

P10

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SEPTEMBER 9-10
2022
SULTANATE OF OMAN

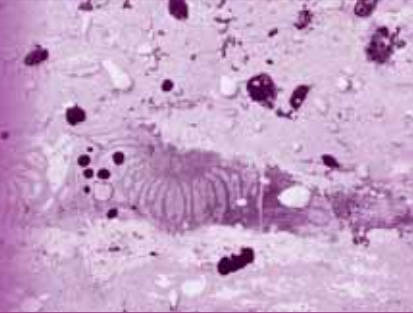
P15

PORT OF SALALAH
TAKES DELIVERY
OF THREE MOBILE
HARBOUR CRANES



P20

EXPLORING THE
HARMONY OF ABSTRACT
ART AND NATURE AT BAIT
AL MUZNA



MUSCAT

CONTRACT JOBS
TO BOOST OUTPUT

The contract job opportunities announced by the Ministry of Labour is meant to generate jobs in the government sector based on job-seekers’ specialisation in respective areas. The job opportunities are distributed in various educational qualifications, starting from a Bachelor’s degree to less than a General Education Diploma. The ministry said the jobs advertised under the temporary contracts system would be for a period of two years.

DETAILS ON P2

CRUDE PRICE AT
\$102 A BARREL

Oman oil price for June delivery on Monday reached \$102.03, comprising a rise by 85 cents from the price of last Friday, which was \$101.18. 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 traded mixed on Monday amid signs that supply issues in the Middle East could abate. Benchmark Brent crude futures were marginally lower at \$104.34 a barrel.



PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR	DHUHR
04:39 AM	12:15 PM
ASR	MAGHRIB
03:42 PM	06:29 PM
ISHA	
07:40 PM	

INSIDE



IRAN WILL RETURN TO
VIENNA TO FINALISE N-DEAL

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SEND MERKEL TO MOSCOW
TO MAKE PEACE

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NIZWA WELCOMES RAMADHAN



The people of Nizwa observe Ramadhan in a different way this year, decorating the Al Aqr village with attractive lamps and lighting the corridors. Creating a spiritual and joyful ambience for the place, the local people are still at work putting up decorations, which gives the area a different atmosphere altogether during the holy month. And the lightings attract both tourists as well as citizens from all governorates.

DETAILS ON P3
(PHOTO BY SAMI AL RIYAMI)

Deal for air survey of mining areas

MUSCAT: State-owned mining and mineral processing enterprise Minerals Development Oman (MDO) has signed a contract with Canada-based Sander Geophysics Ltd (SGL) to conduct airborne geophysical surveys covering MDO’s concession areas of approximately 21,480 square kilometres. The two-year-long survey is scheduled to start next month.

Under the contract, SGL commits to conducting a number of airborne geophysical

surveys using fixed-wing aircraft. The purpose of the survey is to obtain geophysical data including magnetic, radiometric, electromagnetic and gravity. These geophysical surveys are crucial to enhance the geological knowledge at surface and depth leading to better target mineral anomalies which will be further tested to identify mineral ores.

On this occasion, MDO’s CEO Nasser bin Saif al Maqbali said: “This strategic agreement

aims to build a comprehensive geological database for the company’s concession areas. It is an important step towards the company’s efforts to explore strategic minerals in the Sultanate of Oman, which will be followed by a number of studies, geochemical surveys and exploratory drilling. We hope to be able to identify metallic areas such as copper, chromite and other strategic minerals which will be eventually mined.”

DETAILS ON P13

Big impetus to public transport in Muscat

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The improvement of public transport system in Muscat will be accorded top priority, Mwasalat has revealed on Monday.

According to sources in the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Public Transport Strategic Plan will include special lanes for public buses and a transport hub in Muscat.

Earlier, speaking exclusively to the *Observer*, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister for Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said there is a plan to work on the metro railway project for Muscat as the authorities seek to develop the capital as a major metropolis in the coming years.

He said: “There is a committee formed for the metro in Muscat, and the first report has been already submitted. The committee included representatives of all relevant authorities”, said the minister.

According to sources, a survey for the project will be launched gradually in the coming months.



The matters related to public transport came up for a discussion on Monday following reports of traffic congestion on the two trunk routes — Muscat Expressway and Sultan Qaboos Street — on the first day of Ramadhan as people rushed home after work.

“We have to focus on reducing the need for cars by providing public transportation, pedestrian walking areas and tracks for cyclists”, said a citizen.

“Muscat doesn’t have traffic or population density like in many countries, but plans have to be made keeping in mind the future as the country seeks to attract more tourists, visitors and investors”, said an official at the Ministry of Housing of Urban Development. Traffic congestion is largely evident in areas starting from Al Khuwair towards Al Seeb and Maabela, according to motorists.

TURN TO P2

99% of world’s population breathes polluted air: WHO

GENEVA: A full 99 per cent of people on Earth breathe air containing too many pollutants, the World Health Organization said on Monday, blaming poor air quality for millions of deaths each year. Fresh data from the UN health agency showed that every corner of the globe is dealing with air pollution, although the problem is much worse in poorer countries.

“Almost 100 per cent of the global population is still breathing air that exceeds the standards recommended by the WHO”, the

agency’s Environment, Climate Change and Health Director Maria Neira told reporters. “This is a major public health issue.”

In its previous report four years ago, WHO had already found that over 90 per cent of the global population was affected, but it has since tightened its limits, it said.

“The evidence base for the harm caused by air pollution has been growing rapidly and points to significant harm caused by even low levels of many air pollutants”, WHO said. — AFP

Hérons spotted in Al Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve

MUSCAT: The white and the grey heron migratory birds have been spotted in Al Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve, the Environment Authority said on Monday.

Hamoud bin Khamis al Nairy, environmental systems specialist, said that nests of the two birds were found on one of the islands of the nature reserve. The white and the grey herons are among the first migratory birds to arrive at Al Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve. The birds are being

tracked to spot their locations inside the reserve.

Mohammed bin Nasser al Saadi, head of the Department of Nature Reserves Development, said that Al Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve, which was declared as a nature reserve for the protection of migratory birds in 1996, comprises 9 islands containing a multitude of plants, grasses, seaweeds and white beaches that are safe haven for nesting turtles as well as local and migratory



seabirds. The reserve’s marine environments contain a unique diversity of marine organisms such as marine mammals and diverse fish species.

The reserve is famous for rare coral reefs that can be sighted from the surface of the sea due to the transparency of the water in the reserve. It is one of the tourist attractions frequented by visitors from around the world due to its distinctive nature.

It is worth noting that the

Environment Authority has regulated visitor’s entry to the reserve and specified the permitted activities throughout the year. As per the regulations, visitors are not allowed to enter the land from the beginning of May to the end of October every year to protect birds and other animals during the breeding period. However, camping and overnight stay are permitted in the reserve after the end of the birds nesting season. — ONA



■ ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN RECEIVES NEW BATCH OF RECRUITS

MUSCAT: The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) on Monday received a new batch of national job-seekers to start basic military training after passing interviews, medical examinations and physical fitness tests.

RGO employed its capabilities and manpower capacities as well as administrative requirements and means of transport, to provide a suitable environment for speedy and seamless conduction of procedures for joining the military service.

The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, is taking great efforts to employ national job-seekers in accordance with plans and programmes recruiting nationals in the SAF and other departments of the Ministry of Defence. — ONA



Contract jobs a chance to gain experience

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

The contractual job opportunities announced by the Ministry of Labour are meant to create jobs in the government sector based on job seekers' specialisation in respective areas.

The job opportunities are distributed in various educational qualifications, starting from a bachelor's degree to less than a general education diploma.

The ministry said the jobs advertised under the temporary contracts system would be for a period of two years.

The chosen ones will receive a monthly wage as per qualification.

For university degree holders the wage would be RO 500 per month, for post-secondary diploma holders: RO 450 and for general education diploma holders or below RO 400.

This announcement is considered the first of its kind for the year 2022 and the third in the series of job advertisements for the administrative apparatus units issued by the ministry according to a well-studied plan and according to the actual needs of government units.

The initiative called 'Contribute' is one of the initiatives of the Ministry of Labour that adopts the approach of providing job opportunities

under the contract system to Omani citizens in government agencies.

The contract period is for two years, subject to renewal, with the aim of giving job seekers an opportunity to acquire skills until they obtain a permanent opportunity, opening the way for them to learn about the labour market, spread the culture of temporary work within society and to consolidate the principle of decentralisation in different governorates.

Those accepted for jobs will be subject to a week-long training under the 'Experience Programme' aimed at refining job skills as well as skills as per the requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, methods of acquiring knowledge and learning strategies, developing the ABCs of leadership for beginners, and developing positive behaviour to increase productivity.

The Ministry of Labour has announced 2,216 temporary contractual job opportunities in the government departments in all the governorates.

They contained 2,130 contracts for bachelor's and post-secondary diploma holders, and 86 for GED (general secondary) holders as well as for those with secondary certificates and less. Registration for the announced opportunities has started on April 3 and will last for four weeks.

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SBS-0422-00225 |
| Field IT/Telecom Technician
CNF-0422-00221 | Reservoir Engineer
SBS-0422-00226 |
| Field HSE Superintendent
HSE-0422-00222 | |
| Environmental Lead
HSE-0422-00223 | |

More information on the responsibilities and qualification requirements for each position is available on www.petrojobs.om

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Deadline to apply is: 14th of Apr 2022.



Public transport in Muscat to get impetus

FROM P1

"It may be noted that population density has shifted to new areas of Al Khuwair, Bausher and Al Khoudh.

In recent years, the government has taken several steps to streamline the public transport services in the country, which will help reduce dependence on private vehicles.

The taxi services in Muscat have been streamlined, with the ministry now approving two more companies to operate on-demand services at rates approved by the authorities.

For the first time, approval was granted to start female taxi services in the country. The government has announced plans to introduce water taxis also in the country.

Speaking to the 'Observer', Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamaki, Under-Secretary for Transport, had said: "There are plans to introduce water taxis in the Sultanate of Oman.

We are in discussions to identify possible spots to develop water taxi service in Muscat and Musandam. Once the proposal is ready, a tender will be floated."

The decision states that water taxis will be used to transport people for an agreed fee, following approval from the Maritime Authority.

Wheat harvesting season begins in North Al Batinah



SUHAR: Wheat harvesting season began in the wilayats of the Governorate of North al Batinah, which was cultivated on an area of 50 Feddan (each Feddan equals 4,200 square metres).

The Directorate General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the Governorate of North Al Batinah exerts efforts in encouraging the farmers to cultivate various agricultural

crops through providing improved seeds, guidance and periodic follow-up, as well as harvesting service.

The directorate added that during the last season wheat production ranged between 70 to 75 tonnes while this season is expected to be lower than that due to the impact of tropical cyclone Shaheen on the governorate in October 2021.

— ONA





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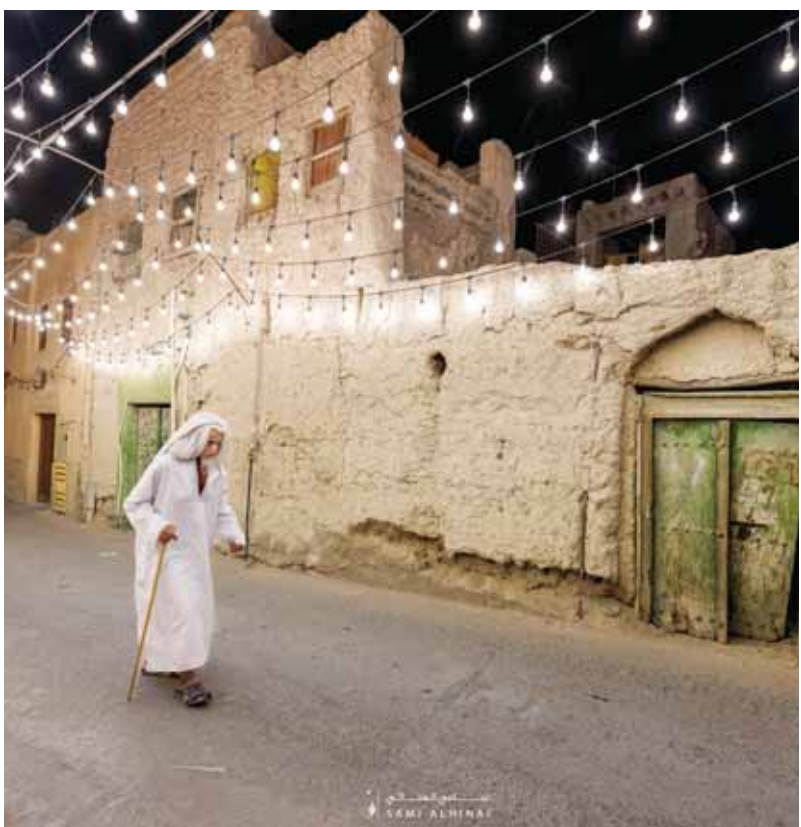
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NIZWA LIGHTS UP RAMADHAN JOY



CREATING A SPIRITUAL AND JOYFUL AMBIENCE FOR AL AQR VILLAGE IN NIZWA, THE PEOPLE ARE STILL AT WORK PUTTING UP DECORATIONS, WHICH GIVE THE ANCIENT HAMLET A DIFFERENT ATMOSPHERE ALTOGETHER DURING THE HOLY MONTH. AND THE LIGHTINGS ATTRACT BOTH TOURISTS AS WELL AS CITIZENS TO THE PLACE FROM ALL GOVERNORATES OF THE COUNTRY

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, APRIL 4

The people of Nizwa observe Ramadhan in a different way this year, decorating Al Aqr village with attractive lamps and lighting its corridors.

Creating a spiritual and joyful ambience for the place, the local people are still at work putting up decorations, which give the ancient village a different atmosphere altogether during the holy month. And the lightings attract both tourists as well as citizens from all governorates of the country.

Mosques in the village, which remained closed for two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have reopened their doors for worshipers and they are turning up for prayers with joy and hope.

Al Aqr village, which was an almost deserted place once with dilapidated houses, caught the attention of many and it has now become one of the worthiest places to visit in Nizwa and Al Dakhiliyah Governorate as a whole. As a heritage village, it has



been renovated and turned into a tourist destination. The rugged mud walls of the houses and their wooden doors tell the stories of an ancient past.

In this village, visitors can experience the traditional atmosphere without getting bored or tired. They can also enjoy the company of the old residents who add nobility to the place with their presence and blessings.

It was owned by imams from the Wilayat of Nizwa and Oman in general.

With a history of more than 1,500 years, the village had been the centre of ancient Islamic Imams and the seat of decision-making. Therefore, the neighbourhood was protected by a 2-km-long wall with four gates, and the village had within it 300 houses and 17 towers built by Omanis.

During this holy month, the people of Nizwa give a lesson in preserving heritage and environment, besides a lesson in making use of the available resources for the benefit of the country. With this initiative, they are also setting an example for others to emulate.

PHOTOS: SAMI AL RIYAMI



Alarm over mounting food waste

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

ALTHOUGH RAMADHAN is a month for spiritual pursuits with greater compassion and kindness towards others, there is also a growing concern about the uptick in the wastage of food during the period.

Despite Ramadhan being a fasting month, food consumption during the time of iftar to Suhoor exceeds the normal consumption pattern. A feast for the eyes, the lavish food which is prepared in hotels, restaurants and homes, a large quantity of it is left uneaten and goes to waste.

According to a conservative estimate by EcoMena, a sustainability advocate in the Middle East, around 15 to 25 per cent of all food purchased or prepared during Ramadhan find its way to garbage bin or landfills before even being used or consumed.

This translates into thousands of tonnes of precious food, which could have been used for feeding tens of millions of hungry people in impoverished countries of Asia, Africa and elsewhere.

“The staggering amount of food waste generated during Ramadhan urgently demands a strong strategy for its minimisation, sustainable utilisation and eco-friendly disposal”, urges a report by the volunteer-driven institution.

The mushrooming of hotels, restaurants, fast-food joints and cafeterias, especially in the Middle East region, has resulted in the generation of huge quantities of food waste. Research shows that significant food waste is generated globally during social and religious occasions and the Sultanate of Oman is no exception.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme, households were responsible for 61 per cent of global food waste in 2019. Household food waste estimations in the Middle East range from 75 to 163 kg/cap year.

People in the Sultanate of Oman threw away over 13,000 tonnes of food in the first ten days of Ramadhan in 2019, the year before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to be’ah, the Environmental Services Holding Company, the amount of wasted food during this period was enough to feed 374,135 people a day.

Statements by

the state-owned company indicate that the amount of wasted food directly impacts its collection and disposal efforts.

“The amount of wasted food directly impacts the company’s collection and disposal efforts, since the company collects it directly from trash bins. More food waste means more equipment and manpower needed for the company to support its operations”, the government agency said in its statements.

Conspicuous consumption fuelled by peer pressure and effective advertising brings more goods and products into the home than the family members can actually make use of.

According to Fadi Elayan, Operation Manager, Al Athnain Co, a catering company, food wastage can increase food prices as it increases demand in relation to supply.

“A country like the Sultanate of Oman is highly dependent on food imports which are usually transacted in US dollars. With our current exchange rate, we have to pay more for the same quantity. It is an outflow of our currency”, Fadi told ‘Observer’.

He stressed the need to educate people about the quantity and quality of food needed to be prepared for breaking the fast.

“During Ramadhan, people tend to buy more than their normal requirements for self-consumption plus for taking care of guests. We need to change our attitude of not laying the table with more food than people can eat. This is not hospitality and welcoming the guests”, Fadi said.

Globalisation and modernisation have led to increased consumption among the Omani population. Reportedly, the average Omani household throws away one-third of the food it purchases.

Even though the holy month has limits this year with restrictions on community prayers and group iftars in the backdrop of a global pandemic and a warming planet, the build-up to iftar is marked by people thinking of the perfect menu and overspending on food purchases.

“Such a trend boosts the demand for certain food products. On the trade front, businesses respond to the increased demand with a wide range of marketing strategies”, said Irfan Mohamed, sales manager at a hypermarket in Ruwi.

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Campaign on infection prevention for health students



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The Post-graduate Diploma in Infection Prevention and Control Program (IPCP) students and faculty from the Higher Institute of Health Specialties (HIHS), in collaboration with Continue Out-reach Committee conducted recently an awareness campaign titled, ‘Empowering a Culture of Safe Working Environment’ at Muscat International Airport.

This activity targeted Muscat International Airport administration staff, supervisors and other staff from different departments (medical and non-medical).

The main aim was to create an awareness on basic infection

prevention and control practices that will help address any similar outbreak in the future.

Moreover, the event was designed to enhance knowledge on preventive measures inside Muscat International Airport based on the Ministry of Health regulation, and improve skills in relation to infection prevention and control practices of all participants and to help develop outbreak management and intervention in the future.

IPCP is one of nine different programmes taught at HIHS which was introduced in 2009 and works to prepare employee from different paramedical categories to be an infection prevention and control specialist in the Ministry of Health.



MUSCAT’S ROADS SEE TRAFFIC JAM DURING RAMADHAN



The roads of Muscat Governorate are witnessing traffic jams during Ramadhan with queues of cars seen on almost all roads specially on peak hours from 8:30 am to 10:00 am following which the traffic eases only to return at 12:30 pm as employees and students return home. The scene of cars moving at snail's pace is also common moments before iftar time.

Muscat faces high humidity, rain around Al Hajar

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The first few days of April have been described as hot, even as many wonder whether summer has arrived already.

Meteorologist Ibrahim al Barashdi from Oman Met Office at Civil Aviation Authority explained that it is not the temperature that has gone high; but the humidity level that makes them feel hot.

“The humidity was as high

as 90 per cent in Muscat during early morning and at night. The maximum temperature recorded has been 32 degrees Celsius in Muscat and is expected to go down to 21 degrees at night,” he noted.

Oman Met Office has also indicated that there are chances of low clouds and fog formation on Tuesday in parts of the governorates of South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta and the coasts of the Sea of Oman at late night and early morning.

“But in Muscat, it will be mist,” said the meteorologist. Humidity in Muscat ranged between 15 per cent to 90 per cent, while in Salalah, it ranged between 25 per cent and 80 per cent.

Maximum temperature was recorded in Fahud and Haima at 40 degrees Celsius with a minimum of 24 and 22 degrees Celsius, respectively. The coolest place was Saiq, with 24 degrees maximum and a low of 14 degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, areas around Al Hajar Mountains are experiencing rains which is expected to continue for two to three days.

Mainly clear skies are expected over most of the governorates with advection of high clouds with chances of convective cloud development and thundershowers over Al Hajar Mountains.

Along Oman Sea coasts, winds are expected to be northerly to northeasterly light to moderate.

Project to generate 25 GW green energy

MUSCAT: An international consortium comprised of OQ, InterContinental Energy and EnerTech on Monday announced further progress on the development of the Green Energy Oman (GEO) integrated green fuels mega project.

The project targets producing 25 gigawatts (GW) of renewable solar and wind energy, which will be used to produce over 1.5 million tonnes of zero-carbon green hydrogen per annum.

Najla Zuhair al Jamali, Executive Manager of Alternative Energy at OQ, said that GEO is at the vanguard of mega-scale green fuels projects, which will make Oman at the forefront of countries that implement similar projects.

The project will utilise Oman's natural resources of wind and solar to produce green fuels.

— ONA



الشركة المتحدة للطاقة (ش.م.ع.م)
UNITED POWER COMPANY (SAOC)

P.O. Box 147, PC 134, Jawharat A'Shatti, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24698498, Fax: 24698496, Website: www.upcmanah.com

Notice of Using the Legal Reserve

Based on the decision of the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company held on 29 March 2022 and in accordance with the provisions of article 132 of the Commercial Companies Law No. 18/2019, United Power Company SAOC, which is registered in the Commercial Register with commercial registration number 1460366, announces that it is in the process of using its Legal Reserve of OMR 167,000 (One hundred and sixty seven thousand Riyal Omani) to cover the Company's losses.

Creditors that have any objection are required to submit their objections to the Company's following address:

United Power Company SAOC,
PO Box 147, PC 134, Jawharat Al Shatti, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman,
for the attention of : Mr. Zoher Karachiwala,

with a copy of the objection to the Secretariat of the Commercial Register at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of this notice.



Directors Report

On behalf of the Directors of Oman Education Training and Investment S.A.O.G. it is my pleasure to present the Second Quarterly Report of the company for the period from 1/12/2021 to 28/2/2022

On February 28, 2022, a cooperation agreement was signed between Sohar University and Madain. The collaboration is the joint development of the Plastic Technology Center at Sohar University, the incubation of small companies, the support and promotion of Intaj Sohar project, as well as the provision of training and consultancy to Madain and its subsidiaries.

On 27 February 2022, (4) agreements were signed with 4 small and medium-sized companies as part of the industrial incubator to support entrepreneurship signed between the SME Development Authority and Sohar University (Entrepreneurship)>

Consolidated Financial Statements:

The consolidated financial statements as at 28/2/2022 indicated the following: -
1- Net profit estimated at 532,658 O.R for the period ended 28/02/2022 was achieved compared to 1,068,869 O.R for the period ended 28/02/2021 due to the decrease in student fees and high expenses.

2- The government grant was registered for deferred government grants, reflecting the value of its extinguishment on the company's profits equivalent to the consumption of property and equipment financed by that grant, which was valued during the current fiscal year at RO 236,166

3- Purchase of fixed assets and assets of the group (computers, laboratory devices, furniture, equipment and projects under completion) during the period for RO 118,445.

Finally, I would extend my sincere congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, may Allah protect him, as well as Ministry of Higher Education Research & Enovation. I would like also to extend my profound thanks to the Board of Directors, as well as the University Board of Governors and the company Executives, Academic and Administrative staff for their great effort, looking forward for a successful future in the next years>

Hassan bin Ihsan bin Naseb Al-Naseb
Chairman

statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income Period ended 28 February 2022

	Group	Group	Group
	28-Feb-22	28-Feb-21	31-Aug-21
	RO	RO	RO
Income			
Tuition fees	5,946,334	6,735,927	14,134,039
Dividend income from subsidiaries	-	-	-
Other income	274,033	82,401	115,046
Total income	6,220,367	6,818,328	14,249,085
Expenses			
Salaries and related costs	(4,412,578)	(4,454,858)	8,563,907
Administrative and other operating expenses	(770,313)	(638,270)	1,594,031
Written off of property and equipment	-	-	(239,302)
Depreciation of property and equipment	(540,207)	(590,860)	(1,160,531)
Release of deferred government grant	236,166	236,166	472,332
Amortisation of right-of-use assets	(6,635)	(6,634)	(13,269)
Total expenses	(5,493,567)	(5,454,456)	
Profit for the year from operations	726,800	1,363,872	3,150,377
Finance costs	(47,359)	(78,783)	(96,837)
Finance income	10,117	8,955	23,395
Profit for the year before tax	689,558	1,294,044	3,076,935
Income tax	(156,900)	(225,175)	(618,970)
Profit for the year after tax	532,658	1,068,869	2,457,965
Earnings per share	0.008	0.015	0.035

Statement of financial position At 28 February 2022

	Group	Group	Group
	RO	RO	RO
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property and equipment	32,022,012	33,200,226	32,447,024
Right-of-use assets	146,170	159,439	152,805
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	-
Total non-current assets	32,168,182	33,359,665	32,599,829
Current assets			
Inventories	33,872	18,891	18,682
Due from related parties	-	-	-
Trade and other receivables	4,811,503	5,257,378	1,637,498
Bank balances and cash	6,443,869	6,037,586	6,455,860
Total current assets	11,289,244	11,313,855	8,112,040
Total assets	43,457,426	44,673,520	40,711,869
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital	7,000,000	7,000,000	7,000,000
Legal reserve	3,882,621	3,388,502	3,829,355
Property revaluation reserve	5,301,623	5,301,623	5,301,623
Retained earnings	1,163,625	1,485,992	2,434,233
Total equity	17,347,869	17,176,117	18,565,211
Non-current liabilities			
Deferred grants related to assets	14,248,159	14,720,491	14,484,325
Deferred tax liability	1,177,903	1,141,083	1,177,904
Banks borrowings	-	-	-
End of service benefits	1,181,947	1,322,184	1,118,985
Lease liabilities	146,319	140,901	144,570
Students' deposits	221,805	232,615	206,035
Total non-current liabilities	16,976,133	17,557,274	17,131,819
Current liabilities			
Deferred grants related to assets	472,332	472,332	472,332
Banks borrowings	-	115,841	-
Lease liabilities	9,130	9,137	9,889
Due to related parties	-	-	-
Trade and other payables	8,233,761	8,765,601	3,607,425
Provision for income tax	418,201	577,218	925,193
Total current liabilities	9,133,424	9,940,129	5,014,839
Total liabilities	26,109,557	27,497,403	22,146,658
Total equity and liabilities	43,457,426	44,673,520	40,711,869
Net assets per share	0.27	0.25	0.27



Iran says will return to Vienna to finalise N-deal

TEHRAN: Iran said on Monday it will only return to Vienna in order to finalise an agreement to revive its landmark 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, with the last steps dependent on Washington.

Tehran has been engaged in long-running negotiations in the Austrian capital to revive the deal, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly, and the US indirectly.

“We will not be going to Vienna for new negotiations but to finalise the nuclear agreement,” foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters in Tehran.

However, Iran said there were still outstanding issues that it was waiting on Washington to settle. “At the moment, we do not yet have a definitive answer from Washington,” Khatibzadeh said. “If Washington answers the outstanding questions, we can go to Vienna as soon as possible.”

The JCPOA gave Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme to guarantee that Tehran could not develop or acquire an atomic bomb — something it has always denied wanting to do. But the US unilateral withdrawal from the accord in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump, who reimposed biting economic sanctions which prompted Iran to begin rolling back its own commitments.

The Vienna talks aim to return the US to the nuclear deal, including through the lifting of sanctions on Iran, and to ensure Tehran’s full compliance with its commitments.

Iranian and US delegations in Vienna do not communicate directly but through other participants and the European Union, the talks’ coordinator. Nearly a year of negotiations have brought the parties close to renewing the 2015 accord.

— AFP



Khatibzadeh

S Sudan rivals seal security pact

JUBA: In what has been hailed as a major breakthrough, South Sudan’s rival leaders sealed an agreement on Sunday on a key military provision in a stuttering peace deal and vowed to silence their guns.

President Salva Kiir and his rival, Vice-President Riek Machar, agreed on the creation of a unified armed forces command, one of several deadlocked issues holding up implementation of the 2018 pact to end the country’s bloody five-year civil war.

Feuding between forces loyal to Kiir and former rebel leader Machar spiralled recently, triggering fears of a return to full-blown conflict in the world’s youngest nation. “Peace is about security and today we have (achieved) a milestone,” said Martin Abucha, who signed the agreement on behalf of Machar’s opposition SPLM/A-IO. “The guns must go down.”

Minister of presidential affairs Barnaba Marial Benjamin hailed the deal — hammered out following mediation by neighbouring Sudan — as a “necessary step... that opens a route for the stable government of the Republic of South Sudan.”

The rivals also agreed to a cessation of hostilities, a halt to “propaganda” that stokes tensions, and called for the two sides to stop trying to encourage defections from the other party, according to Machar’s spokesman Puok Both Baluang.

Nevertheless, the people of the troubled country will be watching warily to see if the deals are implemented, since other



Vice-President of Sudan Mohamed Hamdan, South Sudanese President Salva Kiir, and South Sudan's opposition leader Riek Machar, witness from back row the signing ceremony of the two leaders in a sealed agreement in Juba. — AFP

agreements have collapsed in the past, often leading to violence.

Both Kiir and Machar were at the ceremony in the capital Juba for the signing of the accord, which stipulates a 60-40 distribution in favour of the president’s side of leadership posts in the army, police and national security forces.

Under the deal, the appointments should be made in a week, with the graduation of the unified forces within two months.

Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, the number two in Sudan’s post-coup ruling council, arrived in Juba on Friday in a bid to break the stalemate over the security arrangements.

Sudan, a guarantor of the 2018 deal, drew up the proposal after Kiir on March 25 issued a presidential decree on the formation of the military command structure,

Kiir and Machar were present for the signing of the accord, which stipulates a 60-40 distribution in favour of the president’s side of leadership posts in the army, police and national security forces

an act rejected by Machar as “unilateral”.

Landlocked South Sudan, one of the poorest countries on the planet despite large oil reserves, has suffered chronic instability since independence from Sudan in 2011, spending almost half of its life as a nation at war.

It has struggled to draw a line under the 2013-2018 conflict that erupted after Kiir accused Machar of an attempted coup. Almost 400,000 people lost their lives and millions more were displaced by the fighting.

Although the two men formed a unity government more than two years ago, South Sudan has continued to lurch from crisis to crisis, battling flooding, hunger, interethnic violence and political bickering.

The fragile peace process was put under further pressure last month when Machar’s Sudan People’s Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) pulled out of a monitoring body to protest at “unprovoked” attacks on its bases. Machar’s spokesman said the party had now agreed to return to the mechanism. — AFP

Sri Lanka opposition rejects unity government offer

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka’s opposition on Monday dismissed the president’s invitation to join a unity government as “nonsensical” and instead demanded he resign over the country’s worsening shortages of food, fuel and medicines.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s overture came as armed troops looked to quell more demonstrations over what the government acknowledges is the country’s most severe economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948.

Police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse thousands of protesters trying to storm the private home of the prime minister — the president’s elder brother and the head of the family political clan — in Tangalle, once a bastion of

support for the Rajapaksas in the island’s south.

The president asked opposition parties represented in parliament to “join the effort to seek solutions to the national crisis,” after the late-night resignation of nearly all cabinet ministers to pave the way for a revamped administration.

But the leftist People’s Liberation Front (JVP) responded by urging Gotabaya Rakapaksa and his once popular and powerful family to immediately step down.

“He really must be a lunatic to think that opposition MPs will prop up a government that is crumbling,” JVP lawmaker Anura Dissanayake told reporters in Colombo.

The main minority opposition party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), also dismissed the idea



Protestors during a demonstration against the surge in prices and shortage of fuel and other essential commodities in Colombo. — AFP

of their joining a Rajapaksa-led administration.

“His offer to reconstitute the cabinet with opposition MPs is nonsensical and infuriates the

people who have been demanding his resignation,” TNA spokesman and lawmaker Abraham Sumanthiran said.

The main opposition Samagi

Jana Balawegaya (SJB) party made no formal statement, but its leader Sajith Premadasa vowed Sunday that it would not join any government featuring members of Rajapaksa’s family.

Every member of Sri Lanka’s cabinet except the president and his elder brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, resigned late Sunday.

The country’s central bank governor Ajith Cabraal — who has long opposed the IMF bailout now being sought by the country — also stepped down on Monday.

The departures cleared the way for the country’s ruling political clan to seek to shore up its weakening position and attempt to stem growing public protests.

But the president has already reappointed four of the outgoing

ministers — three of them to their old jobs — while replacing brother Basil Rajapaksa as finance minister with the previous justice chief.

Political analysts said the offer of a unity government did not go far enough to address the economic crisis or restore confidence in the Rajapaksa administration.

“This is like re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic,” Bhavani Fonseka, political analyst and human rights lawyer, said. “This is a joke.”

Political columnist Victor Ivan added that a cabinet reshuffle in the guise of a national government would not be acceptable to the public. “What is needed is a serious reform programme, not just to revive the economy but address issues of governance,” Ivan said.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

MAARAT AL NAASAN

Syrian shelling kills four children

Four children were killed on their way to school on Monday after government forces shelled a town in the Idlib region, Syria’s last main rebel bastion, a war monitor said. The shelling targeted Maarat al Naasan, a town in the northern countryside of Idlib province, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. An AFP correspondent took photographs that show a small lorry carrying three bodies wrapped in black plastic bags to the local cemetery.



One of the victims was buried elsewhere after he later died from his injuries. Maarat al Naasan lies on a frontline between the regime and the rebels. It also houses a Turkish observation point on its outskirts. — AFP

HODEIDA

First fuel ships enter Hodeida after truce

Two fuel ships have entered war-torn Yemen’s port of Hodeida, the first shipment in months, the fighters who control the city said, after a UN-brokered truce went into effect. Yemen has been embroiled in conflict between the government, supported by a military coalition, and the Ansar Allah fighters since 2014, when the insurgents seized the capital Sanaa.

Since 2016, the coalition has enforced an air and sea blockade, with exemptions for aid flights, .



“The fuel ship, Ceasar, has now arrived to the port of Hodeida after being held up for 32 days,” the Yemen Petroleum Company (YPC), which is under fighter control, said in a statement.

— AFP

BEIJING

All 26m residents of Shanghai tested for Covid-19

All 26 million residents of Shanghai had received a Covid-19 test as of Monday, as China’s most populous city grapples with a severe outbreak. China is experiencing its worst wave of cases since the pandemic began, prompting a massive public health response.

Shanghai, a major port city, is the focus of much attention, but the north-eastern province of Jilin has also been severely affected and new cases have been logged across the country.



Health authorities reported more than 13,000 new infections nationwide on Monday, although most were asymptomatic. State media reports that more than 100,000 people were infected in March. — dpa



In brief

■ MEXICO CITY



EX-FM WINS COSTA RICAN PRESIDENCY

Former finance minister Rodrigo Chaves has won Costa Rica's run-off election for the presidency, a nearly complete vote tally showed. Chaves, of the Social Democratic Progress Party (PPSD), is a former World Bank employee who is viewed as an anti-establishment economist set on shaking up the country's political scene. With 98 per cent of the votes from Sunday's election counted, the 60-year-old garnered just under 52.9 per cent of the ballots, the electoral authority showed on its website. Chaves defeated centrist José María Figueres, who served as president in the 1990s. Figueres received 47.2 per cent. — **dpa**

■ BELGRADE



VUCIC SET TO STAY SERBIAN PRESIDENT

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic was set for another term as president as results came in, but his party's path to control of the legislature looked a little trickier as the final votes were counted. With 95.7 per cent of the vote counted, Vucic was set to take 58.6 per cent of the vote. Zdravko Ponos of the centre-right Narodna stranka party took 18.3 per cent, to hit second place.

But his Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) was not set for such a conclusive victory. With 95.2 per cent of the vote counted, the populist party was set to take 42.9 per cent of the seats, or about 119. A ruling party or coalition needs 126 for a simple majority. — **AFP**

■ ISLAMABAD



PAKISTAN'S SUPREME COURT ADJOURNS

Pakistan's Supreme Court adjourned without ruling on Prime Minister Imran Khan's shock decision to dissolve parliament and call a snap election, sidestepping a no-confidence vote that would have seen him booted from office. The court, which will sit again on Tuesday, received a slew of suits and petitions from the government and opposition after the deputy speaker of the national assembly refused Sunday to allow debate on a no-confidence motion against Khan's administration.

Simultaneously, Khan asked the presidency to dissolve the assembly, meaning an election must be held within 90 days.

'Now or never' to avoid climate catastrophe: UN

PARIS: Humanity has less than three years to halt the rise of planet-warming carbon emissions and less than a decade to slash them almost in half, the UN said on Monday in a landmark report on stopping global warming and ensuring a "liveable future".

That daunting task is still — and only just — possible, but current policies are leading the planet towards catastrophic temperature rises, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made clear.

The world's nations, they said, are taking our future right to the wire.

The 2,800-page report — by far the most comprehensive assessment of how to halt global heating ever produced — documents to "a litany of broken climate promises", said UN chief Antonio Guterres in a blistering judgement of governments and industry.

"Some government and business leaders are saying one thing — but doing another. Simply put, they are lying. And the results will be catastrophic," Guterres said in a video message released at the same time as the UN report.

In recent months, the IPCC has published the first two instalments in a trilogy of mammoth scientific assessments covering how greenhouse gas emissions are heating the planet

and what that means for life on Earth.

This third report outlines what we can do about it.

"We are at a crossroads," said IPCC chief Hoesung Lee. "The decisions we make now can secure a liveable future. We have the tools and know-how required to limit warming."

There are solutions, the report says, but they touch on virtually all aspects of modern life and require significant investment and need "immediate action".

The very first item on the global to-do list is to stop greenhouse gas emissions from rising any further.

That must be done before 2025 to have a hope of keeping within even the less ambitious warming targets of the Paris deal of two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Scenarios of catastrophic 2.5C of warming also have emissions peaking within three years.

Beyond that, the report said carbon emissions need to drop 43 per cent by 2030 and 84 per cent by mid-century to meet the more ambitious Paris goal of 1.5C. "It's now or never, if we want to limit global warming to 1.5C," said Jim Skea, a professor at Imperial College London and co-chair of the working group behind the report.

"Without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, it will be impossible."

— **AFP**



Climate activists from the Ocean Rebellion group, take part in a demonstration set at the entrance of the IMO headquarters in central London. — **AFP**

Zelensky calls Bucha massacre as 'genocide'



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky walks in the town of Bucha, northwest of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. — **AFP**

BERLIN: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky travelled to the small town of Bucha on Monday to see first hand the death and destruction that has shocked the world. War crimes had been committed in Bucha, Zelensky told journalists in the community located some 25 kilometres north-west of Kiev. "The world will recognise this as genocide," he said.

Zelensky was accompanied by security guards and wore a protective vest as he took stock of the devastation. Bodies and burnt out Russian tanks litter the streets.

When asked by a reporter whether it was still possible to negotiate peace with Russia, he answered in the affirmative: "Ukraine must have peace."

At the same time, he stressed that an early success in the negotiations was in Russia's interest: "The longer the Russian Federation delays the talks process, the worse it will be for them."

Pictures of unarmed residents

lying lifeless on the ground after Russian troops withdrew have been reverberating around the world since the weekend. Russian troops controlled the area for weeks. Ukraine, along with many world powers, say Russian soldiers committed the massacre.

Moscow says it had nothing to do with the killings.

The EU plans to send investigative teams to Ukraine to look into alleged Russian war crimes in Bucha and elsewhere.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced after a telephone conversation with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that the EU's judicial authority Euro just and the law enforcement agency Europol are ready to provide support.

This group is to collect evidence and investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Ukraine has accused Russia of killing hundreds of civilians in the town of Bucha, near Kiev. Von der Leyen was shocked by the

atrocities and said "the harrowing images cannot and will not be left unanswered" and that "a global response is necessary."

Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden has called for Russian President Vladimir Putin to be tried for war crimes after images of alleged Russian war crimes in Bucha shocked the world.

"He should be held accountable," Biden said on Monday in the White House garden. "This guy is brutal and what's happening in Bucha is outrageous and everyone's seen it," Biden said. He added that it was a "war crime." Investigations must now gather "all the details," so we can "have a war crime trial," Biden said.

He also said that Washington would continue to tighten sanctions on Russia due to the its war on Ukraine. "I'm going to continue to add sanctions," Biden said. He also said the US would keep supplying Ukraine with weapons to fight the Russian aggressors. — **dpa**

Hungary PM tightens hold on power after poll victory

BUDAPEST: Prime Minister Viktor Orban's fourth-term victory threatens to erode democracy further in Hungary, but he needs to tread a careful path with Brussels to secure much-needed EU funds, analysts said on Monday.

His ruling Fidesz party extended its parliamentary majority by two seats in Sunday's general election with turnout at near record levels, trouncing a united opposition in an election overshadowed by Russia's war in neighbouring Ukraine.

An international mission of observers said the vote was "marred by the absence of a level playing field", citing deficiencies that included the way in which the media landscape was slanted towards Fidesz and a lack of transparency in campaign financing.

But electoral victory, on top of 12 consecutive years in power, will make Orban "extremely confident", said analyst Patrik Szicherle of Political Capital.

"This victory shows Fidesz that they need not change course,



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and members of the Fidesz party celebrate on stage at their election base, on the bank of the Danube River of Budapest. — **AFP**

he can continue constructing his illiberal political system," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, increasingly isolated over the war in Ukraine, congratulated Orban on Monday and said he hoped to develop further Moscow's ties with Budapest.

The Hungarian nationalist has been a rare Putin ally in Europe and in Nato, even if diplomatically

he has fallen broadly into line with EU support for Kyiv over the war.

Orban, 58, has ruled the EU nation in central Europe with a tight grip since 2010, taking control of the judiciary and other institutions and cracking down on civil liberties, raising alarm in Brussels.

"We have won a great victory — a victory so great you can

Orban has ruled the EU nation in central Europe with a tight grip since 2010

perhaps see it from the moon and certainly from Brussels," Orban told jubilant supporters in a victory speech late on Sunday that needed the European Union.

"Conservative politics has won, this is not the past, this is the Europe of the future."

Orban has presided over repeated confrontations with the European Union, including over the neutering of the press and judiciary, and measures targeting the community.

With almost all the votes counted, Fidesz won 53 per cent of the vote compared to 35 per cent for the opposition coalition, according to the national election office. As a result, Fidesz and its Christian democratic partner

KDNP retains its two-thirds majority in parliament with 135 seats — two more than in the outgoing legislature.

"I'm still savouring this victory," Fidesz MEP Balazs Hidveghi said. "We didn't expect such a big win," he conceded.

The far-right Mi Hazank party also surpassed expectations and will now enter parliament for the first time, after crossing the five-per cent minimum threshold.

Marta Pardavi of rights group Hungary Helsinki Committee said the results were "a disaster for Hungarian democracy". "We see from other countries how autocrats do not go into reverse mode on their own," she said.

Analysts say Orban is likely to remain a thorn in the side of Brussels but seek a compromise to unlock billions of euros of pandemic post recovery funds.

Brussels has not released the funds to Hungary amid a row about rule-of-law issues and has set up an unprecedented mechanism to slash funds to EU members that flout democratic standards. — **AFP**

Time management is both a skill and an art



Dr Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is an
associate professor,
Dept of English
Language and
Literature, SQU

The long summer days in the Sultanate of Oman can be deceptive – they seem to offer many hours of productive work, leading to relaxed evenings with family and friends. But the reality is not as idyllic. For many, a typical day consists of last minute drives in a traffic jam, midnight submission of assignments and take away meals as there just hasn't been enough time to cook.

Does it have to be this way? Of course not, but how can we ensure that we can make productive use of the time that we have and not feel stressed at the end of the day, with the 'to do' list longer than the 'done' one?

Interestingly, the most equitable

element in the world is time. We all have 24 hours in the day, to accomplish whatever our long and short term tasks may be. Ideally, the goal should be to make the most of this time in ways that are satisfying, productive and enjoyable. This is only possible if we think of time management, not only as a skill to be mastered, but an art to be enjoyed.

Managing time is an art because it asks us to imagine what we want our life to be: an endless loop of looming deadlines or a thoughtfully articulated snapshot of our ambitions and plans. It requires that we accept that dreary, everyday deadlines are important, but only because at the end, they

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help to build the ultimate goal to which we aim.

Teaching time management is a billion-dollar industry spearheaded by business and management gurus.

They teach us how to prioritise,

reduce tasks to bite sized morsels, even use digital applications to keep track of upcoming tasks. These skills should be taught in schools so that they remain a lifelong habit, applicable in any sphere of life.

But at the core of all this is self-respect. Managing our time is important because it is a statement of who and what we are. A hassled, confused person somehow stumbling into a deadline may be able to tick off the box of the task achieved, but they do little else. There is no clarity, confidence, self- assurance or efficiency in last minute work. Nor does it do anything to boost self-worth. If anything, it only builds a sense of guilt and regret, and an empty

promise to be better next time.

Managing time is more than just managing the clock. It is about knowing what is important at any phase in life, identifying ways of achieving those goals and setting realistic timelines, all the while being aware of work-life balance. With multiple distractions now, this is easier said than done, but knowing that the hard work of today will enable a stress free tomorrow is often incentive enough to keep to self-imposed deadlines.

So the next time we think of saying "I don't have time", we could remember that we all have exactly the same amount of time, but for most, "time is what we want most, but what we use worst".

Scientists risk arrest to sound climate alarm

MARLOWE HOOD

A loosely federated network of scientists in more than two dozen countries plan acts of civil disobedience starting this week to highlight the climate crisis, members of Scientist Rebellion said.

Their non-violent actions are timed to the release of a landmark report from the UN's climate science advisory panel laying out options for slashing carbon pollution and controversial schemes for extracting CO2 from the air, they said in interviews.

Scientist Rebellion targets universities, research institutes and major scientific journals, prodding them and their staff to speak out more forcefully on what they describe as the existential threat of global warming.

"Scientists are particularly powerful messengers, and we have a responsibility to show leadership," said Charlie Gardner, a conservation scientist at the University of Kent specialised in tropical biodiversity. "We are failing in that responsibility. If we say it's an emergency, we have to act like it is."

Starting on Monday, the group hopes to see "high levels of disobedience" with more than 1,000 scientists worldwide taking part in direct non-violent action against government and academic institutions.

The world has seen a crescendo of deadly extreme weather amplified by rising temperatures — heatwaves, wildfires, flooding, storms engorged by rising seas — and a torrent of recent climate science projects worse to come.

Much of that research is distilled in periodic reports from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC).

Scientist Rebellion was founded in 2020 by two physics PhD students at St Andrews College in Scotland, inspired in part by the more broadly based Extinction Rebellion.

The group's first significant action with more than 100 scientists, in March 2021, targeted the British Royal Society and science publishing behemoth Springer Nature.

"We basically pasted enlarged copies of their journal articles calling for rapid transformative change onto their offices," said Kyle Topher, an environmental scientist from Australia and full-time activist for the group.

Last year's COP26 climate summit in Glasgow saw a score of their members arrested.

"As far as we know this was the first mass arrest of scientists anywhere in the world since Carl Sagan protested nuclear weapons testing in the 1980s," said Gardner.

They also made headlines by leaking an early draft of Monday's IPCC report, which warned that carbon dioxide emissions need to peak within three years if the world is to keep the Paris Agreement targets for global warming in reach. — AFP

Ukraine is the first real World War



THOMAS L
FRIEDMAN

The writer is an opinion
columnist with NYT

Almost six weeks into the war between Russia and Ukraine, I'm beginning to wonder if this conflict isn't our first true 'world war' — much more than World War I or World War II ever were.

In this war, which I think of as "World War Wired," virtually everyone on the planet can either observe the fighting at a granular level, participate in some way or be affected economically — no matter where they live.

While the battle on the ground that triggered World War Wired is ostensibly over who should control Ukraine, do not be fooled.

This has quickly turned into "the big battle" between the two most dominant political systems in the world today: free-market, "rule-of-law democracy versus authoritarian kleptocracy," the Swedish expert on the Russian economy, Anders Aslund, remarked to me.

Though this war is far from over, and Vladimir Putin may still find a way to prevail and come out stronger, if he doesn't, it could be a watershed in the conflict between democratic and undemocratic systems. It is worth recalling that World War II put an end to fascism, and the Cold War put an end to orthodox communism, eventually even in China. So, what happens on the streets of Kyiv, Mariupol and the Donbas region could influence political systems far beyond Ukraine and far into the future.

Indeed, other autocratic leaders, like China's, are watching Russia carefully. They see its economy being weakened by Western sanctions; thousands of its young technologists fleeing to escape a government denying them access to the Internet and credible news; and its inept army seemingly unable to gather, share and funnel accurate information to the top. Those leaders have to be asking themselves: "Holy cow — am I that vulnerable? Am I presiding over a similar house of cards?"

In World War I and World War II, no one had a smartphone or access to social networks through which to observe and participate in the war in nonkinetic ways. Indeed, a large chunk of the world's population was still colonised and did not have the full freedom to express independent views, even if they had the technology.

Many of those residing outside the war zones were also extremely poor subsistence farmers who were not

so heavily affected by those first two world wars. There weren't the giant connected globalised and urbanised lower and middle classes of today's wired world.

Now, anyone with a smartphone can view what is happening in Ukraine

A WAR BETWEEN
JUST TWO
COUNTRIES IN
EUROPE HAS
SPIKED THE
PRICE OF FOOD
FOR EGYPTIANS,
BRAZILIANS,
INDIANS AND
AFRICANS

— live and in colour — and express opinions globally through social media. In our post-colonial world, governments from virtually every country around the globe can vote to condemn or excuse one side or another in Ukraine through the UN General Assembly.

While estimates vary, it appears that between 3 billion and 4 billion people on the planet — 'almost half' — have a smartphone today, and although Internet censorship remains a real problem, particularly in China, there are just so many more people able to peer deeply into so many more places.

And that's not all.

Anyone with a smartphone and a credit card can aid strangers in Ukraine, through Airbnb, by just reserving a night at their home and not using it.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's government has been able to tap a whole new source of funding — raising more than \$70 million worth of cryptocurrency from individuals around the world after appealing on social media for donations.

Such nongovernmental, super-empowered global players and platforms were not present in WWI or II.

But just as so many more people can affect this war, so, too, can more be affected by it. Russia and Ukraine are key suppliers of wheat and fertiliser to the agricultural supply chains that now feed the world and that this war has disrupted. A war between just two countries in Europe has spiked the price of food for Egyptians, Brazilians, Indians and Africans.

And because Russia is one of the world's biggest exporters of natural gas, crude oil and the diesel fuel used by farmers in their tractors, the sanctions on Russia's energy infrastructure are curbing its exports, causing gasoline pump prices to rise from Minneapolis to Mexico to Mumbai, and forcing farmers as far away as Argentina to ration their diesel-powered tractor usage or cut fossil-fuel-rich fertiliser usage, jeopardising Argentina's agriculture exports and adding further to soaring world food prices.

— The New York Times



A Ukrainian serviceman walks past destroyed Russian tanks not far from the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv. — AFP

The first day of school...



Lakshmi Kothaneth
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The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

The first day of school, the first step to the world of education because students in classroom are away from their parents for the first time. Some of them are in awe, others are yelling out with one just chanting ‘I want to go home.’

Then there are the sweet ones ready to dance and sing, while few of them are onlookers and have few bursts of tears watching the crying ones. One little one came and pointed to the watch on the teacher’s wrist and asked, ‘What time would the bus come?’

It might be back to school for other students, but for these little ones it is their first experience.

Within the room one can see the future world citizens and their personalities. The girl who snatches the football from a boy and refuses to

give it back.

The one who tries to bring all other children to play is eager to help and is ready to share her joy.

“It would only take three days and then they will be normal,” said the teacher.

For now though, on their first day, children are taking in the sights and sounds outside their home on their own.

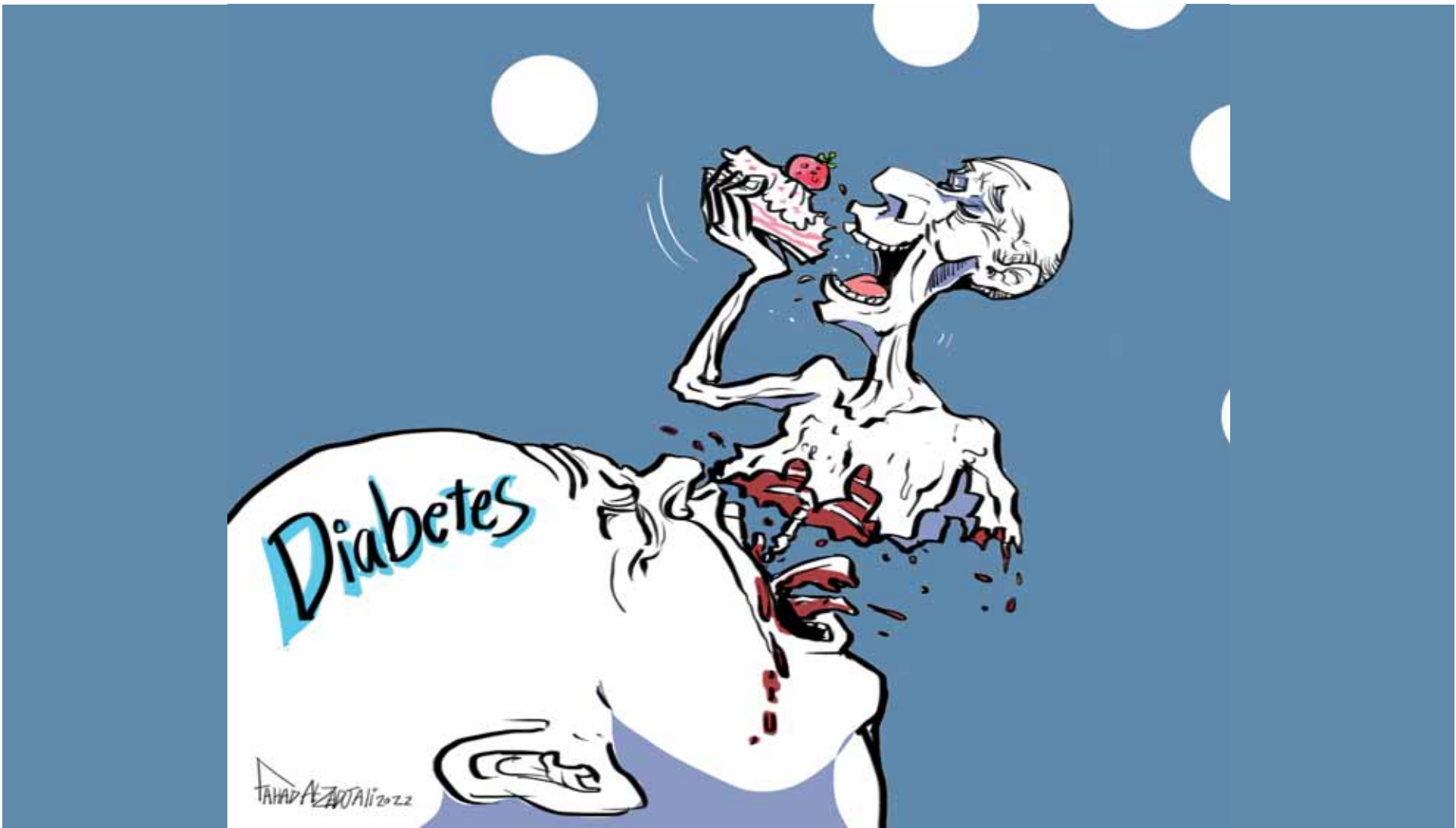
Their journey will take them through higher education and then on to careers. We can only wish them the best. The world is changing and by the time they become adults we would know more about practicality of sustainability, the climatic conditions and how far renewable energy would be part of the daily lifestyle.

Would communication skills go through a make over too?

Obviously, there is every chance because we have been seeing this happen through out history. Political correctness is something we have seen evolving over the years as we become sensitive to other’s feelings and become empathetic. It is so because it has been proven to us that intelligence quotient (IQ) is not the only thing that would guarantee you a job, it is also emotional intelligence that is needed. In today’s works EQ is equally important. But that is not all social intelligence is extremely significant in addition to spirituality quotient, adaptability quotient and creativity quotient.

There is yet another intelligence that is being considered extremely important and is Adversity Quotient (AQ) — how good is a person in handling crisis. Are they ready to give up or would they keep moving forward.

Are individuals born with these qualities or do they need to develop it. Sooner the better and where else but the school to develop these aspects of intelligence with teachers and students?



Send Merkel to Moscow for peace



KATI MARTON

The writer is the Founding Advisory Council Chair of Action for Democracy, is the author, most recently, of The Chancellor: The Remarkable Odyssey of Angela Merkel (William Collins, 2021)

As a horrified world searches for a way to stop Russian President Vladimir Putin’s war against Ukraine, there is one person who might be able to get through to the Kremlin’s powers. Angela Merkel, until recently chancellor of Germany, held Putin to some degree of good behaviour during her 16 years in office, including by blocking Russia’s first attempt to seize Ukraine in 2014.

Merkel has unique qualities, and a shared history with Putin unmatched by any other world leader. She should be persuaded to come out of retirement to help rescue the international order she fought to uphold during her time in office.

Putin and Merkel’s complicated relationship began on November 9, 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall. That event marked Merkel’s liberation from the East German police state that had confined her for her first 35 years. She soon shed her scientist’s white coat and joined the Christian Democratic Union, later becoming the party’s leader and then Germany’s first woman chancellor.

For Putin, November 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet empire he served – which he called “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the (twentieth) century” – ended his career as a KGB officer in East Germany. Two years apart in age, and products of the same Soviet era, Merkel and Putin have a clear-eyed understanding of each other. They literally and figuratively speak each other’s languages.

After Merkel became chancellor, Putin subjected her to various KGB techniques to test her mettle. Knowing her fear of dogs, he unleashed his large black Labrador near her at a 2007 meeting. Merkel did not flinch. “He has to do this to show his manhood,” she later said. “He tests you all day and if you don’t resist you become smaller and smaller.”

Merkel, whose background had prepared her for Putin’s capacity, did not become smaller. In their many interactions, she simply ignored his staged outbursts and menacing silences.

Although Merkel found Putin alarmingly detached from reality already in 2014, she pressed on, sometimes for 15 hours at a stretch, in search of an inch of common ground regarding Ukraine. In such situations, she said, “I am as focused as a tightrope walker, only thinking about the next step.” Putin stayed at the table and eventually agreed to halt his war after Russia had annexed Crimea and occupied parts of Ukraine’s eastern Donbas region. For Merkel, a frozen conflict was always better than all-out war.

Her method during their many hours negotiating was to let Putin bluster uninterrupted. When he finished, Merkel would repeat what he had just said in almost childlike language, draining both drama and much sense from his explosion. “Vladimir,” she would assert, “this is not how the world sees things.”

Merkel’s icy calm was backed up by a mastery of battlefield details. “I think I know every tree in Donbas,” she once said of the war zone. She pressed Putin to state his goal with precision, and then offered a few steps to get him there. With her scientific training, and free of ego, ideology, and emotion, she broke down his grandiose schemes to their smallest, most manageable parts. “What counts is finding solutions,” she often said.

FORMER GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL HAS UNIQUE QUALITIES, AND A SHARED HISTORY WITH RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN UNMATCHED BY ANY OTHER WORLD LEADER

Insofar as Putin is capable of trust, he trusts Merkel, who not only has no remaining political ambitions but also has never publicly denigrated him or divulged the contents of their many private exchanges. Known to admire Russian culture, Merkel never referred to Russia as a “regional power,” as former US President Barack Obama once did.

Two months after she left the chancellery, Putin launched the full-scale war she had

prevented in 2014. With Merkel gone, her successor, Olaf Scholz, untested, and the United States bitterly polarised thanks to former President Donald Trump, Putin likely calculated that he might finally reverse the “catastrophe” that began in 1989.

But Merkel, too, had miscalculated. A cautious politician, she allowed German business interests to hold sway and failed to halt the (now suspended) Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which would have transported gas directly from Russia to Germany via the Baltic Sea. Nor did she increase Germany’s defence budget sufficiently to meet a growing security threat. Merkel despises war and considers recourse to it an utter failure of statesmanship. Yet, with war now raging in Ukraine, Europe and the West have been plunged into the post-Merkel era with no clear end in sight.

Merkel is possibly the only person on the planet who neither fears, openly holds in contempt, nor is beholden to Putin, and whom he also appears to respect. Given their long-shared history, Putin would be unlikely to relegate Merkel to the opposite end of that comically long Kremlin table where he has recently seated other heads of state to telegraph his lack of interest in serious negotiation.

Putin takes Merkel seriously and – as isolated as he is – must at some level realise that he needs help climbing down from his high and precarious tree without suffering the total loss of face that he dreads and is ready to spill more blood to avoid. Merkel, who knows Putin better than any other world leader does, might help him. With her supreme calm, she might admonish him one final time: “Vladimir, this war is not in your interest.”

It is a long shot, of course, but the world order of which Merkel was the most stalwart defender hangs in the balance. The stakes are high enough to take the gamble.

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File photo of former German Chancellor Angela Merkel with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Berlin, Germany, on January 19, 2020. – Reuters

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Dhofar edge Rustaq to close in on Seeb



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

Salalah giants Dhofar recorded their second successive victory with a narrow 1-0 win over Al Rustaq at the latter's home in Al Rustaq Sports Complex late on Sunday in the concluding games of the 17th week of 2021-22 Omantel League. The all-important goal was scored by former national team player Qasim Said in the 11th minute of the match.

The win helped Dhofar to reach same points with league leaders Seeb but remained in second position on goal difference. Al Rustaq missed the chance to move up to fourth with the result. Al Rustaq are in fifth place with 29 points.

In another tight clash among the teams positioned in the relegation zone, Al Ittihad and Saham ended their game in a goalless draw. At Al Saada Sports Complex, both teams entered the fixture seeking for the three points to move up in the league order but the game ended with a

result that did not benefited both sides.

Saham are struggling in the bottom with 8 points only and they did not taste victory since 17 weeks. Al Ittihad went slightly away from the third team in the relegation as they are placed now at 11th position with 13 points and followed by Bahla in the 12th place at 12 points.

Muscat derby clash between Muscat and Oman clubs ended again in a goalless draw at Seeb Stadium. One point was added to each club's credit as Oman Club's tally raised to 24 points at seventh place while Muscat are positioned in 10th place with 16 points.

After the conclusion of the 17th week games, Seeb led the points table with 35 points and by goal difference over Dhofar and third-placed Al Nahda who have the same points. The fourth placed team is Al Nasr with 30 points. Bahla, Nizwa and Saham are competing in the relegation zone with 12, 11 and 8 points respectively.

The next round of matches will be played on Friday.

Oman to host motocross world championship in Sept

MUSCAT: The FIM MXGP World Championship for Motocross will take place in Oman for the first time ever on September 9-10, 2022 in Al Musannah.

World Championship of Motocross – The FIM MXGP has announced its 2022 calendar and the latest addition on the world motocross stage, the Sultanate of Oman, the only GCC country as the closing hosting destination and race of the 2022 season.

The Oman MXGP World Championship has been endorsed by the FIM (Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme based in Geneva, Switzerland) and organised by Trade8 International based in Oman, in conjunction with the Oman Automobile Association.

The FIM MXGP Motocross World Championship, a family-oriented event will take place in Musannah on September 9-10

with the qualifying race on Friday and the finals on Saturday.

Around 8,000 spectators are expected with an estimated turnover of more than 2 million rials. This world class event transcends sports and will have a positive impact on tourism and investment promotion. With no doubt it will contribute to propelling Oman on the world stage for which the support through government entities, national and private companies as stakeholders/sponsors is crucial as this is a international event. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth is supporting the holding of the FIM MXGP World Championship in Oman.

The World Championship of Motocross – MXGP – equals the Formula 1 and Moto GP in terms of prestige and worldwide visibility. In 2019, a total of 600,000 spectators attended the events

across 18 countries, with 2,000 journalists covering the Grand Prix and the value of sponsorship equaled around \$430 million.

This is a unique opportunity to showcase the Sultanate of Oman to younger tourists and sports enthusiasts all over the world, knowing that the potential viewership is 1.5 billion people internationally across 50+ channels such as Eurosport, beIN, Fox Sports, etc. The Sultanate of Oman will further be promoted through a 1-minute postcard video during the live broadcasting showcasing the country as a cultural, touristic and investment destination around the globe. Oman will also appear in the MXGP PlayStation/XBOX game in 2023 which has average sales of 2 million copies yearly.

A press conference will be organised after the Eid holidays and information about purchasing tickets will be available soon.



LIVINGSTONE HELPS PUNJAB THRASH CHENNAI

MUMBAI: England's Liam Livingstone smashed 60 and took two wickets to lead Punjab Kings to an emphatic 54-run win over Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League on Sunday.

Livingstone, who became the most expensive overseas player in this season's IPL auction when Punjab bought the batting all-rounder for \$1.52 million, guided his team to 180 for eight in Mumbai.

He then took two wickets with his spin, including a key scalp of Shivam Dube, who hit 57, as Punjab bowled out Chennai for 126 in 18 overs.

"The first two games didn't go my way, but (it's) nice to contribute to a win," said man-of-the-match Livingstone.

"We got to a target we thought was defendable and the seam bowlers set it up for us."

It was the third successive loss for holders Chennai — four-time IPL winners — in this season's Twenty20 tournament.

"I think we lost too many wickets in the powerplay and didn't find momentum from ball one," said new Chennai skipper Ravindra Jadeja.

"We will try our level best. Work hard and comeback stronger." Livingstone's attacking batting set up victory for Punjab as he smashed five fours and five



sixes in his 32-ball knock and put on 95 runs with Shikhar Dhawan, who made 33, for the third wicket.

Livingstone, who hit England's fastest T20 century in 42 balls in a game against Pakistan last year, smashed Chennai left-arm medium Mukesh Choudhary for the biggest six of the tournament so far at 108 metres.

He reached his maiden IPL fifty with a six off Chennai veteran Dwayne Bravo but soon got out to

Jadeja's left-arm spin.

Jitesh Sharma hit a 17-ball 26 before bowlers checked the batting surge in the final few overs but the total proved enough for Punjab's second victory in three matches.

Punjab bowlers came out roaring and reduced Chennai to 36-5 with Moeen Ali out for a duck.

Dube attempted to put the chase back on track with his 26-

The first two games didn't go my way, but (it's) nice to contribute to a win. We got to a target we thought was defendable and the seam bowlers set it up for us

LIAM LIVINGSTONE
Punjab Kings player

ball 50 and a 62-run partnership with MS Dhoni, who made 23 off 28 balls, but Livingstone, who can bowl off and leg spin, broke through.

He got Dube out with a googly and then took a stunning catch off his own bowling to send back Bravo for nought and the wheels came of the chase.

"I play my own way and I struggled a bit with Rajasthan (last season) as well. Hopefully, this (performance) will bring some confidence," said Livingstone. "Bowling is something I really enjoy and I keep practicing."

In the only match on Monday, Lucknow Super Giants, one of the two franchises added to the expanded 10-team IPL, take on Sunrisers Hyderabad at Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium. — AFP

Al Nahdha Blasters enter knockouts of BCL

MUSCAT: Al Nahdha Blasters bounced back after losing the initial matches to edge past Crown Cricketers in Group D on the basis of NRR to enter the knockout stage of the ongoing 2nd Edition of the Barka Champions League.

Other teams from Group D to qualify for the knockouts are ITG Oman, SABCO & UGB Muscat who finished as first, second & third respectively in rankings.

In Group B & C, UGB Barka and Proline Knight Riders respectively remain at the top of the table after winning all the matches in the league stage.

However, Royal Stars Barka from Group-B and Shooters from Group-C claimed the fourth spot in respective groups only on the basis of NRR where the points were tied.

Other teams from Group-B to qualify for knockout are Sharif

XI, Suwaiq & Dragon Mart Kings XI, Barka. Ashes & Desert Warriors qualified from Group-C.

Barka Super XI topped the Group A to enter the knockouts along with Billah Cricket Club (BCC), Aldaam Nizwa & Barka Riders who finished first, second & third respectively in group rankings.

The Knockout Stage matches between 16 teams (4 from each group) are lined up & will be played after Ramadhan-Eid.

The Topper from Group A will play against the fourth placed team in Group-B & vice versa for Group-B Topper & 4th Place placed team in Group-A. Whereas the second ranked team in Group-A will play against 3rd in Group-B & 3rd in Group-B will play against 2nd in Group-A.

The same pattern will be followed for Group C & D as well.

BARKA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – (BCL) 2ND EDITION

PRE-QUARTER MATCHES

Group A - BARKA STALLIONS



BARKA SUPER XI



BILLAH CRICKET CLUB



AL DAAM NISWA



BARKA RIDERS

v/s

Group B - BARKA GLADIATORS



UGB BARKA



SHARIFF XI SUWAIQ



DRAGON MART KINGS XI BARKA



ROYAL STARS BARKA

v/s

A1 - BARKA SUPER XI

A2 - BILLAH CRICKET CLUB

A3 - AL DAAM NISWA

A4 - BARKA RIDERS

v/s

B4 – ROYAL STARS BARKA

B3 – DRAGON MART KINGS XI BARKA

B2 – SHARIFF XI SUWAIQ

B1 - UGB BARKA

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NZ great Taylor in tearful farewell to international cricket



HAMILTON: An emotional Ross Taylor was given a standing ovation as the New Zealand great made an emotional farewell to international cricket on Monday after 16 years at the top.

The visiting Netherlands team gave the 38-year-old a guard of honour as he came out to bat at number four in the third one-day international at Seddon Park in Hamilton.

He was dismissed for 14, but the day belonged to Taylor, who announced in December that the series against the Netherlands would be his last hurrah.

With his children on one side and team-mates on the other, Taylor was in tears before the match as the players lined up for the national anthems.

The Seddon Park spectators rose to their feet and applauded generously as he came to the crease for the final time.

Taylor bowled out of Test cricket in style in January, taking the last Bangladesh wicket to ensure New Zealand won the second Test in Christchurch and drew the series.

Taylor has been a mainstay in the New Zealand batting order since making his debut in 2006, amassing a plethora of records and achievements.

Among them are a New Zealand record 7,683 Test runs and he also scored the most runs for the country in ODIs.

He also made the highest Test score in Australia by a visiting player — 290 at Perth in 2015.

— AFP

Spin wins it for South Africa over Bangladesh

DURBAN, SA: Spin bowling won the first Test for South Africa against Bangladesh at Kingsmead on Monday, but captain Dean Elgar said he still preferred to attack opponents with fast bowling.

Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj and off-spinner Simon Harmer bowled unchanged as Bangladesh crashed to 53 all out, giving South Africa a 220-run victory.

Maharaj took seven for 32 and Harmer claimed three for 21 as Bangladesh's last seven wickets tumbled in only 55 minutes on Monday morning.

South Africa were without their entire front-line fast bowling attack, with Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje and Marco



Jansen all contracted to Indian Premier League teams.

Elgar said the conditions at Kingsmead dictated the spin

option.

"Even if the IPL guys were available, Keshav and Harmy would have bowled most of our overs," said Elgar.

Elgar praised "the pure skill level and intensity and consistency" of the two spinners, who took a combined 14 wickets in the match.

But he added: "It's not the style of cricket we're used to, or that we want to play. I think it shows a lot of character... that we have the resources to adapt."

"We still want to play the conditions where you play three seamers, an all-rounder and a spinner. Fast bowling is our prime source of attack."

Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque appeared to be baffled by

the way his batsmen collapsed against a style of bowling they are used to. — AFP

SCOREBOARD	
South Africa first innings: 367	
Bangladesh first innings: 298	
South Africa second innings: 204	
Bangladesh second innings (O/n: 11-3)	
M Hasan b Maharaj	4
S Islam c Petersen b Harmer	0
N Hossain st Verreynne b Harmer	26
M Haque lbw Maharaj	2
M Rahim lbw Maharaj	0
L Das c Harmer b Maharaj	2
Y Ali b Maharaj	5
M Hasan c Petersen b Harmer	0
T Ahmed c Mulder b Maharaj	14
K Ahmed c Williams b Maharaj	0
E Hossain (not out)	0
Extras	0
Total (all out, 19 overs)	53
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-6, 3-8, 4-12, 5-15, 6-25, 7-33, 8-50, 9-51	
Bowling: Maharaj 10-0-32-7, Harmer 9-3-21-3	

MTCL Twenty20 grand final on April 7

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The grand finale of the Twenty 20 MTCL, organised by the Muscat Tennis-ball Cricket League (MTCL) in association with Oman Cricket will be held in front of a capacity crowd at 7pm on April 7 at the Al Amerat Cricket Grounds.

The teams, Cosmos Thalassery and Michael Eleven are the finalists which comprise players from Oman, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh.

As many as 2,500 players who have shown their mettle in various local, regional and international matches as part of 92 teams from across the country took part in the first of its kind tournament of



excellence inaugurated by Iqbal Ariwala, Chief Administrative Officer of Oman Cricket.

Organisers of the mega cricket tournament were excited to have the tournament generate an overwhelming response from both the teams, players and the

audience alike to the week-long cricket tournament.

Cosmos Thalassery defeated Al Khoudh Cricket Team while Michael Eleven flew their flag high after they defeated the erstwhile runners up, Kingfisher Cricketers in the semifinal that

filled the gallery with cheers last week.

The organisers further informed that the MCL 16, the MTCL Mini League that hosted 40 teams from across the length and breadth of the country will also be held in the second pitch at the ground on the same day. Muscat Star Brothers and Muscat Super Kings will be vying for the crown.

"Entry to the mega event would be free from 6pm and all cricket enthusiasts are invited to be present to witness the grand finale at the Al Amerat International Cricket Ground," said KC Shaheer, Mohammed Rafi, Anuraj Rajan, Sajū Raghavan and Deepak Thanki, the members of the MTCL organising committee.

Al Faisal finishes fifth in Imola



IMOLA, Italy: Oman’s Al Faisal al Zubair teamed up with Fabian Schiller and Axcil Jeffries to finish fifth in the Silver category on his first appearance at a round of the Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Powered by AWS at Imola on Sunday.

The Omani represented Al Manar Racing by HRT at the wheel of a Mercedes-AMG GT3 and the racing trio completed 94 laps of the demanding Italian circuit in the three-hour endurance race, which attracted 52 entries across the various categories.

Victory in the Silver category fell

to Team WRT’s Thomas Neubauer, Benjamin Goethe and Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer in an Audi R8 LMS, with Marius Zug, Alex Aka and Nicolas Scholi crossing the finish in second place after losing out on a potential win during the last set of pit stops.

The Al Manar Racing by HRT Mercedes had completed 17 laps after the opening 30 minutes of the race and the crew were holding fifth place at that point. By the 90-minute mark, the team had completed 50 laps and had slipped back to seventh.

But they delivered a resilient



OMANI RACER MAKES DEBUT AT FANATEC GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

fight back through the middle of the race and, by the 2hr 30min point, the Mercedes had clocked 77 laps and the crew were lying in second position in the Silver category before slipping back to fifth by the chequered flag on lap 94 after incurring a 10-second penalty.

Al Zubair said: “This weekend was a little bit tougher than we expected. I think finishing P5 out of 18 Silver class cars was a good job considering we got a 10-second penalty for overshooting the pit entry. Finishing just outside the overall top 20 with a grid of 52 cars with the penalty included was a

good result and a good way to start the championship. We are heading in the right direction.

“The format here is different to other championships in that they put everything in one day. We have qualifying in the morning and the race in the evening. There is not much time in between if something goes wrong. Pirelli tyres are new to me. I am just getting my head around it and to learn the way of the car. We have to manage it a bit better next time. The set-up of the car felt good on the test day but all three of us struggled with the set-up and the tyres in the race.

“As a championship there is nothing that gets close to the GT World Challenge. The level of drivers proves that. You only have to look at the level of names participating in that. For example, there were 17 Pro entries, which consist of three factory drivers in each car. This shows that the championship is prioritised by manufacturers. It makes it extremely difficult, but I think it’s a good thing to race at the top level to push ourselves in the right direction, like we did in the Super Cup.

“We have quite a long break now to the Six Hours of Paul Ricard. But

the test was positive there and we will be looking for a podium or a win in the Silver class. This is our goal.”

Action began with free practice on Saturday morning and Al Zubair, Schiller and Jeffries clocked the second quickest lap of 1min 40.937sec in the Silver Cup category to finish just 0.314sec behind the Attempto Racing trio of Marius Zug, Nicolas Scholi and Alex Aka in their Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo2.

The Sainteloc Junior Team Audi R8 of Cesar Gazeau, Nicolas Baert and Aurelian Panis came home in third.

Nadal inspires teen star Alcaraz to Miami title

MIAMI: Carlos Alcaraz believes watching boyhood idol Rafael Nadal helped him become the youngest ever Miami Open champion on Sunday.

Alcaraz, who turns 19 next month, showed why many believe he is currently the hottest young prospect in men’s tennis with a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Norway’s world number eight Casper Ruud to land a first ATP Masters crown.

Only two men have won titles at this level at a younger age - Michael Chang, who was 18 years and five months old when he won in Toronto in 1990, and Rafael Nadal, 18 years and 10 months when he was victorious in Monte Carlo in 2005.

Alcaraz dropped just one set on the way to his Miami triumph and now will head off to compete on his preferred surface of clay buoyed by the biggest win of his career.

There’s a long way to go before even getting close to replicating the legendary career of 21 Grand Slam-winning compatriot Nadal but Alcaraz says he plans to have fun trying.

“I have always looked up to Rafa, I always watched his big moments and matches and learned a lot from that,” Alcaraz, who received a congratulatory call from Spain’s King Felipe VI, after a famous win which saw him collapse to the floor upon winning the final point, said.

“When I fell to the floor, all the times I have dreamed of this came



to me,” added Alcaraz, beaten by Nadal in the semifinals at Indian Wells last month.

Nadal was among the first to congratulate Alcaraz upon his win on Sunday, hailing a “historical” triumph.

“The first of many to come I’m sure,” Nadal wrote on Twitter.

Much is expected of Alcaraz whose passionate, all-energy displays in the latter stages of the Miami Open energised the Florida crowd.

He insisted afterwards that his target now is to win a Grand Slam - and this was certainly a good start.

It was the more understated Norwegian, 23, however, who looked more comfortable in the early stages of what was his 10th ATP final by breaking early and keeping the pressure firmly on his precocious opponent. — AFP

Rampaging Spurs thrash Newcastle

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, APRIL 4

Tottenham Hotspur moved up to fourth in the Premier League in the race for a Champions League position after a goal-spree which saw them win 5-1 against Newcastle. It has put pressure on their arch rivals Arsenal who are also on 54 points but with two games in hand.

Spurs manager Antonio Conte, who joined the club in November, said: “When I arrived it was difficult to believe that we would be in the race for the Champions League because usually when you change manager during the season it means there are difficulties. But now I have seen my team is now in the race because I have seen great improvement.”

He added: “In this race there are other teams that maybe in this moment have an advantage. Arsenal have to play two games. Don’t forget Manchester United. I think now the players understand that this is the right way, they trust me and I trust them. We have eight games (left), eight finals. Every game will be important to get points and continue to dream to finish in the Champions League this season.”

In a five-star performance, Spurs hit back sharply after Newcastle scored first, six minutes before half time from a free-kick by Fabian Schar. But within four minutes Spurs responded with a header from Ben Davis following a corner. With the intensity increasing, there was a flare-up on the stroke of half



time which resulted in Allan Saint-Maximin, Joelinton and Spurs’ Rodrigo Bentancur receiving the yellow card.

Three minutes after the break Tottenham went into the lead. Harry Kane received the ball 40 yards from goal, beat Dan Burn and sent an out-swinging cross which Heung-Min Son missed but Matt Doherty, on his left, was alert enough to put in a diving header at the back post.

Tottenham went further ahead in the 54th minute with the third goal when Son left-footed a shot past Martin Dubravka

from a superb cross from Dejan Kulusevski – on loan from Juventus – who had received a pin-point pass from Kane. The result was then put beyond doubt nine minutes later with Doherty playing a one-two with Kulusevski and passing to Emerson Royal to score his first goal for the club.

Shortly after that Son had a chance for a second goal from a fine pass from Kane but surprisingly, he shot across goal and wide when it seemed easier to score. But it didn’t take long for the fifth goal to come. With six minutes before time, substitute

Steven Bergwijn was sent clear by Lucas Moura – also on as substitute – and he completed Tottenham’s tally.

Newcastle manager, Eddie Howe said: “The minute we went behind and chased the game, we changed what we were doing and that played into their hands. These results can happen against quality opposition.”

He added: “It hurts and I’m sure my players feel the same. We got punished by a top-level team. We need to focus on what’s to come, which is an absolute key week for us.”



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MDO signs contract for airborne survey of mining areas

Geological database: Sander Geophysics Ltd selected to undertake survey of 21,480 sq kilometres of MDO mining concession areas

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

State-owned mining and mineral processing enterprise Minerals Development Oman (MDO) has signed a contract with Canada-based Sander Geophysics Ltd (SGL) to conduct airborne geophysical surveys covering MDO's concession areas of approximately 21,480 square kilometres. The two-year-long survey is scheduled to start next month.

Under the contract, SGL commits to conducting a

number of airborne geophysical surveys using fixed-wing aircraft. The purpose of the survey is to obtain geophysical data including magnetic, radiometric, electromagnetic, and gravity.

These geophysical surveys are crucial to enhance the geological knowledge at surface and depth leading to better target mineral anomalies which will be further tested to identify mineral ores.

On this occasion, MDO's CEO Eng Nasser Saif al Maqbali said: "This strategic agreement aims to build a comprehensive geological database for the Company's concession areas. It is an important step towards the company's efforts to explore strategic minerals in the Sultanate of Oman, which will be followed by a number of studies, geochemical surveys, and exploratory drilling. We hope to be able to identify metallic areas



such as copper, chromite, and other strategic minerals which will be eventually mined."

He added: "These geophysical surveys are playing a major role in complementing MDO efforts to attract direct foreign investors and secure mining partnerships. The survey results will assist us to provide accurate information about mining potential in Oman and building a strong mining portfolio.

Furthermore, it will serve as an important future reference for researchers and those interested in the fields of geology and mining. We are conducting these studies in close cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and several other Governmental Authorities, their continuous support is highly valued."

SGL Chairman commented: "On behalf of Sander Geophysics

Ltd (SGL), we would like to express our great pleasure at being selected to participate in the MDO airborne geophysical survey over seven concession areas in the Sultanate of Oman.

SGL is very experienced in this type of project, having performed similar airborne geophysical surveys worldwide for over sixty years. Our experience and expertise will ensure the project meets the highest standards in safety, technical quality, and efficiency. Providing training to Omani geoscientists is an important component of the project, and we anticipate a rewarding and effective involvement with our Omani counterparts throughout the project.

We look forward to providing final data, maps, and interpretative products that will be valuable for

the development of the Omani mining sector. SGL is very proud to be part of this important project, and we look forward to a safe and successful survey."

Last month, MDO signed an agreement for 12 concession areas with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM) in line with recent government directions aimed at promoting the mining sector as a tributary of national economic growth.

Minerals Development Oman was established in 2017 with a clear strategic vision to invest in the mining sector in the Sultanate of Oman and to increase its contribution to the growth of the economic and social sectors by creating job opportunities and building local competencies, in addition to supporting small businesses and developing the in-country value.

OMINVEST's Insurance Subsidiary, NLGIC, to acquire RSA Middle East towards Building a Leading Multi-Line Insurance Group in the Region

With common interests to further broaden and strengthen its regional insurance business, National Life & General Insurance Company SAOG (NLGIC) – a subsidiary of Oman International Development and Investment Company SAOG (OMINVEST) – has entered a strategic transaction to acquire 100% shareholding in Royal Sun Alliance (RSA) Middle East.

NLGIC will execute the transaction in two parts: (i) purchasing 50.00002% shareholding in RSA Middle East from Sun Alliance Insurance Overseas LTD (SAIO), a fully owned entity of Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Limited; and (ii) exchanging the remaining shares of RSA Middle East, owned by reputable Saudi shareholders, with new issued NLGIC's shares, thus making the Saudi shareholders collectively the second largest Shareholders in NLGIC after OMINVEST. The transaction is subject to approvals from the respective regulators and NLGIC's shareholders.

The agreements have been based on a deep understanding of RSA's business legacy and capabilities, and on efficient utilization of NLGIC's knowhow and financial position, aiming to transform the combined entity into a larger, stronger, and more competitive regional insurance player emerging from the Sultanate of Oman.

Describing OMINVEST's investment philosophy, Khalid Muhammad AlZubair, Chairman of OMINVEST and NLGIC said, "Our investment philosophy at OMINVEST has always been to support and enable our portfolio companies to thrive and grow. OMINVEST has a strong track record of building businesses in the insurance sector. Our largest insurance subsidiary, NLGIC, has remarkably grown locally and regionally. NLGIC's success is attributable to the significant capital



Khalid Muhammad AlZubair

injection from OMINVEST, prudent oversight by its Board, and smart business strategies implemented by the management. We endeavor to work closely with our companies' boards and management teams to identify, screen, and capitalize on growth opportunities. We provide strategic

direction and help our companies draw ultimate roadmaps that would create value for all stakeholders". He added, "With this transaction, we look forward to a brighter and stronger future for our insurance business, having much bigger impact across the region. Moreover, the transaction will bring foreign direct investment to Oman-based NLGIC".

On behalf of RSA Middle East shareholders, Adnan Bogary, Chairman of RSA Middle East said: "Health insurance has been considered a major growth opportunity for RSA Middle East, as it is the fastest-growing product line and by far the largest when compared to non-life and life insurance. To tap into that, we needed a partner with experience in the health space and deep knowledge of the Middle East region". He added, "This



Adnan Bogary

strategic agreement will foster strong partnership between NLGIC and our RSA Middle East shareholders and will pave the way for developing a diversified portfolio, as well as regional scale-up. We look forward to taking this business to new heights with our new partners".

Given RSA Middle East's strong customer base and solid business track record in the region, the transaction will help NLGIC grow its insurance business by optimizing operations in the Sultanate of Oman and in the United Arab Emirates while gaining access to a larger market in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The combined business of NLGIC and RSA Middle East will create incremental value for all stakeholders. In addition, it will create a full-fledge well-diversified insurance player, offering a broad array of insurance products and services to individual and corporate customers in Oman, KSA, UAE, Kuwait, and Bahrain.

The agreement will help both entities reach new markets, seek top-line growth opportunities, rationalize cost, cross-sell products, implement top-notch technologies and innovations, and complement each other's business offerings in the region, which will add tremendous value to the customers and fuel business growth.

The transaction is expected to be completed swiftly post relevant approvals.

It is worth mentioning that RSA Middle East is a leading provider of property and casualty insurance in the Middle East. It offers solutions for both commercial and retail clients, across a range of product lines, including motor, property, medical, SME as well as tailored solutions for large corporates. It has operated in the region for over 50 years, bringing best-in-class international solutions and expertise to the Middle East. RSA Middle East is a joint venture formed by RSA Insurance Group plc, with majority shareholding, and regional shareholders in the Middle East. It has operations in Bahrain, UAE, Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sohar Islamic opens first Islamic bank in Musandam

MUSCAT: In line with the bank's ongoing organic expansion strategy to serve customers and achieve further financial inclusion, Sohar Islamic - Sohar International's Islamic Window commenced operations at its new branch in Khasab, making it the very first Islamic bank in the Governorate of Musandam.



Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at Sohar International said, "The city of Khasab occupies an important position on the geographic map and continues to witness developments. As the first Islamic bank branch in the region, we seek to support the local community by actively promoting the benefits of Sharia-compliant financing, and serve customers in this part of the Sultanate of Oman. Our focus is to be able to capitalise on the socio-economic growth that is being witnessed in the region, by playing the role of a catalyst and key enabler of this growth through progressive Islamic banking solutions.

While digitalisation continues to be a strategic approach for the bank, we strongly believe in being able to service our customers through physical premises. This helps us in building stronger bonds and better understand our customers in order to provide tailor-made Sharia-compliant solutions to them. The new branch will uphold Sohar Islamic's values of customer-centricity, operational efficiency and strong adherence to global Islamic banking norms."

Ministry of Labour, Bank Nizwa sign pact to support Sahim programme

MUSCAT: Demonstrating cohesion with Ministry of Labour's ongoing efforts to facilitate job-seekers and fresh graduates with temporary work permits under the 'Sahim' programme, Bank Nizwa, Oman's most trusted Islamic Bank, has signed an agreement to back beneficiaries of 'Sahim' with a comprehensive set of Sharia-compliant banking services specially designed for this category.

The agreement was recently signed at Bank Nizwa headquarters by Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa and Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development. In accordance with the agreement, Bank Nizwa will provide timely and relevant Islamic finance options including financing facilities and services, savings and Mudaraba investment accounts, credit cards and many other banking products, for job-seekers and fresh graduates making their entry into the competitive employment market.

Developing strategic approach to regulating the labour market



and upgrade the ratio of national work force in both public and private sectors in order to promote its role in supporting the national economy, the Ministry of Labour launches the 'Sahim' programme to target the job-seekers and fresh graduates by providing them with a temporary work contract in different segments; both government and private sector, enabling them to achieve their institutional goals.

This programme comes in line with Oman Vision 2040 to empower the national cadres to fulfil the requirements of the labour market by spreading the culture of temporary work

and flexible working hours and consolidating this culture of work in the community. The 'Sahim' programme will not only provide job opportunities for Omanis graduates, but it also supports overall economic growth of the Sultanate of Oman and improve living standards of individuals across the country.

Speaking on the sidelines of the agreement Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa said, "Our aim is to empower Oman's workforce with relevant financial assistance to help them take confident strides in their careers. Youth are the fulcrum of our society; they are the leaders of tomorrow. As new

employees, they require financial support to boldly carve their niche in the market, and, through this agreement, we want to assure them of our continuous support to help them grow and build their careers. As pioneers in the Islamic banking sector, we have, time and again, demonstrated our dedicated support for local communities through innovative products and services that help us march towards the inspiring Oman Vision 2040. We will continue to invest in the welfare of the community and meet the expectations of our government."

One of the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 is to foster a favourable environment to attract talented youth into the labour market. While the National Employment Programme, which stems from the guidelines prescribed under the Vision, is aiding the government in filling the labour market with qualified and skilled national workforce, Labour Ministry, with the support of private organisations, continues to introduce specific initiatives to meet the set target of employing 85% job-seekers by 2022.

Toyota Yaris with biggest excitement benefits

MUSCAT: The Toyota Yaris is available with exclusive benefits like service 2 years/20,000 kms, (Whichever is earlier) and 1 year insurance or cash gift in lieu of insurance RO 125. The campaign is valid until May 19, 2022. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details.

The Toyota Yaris, one of the most popular sedans, is exciting and rewarding to own and enjoy. Equipped with impressive power, fuel-efficiency, features and more, the Yaris a great choice for those looking for a mid-size sedan. Delivering a dynamic driving experience, the Yaris sedan and Yaris Hatchback is equipped with 1.5L engine. The 1.5-Litre



four-cylinder engine can churn out a maximum output of 106 hp and 14.3 kg-m of torque and is mated to the CVT transmission to offer a smooth shifting experience with excellent fuel efficiency.

Cutting-edge design defines the exterior of the Yaris, with its dynamic angles as well as sleek headlamps and clearance lamps. The front of the Yaris has a horizontal grille for a wider yet

more aerodynamic appearance, while rear combination taillights adorn the rear of the car with a unique look.

The Yaris hatchback is adorned with a stylish radiator grille, colour keyed front and rear bumpers, 14" steel wheels, Halogen headlamps, rear combination lamps, stylish shark fin antenna, high mount stop lamp, sporty lower radiator grille in the front.

With an exciting interior featuring a distinctive design, and offering convenience and comfort with a layer of luxury, the Yaris sedan's cabin has an exclusive profile.

The centre console of the Yaris has been designed to create a greater sense of integration. The cabin has been adorned with a range of enhanced features, including keyless entry, cruise control, as well as a four-speaker audio system with AUX and USB.

For the latest press releases, test drive requests and more, please visit www.toyotaoman.com, www.youtube.com/toyotaoman, www.facebook.com/toyotaoman and instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/. For any further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota showroom.

Oman Cables CEO receives leadership award

MUSCAT: Oman Cables Industry SAOG, Oman's leading manufacturers of industrial cables, made its presence felt significantly at the 10th edition of Oman Forum 2022 where its Chief Executive Officer Cinzia Farisè received the 'Sustainability Leadership in Manufacturing' award.

While Sustainability Awards are aimed at honouring exemplary leaders in Oman with extraordinary accomplishments in areas of social, economic and environment sustainability, the award will further drive Oman Cables' sustainable growth which augurs well with Oman Vision 2040 and the national priorities towards a safe, socially responsible and well-preserved environment, with effective and balanced ecosystems and renewable resources.



Cinzia Farisè, who is also CEO at Prysmian Group MEAT Region, said, "The award is a recognition of our role in preserving the environment and reducing human impact on biodiversity which has clearly been detrimental to it. It also shows how committed we are in reinforcing our business model to integrate economic, social and environmental responsibility in all aspects of our activities while creating value for the community and the entire ecosystem."

Meethaq extends support to Siraj Education Endowment Foundation

MUSCAT: In line with its pioneering role in providing Islamic financial services and products in the Sultanate of Oman, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has extended its support to Siraj Education Endowment Foundation.

Under the terms of the partnership, Meethaq will provide the necessary facilities for collecting contributions, donations and aid from the public through its various channels including its large network of branches, ATMs, CDMs and FFM as well as Internet and Mobile Banking platforms. The partnership will further enhance Meethaq's role in Public-Private Partnership in various fields and sectors.

Since its inception in 2019,

the Siraj Education Endowment Foundation has been working tirelessly to achieve its goals, including the development of a Waqf to support and sponsor educational programmes and supporting talented students in need, through mobilising public donations.

Siraj also focuses on enhancing social solidarity by spreading awareness about the importance of educational Waqf. The donations to the Siraj Education Endowment Foundation can be made through Meethaq account 0631500571440001 by both the bank's customers and the general public through branches and various e-channels.

Meethaq will implement a special awareness campaign to reach out to its customers and the



general public through various media channels including radio and social media, text messages, emails and social messages on ATMs and CDMs.

On this occasion, Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Siraj Education



Endowment Foundation, said: "We are delighted with the strong support and partnership that Meethaq Islamic Banking has extended to the Siraj Education Endowment Foundation.

Innovative products and services are required to meet the evolving needs of the public, including utilisation of Waqf in compliance with Sharia laws. Meethaq's partnership will enable Siraj to assist talented

Omani students from social welfare families and students with disabilities to complete their higher studies and contribute to Omani society to the best of their abilities.

The institution focuses on contributing towards the development of education, financing scientific research and innovation and enhancing the quality of education at different levels, which is very much in line with the strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Shaikh Waleed al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat, said: "We are pleased to partner with the Siraj Education Endowment Foundation so as to provide facilities that will support the development of a Waqf that contributes to higher education,

scientific research and innovation in the Sultanate of Oman. This will be particularly helpful for talented students who require financial support to achieve their goal of contributing to the National Economy through effective participation in the job market.

As the pioneer of Islamic banking in the Sultanate of Oman, Meethaq is always keen to strengthen its partnership with government institutions and corporates in Oman to provide the services and facilities, which are compliant and in accordance with the principles of Islamic Sharia.

We wish Siraj all the success in achieving their worthy goals, and request everyone to contribute to the success of the Foundation through their valuable donations and support."

Asyad Group invests in cold chain ecosystem

INTEGRATED LOGISTICS: Cold chain solutions to minimise the current 35-45 per cent loss of different types of perishable goods

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

As part of its plan for expanding cold chain logistics services in the Sultanate of Oman, Asyad announced the acquisition of 100 per cent stake of Al Ameen Stores and Refrigeration Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Oman Fisheries Company, as well as its assets in a deal worth RO 3.1 million.

By expanding its assets in the cold chain and storage sector, Asyad Group aims to provide fully integrated supply and logistics services in the Sultanate of Oman and upgrade foodstuff preservation and refrigeration



specifications which will effectively reduce local production loss and waste rates.

Such enhanced cold storage capabilities will also add value to local products to become export-ready and improve capacities to re-export imported goods by

obtaining international quality certifications.

Additionally, this step will transform the Sultanate of Oman into a cold chain logistics hub for regional and global markets. Asyad Group hopes to utilise this deal at a time of increasing need

for reliable logistics solutions to strengthen priority industries, such as fisheries, food and pharmaceuticals industries, identified in Oman Vision 2040 as enablers of economic diversification and job creation for Omanis.

Providing such solutions will minimise the current 35-45 per cent loss of different types of perishable goods.

Asyad plans to provide world-class cold chain solutions in the Sultanate of Oman and to attract investments by major multinational corporations and introduce the best international practices, which will boost operational performance and provide more business opportunities, especially for small and medium enterprises.

In this regard, Asyad sets to engage and enhance the contribution of Omani private companies in developing the refrigerated warehousing and transportation sectors, by organising their business and helping them handle larger volumes of various fresh consumables and perishables during transportation, to maintain the products' high quality on delivery.

The group will also help companies comply with cold chain international standards to enable domestic goods, foodstuff and re-exports to reach global markets.

In addition to improving processes and optimising investment in the cold storage sector of fresh consumables and perishable goods, Asyad group understands the significance of data centralisation and analysis to ensure proper support to national research centres and adaptation to new and projected market trends.

Asyad Group, the integrated logistics group in the Middle East providing services across ports, freezones and shipping, was established in 2016 to maximise the financial returns and economic impact of government logistics investments. Asyad has been tasked by the government to supervise the implementation of the Sultanate of Oman Logistics Strategy 2040 (SOLS 2040).

Top Omani brands felicitated in an awards ceremony

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik al Said, the top Omani brands were felicitated in a gala evening hosted by Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Mashani on March 30, at Al Bustan Palace – A Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

TM Done got the coveted 'Brand of the Year' Award. The notable winners in different categories for Top Omani Brands included Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Omantel, Shell V-Power, Khedmah, ahlibank, Bank Dhofar, Bank Nizwa, National Finance, National Life & General Insurance and United Securities.

The other winners included Global Education Services Company, Tibiaan Properties, Bahar, Dahabi, Mazoon Dairy, A'Saffa Foods, Amouage, Al Bustan Palace – A Ritz Carlton Hotel, Global Phone Technology (GPT), German University of Technology (GUtech), G u l f C y b e r T e c h

E-Solutions, Oman Refreshment Company and Techno Plastic Industry.

The event was organised by United Media Services (UMS). The winning brands were selected as per a survey of the top Omani brands done by Alam Al-Iktisaad in partnership with Arabian Research Bureau. The top Omani brands trusted and preferred by the consumers across industry segments included banking, luxury, food & beverages, manufacturing, lifestyle, insurance, e-commerce, corporate, education, finance, technology, telecom, hospitality, digital payments, mobile retail, real estate and fuel, etc.

The event was attended by top business owners, C-suite executives and heads of brand, marketing & communication from leading companies in Oman. The event was supported by Khedmah, United GCC Fund, United Securities, Arabian Research Bureau and UMS Digital.

Lulu Financial Group head receives Bahrain Golden Visa



MANAMA: Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director of Lulu Financial Group, has received the Bahrain golden residency visa. Adeeb Ahamed was awarded the honour by HE Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister of Bahrain.

"I am humbled and delighted to receive this honour today. I thank His Majesty King Hamad bin Eisa al Khalifa, His Royal Highness Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain and the government and people of Bahrain, for bestowing this recognition on me", Adeeb Ahamed said, after receiving his Golden Visa.

Launched in February this year, the Golden residency visa for non-Bahrainis is part of the country's economic recovery plan to attract global talent and boost investment to Bahrain. "The Golden Visa is a benchmark of recognition that will boost Bahrain's image as a business hub, in traditional and new-age sectors", Adeeb added.

Port of Salalah takes delivery of three mobile harbour cranes

Added capabilities: New hardware to improve the service capabilities of its General Cargo operations

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

Port of Salalah has taken delivery of three mobile harbour cranes to boost its general cargo handling capabilities. The new state-of-the-art Liebherr equipment will improve the productivity of its dry bulk and bagged operations significantly.

While the two cranes, one LHM600 and LHM180, are operational, the third one (LHM600) is expected to arrive by end of April 2022. These investments are part of its strategic initiatives to increase capacity and improve efficiencies to meet the market growth demands.

Each LHM600 is fitted with large grab to allow for a thousand tonnes per hour productivity. With an outreach of up to 58 metres, this equipment is the ideal handling solution for ships up to New-Panamax size thereby reducing the unit cost for exporters.

In 2021, the General Cargo



Terminal of Port of Salalah handled 16.9 million tonnes of cargo, up from 15.8 million tonnes in 2020. The General Cargo throughput in Port of Salalah has been growing at a year-to-year growth of around 15 per cent since 2000. Gypsum remains to be the most dominant dry bulk cargo handled. Oman's gypsum export through Port of Salalah have also grown at a phenomenal pace, with volumes rising from 0.3 million tonnes in 2010 to around 9 million tonnes in 2021 corresponding to a 30-fold increase in just ten years.

Further, the Sultanate of Oman is predicted to become the single most important gypsum source in Asia supplying 250Mt out of a total supply of 360Mt in the period

2016-2030, according to a recent study.

"Our current and ongoing investments demonstrate our long-term commitment to meet the growing market demands at the same time improving the competitiveness of Omani exports through efficient operations. The three new mobile harbour cranes coupled with our ability to handle bigger vessels will certainly make a significant difference in this direction", said Mark Hardiman, CEO, Port of Salalah.

"We are extremely excited at the new addition to our equipment fleet which will help improve our operational efficiency and enhance our cargo handling capacity", added Ahmed Qatan COO, General Cargo Terminal, Port of Salalah.

Omani app Jahezlee makes food pre-ordering a breeze

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

Imagine placing your order at your favourite restaurant only to be informed that your order will take 20-30 minutes to materialise because of the rush of customers? Now a young Omani entrepreneur has come up with an app that allows you to pre-order your choice of dishes so that, by the time you arrive at the eatery, your order is ready to be served.

'Jehezlee', which simply means "Make it ready for me", has been launched by Sameh Sinani to

much excitement among food-lovers in the Sultanate of Oman.

A young Omani entrepreneur has rolled out an app that helps you pre-order your choice of dishes at your favourite restaurant so they are ready for dining in or takeaway as soon as you reach the outlet "Jahezlee is an application helps you order food at your choice of diner or beverage at your local café. You can pay online and either collect the order as a takeaway when you reach the outlet or enjoy it as a dine-in customer.

The most important thing is with Jahezlee, you don't have



to wait while the order is being prepared. It's ready for takeaway or dine-in when you arrive at the outlet", Sameh explained.

As for the genesis of this app, the young Omani says it all began by chance.

"On one occasion I found

myself waiting for a long time for the order to be ready. Spending 20 to 50 minutes for a relatively simple order from your favourite restaurant is a common enough problem. But with a bit of Information Technology, it is possible to get around this problem".

Delivery is not yet part of the app's features, but is proposed to be added in the second quarter of this year when Jahezlee is ramped up. Importantly, as a gesture to small family-owned businesses, Jahezlee plans to offer them free registration to use the app to promote

their products and services. Hypermarkets will be added to the app to open up this concept to larger numbers of customers. But Jahezlee is not without its share of challenges, says the app's founder.

"As with any other business, there are challenges. For us, it has to be updating the app's features and functionality based on user and restaurant feedback. We have done a lot of modifications to help improve the app." Going forward, Sameh is hopeful that investors will step in and drive the growth of this increasingly popular app.

Putin reminds the world he still wields a powerful economic weapon

PATRICIA COHEN

In the five weeks since Russia invaded Ukraine, the United States, the European Union and their allies began an economic counteroffensive that has cut off Russia's access to hundreds of billions of dollars of its own money and halted a large chunk of its international commerce. More than 1,000 companies, organizations and individuals, including members of President Vladimir Putin's inner circle, have been sanctioned and relegated to a financial limbo.

But Putin reminded the world this past week that he has economic weapons of his own that he could use to inflict some pain or fend off attacks.

Through a series of aggressive measures taken by the Russian government and its central bank, the ruble, which had lost nearly half of its value, clawed its way back to near where it was before the invasion.

And then there was the threat to stop the flow of gas from Russia to Europe — which was set off by Putin's demand that 48 “unfriendly countries” violate their own sanctions and pay for natural gas in rubles.

It sent leaders in the capitals of Germany, Italy and other allied nations scrambling and showcased in the most visible way since the war began how much they need Russian energy to power their economies.

It was that dependency that caused the United States and Europe to exempt fuel purchases from the stringent sanctions they imposed on Russia at the start of the war.

The EU gets 40 per cent of its gas and one-quarter of its oil from Russia. A cutoff from one day to the next, Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany warned this past week, would plunge “our country and the whole of Europe into a recession.”

For the time being, it appears that the prospect of an imminent stoppage of gas has been averted. But Putin's sudden demand for rubles helped prompt Germany and Austria to prepare their citizens for what might come. They took the first official steps toward rationing, with Berlin starting the “early warning” phase of planning for a natural gas emergency.

Although President Joe Biden has announced plans to release 180 million barrels of oil from the US reserve supply over the next six months and diverted more liquefied natural gas to Europe, that still would not be enough to replace all of



The EU gets 40 per cent of its gas and one-quarter of its oil from Russia.

what Russia supplies. Russian oil exports normally represent more than 1 of every 10 barrels the world consumes.

Europe's ongoing energy purchases send as much as \$850 million each day into Russia's coffers, according to Bruegel, an economics institute in Brussels. That money helps Russia to fund its war efforts and blunts the effect of sanctions. Because of soaring energy prices, gas export revenues from Gazprom, the Russian energy giant, injected \$9.3 billion into the country's economy in March alone, according to an estimate by Oxford Economics, a global advisory firm.

“The lesson for the West is that the effectiveness of financial sanctions can only go so far absent trade sanctions,” the firm said in a research briefing.

Security concerns aren't the only development that has undermined Russia's standing as a long-term energy supplier. What seemed surprising to economists, lawyers and policymakers about Putin's demand to be paid in rubles was that it would have violated sacrosanct negotiated contracts and revealed Russia's willingness to be an unreliable business partner.

As he has tried to wield his energy clout externally, Putin has taken steps to insulate Russia's economy from the effect of sanctions and to prop up the ruble. Few things can undermine a country as systemically as an abruptly weakened currency.

When the allies froze the assets of the Russian central bank and sent the ruble into a downward spiral, the bank increased the interest rate to 20 per cent, while the government mandated that companies convert 80 per cent of the dollars, euros and other foreign currencies they earn into rubles to increase demand and drive up the price.

That has revived the value of the ruble, but as several analysts have pointed out, the currency's newfound stability has come not because the marketplace suddenly found faith in the Russian economy but because of the extraordinary government interventions.

Aside from currency woes, Russia is struggling economically in other ways.

The country is already facing a deep recession, and several analysts estimate that the economy could shrink by as much as 20 per cent this year. An S&P Global

survey of purchasing managers at Russian manufacturing companies showed severe declines in production, employment and new orders in March, as well as sharp price increases.

In a matter of weeks, Putin undercut business and trade ties between Russia and more wealthy economies that took decades to build after the demise of the Soviet Union.

By one estimate, some 500 foreign companies have pulled up stakes in Russia, scaled back operations and investment, or pledged to do so.

“Russia does not have the capabilities to replicate domestically the technology that it would otherwise have gained from overseas,” according to an analysis by Capital Economics, a research group based in London. That is not a good sign for increasing productivity, which even before the war, was only 35 per cent to 40 per cent of the United States'.

The result is that however the war in Ukraine ends, Russia will be more economically isolated than it has been in decades, diminishing whatever leverage it now has over the global economy as well as its own economic prospects.

Europe's ongoing energy purchases send as much as \$850 million each day into Russia's coffers. That money helps Russia to fund its war efforts and blunts the effect of sanctions.

BRUEGEL
ECONOMICS INSTITUTE IN BRUSSELS

More nations join US in releasing emergency oil reserves

STANLEY REED

The International Energy Agency said that its 31 member nations had agreed to a new release of emergency oil reserves in what is turning into a historic, wide-reaching effort to calm global markets roiled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

A day earlier, the Biden administration announced a 180-million-barrel release over six months from the strategic reserve held by the United States. These efforts are aimed at compensating for the oil production expected to be curbed by sanctions on Russia and buyers who are shying away from Russian petroleum.

“This morning, over 30 countries from across the world convened in an extraordinary meeting and agreed to the release of tens of millions of additional barrels of oil onto the market,” President Joe Biden said at a news conference.

The agency, which is based in Paris, did not say how much oil would be released. It said more details will come next week.

The United States and the IEA have been unusually aggressive in trying to control the disruptive impact that the war in Ukraine and the sanctions on Russia have

The United States and the IEA have been unusually aggressive in trying to control the disruptive impact that the war in Ukraine and the sanctions on Russia have begun to have on the global economy and consumers in the United States facing escalating gasoline prices.

begun to have on the global economy and consumers in the United States facing escalating gasoline prices. The meeting was led by US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm.

The announcement is the agency's fifth emergency release of oil in its 48-year history and comes only about a month after a release of 63 million barrels. The agency appears to be working closely with the United States under its executive director, Fatih Birol, who was recently appointed to a third term. Birol has held the post since 2015.

The IEA warned about the dangers of disruption to global oil markets posed by the outsized role that Russia plays as the world's third-largest producer and largest exporter.

The agency issued a statement saying the war in Ukraine is putting “significant strains on global oil markets.” Storage tank farms are at eight-year lows, and the agency said oil producers had a “limited ability” to add supply in the short term.

At a meeting, the Opec+ group of producers declined to add more than a modest amount of oil to the market. Two members of the group, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, are believed to have the

ability to produce substantial amounts of additional oil but have so far declined to do so, blaming “geopolitics” rather than shortfalls of oil for volatile prices.

Analysts at Goldman Sachs said in a note to clients that the deluge of oil from the strategic reserves would “help the oil market rebalancing in 2022” and potentially ease the need for “demand destruction” or reduced economic activity to bring consumption in line with lower supplies.

Brent crude, the international bench mark, fell about 0.25 per cent on Friday to \$104.40 a barrel. West Texas Intermediate, the US standard, fell nearly 1 per cent to \$99.40 a barrel.

The analysts also said there were risks associated with the reserve releases, including potential logistical bottlenecks for oil that is trying to reach refineries and terminals in the United States. The releases might also discourage potential growth in shale oil production in the United States, the analysts said.

The swinging prices of recent weeks and uncertainties over the outcome of the war in Ukraine, all surrounding a potential deal that might allow Iran to sell more oil, may combine to discourage investments by oil producers, the analysts suggested.

Classifieds

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By Kabeer Yousuf

Islamic way of fasting for thirty days, keeping oneself away from food, water and material pleasures of life for a whole month, engaging oneself in charity and other good deeds for himself or herself, for the family and society, and getting closer to the Creator is truly unleashing a plethora of benefits according to not just the believers, but in the words of medical professionals and other scholars as well.

A gamut of physical and spiritual reasons is behind the one-month-long fasting by Muslims across the globe although there may be likely ailments such as headache, abdominal pain or acidity and mood swings.

The holy Quran says: "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may attain "Taqwa" (God-consciousness, Self-restraint, God-fearing, Guarding against evil) (2:183).

The basic lesson that fasting teaches to the rich and those who never experienced deprivation of

material things in life is being given a unique opportunity to discover the hardship imposed on poor, needy and downtrodden people through fasting.

"A whole lot of health and mental benefits are awaiting the fasting people," says Dr Parvez Zarif, specialist of internal medicine at the AdLife Hospital.

"They include boosting cognitive performance, protection from obesity and associated chronic diseases, reduction in inflammation, reducing the risk of metabolic disease, lowers cholesterol, supports weight loss and results in the improvement in overall fitness," said Dr Zarif.

However, mental health awareness is one of the most pressing issues we face in the healthcare industry and society as a whole today, as far as other medical specialists are concerned. For these specialists, the fasting period is also an excellent opportunity for us to reflect on ourselves, express our gratitude for what we have, and observe self-control by kicking the bad habits and helping the poor, just as the canons of Ramadhan imply.

"The holy month of Ramadhan is a great opportunity to build stronger

relationships with our loved ones. Sharing food, praying together, and distributing food among other things not only helps us feel good but also aids in achieving inner peace. This is the best time to meet people, talk, share our feelings, and resolve issues which in turn will help in mitigating the occurrence of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues," says Dr Zaheerudeen Mohamed, Medical Director, Al Hayat International Hospital.

"People who spend quality time together, inevitably influence each other's lives and behaviour. The chances of picking up positive vibes and habits increase dramatically with spending more time with our loved ones, be it, friends or family," he adds.

SOME OF THE BONUS BENEFITS OF FASTING ARE:

1) Fasting in the holy month of Ramadhan can be utilised to quit some bad habits. If a person can abstain from smoking cigarettes from dawn to dusk for 30 days, chances are soon he can easily kick the habit from life forever

2) For alcoholics, they can abstain



from drinking alcohol from dawn to dusk, they can easily say goodbye to the habit. All intoxicants are forbidden in Islam

3) Fasting gives rest to the body because, during fasting, Muslims abstain from food, drink, etc. during the daytime. While fasting, many organs of the body get rest, which is important for a better health

4) One of the medical benefits of fasting is that it increases intestinal absorption helping the digestive sys-

tem to work well, and

5) Fasting also lowers cholesterol levels, which prevents several cardiovascular diseases.

Islamic way of fasting is nothing but a process of cleansing our body from impurities while purifying our hearts and minds from all evil thoughts and desires. In conclusion, when someone is fasting, let all his senses - eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet fast with him in order to get both the physical and mental benefits.

QURAN

VERSE OF THE DAY

When there comes God's victory, and conquest. And you see the people entering God's religion in multitudes. Then celebrate the praise of your Lord, and seek His forgiveness. He is the Acceptor of Repentance.

(An-Nasr)



HIS EMINENCE
SHAIKH AHMED
BIN HAMAD AL KHALILI
GRAND MUFTI OF OMAN

FATWA

QUESTION:
An elderly sick, who is very poor, couldn't fast in the past two years and he is not able to feed others to compensate his lost fasting days during Ramadhan. What should he do?

ANSWER:
If he cannot feed people because of certain inability, Allah will forgive him. "Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear". (suras Al Baqarah/verse 286)

HADITH

A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Anas and Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with both of them, reported that the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: "None of you will attain perfect faith until I am more beloved to him than his child, his parent, and all people".

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



duchessofmuscat



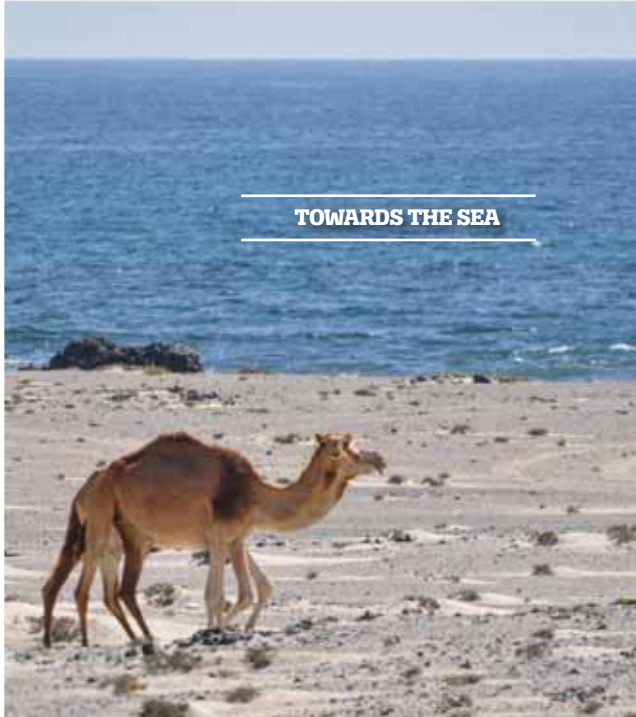
FINDING A POTTER



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BEHIND THE BUSH

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0

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AROUND THE WORLD

TRAVEL TALES

Celebrating timeless Maldivian Culture at Hukuru Ufaa



HUKURU UFAA, which means Friday Happiness in Dhivehi, is an inspiring art and craft extravaganza that unfolds under starry twilight skies — allowing guests to discover passionate stories of local craftsmen, soak in enchanting music performances and immerse in an elegant cultural experience that is distinctly Maldivian.

Ozen Reserve Bolifushi stays true to its brand promise of curating a melange of exceptional experiences rooted in indigenous culture with the soulful 'Hukuru Ufaa' launched on March 8, 2022.

Hukuru Ufaa offers an authentic glimpse into the Maldivian way of life. Every week on Friday evening, three different craftsmen are invited to the resort to participate in the elegant island bazaar, set to the backdrop of majestic sunset hues.

Peaceful poolside settings, charming displays of intricate jewellery, handloom, handicraft and free-flowing conversations with local artists evoke an indulgent bohemian vibe. Traditional motifs are highlighted throughout the experience. Dhoni-shaped display platforms and food stations mirroring Badhiges (traditional kitchens in the Maldives) transform the Ozar poolside deck and beach.

Guests can savour authentic Maldivian, Indian and Sri Lankan aperitifs as they walk around and appreciate the enchanting art displays. At the heart of this culinary experience is a Maldivian dish, a new one curated, executed and served by a local chef each week.

Craft comes alive at a live station, be it a potter at the wheel, a jewellery designer at work or a painter capturing the timeless lagoon views on canvas – guests have a lot to discover here. Live musical acts bring the local flavours of culture alive. Hukuru Ufaa is also conceived as a platform to support established and emerging Maldivian artists. It is their space to showcase traditional artisanal skills, sell their creations directly to travellers, and find the freedom to continually renew and innovate their craft.

Luisa Lalli, General Manager of Ozen Reserve Bolifushi, shared, "It is with the spirit of preserving Maldivian culture, that we launched our first Hukuru Ufaa event. Bolifushi Island offers an enriching island lifestyle. We seek to facilitate moments of connection with nature, people and culture that spark conversations and create deeper, more meaningful immersions into the destination. For a truly rewarding travel experience."

Soulful white sandy beaches surround Ozen Reserve Bolifushi, which can be reached via private luxury catamaran service in 20 minutes from Malé Airport. 90 stand-alone villas and reserves make up Ozen Reserve Bolifushi accommodation options.

CULTURE

Sweet smell of Ramadhan tempts as South Asia's Muslims fast



MOSQUES AND market streets teem with evening crowds tempted by the scent of syrupy sweets and hefty rice plates, as more than half a billion Muslims across southern Asia break the day's Ramadhan fast.

The Islamic holy month began over the weekend and during that time believers abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual relations between sunrise and sunset.

The fast is conceived as a spiritual struggle against the seduction of earthly pleasures — but for the nightly "iftar" meal, festive meals traditionally bring families together and there is intense social activity.

The centuries-old Chawk Bazaar market in Bangladesh is a traditional centre for evening meet-ups during Ramadhan, with hundreds of makeshift food stalls selling traditional grilled meats and delicacies.

Huge crowds returned to the neighbourhood on Sunday for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic put a pin in large public gatherings.

"I am so happy to see people here", said Ramzan Ali, who has sold barbequed quail at the market for around four decades. "The last two years were painful."

Traditional dishes of pakoras and lentil soup were on offer alongside more esoteric fare, like kebabs made from the meat of bull genitalia and the ever-popular fried goat brain served to accompany roast meats and vegetables.

"It felt so good to come here again", said businessman Mohammad Ashrafuddin.

"Without Chawk Bazaar's iftar items, I feel like my Ramadhan isn't complete."

Pakistan's Muslims are also basking in the opportunity to again break fast in company and out from under a Covid crowd, with the government lifting restrictions on public gatherings weeks earlier.

Mosques have been lit up with lanterns and nearby markets are bustling as crowds stop for fried sweet pastries and stock up on meals to distribute to the poor.

In India, crowds flock to stalls which line a street in the shadow of New Delhi's resplendent Jama Masjid, one of the country's largest houses of worship, snacking on wrinkled dates and seasonal sweet buns baked with infusions of coconut or cherries.

SUBDUED CELEBRATIONS

More subdued evening gatherings are under way in Afghanistan, where people are still reckoning with an acute humanitarian crisis in the wake of last year's US

withdrawal and the Taliban's return to power.

The most popular fast-breaking local dish is Kabuli pulao — rice sprinkled with saffron and mixed with dry fruits, especially black raisins.

Special spicy pickles and jalebis — a calorific sphere of deep-fried batter soaked in sugary syrup — are also relished by families during their evening meals after breaking the dawn-to-dusk fast.

But many have been forced to keep their purchases to a bare minimum this year on account of the country's food shortage.

"For the first time I'm seeing that food prices have risen so much in Ramadhan", Kabul resident Shahbuddin told AFP on the weekend.

"People were expecting that in an Islamic country prices would drop during Ramadhan, but that has not happened."

Islam is the second-largest religion in South Asia after Hinduism, and the region is home to around a third of the faith's adherents.

Ramadhan is sacred to Muslims because tradition says the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad during that month.

The global observance draws to a close with the Eid al Fitr festival, a celebration marked with prayers and feasts. — AFP

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

There's a Silver Pen in our Hands

THE FOLLOWING is an English translation of an excerpt from "A Soldier from Oman: Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid al Kalbani

Our excitement with Wadema

In our school days, we would occasionally go on a picnic known as wadema. As and when decided by the "teacher", we would go either to a valley or a farm irrigated by a well. Every student would bring some food. Occasionally, we would go out if someone finished reading the Quran. Relishing our out-of-school activities, either on foot or riding donkeys, we would escape by soaking up the beauties of nature, swimming in valleys. It seems that the teacher had an insight into the importance of such activities for the emotional needs of his schoolchildren.

Once on such a picnic in a farm called Tawai al Mihna, we had all we needed except for water. The plan was we would take water from a well in the farm itself. One of us saw a huge snake on a stone in the well. My friends screamed out my name, as I had an old gun, known locally as tafaq. I ran towards the well and took aim at the snake. In matter of seconds it split into two, falling into the well and polluting its water with blood and perhaps even with poison. In a spirit of joy we left that well and started looking for another farm. I must say, being the one who hunted the snake, I was the happiest of all; indeed, I was thrilled as I had succeeded with the first shot.

I took pride into the story as the news spread in our village. My skill in shooting was partly because the gun was almost always something of a companion for me. We all used to enjoy hunting birds with a gun known locally as saktun.

CHANTING FOR BIG EID'S MOON.

From the first day of the Big Eid till the tenth, we used to go around our village chanting religious songs. One would sing and the others repeat in chorus. Here's a part of one such songs:

Praise and Glory to Allah - We seek refuge from Satan.
Praise and Glory to Allah - We start with His name.
Praise and Glory to Allah - We enter the last days of the Big Eid.
Praise and Glory to Allah - We sing to Allah's glory in these days.
Praise and Glory to Allah - We pass by the furnace.
Praise and Glory to Allah - He who joins not is as cowardly as a kitten.

THE ALTAMEENA CHANT

Altameena was a chant we

recited on the completion of the reading of the Quran or often rehearsed on religious occasions. Though it varied according to the individual teacher and place, its meaning was more or less constant. All the children repeated "Amen" at the end of each and every stanza:

Glory to God who guided us
To the Straight Path.
Glory to God, worthy of praise,
Virtue prevailed,
Prayers concluded,
Upon the Hashemite Prophet.

This lad both read and wrote
Learnt rhetoric and letters
You fulfilled your duty
O the son of the most honourable Arabs

With generosity
Strew money and gold
God gives, God bestows.

The teacher taught me
With love and care
He made me repeat, he made me rehearse.
I learnt from a grand book
May God bestow upon you Eden
And hew for you buildings.
Never forget the ink and ink pot
With them you shall remain in Paradise with nymphs.
Some chants were sung in chorus before the end of the lessons:

No god but Allah
Muhammad is Allah's prophet
God be merciful to the teacher.
There's a silver pen in our hands

We write God's verses
May God damn Satan.
Such chants we would joyfully sing, heralding our departure to home.

We started praying approximately at the age of 12. At pains to teach us how to pray, both our parents and those who brought us up would watch us rather strictly. If they sensed any negligence from our part, they would punish us by beating us with a stick. Our fathers would take us to the mosque to perform our five prayers, including even dawn prayers.

After I finished reading the Quran, my tameena was something of a graduation ceremony, but it also meant new responsibilities. I had no choice but to devote my time helping my father in the farm. I had to plant garlic, onion and herbs, cultivate date palms and lemons, raise cattle and harvest honey. I should also mention that it was my brother and friend Salim bin Mohammed al Kalbani who taught me how to find honey.

To be continued...



Duende: Exploring the harmony of abstract art and nature at Bait Al Muzna

By Yeru Ebuon

It's easy to see that the 'Duende' exhibition currently taking place at Bait Al Muzna is a journey towards the innermost thoughts and love for nature of two self-aware and consistently evolving artists.

Numerous clues lead to this conclusion. The jars of broken shells sporadically scattered at the reception hall, the baskets of bleached corals peppering the hallways, the grains of sands in some of the artworks and the collection of art from Anna Dudchenko and Alma de Ville not only remind you of an abstract rendition of beaches and mountains, in many of them, particularly with Alma's work, nature also makes up the art.

At first glance, the artworks look simplistic. To an untrained eye, one would say some are just glazed lines and symmetrical and asymmetrical debris collected and pasted together to form a protruding figure on canvas. For this exhibit, however, the devil is in the details and it's only upon closer inspection that one will notice the stroke of genius to all of the pieces hanging on the walls.

De Ville explained it best when she said, "To achieve that simplicity, you have to go through a process where you eliminate all the options that are cluttering and making the artwork clumsy to arrive at something that looks harmonious."

De Ville was born in rural Bosnia, and for a time, was based in the UK before moving to Oman in 2010. Dudchenko, on the other hand, is an established art heavyweight having been in the Sultanate of Oman since 1999. De Ville has a BA (Hons) degree in Interior Design and Technology while Dudchenko not only has a Masters's degree in English Linguistics, she also has Masters in Fine Arts and Art History.

Both women love nature and they can go on for hours talking about the place that definitely has become their second home.

Duende officially opened

on March 27, to what Alma would refer to as a success and an intimate affair joined by amazing people who allowed for a free flow of ideas and conversations.

She also said that the name of the exhibition was inspired by a Spanish term that refers to a heightened state of emotion, expression and authenticity.

"It's when you see something that before your brain has time to rationalise and think, you already let out a gasp. It's that moment that you let out a gasp that we are trying to capture in Duende", she said.

As to how the partnership came together, both artists explained that they respect each other's work.

"Anna is an amazing artist. She has gone through different styles as an artist, and so did I. Every couple of years, she does something totally different. We share this passion for enjoying our time expressing our art in whatever genre or format that feels right at the moment. She's currently at this stage where she has abstract works to showcase. They remind you a lot about things that you would see in nature for example a cut out of a mountain or the sediments on the beach. When contemplating an exhibit at Bait Al Muzna and with our work complementing each other, it was an easy decision to make", Alma said.

In addition, "My work has always been centred around environment-conscious and sustainable art. A lot of these materials I use were picked out on the beach but even the shells, I don't pick those that are not broken. What I use are the ones carried by the waves far from the shores and those that are already too broken for mother nature to recycle. I pick up the pieces that animals can no longer use and give them a new life", Alma explained.

Meanwhile, Anna shared that she had always been haunted by how humans are just but a grain of sand in the context of the vastness of the universe.

"Nature has always been an immense source of inspiration for me. When I walk on the beach and pick up shells and

pieces of driftwood or hike in the mountains and watch the sun disappear on the horizon, swim in the ocean or drive along the coastline, I always come across such unique places and landforms that make me want to stop and take a close look. When I take photos of these, the abstract forms later become part of the paintings", Anna added.

"This exhibition is a small effort to transfer a profound, mysterious sense of the beauty of the universe onto the canvas to make the viewer live in the moment, detached from the bothers of life. Some of the paintings might resemble aerial shots of the cliffs and rivers flowing between them, others – the geological formations found on the surface of the rocks and mountains, and a few might have some connection to the beach, but these are not specific places and landforms but rather feelings and emotions triggered by the wind, the waves, the sun, the clouds, the stars and the humble existence in this world", she shared.

As a follow-through, Alma explained that the majority of her work is a by-product of nature where she is giving new life to what nature no longer needs. Her 56 artwork is a mixture of using urchin pins and dried out shells strategically positioned on a canvas to reveal a bigger picture.

"The latest additions, those that I've worked on during the pandemic, surprisingly would actually remind you of a virus through its shape. When people come and visit, they would understand that art is a journey of discovery where, as an artist, I am discovering possibilities and the best things happen", she said.

To see how both artists masterfully showcased their skills, Duende will continue to be on show until the second week of May at Bait Al Muzna located near Al Alam Palace. The timing hour from Sunday to Thursday is 10 am to 3 pm. They are close on Friday and will be open from 10 am to 2:30 pm on Saturday.

You can follow Alma de Ville on Instagram @almadevilleart and Anna Dudchenko @annadudchenko55.

