player of the match award.

Nadeer Kunninu Thaye Kunninu of Mazoon UP finished as the tournament's leading rungetter. He accumulated 249 runs over a 4-match span. With 9 scalps in his 3 outings on the field, Aravinthan Raja of Al Muthla Golden CT ended the competition as its highest wicket-taker.

BRIEF SCORES:

Earn Trust CT 145-7 in 20 overs (Khurram Chaudhary 47 (33b, 7x4) Ramesh Viswanathan 33 (39b, 3x4); Asim Shaheen Muhammed 3-23) lost to Israr Ghala 149-6 in 19.1 overs (Ali Gul Agha 75 (48b, 9x4); Mozzam Shah 2-6) by 4 wickets. Design Group Engineering Consultants 148-8 in 20 overs (Jibin Kunnumpurath 39 (32b, 7x4), Muhammed Althaf 33 (24b, 2x4, 1x6); Aravindh Ramesh 3-20) lost to Vanderlande 151-2 in 16.4 overs (Prasanth Reddy Thonduru 73 (46b, 9x4, 1x6), Barathwaj Vinayagam 46 (37b, 6x4); Wasim Abbas 1-15) by 8 wickets.

Champions League 2021-2022



Tuchel provides calm amid Chelsea storm

LONDON: Chelsea face Real Madrid on Wednesday reeling from their heaviest defeat of the season, but Thomas Tuchel's battle-hardened ability to keep his players focused should ensure the Champions League holders are ready for the latest test of their resilience.

While Saturday's shock 4-1 home defeat against Brentford was hardly ideal preparation for the quarterfinal first leg against Real, Chelsea boss Tuchel has dealt with worse setbacks during a turbulent period for his club.

When Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich was sanctioned by the British government for his alleged links with Russian President Vladimir Putin following the attack of Ukraine, the Blues were plunged into a financial meltdown that threatened to engulf Tuchel's team. Unable to negotiate new contracts with players due to the sanctions, Chelsea have had to sit by while key defenders Antonio Rudiger, Andreas Christensen and Cesar Azpilicueta considered their futures.

Restricted on the amount of money they could spend on travel to away games, Tuchel joked he was willing to drive the team bus himself before their Champions League last 16 win at Lille.

Yet, despite the chaos, Tuchel kept his players focused so well that they won six successive matches in all competitions immediately after Abramovich put the club up for sale.

Chelsea returned from the international break with such a sloppy display last weekend, as Brentford recovered from Rudiger's opener to beat their west London neighbours for the



first time since 1939.

Aware his players cannot afford to feel sorry for themselves with Real's visit to Stamford Bridge looming, Tuchel tried to downplay the extent of the Brentford defeat.

"After so many wins and so many good results, I will now refuse to make a drama out of it. Why should we?" he said.

Challenging Chelsea to respond against La Liga leaders Real, Tuchel said: "It's hard to take because it's very unusual for us what happened. It's a summary of strange events but it's on us and it's our fault."

"We will dig in and try to find out why it was like this. There are some reasons which we can put on us and we will analyse and digest it. There is nothing else."

Having left Jorginho, Reece James and Mateo Kovacic on the bench against Brentford, Tuchel is likely to make changes for the Real showdown.

"We selected the team because we thought it was the best team against Brentford," Tuchel said.

"There was not half an eye or one per cent on Real Madrid. This was our fault and we have to analyse it quickly." — AFP

Arsenal's top-four bid rocked in 'unacceptable' Palace defeat

LONDON: Mikel Arteta apologised for Arsenal's "unacceptable" performance in a 3-0 defeat at Crystal Palace that dealt a significant blow to their bid to finish in the Premier League's top four.

Arteta's side were destroyed by first half goals from Jean-Philippe Mateta and Jordan Ayew at Selhurst Park on Monday.

Unable to muster a revival after the break, Arsenal's second defeat in their last three league games was sealed by Wilfried Zaha's late penalty.

Arsenal had gone into the weekend in fourth place, but Tottenham's 5-1 win against Newcastle on Sunday piled pressure on the Gunners and their response could not have been any less convincing.

The battle to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish is heating up and Arsenal are in danger of wilting.

They sit in fifth place, behind Tottenham on goal difference having played a game less than their north London rivals.

West Ham and Manchester United, both three points behind Arsenal, will also fancy their chances after a result that blew the top four battle wide open.

"We made it impossible for ourselves with the way we competed. You have to be physical and run and then you earn the right to play. We were really inconsistent on the ball and that is unacceptable," Arteta said.

"We were poor, especially in the first half. I apologise to our supporters. We didn't have the presence or the composure to dominate the situation. That's what I'm most annoyed with."

It was an especially painful result for Arsenal fans given the presence in the Palace dug-out of Eagles boss Patrick Vieira, a Gunners legend after his trophy-filled playing career with the club.

How they could have done with the kind of tenacious performance that was Vieira's hallmark in midfield during Arsenal's glory days.

Vieira comfortably out-witted Arteta, who was voted the Premier



League's manager of the month for March after masterminding his side's climb into contention for a top four berth.

Those Champions League ambitions don't look so believable now. "We need to put our hands up and get the criticism we deserve. Then we accept it, look ourselves in the mirror and look to the next game. This performance was not good enough," Arteta said.

ARSENAL IN DISARRAY

Palace took the lead in the 16th minute after Ben White needlessly fouled Zaha.

Conor Gallagher swung his

free-kick towards the far post, where Joachim Andersen headed it back across for Mateta to nod home from six yards for his sixth goal this term.

If that was a sloppy goal to concede, there was worse to come for Arteta eight minutes later.

Andersen's long pass should have been easy for the Arsenal rearguard, but Gabriel made a hash of his attempt to intercept, completely missing the ball as Ayew eluded the dozing Nuno Tavares to score with a composed finish from the edge of the area.

The Ghana forward's second goal this season left Arteta

scratching his head in disbelief.

Without Scotland left-back Kieran Tierney due to a knee injury, Arsenal's defence was in disarray and Zaha swept through to tee up Mateta for a chance that Aaron Ramsdale saved at full stretch.

Out-fought and out-played in the first half, Arsenal needed an immediate response after the break but Bukayo Saka's penalty appeal was waved away after he was bundled over by Cheikhou Kouyate. Although there was more urgency about Arsenal in the second half, they still lacked a cutting edge. — AFP

OCT Ruwi, OCT Al Hail 'B' clinch opening day wins

MUSCAT: Day 1 of the All-Omani tournament held at the Oman Cricket Academy on April 4 saw OCT Ruwi and OCT Al Hail 'B' emerge victorious. They beat OCT Muscat and OCT Al Mabela by 6 and 7 wickets respectively.

On Turf 1, OCT Muscat elected to bat first after winning the toss. Majid al Balushi was their most impressive batsman by a distance. After losing his opening partner in the very first over, Majid controlled the innings by building a 44-run partnership with Rashad al Balushi.

But once he was dismissed in the 10th over, OCT Muscat crumbled. From 65-3, they were reduced to 82-10 in 18.3 overs. Munthir al Balushi was the only batter apart from Majid and Rashad to reach double figures.

OCT Ruwi were excellent with the ball and on the field during this period. Their star in the first

innings was undoubtedly Zubair Ali Akabr al Balushi. He single-handedly shredded the entire OCT Muscat batting unit, picking up 5 wickets for just 6 runs in his 3.3 overs.

The first five overs of the second innings saw the game turn into a contest once more, as OCT Ruwi found themselves teetering on the edge of collapse at 10-3. However, a superb 70-run stand between Abdul Aziz al Balushi and Nawed al Balushi ensured that all further damage was done by them.

The former top-scored for his side with a 44-ball 42. The latter remained unbeaten on 25 and took OCT Ruwi over the finish line with 21 balls to spare. Arif al Balushi was OCT Muscat's top performer with the ball and was the only one with more than 1 wicket to his name.

On the other ground, OCT Al Mabela were put to bat first after



losing the toss. Salim al Balushi and Zafarullah al Balushi looked assured in the middle and stitched together a 51-run opening

partnership to begin proceedings. They collected 39 and 24 runs individually.

While the latter was sent back

in the 9th over, the former stayed put for much longer and set his side up for a grandstand finish, with the scoreboard reading 95-2 after 14.4 overs.

But after his dismissal in the very next ball, the rest of OCT Al Mabela's batting cast were unable to score as freely. At a run-a-ball rate, they finished on 127-7 after 20 overs.

Shareef al Balushi and Nabeel Mohd Boota were the others with notable contributions.

For OCT Al Hail 'B', Qais Khalid, Asim Abdul Qadeer and Khalid al Balushi picked up 2 wickets apiece.

In response, after a tricky start, OCT Al Hail 'B' took total control of the tie, thanks to a majestic 93-run stand between Hassan Mohamed Hussain and Ahmed Mohammed.

Hassan was dismissed for 50, but Ahmed carried on until the

end and clinched a well-deserved victory for OCT Al Hail 'B' with 2.5 overs in the bank. He ended the day on 56 runs from 54 deliveries.

Nabeel Mohd Boota was the pick of OCT Al Mabela's bowling unit. His 4 overs brought 21 runs and 2 wickets for his side.

BRIEF SCORES:

OCT Muscat 82 all out in 18.3 overs (Majid al Balushi 35 (27b, 4x4, 1x6); Zubair al Balushi 5-6) lost to OCT Ruwi 85-4 in 16.3 overs (Abdul Aziz al Balushi 42 (44b, 2x4, 3x6); Arif al Balushi 3-13) by 6 wickets.

OCT Al Mabela 127-7 in 20 overs (Salim al Balushi 39 (48b, 2x4); Qais Khalid 2-17) lost to OCT Al Hail 'B' 128-3 in 17.1 overs (Ahmed Mohammed 56 (54b, 3x4), Hassan Mohammed Hussain 50 (40b, 7x4); Nabeel Mohd Boota 21-2) by 7 wickets.

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

4,137.461



CRUDE OIL PRICE

Oman Crude \$105.24

Brent Crude \$108.18

Light Crude \$104.07



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MSX to set up two new subsidiaries ahead of planned public listing

KEY GOALS: Omani bourse has ambitions to become a ‘futuristic exchange’ driven by new innovations and technologies

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) says it is exploring the establishment of two new subsidiaries in line with its goal to evolve into a world-class bourse ahead of its planned listing on the Omani exchange in about five years.

According to MSX Chief Executive Officer Haitham bin Salem al Salmi (pictured), one of the proposed entities will emerge from the planned restructuring of the wholly-owned Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (MCD), set up as a central depository of all MSX-listed instruments with an important clearinghouse function as well.

The other proposed entity will focus on technological investments in the stock exchange to bring it on par with leading bourses of the region and the wider world.

“At present, we have our own subsidiary, Muscat Clearing & Depository (MCD), but we are planning to have another subsidiary to handle Central Counterparty



(CCP) risks. And perhaps, we can have another one to invest in the technology part. All of these subsidiaries are proposed to be consolidated into the MSX Group, which will then get listed in five years’ time.”

The CEO made the observations during a recent virtual event hosted by the Armenia-headquartered Federation of Euro-Asian Stock Exchanges (FEAS).

The proposed new subsidiaries, Al Salmi said, are part of an array of initiatives envisaged by the MSX as it transitions from an independent stock exchange, owned by Oman Investment Authority, into a publicly traded company via an eventual listing on the Omani bourse. Notable has been MSX’s

“The MSX has aspirations to evolve into a ‘futuristic exchange’ – a goal that will warrant investments in new innovations and technologies

HAITHAM BIN SALEM AL SALMI
Chief Executive Officer, MSX

recent announcement declaring all listed companies open to 100 per cent foreign investments (save for those with an inbuilt ceiling on foreign investment).

To help streamline and optimise its depository and clearing house functions, a new spinoff is envisaged, said the CEO.

“Currently, we have a clearing house and depository in the same organisation. But we aim to separate the two functions in order to establish a Central Counterparty (CPP) company that does settlements with a very high risk mitigation and management.

This is meant to mainly cover the counterparty risk, especially when we introduce new and complicated products like derivatives and

commodities and so on, where the counterparty risk becomes very high.”

Additionally, the MSX has aspirations to evolve into a ‘futuristic exchange’ – a goal that will warrant investments in new innovations and technologies, said Al Salmi.

“As MSX, we believe that technology is the best way to achieve our goal, and being a futuristic exchange is our main interest using technology to enhance our financial performance. We believe in smart exchanges”, he stressed.

The official noted in particular the importance of technologies of the 4th Industrial Revolution to help achieve the long-term ambitions of the MSX.

“We believe that Big Data is what we need — data becomes the future oil for the industry. Having Big Data will help us to understand and analyse data, and find the gaps to perform better. It will also help us to provide future services based on robotics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and so on.”

Also in the bourse’s sights are digital assets, the CEO stated. “We cannot ignore that markets are now facing a big challenge in terms of having digital assets. Digital assets become very important in terms of market volume, which is projected to touch almost \$2 billion. We want to be part of this”, he added.

Amazon hosting of 100 Omani SMEs to be launched soon



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

An initiative of the Ministry of Economy, in cooperation with the Authority of SME Development (Riyada), to register 100 companies on the famous Amazon website, will be launched soon, the Authority announced on its official website.

The programme aims to take small and medium enterprises to the global level and open up new horizons for them regionally and internationally.

It is also part of initiatives by the Ministry of Economy

to support and sustain economic development by encouraging the SME sector – a goal prioritised by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The programme will offer practical training and live sessions with experts in e-commerce, as well as practical exercises and video clips to facilitate the e-marketing process for small and medium enterprises that are on the list.

In the context of the digital transformation witnessed by the commercial sector worldwide, the Sultanate of Oman is also keeping pace with the developments globally.

Move to pilot green hydrogen use in Suhar steel production

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

German green energy technology firm Hydrogen Rise has signed an agreement with Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel and Sohar Port and Freezone to evaluate the development of the first green hydrogen plant at Suhar, which will decarbonise the steel production process at Jindal Shadeed’s steel manufacturing plant.

After conducting techno-economic feasibility studies, the first phase will include the operation of a 35MW electrolyser capacity by mid-2024, paired with a solar renewable energy plant. Following this first phase, an upscaling path to a potential 350MW electrolysis capacity will be evaluated.

Hydrogen Rise, based in Oman and Germany will develop, build and operate the green hydrogen facility at Suhar supplying green hydrogen to Jindal Shadeed’s steel manufacturing facility.

Jindal Shadeed’s expertise in steel production can see the company become an early pioneer in utilising innovative decarbonisation technologies and in



substituting natural gas with green hydrogen in the steel manufacturing process to become a major producer in the fast-developing global market for green steel.

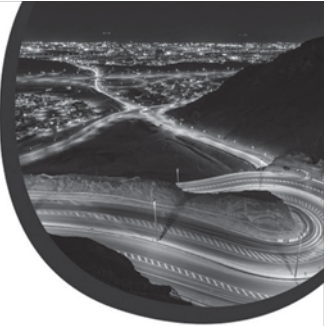
Olav Carlsen, CEO of Hydrogen Rise, Oman, said, “We are excited to work with Jindal Shadeed and Sohar Port and Freezone to evaluate the development of a step-wise scalable and bankable project for a very innovative decarbonisation process - from a starting electrolysis size of 35MW to a step-by-step ten-fold scaling of 350MW.

This approach, plus the very cost competitive renewable energy production in Oman and the commitment to decarbonisation processes here in the country will give all partners a significant competitive edge in the developing global

market for green steel. It is no doubt a step in the right direction as we look at ways to decarbonise industries in Oman and their dependency on gas. If successful, this mechanism can be rolled out to industrial zones across the country and around the world.”

Sanjay Anand, CEO and Head of Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel in Oman, said, “The range of products that are possible to be produced using this method has the potential to transform the steel industry in Oman. At Jindal Shadeed, we are very proud to adopt an environment-friendly approach to steel making and have some of the world’s lowest carbon intensity footprints.”

Mark Geilenkirchen, CEO of SOHAR Port and Freezone, said, “SOHAR is ideally-positioned to become a major exporter of green steel across the world and lead the way in facilitating the production, transportation and utilisation of clean hydrogen. This agreement is the first major step towards developing a viable alternative to gas, which will promote sustainable practices for all industries operating within SOHAR and attract new businesses to our clusters.”



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS IN RELATION TO

Provision of Technical Consultancy Services for the Development of a Waste to Energy Project

The Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC (OPWP), a member of Nama Group, is responsible for procuring new capacity for power and water in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the requirements of the law for the regulation and privatisation of the electricity and related water sector promulgated by Royal Decree 2004/78 as amended and the OPWP licence.

Tender Description	In line with Oman's vision to diversify fuel sources for power generation and exploring potential solutions to reduce waste volume, OPWP was nominated to lead the development of the first waste to energy project (WTE IPP) in Oman in coordination with Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (Be'ah). OPWP would now like to proceed with appointing a qualified and experienced technical consultant for the development of WTE IPP. OPWP seeks proposals from interested bidders to provide technical advisory services for the development of the WTE IPP, and to advise for the competitive tendering of the WTE IPP.
Tender Number	OPWP/2022/004
Tender Purchase Period	29 March 2022 up to 9th April 2022
Tender Fee	OMR 210
Submission date	16 May 2022 at 12:00 PM Gulf Standard Time GST
Collection & Payment Methods	The tender documents is available for purchase in an electronic format through OPWP website (https://www.omanpwp.com/new/Default.aspx). The payment is done electronically through OPWP website. Any queries, shall be communicated through: procurement.officer@omanpwp.nama.om
Bank Guarantee	A bid bond or a bank certified cheque of not less than 1% of the tender value, to be valid for a period of 120 days from the submission deadline date referred to above. A copy of the bid bond shall be enclosed as part of the bid and the original to be delivered in a closed envelope citing only the tender number to OPWP office in the below address.



Oman Power And Water Procurement Co. S.A.O.C.
5th Floor, Building 5, Muscat Grand Mall, Tilal Complex (Office)
P.O. Box 1388, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman Ruwi.
Tel.: 8400 2450 968+ | Fax: 9946 2439 968+ | www.omanpwp.com

National Finance wins Top Omani Brand award

MUSCAT: In recognition of its outstanding achievements and innovative solutions, the Sultanate of Oman's largest finance company, National Finance, was recently awarded the title of "Top Omani Brand" in the 'Finance' category at the Alam Al-Iktisaad Top Omani Brand Awards ceremony.

The event took place in the Majan Ballroom at Al Bustan Palace, Muscat, the guest of honour, HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik al Said, presented the award to National Finance – Mohammed al Busaidy, Head of Operations.

This accomplishment exemplifies National Finance's exceptional performance which

is achieved through its range of financing services for customers, corporates and SMEs along with its keen focus on ensuring that its services are easily accessible. Over the last three decades, the company has worked unceasingly towards providing fast, easy and flexible solutions that meet the client's various requirements.

In an endeavour to enhance customer engagement, the company has been at the forefront of embracing technological advancements and adopting digital solutions that focus on ease and convenience. It has also embraced technology to enhance its e-channels such as its feature-



packed mobile app and website and has also ensured prompt, easy and quick communication

through WhatsApp. "We are delighted with this accomplishment that reflects the

company's successful journey as well as its leading position in the finance industry. Since its inception, National Finance has built a strong reputation as a market leader and has been trusted by thousands of customers across the Sultanate of Oman to meet their financing needs while surpassing their expectations", said Mohammed al Busaidy.

The winners of these prestigious awards were selected based on the results of a survey conducted by Alam Al-Iktisaad, Oman's premier Arabic business magazine, in collaboration with Arab House Research. The survey witnessed the participation of a

large number of senior officials from a cross-section of industries and government bodies in the Sultanate.

With an industry experience of over 35 years, National Finance has achieved excellence in all areas of operations. It has won several accolades such as the 'Best SME Finance Solution' award by Capital Finance International (CFI.co), the 'Most Innovative Retail Finance – Automobile – Oman' award at the International Finance Awards, and was also recognised as the 'Best Non-Banking Financial Corporation' at the Oman Banking & Finance Awards.

Refer new Bushra customers and get RO 50 as a reward

MUSCAT: To ensure that its customers benefit from its offers, services and products, Alizz Islamic Bank announced a special offer where any customer referring and bringing 10 successful new Bushra customers will have a chance to get an RO 50 reward.

The first 500 customers who successfully refer 10 new customers to open Bushra accounts during the holy month of Ramadhan and they maintain a deposit balance of RO 1,000 for minimum for 30 days will be rewarded with RO 50. The new customer's deposit must be sourced from pure credits (fresh deposits) while deposits sourced from internal transfers, existing salaries and postdated cheques will be excluded from the campaign.

Alizz Islamic Bank currently offers a tiered Bushra Savings Account, which is based on the Sharia



principle of unrestricted 'Mudarabah', where the customer is the owner of the money, and the bank manages the 'Mudarabah' by investing the pool of customer funds in joint 'Mudarabah' transactions, in addition to other Mudarabah-based accounts.

All profits are divided between the customer and the bank, based on a profit-sharing ratio determined by the bank. Profit rates based on each category will be applied to the deposit balances kept in the Bushra Account.

Based on each customer's

account balance, the bank will deposit their profit shares on a monthly basis.

Customers can get more details on profit rates by visiting the bank's official website at www.alizzislamic.com, visiting the nearest bank branch across Oman or calling the customer service centre on the toll free number 80072265.

The Bushra Savings account has been designed to keep up with the changes in customer lifestyles by ensuring the best possible profits for the customer. Alizz Islamic Bank continues to tailor-make products and services to suit the expectations and requirements of customers.

Bushra customers, whether Omanis or expats, enjoy many advantages and benefits including monthly profit payment, instant debit card issuance and collection, free online and mobile banking and SMS alerts.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds sets aside RO 150,000 for Ramadhan CSR activities

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest global jewellery retailers amplifies the spirit of Ramadhan by strengthening its CSR activities in the GCC and Far East. The brand has planned month-long CSR activities in association with embassies, and like-minded organisations, which include the distribution of food provision kits and iftar meals to deserving laborers and families. This initiative is expected to benefit a large section of the society across all countries in which Malabar Gold & Diamonds operates.

"CSR remains a core value at Malabar Gold & Diamonds ever since its inception in 1993 and contributing to the community has been a key part of the company's ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) goals. Ramadhan is usually the time we reflect on our actions and contribute to society in whatever way possible. Every year during Ramadhan, we engage in various CSR initiatives, aiming to create a difference in the community in and around our area of operations and to drive other



organisations, both big and small to initiate such activities that will help the needy," said Abdul Salam KP, Vice Chairman – Malabar Group.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds will distribute both iftar meals and food provision kits as part of this Ramadhan CSR initiative. In Oman, iftar meals will be directly distributed to various labour camps in Muscat, Al Seeb, Barka, Suhar & Salalah in addition to needy families, individuals who have lost their job, and those on visit visas, references of whom will be provided by like-minded organisations and customers of Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

"The spirit of Ramadhan gives us an added opportunity to exercise humanitarian values while making a positive impact on the lives of those around us. At Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the Ramadhan CSR activity is spearheaded by our team

members themselves along with like-minded organisations and associations, together with whom we identify and provide support to the needy in the local communities. It gives me a lot of happiness that we can continue to add goodness to society with the generous support of all our customers, partners, shareholders and team members, said Shamlal Ahamed, MD – International Operations of Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds believes that the most successful companies are those which integrate responsibility and sustainability into their core business and these principles are captured in the ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) goals of the organisation. The group is always proactive when it comes to CSR activities right from inception in 1993.

Win up to RO 5,000 with Bank Muscat's Al Jawhar referral scheme

MUSCAT: In line with the bank's vision 'To serve you better, everyday', and commitment to offering the best services in Oman to benefit its customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has launched the Al Jawhar referral scheme, which will be open to Privilege Banking customers till December 31, 2022. The scheme gives Al Jawhar customers a chance to earn up to RO 5,000 by referring their friends and family members to join the Privilege Banking services.

Amjad bin Iqbal al Lawati, Deputy General Manager – Customer Segments, said: "Bank Muscat is delighted to once again launch the Al Jawhar referral scheme with guaranteed rewards for the benefit of all existing Al Jawhar customers who can now earn an incentive of RO 50 for every successful referral, up to a maximum of 100 referrals.

All new referrals who successfully open and maintain



their Al Jawhar account will also win RO 50 each. This makes the scheme a win-win proposition for existing customers as well as their family and friends and we welcome all eligible customers to try it out."

All that needs to be done is to download and fill the form given in the link below with both the customer's and referee's details and then email it to AlJawharCampaign@bankmuscat.com. T

he scheme is open to all existing customers of Bank Muscat Al Jawhar Privilege Banking who successfully refer new Al Jawhar salary accounts for their friends and family. The incentives will be credited on a quarterly basis



into the accounts of both referrer and the referee on successful completion of a three-month eligibility period.

Designed to elevate Privilege Banking to unparalleled heights, Al Jawhar opens a world of opportunities with a number of services and facilities that makes the banking experience truly rewarding for its exclusive clientele. Al Jawhar Privilege Banking customers are eligible for exclusive 2-for-1 deals on food, entertainment and shopping that are available through the 'Visa Offers MENA' app on their smartphones. They also have access to a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO 800. Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit

Cardholders offers access to 25 premium lounges around the world in addition to lounges at Muscat and Salalah airport. Cardholders are eligible for a complimentary Dragon Pass and a 'Meet and Greet' service with 15% discount at over 450 global destinations.

The Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Card allows customers to enjoy the best in class complimentary travel insurance which include includes travel accident insurance as well as insurance for lost baggage and money, cancellation, travel delay, delayed baggage, personal liability, legal expenses and loss of passport and access to free medical and legal referral services worldwide.

The cardholders also enjoy 1% cash back on all local and international spends. Designed around unique lifestyle and banking requirements, Al Jawhar is a first-of-its-kind privilege banking service in Oman.

MCBS wins at 2022 GHEDEX Awards



MUSCAT: Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS), Oman received the 'Entrepreneurship Development Award' for all the efforts and initiatives by its Centre for Entrepreneurship & Business Incubation (CEBI) on March 28, 2022 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

The event was organised and awarded by GHEDEX: Oman's Higher Education, Training & Future Skills Show: Awards for Excellence

in Higher Education.

MCBS was recognised for its entrepreneurial development efforts amongst students and society in general with the joint efforts between the entrepreneurship centre, entrepreneurship student club, and external organisations such as Oman Academy for SMEs, Muscat. Muthla al Busaidy, Entrepreneurship Lecturer and Supervisor – Entrepreneurship Club received the award on behalf of MCBS.

Worley wins contract to support Green Energy Oman project

JOMAR MENDOZA

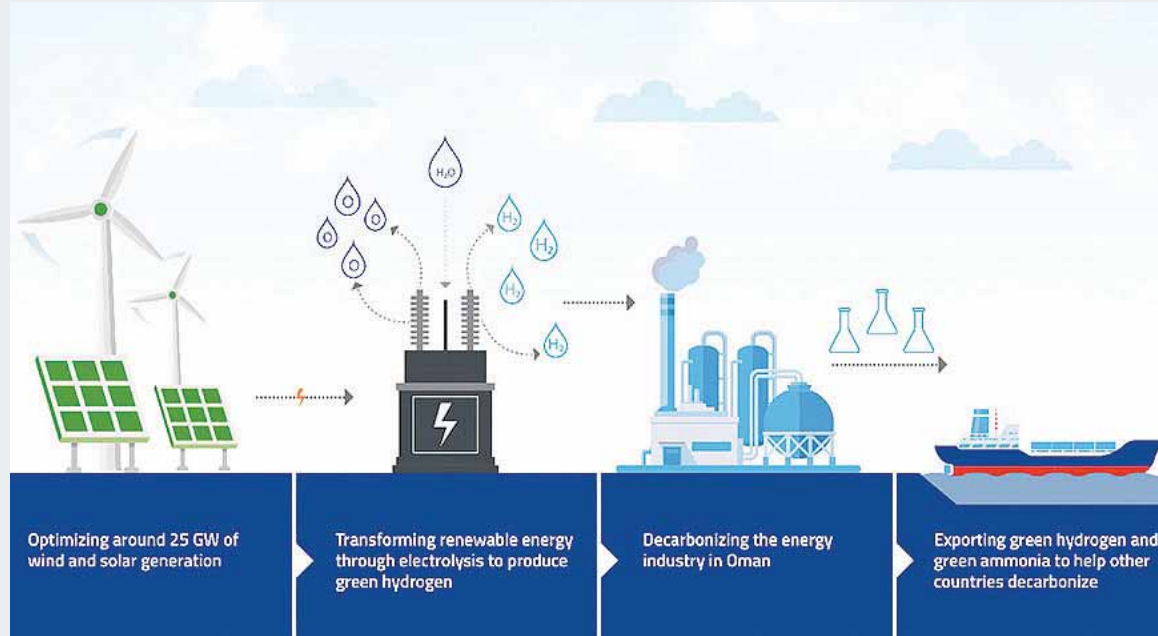
@JmObserver

Leading international engineering services giant Worley has announced that it has been contracted by Green Energy Oman (GEO), an international consortium, to support their 25-gigawatt (GW) low-carbon fuels project in the Sultanate of Oman.

The GEO project consortium comprises OQ – the Sultanate of Oman's global integrated energy company, InterContinental Energy (ICE) – the leading dedicated green fuels developer, and EnerTech (ETC) – a Kuwait government-backed clean energy investor and developer.

"We're providing concept feasibility study services to develop and challenge GEO's defined green hydrogen energy project. This includes optimising around 25 GW of wind and solar generation, transforming this renewable energy through electrolysis into green hydrogen, as well as the production, storage and export of green ammonia," Worley said in a statement on Tuesday.

The overall project aims to produce over 1.8 million tons



of low-carbon green hydrogen which can produce up to 10 million tons of green ammonia per annum, supporting the local economy and global market by exporting green ammonia to help other countries decarbonise their economies.

"In addition to defining the project components, our study will identify opportunities to enhance in-country value delivered from the expected 10-year project implementation period. This includes employment and development

for Omanis and value adds through local manufacturing and supply by Omani companies across the supply chain," Worley stated.

Commenting on the occasion, Dr Hans Dieter Hermes, Vice-President of Clean Hydrogen at Worley, said: "Hydrogen has the potential to decarbonise hard to abate sectors where there's no obvious alternative. This project enables Oman to use their natural resources to produce green fuels for self-use and export and supports our

purpose of delivering a more sustainable world."

Najla bint Zuhair al Jamaliyah, CEO Alternative Energy at OQ, added: "The GEO team, together with our technical specialists, are at the vanguard of mega-scale green fuels project development. The work being undertaken will place Oman at the forefront of such projects, maximising the utilisation of Oman's natural resources of wind and solar to produce green fuels, and build the country's associated industry."

Oman Forum 2022 focuses on Innovation and Sustainability

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the 10th edition of Alam Al-Iktisaad Oman Forum facilitated a discussion and knowledge sharing on the Sultanate of Oman's progress on promoting innovation, sustainable development and inclusive growth, building a diversified and competitive economy, and encouraging ESG adoption and creation of an empowered knowledge-based society, as per Oman Vision 2040 under the dynamic leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

In Oman Forum 2022, organised recently by United Media Services (UMS), Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah (pictured), Minister of Higher Education, Research & Innovation, was the chief guest and keynote speaker. The Forum was also addressed by Sayyid Hamed bin Sultan al Busaidy, CEO of Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability and Eng Abdulmir al Ajmi, External Affairs and Value Creation Director, Petroleum Development Oman.

In a panel discussion, noted industry leaders including



Abdullah bin Saeed al Hakmani, General Supervisor of the Technical Office for Programme Management, Follow-up Unit for the Implementation of Oman Vision 2040; Eng Khalil al Maawali, National Programme for Artificial Intelligence & Advanced Technologies, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; Dawood al Qassabi, New Business Development Manager, Petroleum Development Oman; Said al Rashdi, CEO, Oman Manufacturers Association; Ali Hassan Moosa, CEO, Oman Banks Association and Othman al Mandhari, Founder & CEO, InnoTech, discussed Oman's progress on the path of transitioning to an innovation, technology and knowledge based society and economy.

Madayn launches Ramadhan charity drive

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has launched its annual Ramadhan charity campaign to distribute donation boxes of Omani products to the target community segments.

The campaign is taking place in coordination with the walis' offices and voluntary teams in the various governorates where Madayn's industrial cities are located: Al Rusayl, Samayil, Nizwa, Sur, Suhar, Al Buraimi, Raysut, Thamrait, Mahas, in addition to the Knowledge Oasis Muscat and Al Mazunah Free Zone.

Madayn's Ramadan charity campaign aims at providing the target segments with essential products and food supplies, and playing a role in promoting the local made products as the campaign team has coordinated with the Omani factories to donate their products.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) hosted a joint meeting with the Omani Medical Association to review the implementation of the health insurance scheme for employees of the private sector, residents and visitors. More than 30 doctors from different medical specialisations took part in the review of medical coding systems and other features of the scheme.

Attendees were given an update on the progress made in the development of the underlying regulatory infrastructure, the first phase of the Dhamani platform, linkages with private health institutions, insurance companies and the regulators and facilitation



of transactions.

The meeting discussed the ongoing efforts in the medical coding project governing the classification of medical terminology, medical and surgical procedures and diseases as part of a unified coding system. To this end, the CMA has signed a contract with the American Medical Association to provide CPT license for the Dhamani

platform and conducted a training programme in medical coding.

Said bin Sulaiman al Saadi, Director of the Health Insurance Supervision Department, noted that the provision of health insurance coverage is a human and social necessity.

The Dhamani platform, he said, will link all stakeholders, including government entities, insurance companies and health

services providers to enable the exchange of information on the health insurance transactions.

The arrangement with the American Medical Association will enhance increase the level of transparency and accuracy in all the transactions, he stated.

The Authority is currently preparing the regulatory and technological infrastructure ahead of the implementation of the compulsory health insurance project for the employees of the private sector, their dependents and visitors in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Public Authority for Social Security and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Oman to host mega forum for power, energy professionals

Key platform: IEEE Power Talks to take place at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre during June 6 - 8, 2022

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

The Oman Chapter of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the world's largest technical professional organisation, is preparing to host the biggest technical gathering of power and energy professionals in the Sultanate of Oman in June.

The event, dubbed IEEE Power Talks, will take place at Oman

Convention and Exhibition Centre during June 6 - 8, 2022. It will be held under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals with the support of Nama Group and a host of other key industry stakeholders.

IEEE Power Talks will bring together industry stakeholders and partners, CEOs and young professionals to share knowledge and fuel innovation in the ever-changing energy landscape. The event will also feature a wide array of power systems and energy solutions including power generation, transmission and distribution as well as green energy applications such as hydrogen, wind and solar.

IEEE Power Talks
Oman's Power and Energy Forum

Besides highlighting the latest innovations and technology advancements across the power and energy sector, the forum will also include plenary sessions and technical workshops.

Furthermore, it will showcase new technologies in power generation, transmission and distribution.

Dedicated sessions will also focus on energy efficiency, energy storage and related themes. Deliberations during the three-

IEEE PES
Power & Energy Society®
OMAN CHAPTER

day event will centre around five key pillars: (I) Market and policies updates: Regulatory Aspects, Electricity Market and Power System Economics; Future of power grids; Intermittent Distributed Energy Resources and Network Integration; How Hydrogen-Fuelled Renewable Energy projects will effect the grid;

Smart Grids and Infrastructure Challenges; and Utility Scale Cybersecurity.

(II) Renewables and energy storage solutions: Renewable energy projects in Oman; Cutting Edge Storage Options; Evaluating the Reliability Benefits of Battery Storage on Distribution systems; Renewable Energy Systems and Power Electronics; and Electric Vehicles and Energy Storage.

(III) Energy management and efficiency: Smart Metering and Safety; Energy Management System and Demand Side Management; Customer Behaviour and Attitudes; and Agent-based and Self-Organising Solutions for Smart Grids

(IV) Asset management and optimisation: System Control, Wide-Area Monitoring and Protection; Predictive analysis and maintenance; Fixable operations; Transitioning from Operations to Technology; and Forecasting problems and Virtual Power Plant.

Assisting IEEE Oman Chapter in the delivery of a successful event is Raya Services, a Muscat-based firm specialising in creating effective platforms for knowledge exchange and business networking by conceptualising and executing strategic business conferences for international clients, Buyers Meet Programmes, Bespoke events and Technical Hands-on Learning Programme.

Capitalise on employee feedback



DR GHALIB AL HOSNI

Tejarah Talks

BUSINESS STORIES ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER

We sat down with Dr Ghaleb Al Hosni, Omantel's Chief People Officer and Tejarah Talks panellist to discuss employee creativity, communication, resilience, flexibility, trust and more.

Has the pandemic changed Omani corporate culture for the good?

Undoubtedly, the pandemic has transformed Omani corporate culture. Indeed, it has had a tremendous and swift impact on the work environment. People have discovered they do not have to be in an office and can get most things done remotely. In response, organisations are reimagining and reinventing the way work gets done post-pandemic.

Today, Omantel is embracing the many necessary changes needed for success in a post-Covid era while understanding and preserving the elements of company culture that led to our success. For example, we are rethinking operating models and hierarchical structures with a focus on objectives rather than operations.

Uplifting employee and customer experience to achieve sustainable growth is a priority as is revamping learning and development programmes, equipping staff with the skills and knowledge needed for the jobs of tomorrow.

We recognise that to remain dynamic we need to encourage and harness our employees' creative power and we are doing that through a successful intrapreneurship program, an initiative we believe will fuel growth and be a source of Omantel's ongoing competitive advantage.

How important is it that employees know what their company stands for?

A purposeful culture stands for and takes action on something bigger than a company's products



or services. Purpose can be an organisational strategy, a roadmap to remain competitive in a fast-changing world, helping an organisation achieve its goals.

At Omantel, the bigger picture guides our decision-making, priorities, strategies and goal setting. After all, if in doubt we can ask ourselves "is what I am doing right now helping achieve the business mission?" If not, it is time to rethink and change our course of action.

Most people believe workplace culture does not change very much or very quickly. Rather it adjusts slowly over a long period. Is this true today?

Based on what we witnessed during the pandemic this is not true. In a matter of days, the pandemic disrupted existing behaviour and we noticed staff becoming more adaptable, task driven, productive and collaborative.

We also noticed employees wanted flexible time and better work-life balance. Clearly, the change in behaviour and routines has influenced attitudes and

mindsets and the overall corporate culture. As a result, we have become more aware of the importance of being resilient and flexible.

It is the million-dollar question – how do you ensure a positive employee experience in the workplace?

With the right employee experience strategy in place you can boost your ability to attract, engage, develop and retain high-performing employees as well as improve the organisation's overall performance. If you are looking to develop an employee experience strategy, there are a few things that need be on your radar:

Workspace – create a work environment that meets your employee needs, this includes everything from comfortable ergonomic furniture to healthy cafeteria food.

Communication – utilising different channels and approaches that include one-to-one meetings, roadshows, social media, e-mail and WhatsApp. We have found that strong communication ensures everyone is on the same page; it

allows room for questions and concerns and creates a safe space for open dialogue. Let us not forget that listening is a key element of communication.

Feedback – act on recommendations received from staff. Being receptive to feedback and taking real action in response to it is crucial if you want to nurture and grow your company and employees. From experience, capitalizing on employee feedback has helped Omantel perform better while making sure staff feel recognized and appreciated. This is key.

Employees – help staff become the best version of themselves. We pride ourselves on creating a stimulating work environment that encourages and enables staff to develop new skills. We also provide them with opportunities to grow that are personalised to their circumstances, interests and aspirations.

Diversity and inclusion – this means valuing, respecting and treating employees fairly. It also means empowering them and

recognizing their unique talents. This has to be at the heart of company culture.

Management – the manager's role is shifting from performance monitoring to performance coaching.

Managers are focusing more on how and not just on what is accomplished with greater attention paid to value and impact.

The role of trust is central to positive, healthy work cultures.

I completely agree. Trust is a key element of effective communication, teamwork and productivity. It leads to stronger working relationships, a healthier organisational culture, helps make challenging conversations easier, teams more integrated and employees more engaged.

In fact, we have been evaluating the level of communication and trust at Omantel since 2013 through pulse surveys, and according to the last evaluation conducted in 2020, the Communication and Trust Index was 71 per cent. This is an area where we are always looking for improvement.

UPLIFTING
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KNOWLEDGE
NEEDED FOR
THE JOBS OF
TOMORROW.

Anxious Moscow executives in hurry to leave



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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

Western banks in Russia are pulling out and with thousands of staff in the country and billions in assets, their exits are likely to be drawn out and costly.

While Citigroup, JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs and Deutsche Bank started off a growing trend to unwind their Russian-based business, workers are faced with a dilemma — to risk their jobs by leaving or stay in an increasingly tense and overbearing country at war.

"Most local investment bankers have already left the country for different reasons, mostly because they fear a war regime will be introduced and people will be prohibited from leaving the country," said one dealmaker at a western bank in Moscow who declined to be named because of their employer's rules and security concerns.

"There's no banking activity right now. Some people are just leaving to get some rest. Others just keep panicking." Around half of Goldman Sachs' 80 Russian-



Customers wait to enter a branch of Citibank AO in Moscow, in this file photo. – AFP

based staff had already relocated to Dubai before the bank had stopped operating in the country last month. J

PMorgan did the same and is also considering relocations by concerned staff in the country, according to a person familiar with the matter.

There's still little clarity about what exactly a wind back really means. Banks run complex operations that are often deep within the market's plumbing – extracting themselves from loan

obligations and multi-layered transactions could take months.

Also, while banks are notoriously quick to sack staff at the slightest sign of a downturn, few have rolled out formal redundancy programmes in Russia yet.

Morgan Stanley is also considering offering relocations to its 20 staff in the country, Bloomberg reported.

"Most Russians don't support this decision but all of us have to suffer the consequences," said another banker working for a

local institution. "I wanted to leave before all this happened, but now my desire to go has just skyrocketed."

Another dealmaker who has worked at several US banks in Russia said he left the country shortly after the Ukraine conflict broke out on February 24.

"Most people in the financial sector are trying to flee," he said. "The sector has been knocked down. Everyone is sitting on their hands doing nothing. Everyone is packing their stuff and trying to get out."

Kremlin-backed news agencies churn out state propaganda, but some banks have international news networks broadcast into their offices through internal networks. Dealmakers say that this is influencing their decisions to get out.

"Most of the people here are not being constantly brainwashed by Russian propaganda and feel ashamed at what's going on with Ukraine and their country, too," said one of the dealmakers in Moscow.

The \$417m in fees brought in from Russia deals in 2021 is a tiny

fraction of the \$130bn hauled in during a record year for investment banks that year. Quitting Russia is a relatively easy choice for investment banks.

For others, it is more complex. Deutsche Bank has said that it is not going to shut its 1,600-strong technology centre as part of its withdrawal from Russia. That centre employs the vast majority of its staff in the country.

Citigroup has 3,000 employees and a retail network with 500,000 customers there, which it was aiming to sell ahead of the conflict. In a statement last month, the bank said it was "moving with urgency to complete our assessment of our operations in Russia" and is starting to scale back.

In the short term, Russia's banking sector is facing a brain drain. "I had three job offers on the table before the conflict, two of them in Russia, but they were all suspended," said one of the dealmakers.

"It just makes sense to get out." Another banker who is trying to secure a visa to the UK said: "Job prospects are complete trash. I'll do anything to get out."

Classifieds



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The collage shows three front pages of the Observer newspaper. The top page is dated Friday, July 10, 2020, and features the headline 'HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER' with a photo of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. The middle page is dated Thursday, July 9, 2020, and features the headline 'STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN' with a photo of a group of people. The bottom page is dated Wednesday, July 8, 2020, and features the headline 'NEW RO 50 BANKNOTS FROM THIS MONTH' with a photo of a banknote. The newspaper is published by the Oman Observer Press, established in 1981, and is available in print and digital formats.

P20

"It is unlawful for a Muslim to desert his fellow Muslim for more than three nights. As they meet, both of them turn their backs on each other. However, the best of them is the one who starts by greeting the other."

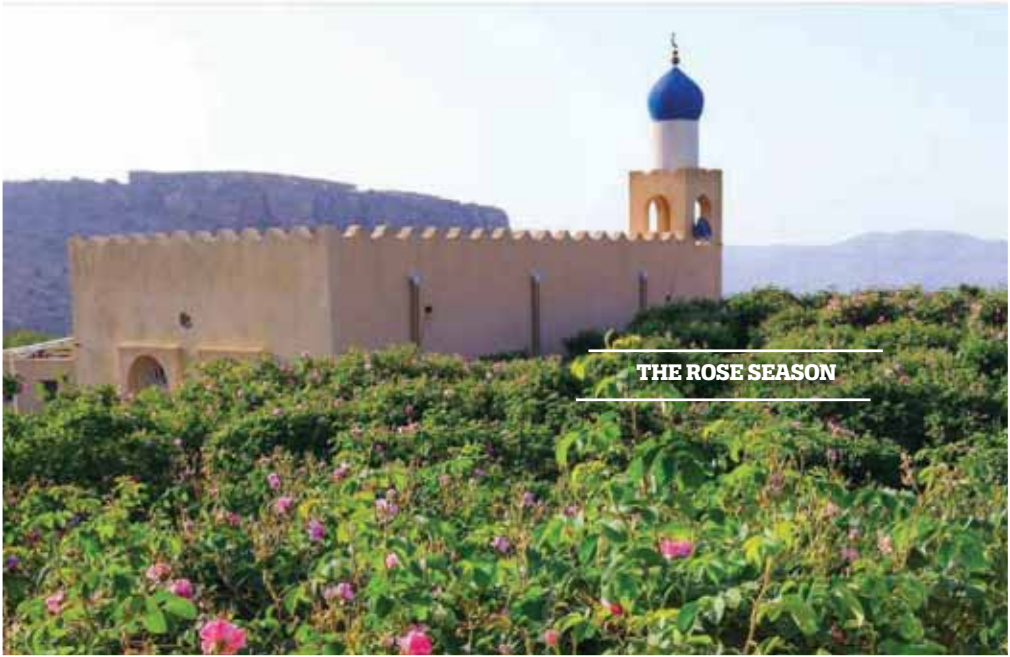
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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

UK's National Gallery renames 'Russian Dancers' painting



LONDON'S NATIONAL Gallery said on Monday it had renamed a painting by Edgar Degas from "Russian Dancers" to "Ukrainian Dancers" following Moscow's war.

The Kremlin's war on its western neighbour has impacted far beyond politics and diplomacy, prompting sporting boycotts, as well as fallout in arts and culture.

The National Gallery confirmed in a statement to AFP that it had updated the title of the French impressionist's artwork "to better reflect the subject of the painting".

The pastel and charcoal piece, produced at the end of the 19th century, is part of its main collection, but not currently on display.

It depicts three members of a troupe dancing in a field wearing blue and yellow ribbons -- the national colours of Ukraine -- but had long been known as "Russian".

The National Gallery notes on its website that "it is almost certain that these visiting dancers, and those drawn by Degas, were Ukrainian, rather than Russian".

A spokesperson for the gallery told 'The Guardian' newspaper, which first reported the change, that its title had been "an ongoing point of discussion for many years".

"However, there has been increased focus on it over the past month due to the current situation, so therefore we felt it was an appropriate moment to update the painting's title."

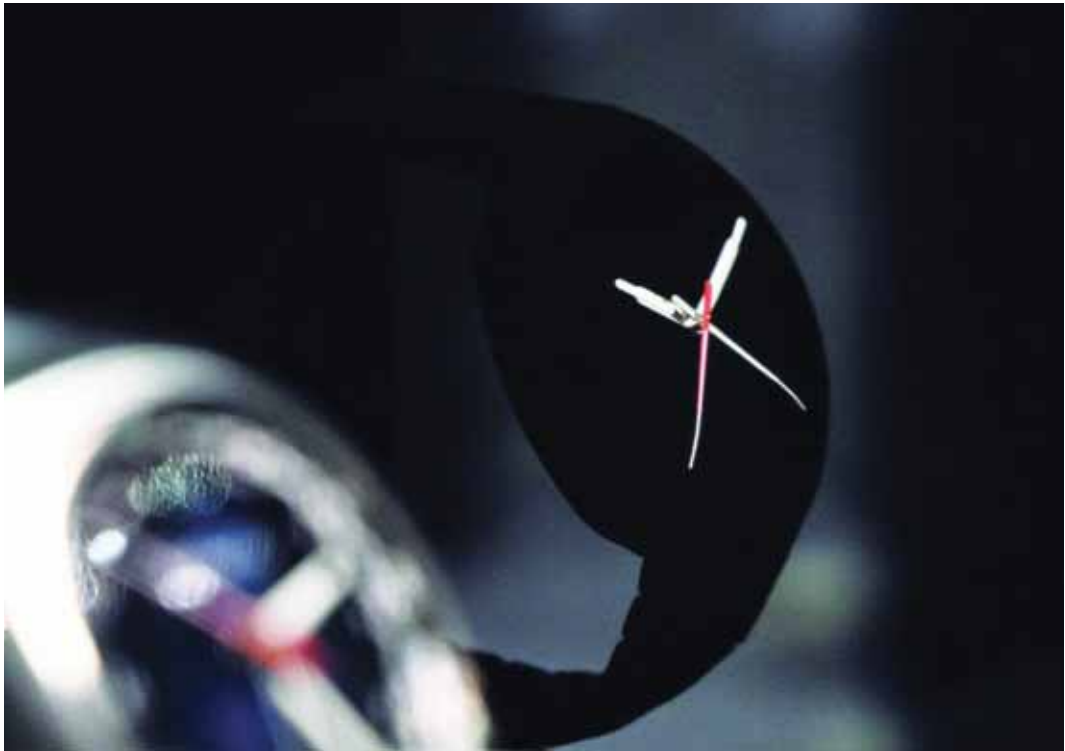
Tanya Kolotusha, a Ukrainian living in London who was among those to complain about the painting's name on social media, welcomed the renaming.

"It's important to return our cultural heritage and to give it (its) rightful name", she told AFP, adding that Ukrainian culture had "suffered from Russian politics for centuries".

The West's response to the invasion, including sanctions and cultural boycotts, prompted Russian President Vladimir Putin last month to claim his country suffers from "discrimination". — **AFP**

LIFESTYLE

Watchmakers tinker with new materials to draw new buyers



LAB-MADE diamonds, recycled plastic and 3D printing. This year's Geneva watch fair was teeming with time-pieces crafted from new materials, aimed at seducing a new generation of luxury watch connoisseurs.

H Moser, a niche brand producing 2,000 watches a year for wealthy collectors, this year presented a watch covered in Vantablack, a super-black coating that absorbs nearly all light.

Perched against a black background, the watch, which is still in the concept stage, creates the illusion of a black hole, with only the coloured hands visible to the naked eye.

The material, consisting of carbon nanotubes and made by NanoSystems, is considered the darkest pigment in the world.

"I wanted to bring something different than what will be on display in shop windows three months from now", company chief Edouard Meylan told AFP at the Watches and Wonders fair.

"I wanted to show the future of materials", he said adding that he had aimed to provide a view to how the watch industry might look five years down the line.

While the luxury brand has already used Vantablack in its clock faces, this exhibit model is completely covered.

For now, it cannot be touched since the material could lose its properties. More work is needed before

it can actually be worn.

HANDCRAFTED TECHNOLOGY

Black is in high demand this year with new luxury virtuosos, according to Vincent Gregoire, who heads men's fashion and accessories for the Parisian fashion consultancy NellyRodi.

"This is a clientele that wants beauty, hyper-luxury, with materials of the future, full of technology, but expertly handcrafted", he said.

Their taste evokes the "Anish Kapoor universe", he said, referring to the British sculptor who sparked a scandal in 2016 when he bought the exclusive right to use Vantablack in the art field.

A new generation of luxury lovers is emerging, Gregoire said, including a category of "agitators" who are fans of street culture and salvaging, and who want to use their purchasing power for "activist action".

At a stand dedicated to innovation, the Oris brand is showing off how it recycles plastic waste, shredding it to make a material that resembles multi-coloured marble for its clock faces.

Lab diamonds

Lab diamonds, owned by French luxury group LVMH, has meanwhile broken an industry taboo by, for the first time, using diamonds made in a laboratory in one of its flagship models.

These diamonds, crafted from chemical deposits,

CONSERVATION

Fly less? Go vegan? How people can take climate action



INDIVIDUALS ALONG with economy-wide efficiencies can make a major difference in the drive to avert the worst of global warming, UN climate experts say, estimating that sharp cuts to demand for energy-guzzling services could slash emissions up to 70 percent by 2050.

Avoiding airplanes, eating less meat, insulating your home could all make a dent, particularly when broad swathes of societies embrace change, says the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

While research often focuses on cutting emissions in the supply of goods and services -- energy generation, transport, agriculture, construction -- the IPCC has for the first time dedicated a whole chapter of its climate solutions report to the demand that drives these industries.

"Having the right policies, infrastructure and technology in place to enable changes to our lifestyles and behaviours can result in a 40-70 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050," said Priyadarshi Shukla co-chair of IPCC working group that produced the 3,000 page report.

But where can "this untapped potential", as Shukla calls it, be found?

- DAY-TO-DAY CHOICES -

"Avoid, shift, improve" -- these are the key ways to curb demand, the report says.

You can avoid energy-intensive behaviour, switch to low-carbon technologies and improve the efficiency of existing tech.

In general, there are plenty of opportunities for improvement in the ways people travel from point A to point B.

You can change an internal combustion engine car to an electric one ("improve"), or even "shift" your daily commute to cycling or walking.

The biggest potential for avoidance is reducing long-haul flights. If people took fewer long distance flights and took the train where possible, overall aviation emissions could be reduced by 10 to 40 percent by 2040.

Meanwhile, increasing energy efficiency in homes and other buildings takes first place in the "improve" category.

And the most important "shift" you can make is to adopt a plant-based diet. But becoming a vegetarian or

even vegan would have less of an emissions impact than cutting out one long-haul flight a year.

The report also highlights the need to reduce all types of waste, from energy or food for example.

"Choosing low-carbon options, such as car-free living, plant-based diets without or very little animal products, low-carbon sources of electricity and heating at home as well as local holiday plans," can reduce an individual's carbon footprint by up to nine tonnes of CO2 equivalent, says the IPCC.

- UNEQUAL -

Most people in the world never take long-haul flights in the first place and do not have access to nutritious food.

Billions of people have a carbon footprint far below nine tonnes of CO2 equivalent.

For example, the average carbon footprint per inhabitant in Afghanistan is less than one tonne, according to the report, while in most western developed nations it is well over 10 tonnes.

And within countries there can also be an enormous split between the lavish energy consumption of the rich and the meagre carbon footprint of poorer people.

In fact, about half of the world's emissions can be attributed to the consumption of the richest 10 percent of the global population, the report said.

At the bottom of the wealth pyramid, the poorest half of the world contributes around 10 percent of consumption emissions.

"Wealthy individuals contribute disproportionately to higher emissions and have a high potential for emissions reductions while maintaining decent living standards and well-being," the report said.

Beyond behaviour -

The responsibility for transforming the world's energy use and economic system to deal with climate change cannot be borne on the shoulders of individuals alone, the report stresses.

While people can make a difference with their lifestyle choices, the IPCC says transformative change involves more than just individuals' consumption choices.

There also need to be shifts in culture and social norms, business investment, political drivers from institutions, and changes in infrastructure. — **AFP**



Yusra's ladies-only mini-museum offers insight into Oman's history

By Rumpa Mitra
Insta: @rumpa_mitra

For centuries, museums have played an integral role in preserving the history of society. Exhibits tell us stories about how our nation, our communities and our cultures came to be.

But not all of the great collections can be found in established and well-oiled museums. The mini-museum of Yusra in Al Khoudh is one of them providing an amazing insight not just into Oman's history but including how women can create their own niche within the society.

Yusra's mini-museum is not accessible to everyone. It's a ladies-only museum that showcased the personal collection of its owner.

At a very young age, Yusra has been interested in arts and artefacts, especially those that tell stories of her roots and the country's history and heritage. Some of the things she collected were hand-me-downs from women of her family, heirlooms that on their own tell amazing stories of struggle and perseverance.

Yusra has been very meticulous about labelling the items, some of them include items that were childhood favourites.

After finishing her Fine Arts degree from Helwan University in Cairo, Egypt in 1986, she decided to take her passion to the next level. After a conversation with her family, she has converted part of their house into a mini-museum accessible to women who would like to learn more about

Oman's history and heritage from a woman's perspective.

After finishing her degree, she started working on her dream project and visited various places. She travelled to the interiors of the country to collect artefacts.

She shared, "Due to less knowledge about these antiques, some of the items were neglected" but her study helped her to identify them and their importance in history.

When her relatives and friends heard about her passion, they hand in their historical possessions and even distant relatives started to pitch in.

"Oman is rich in its culture and heritage and apart from the few approved Unesco World Heritage Sites, still people find ancient items buried in the grounds and due to less knowledge, some fail to get its importance", she said.

Upon entering the mini-museum, it is easy to tell that Yusra is big on keeping the museum as detail-oriented as possible. She has divided it into two sections – one part showcasing old Omani heritage and culture that included items used in the day to day life of ancient times and the other part was how to change over the years has affected the way they do and use things.

Yusra is happy to see that there has been modern interest about items from the past.

She said, "Collection is one part of preserving these antiques but another and most important part is labelling them".

Since she started, Yusra already collected more than

200 items as part of her collection. Her collection includes antique silver pieces of jewellery (Mariya), different types of coffee beans pots (Qalayay bin), items used for grinding grains (Raha), different types of measuring objects (Meezan), pots used for laban from milk (Qidr), different Omani dresses and many more.

She also has a good collection of pottery, bowls and ceramic plates including coins from different eras and paintings sourced from different locations.

To give all the visitors a realistic feel, she also decorated a place outside the museum with an old hut style house where she serves each guests Omani coffee (Kahwa) and dates.

Yusra shared that she is still pursuing other items to become part of her collection and explained that as long as she has the energy, will keep collecting them.

Yusra shared that she already notified the Heritage and Tourism Ministry about her museum and they have extended their appreciation for her innovative contribution to the Omani heritage. She said she looks forward to their visit but due to the pandemic, she said they may have to arrange it at a better time.

To explore the museum, an appointment must be made in advance via Yusra's Instagram: @bait_turath. Her Instagram has a direct link where visitors can register. Once registration is made, Yusra will be contacting back guests to give them the timing hours. For emphasis, the museum is for ladies-only.

