

10% land reserved for SMEs in govt projects

Contribution of SMEs ranges between 25 and 26% or about RO8bn to GDP

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shuaili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, has issued Ministerial Decision No 90/2023 which grants small and medium enterprises (SMEs) right to use state-owned land.

The decision states that SMEs will be granted usufruct right to land owned by the state in accordance to provisions and controls of the Law Governing Usufruct Right of Land in Oman and its executive regulations.

According to the decision, the ministry will allocate SMEs no less than ten per cent of the land in commercial, industrial, agricultural and tourism projects ready for distribution under the usufruct system.

The ministry has set some conditions for owners of SMEs to benefit from the decision such as the enterprise must be wholly owned by an Omani citizen and the headquarters of the institution must be in Oman.

The decision also mandates that the owner of the enterprise must manage it on a full-time basis and is registered with the



The SME sector has stood out in the last few years as the key driver behind economic development in the sultanate

HAMAD AL RAHBI

Ministry of Labour as an employer.

The enterprise should also be registered with the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) and have a Riyadh card.

'The SME will have usufruct right to one plot of land only. Priority to enterprises will be based

on the nature and importance of the project and its economic feasibility, besides Omanisation rate,' ASMED stated.

The decision was welcomed by experts and owners of SMEs. Speaking to *Muscat Daily* Khalfan al Touqi, an economic analyst, said, "The sultanate now relies on SMEs to increase na-

tional income. The decision is important because it will help SMEs get stability, develop their projects and increase the national income."

He added that the contribution of SMEs to the GDP was about RO7bn or 24 per cent three years ago. "According to the latest statistics, the contribution now ranges between 25 and 26 per cent, equivalent to RO8bn."

Hamad al Rahbi, owner of an SME, said, "The SME sector has stood out in the last few years as the key driver behind economic development in the sultanate. So the decision will create an environment of stability and be a strong motivation for owners of small businesses to expand and create more job opportunities."

Another SME owner Nasser Selim said the decision will be an incentive for owners to adopt new strategies to develop their businesses, attract foreign investment and be creative in developing new projects that will contribute to the economic development of the country.

"The decision will also help SMEs that were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic," Rahbi added.

The total number of SMEs registered in the country till September 2022 was 210,877, while the number of SMEs registered with ASMED till December 2022 was 104,141.

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES UAE ENVOY



H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison H E Mohammed Nakhira al Dhaheri, Ambassador of UAE to Oman, on Monday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing these. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest (ONA)

Quarter of jobs expected to change in five years

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2023* released on Monday reveals that almost a quarter of jobs (23 per cent) are expected to change in the next five years.

According to the estimates of the 803 companies surveyed for the report, employers anticipate 69mn new jobs to be created and 83mn eliminated among the 673mn jobs corresponding to the dataset, a net decrease of 14mn jobs, or two per cent of current employment.

Macrotrends, including the green transition, ESG standards and localisation of supply chains are the leading drivers of job growth, with economic challenges including high inflation, slower economic growth and supply shortages posing the greatest threat, the report stated.

'Advancing technology adoption and increasing digitisation will cause significant labour market churn, with an overall net positive in job creation.'

"For people around the world, the past three years have been filled with upheaval and uncertainty for their lives and livelihoods, with COVID-19, geopolitical and economic shifts, and the rapid advancement of AI and other technologies now risks adding more uncertainty," said Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director of World Economic Forum.

"The good news is that there is a clear way forward to ensure resilience. Governments and businesses must invest in supporting the shift to the jobs of the future through education, reskilling and social support structures that can ensure individuals are at the heart of the fu-



JOBS GROWING FASTEST

- AI and machine learning specialists
- Sustainability specialists
- Business intelligence analysts
- Information security specialists
- Fintech engineers

per cent) in importance.

At the same time, the fastest declining roles are also being driven by technology and digitalisation, with clerical or secretarial roles including bank tellers, cashiers and data entry clerks expected to decline fastest.

Artificial intelligence, a key driver of potential algorithmic displacement, is expected to be adopted by nearly 75 per cent of surveyed companies and is expected to lead to high churn - with 50 per cent of organisations expecting it to create job growth and 25 per cent expecting it to create job losses.

However, the largest absolute gains in jobs will come from education and agriculture. The report finds that jobs in the education industry are expected to grow by about ten per cent, leading to 3mn additional jobs. Jobs for agricultural professionals, especially agricultural equipment operators, graders and sorters, are expected to see a 15 per cent to 30 per cent increase, leading to an additional 4mn jobs.

Reskilling revolution

Companies report that skills gaps and an inability to attract talent are the key barriers to transformation, showing a clear need for training and reskilling across industries. Six in ten workers will require training before 2027 but only half of employees are seen to have access to adequate training opportunities today. At the same time, the report estimates that, on average, 44 per cent of an individual worker's skills will need to be updated.

The most important skills for workers in 2023 are seen to be analytical thinking and creative thinking, and this is expected to remain so in the next five years.

► NEWS BRIEF

MOU INKED TO BOOST INBOUND TOURISM

Dubai, UAE - Visit Oman, the national travel operator and a subsidiary of Omran Group, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the UAE-based Cozmo Travel Company to develop inbound tourism.

The move aims to boost the number of tourists visiting Oman and to organise marketing campaigns and initiatives to promote Omani tourism destinations.

The MoU was signed on the sidelines of the Arabian Travel Market (ATM), being held in Dubai.

Oman, Lithuania explore business opportunities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the United Kingdom, in cooperation with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), organised the Omani-Lithuanian Business Forum in Muscat on Monday.

Headed by Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Board of Directors of OCCI, the forum sought to enhance economic and commercial cooperation with Lithuania.

The forum also aimed to develop and strengthen trade and investment relations between the sultanate and Lithuania, facilitate exchange of experiences between the two countries, and expand business bases on the two sides.

According to Ausrine Armonaite, Minister of Economy and Innovation of Lithuania, the forum was attended by 30 Lithuanian



(Supplied photo)

companies from various industries, including furniture manufacturing, real estate and tourism.

She informed that cooperation between the two countries will focus on technology and clean energy.

The Lithuanian delegation also met H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. "Fruitful meeting with Minister of Commerce Oman and Minister of Economy Lithuania

concentrating on life sciences, engineering, agriculture, renewable energy etc," H E Eitvydas Bajarunas, Ambassador of Lithuania to Oman, tweeted.

Sayyid Badr receives credentials

Earlier in the day, H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received a copy of credentials of Bajarunas, Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania appointed to the Sultanate of Oman.



MSX becomes GCC's worst performing market in April



UN says Sudan is at breaking point

Izki girls win prize for excellence in classical Arabic

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani students Sarah Saif al Rashdi and Fatima Saleh al Subaih won laurels for the sultanate by claiming the first place in an Arabic speaking competition in Egypt.

In a statement, the Ministry of Education said Sarah and Fatima from Izki, Dakhliah, won the first place in the competition for speaking classical Arabic and grammar, and poetry recitation.

'The annual competition aims



Sarah Saif al Rashdi and Fatima Saleh al Subaih

(Supplied photo)

to improve the proficiency of students in Arabic, more precisely aiming to improve their skills in four aspects of the language - listening, speaking, reading and writing - as well as encouraging and nurturing students in expressive poetry.'

Sarah said that she was happy with the win and thanked her teachers who trained her well to participate in the competition.

"The competition was not easy, but with our training, we were able to claim the first place," Fatima said.

Egypt releases Al Jazeera scribe after 4-year detention

Cairo, Egypt - Egyptian authorities have released Al Jazeera journalist Hisham Abdelaziz after he was held for almost four years in pre-trial detention.

Abdelaziz, an Egyptian journalist for the network's Mubasher channel, was released early on Monday, according to the network.

His family confirmed his release and said he was now at his family home in Cairo.

Abdelaziz was arrested in

June 2019 after he was stopped while travelling from Qatar, where he was based, to Cairo for a family visit. He was one of a number of Al Jazeera journalists to be detained in Egypt since the 2013 coup that overthrew President Mohamed Morsi.

His detention was repeatedly extended for what Al Jazeera had previously described as "baseless allegations" and led to deterioration in his health.

Agencies



On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am delighted to present ahlibank's unaudited interim financial statements for the three-month period ended March 31, 2023.

Despite the Muscat Stock Exchange listed Banks registering an outstanding 20.6% increase in total net profits by the close of 2022, the global financial sector began the first quarter of 2023 with uncertainty. The recent failures of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank in the USA, coupled with UBS Group AG's government-backed acquisition of Credit Suisse Group AG, have instilled apprehension in the market, posing potential risks to the banking sector worldwide.

Although Omani and other GCC banks boast robust fundamentals, marked by rising profitability, enhanced asset credit quality ratios, and fortified capital positioning, the upcoming months will present significant challenges. Fitch Solutions anticipates the Central Bank of Oman's policy rate to climb to 6% from the current 5.50% by year-end. However, the inflation rate is projected to slow to an average of 1.4%, down from last year's 2.8%.

As ahlibank transitions from a successful first quarter to a promising second, a sense of achievement prevails, not only for staying at the forefront of digital acceleration, but also for recommitting to exceptional customer service with the new state-of-the-art headquarters in Wattayah. This demonstrates the Bank's unwavering approach to business, ensuring it remains prepared for any global financial crisis with action plans grounded in innovative products and services.

The first quarter results, together with the ongoing strategic growth, reaffirm ahlibank's dedication to maintaining its customer-centric business model.

Financial Performance

ahlibank continues to grow steadily in terms of its asset portfolio and most of its key financial indicators, as shown below:

	31-Mar-23	31-Mar-22	Growth %
	RO Million		
Net Loans, Advances & Financing	2,571.7	2,435.9	5.6%
Customers' Deposits	2,339.7	2,180.1	7.3%
Total Assets	3,070.3	3,166.6	(3.0%)
Equity	448.8	419.3	7.0%
Operating Income	23.33	22.30	4.6%
Operating Expenses	10.16	9.72	(4.5%)
Profit for the Period	8.35	7.52	11.1%

The Bank's net loans, advances and financing as of March 31, 2023 grew by 5.6% to reach RO 2,571.7 million, in comparison to RO 2,435.9 during the corresponding period last year. Customer deposits as of March 31, 2023 increased by 7.3% to reach RO 2,339.7 million compared to RO 2,180.1 million last year. Operating income increased by 4.6% to reach RO 23.33 million for the three-month period ended March 31, 2023, and operating expenses increased by 4.5% to reach RO 10.16 million. Profit for the period increased by 11.1% to reach RO 8.35 million, in comparison to RO 7.52 million during the first quarter of last year, testifying the Bank's resilient growth and its relentless pursuit of excellence.

Highlights of Achievements

2023 marks the 15th anniversary of ahlibank's illustrious presence in the banking sector, and the first quarter showcased its strategic growth and fortified its standing as the country's top banking choice.

The grand opening of the new head office was the first quarter's crowning achievement. Every aspect of the new head office, from the architecture to the elegant interiors and exclusive lounges, underscores its mission to deliver unparalleled customer experiences.

ahlibank's primary objective has always been to address the unique needs of diverse customer segments and enhance the banking experiences for individual and corporate clients. A recent standout addition is the comprehensive Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) for Private Banking and Wealth Management customers, designed to guide them towards their long-term financial goals. Investors have readily embraced the plan, recognizing the value of investing in a variety of global mutual funds for a brighter future.

The introduction of A'maal, the SME Value Plus Account, is another triumph for ahlibank, reaffirming its commitment to ensuring customer satisfaction at all levels. This new account caters specifically to small and medium enterprises, offering financial solutions that boost business potential and foster new ventures

Wholesale Banking remains a powerful ally in supporting the government's Vision 2040. Most recently, ahlibank signed an agreement with International Sea Food Company to finance its Seafood Cannery and Processing Facility, reflecting its dedication to assisting both private and public sector enterprises that contribute to the government's economic diversification plan.

These recent milestones bear witness to ahlibank's strategic growth and unwavering dedication to meeting and surpassing customer expectations.

Corporate Social Responsibility

ahlibank's commitment to corporate social responsibility stems from a deep understanding of the needs of the community it serves. During the Holy month of Ramadan, the bank has contributed significantly by launching various programs that positively impact society, assisting families in need across the Sultanate, and promoting socio-economic development by supporting SMEs through a 3-day souq held at the Bank's premises.

Moreover, the Bank continues to collaborate with charities and non-government organizations to support causes that enrich society.

Looking Ahead

ahlibank has played a pivotal role in fostering financial inclusion in the country by introducing timely and relevant products and services that cater to the evolving needs of consumers from all walks of life. This focus will be further enhanced in the coming months as the bank explores local, regional, and global markets to assess changing trends and meet its customers' banking and financial needs.

The emphasis will remain on improving customers' everyday banking experiences and solidifying ahlibank's position as the country's most preferred bank. The bank will continue to explore new avenues for strengthening customer engagement and contributing to Oman Vision 2040.

Acknowledgments

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our gratitude to ahlibank's stakeholders for their unwavering support and steadfast confidence in our ability to deliver on our promises. Our shareholders' faith empowers us to reach new milestones without fearing failure.

I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Executive Management and every team member of our esteemed organization. Your tireless efforts in shaping ahlibank's fortunes have led us to this exhilarating phase in our journey. We are equally grateful to our loyal customers – both existing and new – whose trust in our products and services ensures our sustained growth.

Lastly, I would like to pledge ahlibank's support to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the nation's economic development plans.


Hamdan Ali Nasser Al Hinai
Chairman

INTERIM CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Unaudited 31-Mar-23 RO '000	Unaudited 31-Mar-22 RO '000	Audited 31-Dec-22 RO '000
ASSETS			
Cash and balances with Central Bank of Oman	94,179	138,441	132,212
Due from banks	34,450	51,835	75,147
Investment securities	299,937	474,039	293,163
Loans & advances and financing, net	2,571,660	2,435,947	2,500,435
Other assets	32,898	39,049	39,405
Property, equipment and intangibles	37,165	27,244	35,104
TOTAL ASSETS	3,070,289	3,166,555	3,075,466
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
Due to banks	145,184	341,241	223,353
Customers' deposits	2,339,725	2,180,063	2,296,231
Borrowed funds	19,250	111,650	-
Tax liability	12,626	10,040	11,444
Other liabilities	104,711	101,273	83,499
Subordinated loans	-	3,000	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES	2,621,496	2,747,267	2,614,527
EQUITY			
Share capital	194,966	194,966	194,966
Legal reserve	40,213	36,904	40,213
Subordinated loan reserve	-	3,000	-
Fair value reserve	(2,660)	(3,087)	(2,463)
Special reserve	998	998	998
Impairment reserve	10,127	10,127	10,127
Retained earnings	56,149	52,380	68,098
TOTAL NET EQUITY ATTRIBUTABLE TO OWNERS OF THE BANK	299,793	295,288	311,939
Tier 1 Perpetual subordinated bonds	149,000	124,000	149,000
TOTAL EQUITY	448,793	419,288	460,939
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET EQUITY	3,070,289	3,166,555	3,075,466
Net Assets Value Per Share (baizas)	154	151	160
Contingent liabilities and commitments	222,830	204,223	236,319

INTERIM CONDENSED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE THREE MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Three months period ended	
	Unaudited 31-Mar-23 RO '000	Unaudited 31-Mar-22 RO '000
Interest income	33,731	30,132
Interest expense	(18,224)	(15,537)
NET INTEREST INCOME	15,507	14,595
Income from Islamic financing and investments	6,743	6,221
Unrestricted investment account holders' share of profit and profit expense	(3,487)	(2,893)
NET INCOME FROM ISLAMIC FINANCING AND INVESTMENTS	3,256	3,328
NET INTEREST INCOME AND INCOME FROM ISLAMIC FINANCING AND INVESTMENTS	18,763	17,923
Fees and commission income	3,869	3,558
Fees and commission expense	(186)	(247)
Net fees and commission income	3,683	3,311
Other operating income	883	1,061
OPERATING INCOME	23,329	22,295
Staff expenses	(6,230)	(6,175)
Depreciation and amortisation	(888)	(802)
Other operating expenses	(3,039)	(2,745)
OPERATING EXPENSES	(10,157)	(9,722)
Net impairment on financial assets	(3,348)	(3,672)
PROFIT BEFORE TAXATION	9,824	8,901
Income Tax expense	(1,474)	(1,384)
PROFIT FOR THE PERIOD	8,350	7,517
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME/(EXPENSE) - NET OF TAX		
<i>Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss</i>		
Equity investments at FVOCI - net changes in fair value	(164)	150
<i>Items that may be reclassified to profit or loss</i>		
Cash flow hedge - net changes in fair value	(29)	265
Changes in fair value of FVOCI debt investments	49	(1,019)
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE (EXPENSE)/ INCOME FOR THE PERIOD	(144)	(604)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD	8,206	6,913
Basic And Diluted Earnings Per Share (baizas)	3	4

100 firms participate in forum to improve business environment



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) organised a forum - titled 'Improving the Business Environment in Oman and Enhancing its Competitiveness' - on Wednesday with participation of 100 companies.

The opening of the forum was held under the patronage of Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI.

The two-day forum targets

executive directors of large companies in different sectors in the sultanate, and owners of small and medium enterprises.

Rawas said, "The forum aims to review government and private efforts in improving the business environment and hear the views of the private sector on improving the level of services provided in order to achieve global competitive levels."

According to the OCCI chairman, the forum will help come up with several proposals on ways to improve the business environ-

ment in Oman and enhance its competitiveness, and develop solutions to address the challenges facing businesses in the sultanate. "This in turn will open avenues for economic activities and support private businesses in all sectors."

Rawas stressed that OCCI will support the aspirations of private sector businesses in order to create an attractive and encouraging business environment for the establishment and growth of businesses in the sultanate.

Over 100 educational institutions take part in 3-day GHEDEX

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With over 100 educational institutions and 40 international speakers, the educational fair Global Higher Education Exhibition (GHEDEX) started on Sunday evening at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Held under the patronage of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, the fair was inaugurated by H E Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The three-day event will host several activities, including the school exhibition 'Schoolex'; technical education and vocational training exhibition 'Trainex'; a conference on innovation and entrepreneurship in Omani schools, colleges and universities; Oman Innovation Oasis Expo; the GHEDEX Awards for Excellence in Education; and a presentation of student projects



and youth activities.

A special session, called Empowering Omani Innovations, will bring together Omani innovators, government and non-government organisations, representatives of Innovation Park and experts from around the sultanate. The session will provide them an opportunity to showcase their innovative products and solutions and to also engage with investors and government representatives in order to achieve the national strategy for innovations.

Khalid al Amri, a teacher who has been attending the fair for many years, said, "GHEDEX is a popular event in the education

sector, which has been providing an annual opportunity for local universities and colleges to interact, recruit and connect with students, parents, officials and academic representatives from the country and abroad for the last two decades. We are happy to see this edition is bigger than the previous ones."

Continuing to build upon the success GHEDEX Sohar had in 2022, the exhibition will have its edition in the city from May 3 to 4. The event will provide opportunities for students from the Batinah region seeking higher education to meet representatives of international universities and colleges.

Muscat Municipality to organise night padel tournament from May 5 to 7

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, will organise Muscat Nights Padel Tennis Tournament starting May 5.

In a statement, Muscat Municipality said that the tournament will be held in male and female categories at Oman Automobile Association till May 7. Registration fee for teams is RO25 and the registration deadline is May 2.

The top three winning teams will receive cash prizes and medals.

Padel is a racket sport that is always played in doubles on an enclosed court. It is much like a



cross between tennis and squash where the ball can bounce off the glass wall or metal mesh that surrounds the court.

Usually played outdoors, padel was invented in Mexico in 1969 by Enrique Corcuera when he modified his squash court to incorporate elements of platform tennis. In the 1970s, a Spanish

friend of Corcuera took the sport to Spain where it is now considered one of the most popular sports in the country. Other countries where padel is a hit include Mexico, Argentina, the UK and the US. According to the International Padel Federation, the sport is played in more than 90 countries around the world.

صندوق مزون الأول
The First Mazoon Fund

THE FIRST MAZOOON FUND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED MARCH 31, 2023

The Chairman's Report
For 31 March 2023

The primary objective of the fund is to achieve capital appreciation through a diversified portfolio of equity and bond investments in public companies listed at GCC Markets and MENA region.

A summary of financial results is as follows:

Figure 1:	For the period ended 31 March 2023	For the period ended 31 March 2022
	(OMR)	(OMR)
Total Income	301,882	1,230,180
Total Expenses	88,728	125,455
Profit (Loss) for the Period	213,154	1,104,725
Profit (Loss) per Unit	0.028	0.146
NAV per Unit	1.093	1.278

Fund Performance:

For the period ended 31 March 2023, the performance of The First Mazoon Fund is as follows:

Figure 2:	31 March 2023	31 March 2022
Net Asset Value (OMR)	8,324,443	9,731,203
Number of Outstanding Units	7,613,136	7,614,225
Net Asset Value per Unit*	1.093	1.278
FMF Fund Performance for the period	2.63%	11.38%
Benchmark Performance for the period	-1.80%	15.75%

The First Mazoon Fund's NAV increased by 2.63% (net of all expenses) to reach RO 1.093 per unit for the Quarter that ended on 31 March 2023. This compares with a decrease in the benchmark Index S&P GCC Composite index of 1.80% resulting in an outperformance of 4.43%.

Figure A: Index Returns

Index	YTD (31 March 2023)
Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange	-7.65%
Qatar Exchange	-4.39%
Boursa Kuwait	-3.31%
S&P GCC Index	-1.8%
Bahrain Bourse	-0.45%
Muscat Stock Exchange	0.12%
Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul)	1.06%
Dubai Financial Market	2.11%

Economy and Markets

It has been a tough quarter for the regional markets and global markets due to volatility in oil prices, banking-sector turmoil and global central banks hiking interest rates. The global markets have outperformed their regional peers during first quarter 2023. For instance, US and European markets ended higher in a volatile quarter in a very wide range between 0.7% (Dow Jones) to 20.8% (Nasdaq), while S&P GCC was down by 1.8%. The near to medium term movement for the regional markets will be driven by the trend in oil prices and other global factors such as future Fed rate hikes (if any) and the trend in the global economy. The fund is focused on its stock specific strategy and will try to benefit from market opportunities. We will be analyzing the detailed corporate results for the first quarter, with a focus on global economic and geopolitical developments, trends in global inflation, central banks' policy actions and re-opening of the Chinese economy.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Fund Management Body, I extend my thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq bin Taimur for his government's progressive policies and constant encouragement to the

financial services sector.

I also take this opportunity to thank the CMA, MSX & MCD for their support and cooperation, members of the Fund Management Body for their valuable time and guidance, our valued unitholder, for your continued support and trust and the fund manager and service providers for their efforts.

Chairman
The First Mazoon Fund
April 27nd, 2023

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income For 31 March 2023

	31 March 2023 RO	31 March 2022 RO
INCOME		
Dividend income	121,844	114,088
Interest income	24	274
Net realised gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	186,033	655,623
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	(6,019)	456,942
Other income	--	3,253
Total income	301,882	1,230,180
Expenses		
Management fees	28,182	34,841
Brokerage expenses	41,598	34,629
Custodian and administrator fees	3,019	3,733
Performance fees	--	17,289
Investment Manager incentive	10,000	--
General and administration	7,299	17,156
Fund Management Body fee	8,630	7,827
Foreign exchange loss (net)	--	--
Total Expenses	88,728	125,455
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the year	213,154	1,104,725
Net profit per unit	0.028	0.146

Statement of financial position
As 31 March 2023

	31 March 2023 RO	31 March 2022 RO
ASSETS		
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	7,630,952	8,894,217
Cash and cash equivalents	681,259	902,758
Other receivables	57,819	17,952
Total assets	8,370,030	9,814,927
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Accruals and other payables	45,587	83,724
Total liabilities	45,587	83,724
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	8,324,443	9,731,203
Net asset value per unit	1.093	1.278

For more information please contact:
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Send your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

صندوق اوبار للأسواق الخليجية
Ubhar GCC Fund
للاستفادة من خبراتنا
Benefit from our expertise

UBHAR GCC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED MARCH 31, 2023

The Chairman's Report
For the three months period ended March 31st, 2023

On behalf of the Fund Management Body Members, I am pleased to present the financial results of Ubhar GCC Fund for the three months ended March 31, 2023.

A summary of financial results is as follows:

Figure 1:	For the period ended March 31, 2023	For the period ended March 31, 2022
Total Income	118,327	715,628
Total Expenses	(63,469)	(49,635)
Profit (Loss) for the Period	54,858	665,993
Profit (Loss) per Unit	0.011	0.135

Fund Performance:

For the period ended 31 March 2023the performance of Ubhar GCC Fund is as follows:

Figure 2:	March 31, 2023	March 31, 2022
Net Asset Value (OMR)	5,232,996	6,320,733
Number of Outstanding Units	4,958,370	4,958,370
Net Asset Value per Unit**	1.050	1.275
UBGCC Fund Performance for the period	+1.05%	+10.88%
Benchmark Performance for the period	-1.80%	+15.77%

* NAV per unit for 2022 is after cash dividends
**NAV per unit for 2021 is after cash dividends and bonus units

Figure A: Index Returns

Index	YTD (31 March 2023)
Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange	-7.65%
Muscat Stock Exchange	0.12%
Bahrain Bourse	-0.45%
Dubai Financial Market	2.11%
Boursa Kuwait	-3.31%
Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul)	1.06%
S&P GCC Index	-1.8%
Qatar Exchange	-4.39%

Going forward, results for banks in KSA would be reviewed with interest; the key would be to assess the performance of corporate lenders over banks having more of mortgage exposures, with the former expected to do better. The trend in cement prices in KSA would be closely observed to understand if the execution of mega projects has started to roll in a major way. Petrochemical product prices, which had shown some recovery in January, again have exhibited weakness from late February till end March. UAE banks are expected to show some improvement in Net interest margin on account of a robust real estate environment in the country while Qatari banks might show tepid loan book growth as the new projects have just starting to roll out.

Going forward, we will be analysing the detailed corporate results for the first quarter, with a focus on global economic and geopolitical developments, trends in global inflation, central banks' policy actions and re-opening of the Chinese economy.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Fund Management Body, I extend my thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq bin Taimur for his government's progressive policies and constant encouragement to the financial services sector.

I also take this opportunity to thank the members of the Fund Management Body for their valuable time and guidance, the CMA, MSM & MCD for their support and cooperation, the fund manager and service providers for their efforts and you, our valued unitholder, for your continued support and trust.

On behalf of the Fund Management Body
Chairman
April 26, 2023

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income For 31 March 2023

	31 March 2023 RO	31 March 2022 RO
INCOME		
Dividend income	75,153	67,270
Interest income	213	21
Net realised gain / (loss) on investments at fair value through profit or loss	11,819	352,719
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	31,143	295,483
Other income	--	135
Total income	118,327	715,628
Expenses		
Management fees	18,950	23,473
Brokerage commission	36,102	12,718
Custodian & Administration fees	3,452	8,030
Performance Fee	--	--
General and administration	3,732	4,414
Fund Management Body fee	1,233	1,000
Total Expenses	63,469	49,635
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the year	54,858	665,993
Net profit per unit	0.011	0.135

Statement of financial position As 31 March 2023

	31 March 2023 RO	31 March 2022 RO
ASSETS		
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	4,923,392	5,962,193
Cash and cash equivalents	276,782	336,996
Other receivables	32,823	39,329
Total assets	5,232,996	6,338,518
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Accruals and other payables	16,705	17,785
Total liabilities	16,705	17,785
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	5,216,291	6,320,733
Net asset value per unit	1.050	1.275

For more information please contact:
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MSX becomes GCC's worst performing market in April

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), which had emerged as the GCC's second best performing stock market in February and March this year, took a U-turn and became the worst performing market in the region in April.

Oman's MSX30 index recorded a monthly decline of 3.0 per cent in April 2023 to close the month at 4,718.08 points.

By contrast, the overall GCC markets closed April at the highest level since the last week of January 2023, mainly led by consistent gains during the last week of the month, according to Kamco Investment's GCC Markets Monthly Report which was released on Monday.

Saudi Arabia was the best performing market during April with a gain of 6.8 per cent followed by the UAE markets with monthly gains of 4.1 per cent and 3.8 per cent for Dubai and Abu Dhabi, respectively.

On the other hand, Oman's MSX30 index topped the decliner's list for the month with a drop of 3.0 per cent followed by a marginal decline of 0.3 per cent for the Qatari market during April 2023,' the report noted.

In terms of sector performance, the Muscat Stock Ex-



Trading activity on MSX increased for the second consecutive month with monthly value traded recording a gain of 24.5% to reach RO114.5mn during April 2023 as compared to RO91.9mn during March 2023

change's two out of the three sector indices recorded monthly gains during April. Industrial sector index recorded the biggest monthly growth of 3.7 per cent in April, while services sector index registered a gain of 2.4 per cent for the month.

The growth in industrial sector index was primarily driven by a small number of top performing companies including National Aluminum Products which witnessed share price growth of 227.3 per cent during April and Raysut Cement which recorded

23 per cent gains. On the other hand, the MSX's financial sector index recorded a monthly decline of 2.3 per cent in April.

Stand out share price decline of companies like Ominvest (18.2 per cent drop) and Al Madina Investment Holding (16.7 per cent decline) in the financial sector index were the primary driver of the sector's monthly decline during April.

Trading activity increases

Trading activity on the Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed

gains for the second consecutive month with monthly value traded recording a gain of 24.5 per cent to reach RO114.5mn during April 2023 as compared to RO91.9mn during March 2023.

Similarly, total volume of shares traded on the exchange witnessed an increase of 18.1 per cent to reach 375.2mn traded shares during April 2023 as compared to 317.8mn traded shares in March 2023.

Bank Muscat topped the monthly value traded chart for the second month running with trades worth RO4.6mn followed by Omantel and National Bank of Oman with total value traded at RO3.8mn and RO2.5mn, respectively.

In terms of company performance, National Aluminum Products topped the gainers list with a share price gain of 227.3 per cent followed by Al Hassan Engineering and Oman Chromite with 38.5 per cent and 35.8 per cent monthly share gains, respectively.

On the decliner's side, Construction Materials Industries topped the monthly losers list with a share price drop of 21.6 per cent followed by Ominvest and Al Madina Investment Holding.



Oil prices rise as US stockpiles decline

Muscat - Oil prices increased on Monday due to demand hopes following US data showing a decline in crude oil stockpiles in the world's largest oil-consuming country.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at US\$80.66 per barrel early morning on Monday, a 1.42 per cent increase from the closing price of US\$79.54 a barrel in the previous trading session.

However, the US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at US\$76.09 per barrel, down 0.13 per cent from the previous session's close of US\$75.99 per barrel.

Recent data released by the US Energy Information Administration showed US oil stockpiles dropped by 5.1mn barrels to 460.9mn barrels during the week ending April 21.

Although stocks fell short

of the American Petroleum Institute's projection of a 6.08mn barrel draw, the data nonetheless showed an increase in US oil demand to put upward pressure on prices.

This development came as a welcome relief to global markets, which are plagued by demand concerns ahead of the Fed meeting to be held in the first week of May.

Also, Russian President Vladimir Putin excluded 'friendly countries' from the ban on Russian oil sales imposed in response to the price caps.

According to the decree, which is stated to have entered into force as of Monday, 'friendly countries' were excluded from the scope of the oil and oil supply ban to countries participating in Russia's ceiling price application.

Agencies

Tender Announcement

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tenders :

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (OMR)
MEDC/2023/023	Annual Maintenance Contract & Support Renewal for WAN Optimization (Silver peak)	08/05/2023	16/05/2023	Specialized	Free cost
MEDC/2023/024	Annual Maintenance Contract & Support Renewal for Manage Engine Service Desk Plus and AD360	08/05/2023	16/05/2023	Specialized	Free cost
MEDC/2023/019-2	Consultancy Services for Study, Design and Tendering Services for Azaibah South1-A PSS (P014) Assets Replacement	08/05/2023	16/05/2023	DCRP Approved Consultant Type 1	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and in I Supplier with Nama Groupe may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure , please visit MEDC Website/Vendor/E-Tendering, www.medcoman.com or call 24588600 – Ext: 8685, 8707
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to MEDC Website/Vendor/E-Tendering, www.medcoman.com , one week before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.
Tender Submission	- Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER mentioned in clause 20.0 in Prime Document and to the supplier guideline available MEDC Website/Vendor/E-Tendering, www.medcoman.com - The bid amount should be submitted without VAT in the E-Tendering System.
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY S.A.O.C. - The bid bond should including 5% VAT. - The bid bond should be included in the commercial proposal only as sof copy. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - After the commercial opening , the qualified bidders will be notified to submit the original (hard copy) of bid bond to MEDC office. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - MEDC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization. - Muscat Electricity Distribution Company gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - For projects whose value is less than OMR 10K, the priority to award will be given to registered companies that hold a valid certificate Of Reyadah. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification. - Any company that does not reach 30% Omanisation, including its sub-contractors, will be disqualified.



شركة مسقط لتوزيع الكهرباء
Muscat Electricity Distribution Company
أحدى شركات مجموعة نماء
Member of Nama Group



الهيئة العامة للتوزيع الكهربائي
Muscat Electricity Distribution Company
أحدى شركات مجموعة نماء
Member of Nama Group



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UAE's first gaming resort to cost \$3.9bn: Operator

Dubai, US - The United Arab Emirates' first gaming resort will open in four years and cost US\$3.9bn to build, US casino operator Wynn has said, unveiling new details of the project.

The resort in Ras Al-Khaimah, one of the UAE's seven emirates, will feature "exceptional entertainment and gaming amenities", Wynn Resorts said on its website.

Gambling is generally prohibited under Islamic laws in the oil-rich Gulf state. But Ras Al-Khaimah's tourism development authority last year announced a new body to regulate "integrated resorts", including gaming facilities.

Preliminary construction work has begun on Wynn Al Marjan Island, set on a man-made and hotel-studded promontory, Wynn Resorts said Thursday in a statement.

The resort, with 1,500 rooms, 24 dining and lounge areas, spa facilities, "high end" shopping and nightly laser and light shows, will open in early 2027, Wynn said, revising an earlier schedule of 2026.



The resort in Ras Al-Khaimah will feature exceptional entertainment and gaming amenities

Artists' impressions of the site, about an hour's drive from the commercial hub of Dubai, showed a brown-gold high rise towering above a beach area and circular marina, as well as a luxuriously appointed lobby.

"We have spent the past year meticulously programming and conceiving Wynn Al Marjan Island, carefully considering its unique location," Wynn Resorts CEO Craig Billings said in the statement.

Wynn operates casinos in Las Vegas and Boston as well as Macau, a Chinese territory close to Hong Kong.

The UAE, whose population is

90 per cent foreign, has made a series of liberalising moves as it faces increased regional competition for talent and tourism, notably from neighbouring Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

As well as lifting a ban on unmarried couples living together, loosening restrictions on alcohol and offering long-term residences, last year it introduced a Saturday-Sunday weekend.

The move brought the UAE into sync with Western countries and markets, but made it the only Gulf country not to observe weekends on a Friday, the Muslim day of prayer.

AFP

Adnoc Gas signs 3-year LNG supply deal

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Adnoc Gas, an Abu Dhabi-based world-class integrated gas processing company, on Monday announced a three-year supply agreement with TotalEnergies Gas and Power Limited, a subsidiary of TotalEnergies, for the export of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

The deal underscores Adnoc Gas' position as a global LNG export partner of choice and cements TotalEnergies as a key strategic partner for Adnoc Gas in the LNG market, representing another important milestone as Adnoc Gas expands its global reach.

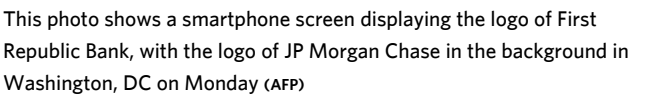


Under the terms of the agreement, through its subsidiary, Adnoc Gas will supply TotalEnergies LNG, which will be delivered to various export markets around the world. The agreement demonstrates Adnoc Gas'

ability to meet growing global demand for LNG, a critical energy transition fuel.

In a press release, Ahmed Alebri, CEO of Adnoc Gas, said, "Our new LNG supply agreement with TotalEnergies represents another significant milestone in our strategy to expand our global reach and strengthens our position as the LNG export partner of choice for leading global energy businesses."

TotalEnergies has a long-standing presence in the UAE having operated in the country for more than 80 years.



New York, US - US financial authorities seized California's troubled First Republic Bank on Monday and sold it to JPMorgan Chase, hoping to bring to a close a two-month banking crisis that has spooked the financial system.

After the bank failed to produce a satisfactory rescue plan and with its stock continuing to nosedive, the authorities stepped in, soliciting bids last week from potential buyers, and then taking possession of it.

The agreement means JPMorgan, the largest bank the United States, will recover all of the First Republic's deposits, as well as "almost" all of its assets, according to an FDIC statement.

"Our government invited us and others to step up, and we did," Jamie Dimon, JPMorgan's CEO, said in a statement after the deal was announced. appeared to be well-positioned: it was known to have a wealthy clientele who deposited large sums.

But the string of banking de-

Shares of JPMorgan jumped 4.3 per cent in pre-market trading, while US stock futures were

Tokyo, Japan - Chinese billionaire Jack Ma on Monday took up a visiting professor position at a Japanese university, another new academic role for the founder of tech giant Alibaba.



As visiting professor, the magnate is also expected to "provide advice and support" on research topics.

AFP

The US central bank has raised interest rates nine times in quick succession since March last year in a bid to control rising prices, and is weighing up

The annual personal consumption expenditures price index (PCE) eased to 4.2 per cent in March from a revised 5.1 per cent a month earlier, with a sharp decline recorded in energy prices, according to data released by the Bureau of Eco-



The vast majority of futures traders predict it will opt to raise its benchmark lending rate by a quarter-point on Wednesday, according to data from CME Group. The Fed has been closely watching PCE inflation for signs that its aggressive campaign of interest-rate hikes to bring inflation back down to its long-term target of two percent is working. Although annual PCE eased significantly, core PCE, which ex-

At its recent rate decision, Fed chair Jerome Powell suggested the central bank may only raise rates once more and then bring its current hiking cycle to a halt.

On a month-to-month basis, the PCE price index rose by 0.1 per cent from February to March.

AFP

المدينة تكافل

Al Madina Takaful

Everything in harmony

Al Madina Insurance Company SAG

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Chairman's Report

Dear Shareholders,

Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhi
(May the Peace, Mercy and Blessing of Allah be with you)

On behalf of the Board of Directors, and Management team of Al Madina Insurance Co ("Al Madina"), it gives me great pleasure to present to you the financial results achieved by your company for the period ending on 31st March 2023.

The financial results delivered by your Company reflect its intent to deliver consistent surplus from Insurance operations so that the Policyholder's interest is safeguarded while we continue to reward our shareholders.

Al Madina continues to maintain a healthy and well-balanced portfolio across all lines of business. Your Company is constantly enhancing its customer experience by ongoing process enhancements, efficient claims servicing, and by adopting best international practices in the field of insurance operations.

Operating Environment

The economic environment continues to be challenging where pressure on pricing prevails in the insurance market. Whereas the global insurance & reinsurance markets have also been witnessing rate corrections and insurers operating margins are shrinking. In these tough circumstances your Company achieved a Gross written contribution of RO 8.53 million as of first quarter of 2023 as against 9.29 million during the same period of 2022. This was due to the application of strict underwriting discipline and a focused sales strategy where the Company consciously did not renew certain loss-making accounts which contribute negatively to the Company's profitability. This is evident in 4% increase in profit after tax despite a decrease in Gross written contribution.

Results from Operations

Your Company continues to deliver stable growth while strengthening the adequacy & sufficiency of its reserves. The Company registered a 3% growth in Net Earned Contributions amounting to RO 3.72 million in the 1st Quarter of 2023 as compared to RO 3.63 million in the corresponding period of 2022. However, simultaneously an 8% increase in the incurred claims was witnessed in the first quarter of 2023 which impacted the combined net surplus from operations.

Investment Income

The investment performance of your company has been encouraging and achieved a 4% growth in Q1-2023 as compared to Q1-2022. Investment Income of RO 437 K was registered for Q1-2023 as against RO 422K for the corresponding period.

Your Company prudently manages all its investments and will continue to look at growing opportunities within the Islamic Finance space for optimizing its Investment Income in line with the Company's risk appetite. Profitability of the company

Despite the increase in incurred claims, the Company reported a 4% increase in profit after tax of RO 465K as compared to RO 446K for the corresponding period.

Risk Management

Your Company constantly evaluates its risks associated with the insurance business as well as its investments and adopts necessary measures to manage these risks.

Company's Outlook & Vision

As we embark into the post-pandemic era, we are extremely optimistic about the year 2023, as the Insurance

industry in Oman is poised for a period of stable growth and the overall outlook appears to be positive, as markets have witnessed some stability in the oil prices.

Our emphasis will be on stability and sustainable growth, while keeping the focus on some key drivers such as customer service, launching of new products, technological innovations, and regulatory changes. Much will also depend on how the global reinsurance market responds to the rapid frequency of natural catastrophic events in Oman, subsequently impacting reinsurance pricing in addition to the availability of reinsurance capacities and issues of risk concentrations. Apart from these, public spending, foreign investment, market credit issue and cashflow will also be crucial factors for the growth of the insurance industry.

Our position in the market, combined with strong underwriting fundamentals will enable us to continue our endeavor to provide sustained growth and profitability to all stakeholders in FY2023. We expect to maintain our market position in line with our projection for FY2023 by strengthening the distribution channels and supply chains. Furthermore, mandatory health insurance is expected to be launched soon and it is expected to give a thrust to the Health Insurance market. Al Madina has fulfilled the licensing requirement and await further instructions from the Capital Market Authority.

The Company continues to maintain its steady track record of having always been driven by and supportive of national objectives, such as in job creation and Omanization.

Al Madina will focus on its mission of Superior Customer service with many technology-driven innovation and consumer centric strategies. The Company, with its well-planned growth strategy and business continuity plan is well positioned to achieve stable growth and Operational Profit in 2023 through disciplined underwriting, Process efficiency, Expense management and focused sales planning.

Al Madina will continue to invest in IT upgrades, Process automations and digitization of Insurance processes which is expected to provide the necessary platform for a positive engagement with customers and grow on the back of superior customer service.

The Company will also keep looking at growing opportunities within the Islamic finance space to generate stable yield on its investment book and to achieve the targeted investment returns for shareholders and policyholders.

Acknowledgements

It gives me immense pleasure to express appreciation on behalf of the Board. We extend our thanks to our customers, business partners, shareholders, Sharia Supervisory committee, and staff members, for their support and contributions. We also thank and appreciate the Capital Market Authority for their constant support and their initiatives oriented towards the Insurance market, with a special emphasis on the development of Takaful Insurance in the Sultanate.

On behalf of the Board, I take this opportunity to express our most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Al Said, for his dynamic and progressive leadership. We are confident that under the leadership of His Majesty, the Sultanate will continue to march toward further progress, development, and prosperity.

May God Bless you all.

Dr. Mohammed Ali Al Barwani
Chairman of the Board.

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Shareholders' fund		Participants' fund				Grand total		Audited	
	Unaudited 31 March 2023	Audited 31 December 2022	Unaudited 2023 RO	Audited 31 December 2022 RO	Unaudited 2023 RO	Audited 31 December 2022 RO	Unaudited 2023 RO	Audited 31 December 2022 RO		
ASSETS										
Cash and bank balances	2,722,407	1,043,047	17,352,728	5,196,834	145,940	430,625	17,498,668	5,627,459	20,221,075	6,670,506
Investments carried at fair value through profit or loss	693,244	857,090	-	-	-	-	-	-	693,244	857,090
Takaful balance receivable	-	-	14,826,022	17,214,787	693,974	953,717	15,519,996	18,168,504	15,519,996	18,168,504
Retakaful / reinsurance balance receivable	-	-	674,691	309,936	399,243	597,561	1,073,934	907,497	1,073,934	907,497
Receivable from participants' fund – family takaful	-	-	-	711,304	71,448	-	71,448	711,304	71,448	711,304
Receivable from participants' fund	2,658,367	2,743,573	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,658,367	2,743,573
Due from retakaful / reinsurance companies in connection with takaful liabilities	-	-	48,106,242	53,834,700	1,591,767	1,454,586	49,698,009	55,289,286	49,698,009	55,289,286
Deferred policy acquisition cost	782,141	780,483	102	164	-	-	102	164	782,243	780,647
Other receivables and takaful assets	918,855	602,830	1,572,328	2,147,944	671,653	633,607	2,243,981	2,781,551	3,162,836	3,384,381
Investments at fair value through equity	2,072,896	2,068,442	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,072,896	2,068,442
Bank deposits	4,340,000	4,300,000	6,175,000	12,897,500	1,475,000	1,475,000	7,650,000	14,372,500	11,950,000	18,672,500
Investments carried at amortised cost	4,210,812	5,710,977	460,635	460,519	100,000	100,000	560,635	560,519	4,771,447	6,271,496
Deferred tax asset	299,137	299,137	-	-	-	-	-	-	299,137	299,137
Investment in real estate	5,170,000	5,170,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,170,000	5,170,000
Property and equipment	611,604	611,927	-	-	-	-	-	-	611,604	611,927
Total assets	24,439,463	24,187,496	89,167,748	92,773,688	5,149,025	5,645,096	94,316,773	98,418,784	118,756,236	122,606,280
LIABILITIES, PARTICIPANTS' FUND AND SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY										
LIABILITIES										
Takaful liabilities	-	-	59,764,933	66,228,713	2,005,438	1,803,877	61,770,371	68,032,590	61,770,371	68,032,590
Unearned retakaful commission	-	-	184,223	163,979	-	-	184,223	184,223	184,223	163,979
Retakaful/reinsurance payables	-	-	22,270,278	17,899,454	221,925	443,971	22,492,203	18,343,425	22,492,203	18,343,425
Accounts and other payables	3,087,442	1,725,552	5,589,106	7,398,630	1,327,486	1,170,808	6,916,592	8,569,438	10,004,034	10,294,990
Charity fund payable	21,738	21,738	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,738	21,738
Payable to shareholders	-	-	717,082	902,896	1,941,285	1,840,677	2,658,367	2,743,573	2,658,367	2,743,573
Payable to participants' fund – family takaful	-	-	-	71,448	-	711,303	71,448	711,303	71,448	711,303
Employees' end of service benefits	525,363	510,630	-	-	-	-	-	-	525,363	510,630
Total liabilities	3,634,543	2,257,920	88,597,070	92,593,672	5,496,134	5,970,636	94,093,204	98,564,308	97,727,747	100,822,228
PARTICIPANTS' FUND										
Surplus / (deficit) in participants' fund – net	-	-	570,678	180,016	(347,109)	(325,540)	223,569	(145,524)	223,569	(145,524)
Total participants' fund	-	-	570,678	180,016	(347,109)	(325,540)	223,569	(145,524)	223,569	(145,524)
SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY										
Capital and reserves										
Share capital	17,500,000	17,500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	17,500,000	17,500,000
Share premium	1,380,151	1,380,151	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,380,151	1,380,151
Legal reserve	1,283,285	1,273,697	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,283,285	1,273,697
Investment fair value reserve	319,911	315,457	-	-	-	-	-	-	319,911	315,457
Retained earnings	321,573	1,460,271	-	-	-	-	-	-	321,573	1,460,271
Total shareholders' equity	20,804,920	21,929,576	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,804,920	21,929,576
Total liabilities, participants' fund and shareholders' equity	24,439,463	24,187,496	89,167,748	92,773,688	5,149,025	5,645,096	94,316,773	98,418,784	118,756,236	122,606,280

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' REVENUE AND EXPENSES FOR THE THREE-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	General takaful		Family takaful		Total	
	(Unaudited) 31 March 2023	(Unaudited) 31 March 2022 RO	(Unaudited) 31 March 2023 RO	(Unaudited) 31 March 2022 RO	(Unaudited) 31 March 2023 RO	(Unaudited) 31 March 2022 RO
Takaful revenue						
Gross contributions	7,944,606	8,365,454	584,548	928,847	8,529,154	9,294,301
Retakaful/reinsurance share	(4,600,899)	(4,561,896)	(397,947)	(693,868)	(4,998,846)	(5,255,764)
Retained contributions	3,343,707	3,803,558	186,601	234,979	3,530,308	4,038,537
Movement in unearned contributions reserve	223,178	(316,550)	(26,508)	(89,923)	196,670	(406,473)
Net earned contributions	3,566,885	3,487,008	160,093	145,056	3,726,978	3,632,064
II Income earned from retakaful contracts	114,429	95,314	7	-	114,436	105,314
	3,681,314	3,582,322	160,100	145,056	3,841,414	3,737,378
Takaful expenses						
Gross claims settled	(3,143,167)	(3,283,439)	(517,263)	(383,903)	(3,660,430)	(3,667,342)
Claims recovered from retakaful/reinsurance	942,721	1,039,700	451,308	324,127	1,394,029	1,363,827
Net claims settled	(2,200,446)	(2,243,739)	(65,955)	(59,776)	(2,266,401)	(2,303,515)
Net movement in outstanding claims	512,144	629,550	(37,872)	15,334	474,272	644,884
Net claims incurred	(1,688,302)	(1,614,189)	(103,827)	(44,442)	(1,792,129)	(1,658,631)
Commission expense	(62)	(6,275)	-	(329)	(62)	(6,604)
	(1,688,364)	(1,620,464)	(103,827)	(44,771)	(1,792,191)	(1,665,235)
Surplus from Takaful operations	1,992,950	1,971,858	56,273	100,285	2,049,223	2,072,143
Takaful (expense) / income – net	(59,301)	(61,884)	75	110	(59,226)	(61,774)
Provision for impairment of receivable	(30,000)	-	-	-	(30,000)	(30,000)
Surplus from takaful operations	1,903,649	1,879,974	56,348	100,395	1,959,997	1,980,369
Investment income – net	168,743	120,755	21,699	15,155	190,442	135,910
Mudarib share	(92,809)	(66,415)	(11,934)	(8,335)	(104,743)	(74,750)
Wakala fees	(1,588,921)	(1,673,091)	(87,682)	(185,769)	(1,676,603)	(1,858,860)
Surplus / (Deficit) from takaful operations	390,662	261,223	(21,569)	(78,554)	369,093	182,669

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Shareholders' fund	
	(Unaudited) 31 March 2023 RO	(Unaudited) 31 March 2022 RO
Wakala fees	1,676,603	1,858,860
Investment income – net	246,479	286,399
Mudarib share	104,743	74,750
	2,027,825	2,220,009
General and administrative expenses	(1,435,026)	(1,465,238)
Commission expense	(446,959)	(441,938)
Other income	50	5
	(1,881,935)	(1,907,171)
Profit before tax	145,890	312,838
Taxation	(50,000)	(50,000)
Profit for the period	95,890	262,838
Earnings per share – basic and diluted	0.001	0.002

Al Mouj Golf launches short-term summer membership packages

Al Mouj Golf has launched two summer membership packages giving golfers the chance to play at the multi award-winning course over the summer months without having to commit to a full year's membership.

Situated at the heart of Oman's premier lifestyle and leisure destination Al Mouj Muscat, the prestigious course is ranked Number 2 in the Middle East by Today's Golfer magazine and last year it won Best Golf Course Globally in the World Luxury Travel Awards, as voted for by the public.

A one-month membership or five months of membership are the two by popular demand new deals being offered by Al Mouj so that golfers of all standards have the flexibility to play for a shorter period of time and fit golf around their summer plans.

The one-month package is for any four consecutive weeks between June 1 and September 30 and costs RO109 including VAT, and the five-month membership package runs from May 1 until the end of September for a fee of RO436 including VAT. Both options include full member benefits such as a 20 per cent discount at the club's international restaurant, 10 per cent at its Pro Shop and the opportunity to practice day and night at the floodlit driving range.

Commenting on the member-



ship opportunities Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat said, "We are delighted to offer these popular packages as they give golfers the flexibility and freedom to try the course out for the first time, or beginners can start playing without committing to an entire year. It also suits anyone on a temporary stay in the Sultanate or current members wishing to extend.

"Whatever the appeal, opening up our exemplary course to more golf lovers sits with our

founding principles of providing world class sports and leisure amenities for all, from our residents who have the convenience of a superb facility on their doorstep to golfers across Oman and visitors and tourists from further afield."

Designed by Greg Norman, the 72-par course makes the most of its magnificent oceanfront location with stunning sea views and where players are cooled by sea breezes. Al Mouj was the country's first PGA golf course and now as a World 100

course, has hosted numerous professional competitions including the Oman Open and the International Series Asian Tour, a high-profile pan-Asian tournament supported by LIV Golf.

The lush links-style course also has a reputation as a world leader in sustainability and, as a habitat for over 173 different bird species, won the International Environmental Golf Club Award at the 2023 Golf Environment Awards, a UK-based program that recognises excellence in environmentally sustainable prac-

tices within the sport.

Al Mouj Golf reminded that the terms and conditions would apply for summer membership offers and that one can call 22005990 or visit www.almoujgolf.com to find out more.

Al Mouj Muscat is a destination without an equal. It has re-defined urban living in the region with an impressive portfolio of oceanfront residential properties, luxury and authentic hospitality, elegant Business Parks, award-winning architecture and well-designed landscapes.

A warm and diverse community at the heart of Oman's capital, Al Mouj Muscat created a sense of belonging for 8,000 residents from 85 nationalities who now call it home. With a vibrant dining and retail district, residents and visitors alike are able to enjoy a wide range of culinary experiences in a lively oceanfront setting.

Al Mouj Muscat provides an exclusive lifestyle that urges families and individuals to live life to the fullest, do better, see more and live richer. For work or leisure, residents and visitors can stay, dine or relax at seven luxury hotels, including Kempinski and The St. Regis, experience boating in Oman's largest Marina, or awaken their sense of play at an 18-hole championship golf course that's listed in the world's top 100.



Bank Muscat promotes financial inclusion through variety of services

To further enhance its pioneering role in providing the best banking services for all segments of society, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to implement plans and strategies to boost financial inclusion through facilitating banking services across Oman.

The Bank recently celebrated the Arab Financial Inclusion Day, which falls on April 27 every year, confirming its commitment to improving financial inclusion across the sultanate.

The bank, which currently has 174 branches spread across all governorates in Oman, offers customers easy banking accessibility. The branch network is ably supported by the bank's large base of over 800 e-channel devices including ATMs, CDMs and statement printers.

Reflecting the latest technological trends in banking, Bank Muscat has been continuously launching new features and services on its digital channels too, including its state-of-the-art and Omnichannel mBanking and Internet Banking, Contact Centre and its e-payment gateway on a continuous basis over the years.

The bank's contactless cards and the more recent QR code scanning option have become very helpful for the bank's merchant partners in accepting e-payments from their customers quickly and securely. The positive results of these services have helped to enhance financial inclusion as they provide easy and fast accessibility to different banking services.

Digital services have now become the future of the financial inclusion policy as they save time and effort for everyone.

As part of its financial inclusion strategy to reach out to different customer segments and provide high-quality banking facilities, Bank Muscat has also launched a number of critical products and services for the persons with disabilities.

In 2019, Bank Muscat launched the first ATM in Oman

for visually-impaired persons at the premises of the Al Noor Association for the Blind.

The bank continues to enhance financial inclusion amongst persons with disabilities by enhancing physical access and facilities at branches and training its employees to better serve customers.

Bank Muscat has trained a number of its employees at different branches in Arabic Sign Language in partnership with the Omani Association for the Hearing-impaired so as to facilitate better communication and customer service. Moreover, the bank has established facilities dedicated to disabled customers in select branches.

It may be noted that as many as 210 bank employees have completed two levels of sign language courses to provide better services for customers. The bank also provides forms in Braille, audio and QR code, in addition to providing special rates on a number of banking products for people with disabilities.

As part of its efforts to broaden financial inclusion, Bank Muscat is also continuously launching several new products and services. In 2020, the bank launched the Woqar Banking Package after studying in great detail and understanding the needs of retirees who were earlier working in both government and private institutions.

The bank also launched the Floosi account for youth in the 15-17 age group in response to this age group's financial needs and to raise personal finance awareness.

To improve financial literacy in Oman, the bank launched its free Maliyat financial literacy programme in 2019. It also offers free online training sessions through the Irshad financial coaching programme.

Meanwhile, the Little Investor financial literacy training for school students has also contributed to enhancing financial knowledge amongst school students.

Heart complications in post-COVID patients

Detecting heart-related complications in patients recovering from COVID-19 has become increasingly important with the growing number of recovered patients. Studies have shown that the virus can affect the cardiac system in some patients and leave a long-term impact on overall health.

Heart-related complications in post-COVID patients include various diseases such as myocarditis, and blood clots formation. Post-COVID patients may also experience shortness of breath and chest pain.

Although most recovered patients are generally healthy, a small group may experience serious heart complications after being infected with the virus. Therefore, patients who



Dr Waleed Bashandy, MD Interventional cardiologist Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair

experience any cardiac symptoms after contracting COVID-19 should seek medical attention for necessary tests and diagnosis of any potential heart issues.

In conclusion, it is essential for everyone to continue following safety and health prevention guidelines.

Mercedes-Benz Oman launches GenuineParts campaign for safety

Mercedes-Benz Oman has launched its new GenuineParts campaign, highlighting the importance of using first-rate parts when servicing to maintain the vehicle's safety and resale value.

'GenuineParts reaffirms the Mercedes-Benz promise of value retention through excellent quality, proven safety, and a high level of reliability,' the company said in press release.

Mercedes-Benz GenuineParts are developed specifically for Mercedes-Benz vehicles. They are refined for every model to precisely defined specifications. With great attention to detail and using only high-grade materials, the parts are then crafted with the same tools and to the same standards as for new vehicles.

Comprehensive checks and extensive testing ensure they always meet Mercedes-Benz's exacting standards. GenuineParts will guarantee reliability and



value retention for years, making sure the vehicle maintains its Mercedes-Benz characteristic.

Commenting on the campaign, Alistair Cook, Head of Parts at Mercedes-Benz Oman, said, "Parts such as brakes, batteries, filters, windscreen wipers and others may have to withstand great pressures or movement, heat, and extremes of weather - while having to per-

form. And they must do it again and again on every journey.

"With our extensive parts portfolio, quality comes as standard. Mercedes-Benz GenuineParts are the final piece in protecting vehicle performance, comfort, style and most importantly, safety, for many years. And they embody our entire know-how as a vehicle manufacturer."

Sri Lankan embassy holds 75th Independence Day Cricket Trophy

The Embassy of Sri Lanka together with the Sri Lankan expatriate community in the Sultanate of Oman organised the 75th Independence Day Cricket Trophy-2023, as a part of the yearlong special commemorative events of celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka.

The Cricket Tournament was held at the Oman Cricket (OC) grounds in Amerat on Friday from 7am to 11.30pm.

The team representing St Anthony's College, Wattala won the champion's trophy, while Richmond College-Mahinda College, Galle combined team won the runner-up trophy.

The Sri Lankan Embassy in Oman launched a yearlong commemorative events to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka in February this year and will continue till



January next year.

The 75th Independence Day commemorations officially commenced with the Flag Hoisting ceremony at the Embassy on February 4, a release said.

The cricket tournament was organised with the aim of revamping the splendourous memories of Sri Lankan expatriates' school life in Sri Lanka. The event commenced with the playing of

the national anthems by the students from Sri Lankan School, Muscat School and unveiling of the 75th Independence Day Trophy by H E A L Sabarullah Khan, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka to

the Sultanate of Oman.

Twelve teams participated in the tournament representing 16 schools in Sri Lanka. Past students representing Richmond College-Mahinda College, Galle;

D S Senanayake College, Colombo; Al Hasniya Maha Vidyalaya-Al Manar National School; Dharmapala College, Pannipitiya; St Anthony's College, Wattala; Zahira College, Matale; Maliyadeva College, Kurunagala; Rahula College, Matara; Joe-Pete, Colombo; St Thomas College; Ananda College, Colombo and Central College Akkaraipaththu-Zahira Kalmunai took part in the tournament, the release added.

Twelve teams were divided into four groups and the first round was a league within the groups. Top teams from each group qualified for the semi-finals.

The first semi-final was between Al Hasniya Maha Vidyalaya- Al Manar National School and Richmond College-Mahinda College. Maliyadeva College, Kurunagala vs St An-

thony's College, Wattala was the second semi-final.

During the tournament, a fun cricket match was also organised for the Sri Lankan women cricket players in the sultanate.

Fun games for kids, spot quizzes for audiences, a lucky draw for all Sri Lankans visited, a special live band performance, and stalls with Sri Lankan food and Sri Lankan Tea were also arranged and showcased at the ground parallel to the cricket matches making it an exclusively live Sri Lankan Day at Amerat cricket grounds.

The embassy conveyed gratitude to Oman Cricket chairman Pankaj Khimji and Sri Lanka's former national cricket player Dulip Mendis - the current head coach of the national cricket team of the Sultanate of Oman - for making available the Oman Cricket grounds for the event.

MoE opens forum to promote Intellectual Property

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiad, implemented the Intellectual Property Forum under the slogan 'Our Schools Promote Intellectual Property'.

The forum comes with the participation of specialists from the Ministry of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, and Al Buraimi Vocational College.

The forum comes as an extension of the programme to enhance awareness of the importance of intellectual property among schoolteachers, which was launched by the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiad in February 2023, targeting schoolteachers in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman to enable the Omani teacher to design interesting educational tools and means for students to display and highlight intellectual property, its importance, types and methods of protection, and to exchange experience between teachers by presenting successful and interesting experiences in this aspect.



Dr Mia al Azri, an educational expert in the Office of the Minister of Education and in charge of the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiad, said, "The Intellectual Property Forum is one of the programmes related to raising awareness among school students, and administra-

tive and teaching staff of the importance of protecting intellectual property rights."

Dr Mia informed that the forum "is an extension of a programme that was launched at the beginning of the second semester, mainly targeting teachers to bring innovative,

non-stereotypical ideas for educational means through which they would be able to communicate this information related to intellectual property in an exciting manner to students".

"This is why a competition was launched for teachers in several categories, including

video design, electronic application, a website, or a theatrical scenario to communicate intellectual property concepts to students," she added.

The forum aims to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of intellectual property and ways to protect it, spread the



concept of intellectual property and its importance to students at various levels of study, and provide various educational materials and tools to teach the principles of intellectual property to students.

The programme went through three phases, starting with launching the program and circulating it to all schools, going through the evaluation process, and ending with the organization of the Intellectual Property Forum for Teachers, which included presenting the most prominent work delivered by the teachers.

It also included a number of papers by specialists from the various concerned institutions and honouring teachers who presented the most outstanding works in the various fields of the competition.

It is worth noting that the Ministry of Education is interested in raising awareness in the field of intellectual property, in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organisation and the concerned authorities in the Sultanate, through the implementation of several programs targeting school students, teachers and specialists.

OPAZ organises workshop on supply and cold chains initiative

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) held a workshop on Supply and Cold Chains Initiative, with the participation of specialists from the National Programme for Economic Diversification (Tanwea), the National Employment Program (Tashgeel) and the Industrial Innovation Academy (IIA).

This workshop was held to promote integration of large investments and supplier projects in the supply and cold chains, and to create opportunities for new industries that contribute to the economic diversification. The seminar reviewed the infrastructure and logistical factors available in the economic zones, free zones and industrial zones.

The workshop discussed the authority's initiatives to develop import and export services and analyze supply chains.

These initiatives aim to create a prominent and enabling investment environment, and to simplify the practical measures that have been taken to assess the current situation, define roles and enhance integration with other entities.

A team from the Ministry of



Economy and the Academy of Industrial Innovation provided an overview on studying the economic diversification in cold chains in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm as a first stage and circulate it to the rest of the zones later, including the targeted objectives.

The seminar discussed opportunities to enhance this study including additional capabilities that enhance the diversification of manufacturing industries in the fish sector and boost the

local added value achieved from those projects and the highly competitive investment environment provided by the authority in the areas under its supervision.

It is worth noting that this initiative comes in the first phase to take advantage of the attractive and facilitating capabilities of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, and to achieve high value for those wishing to invest in this aspect, including highly efficient and designed infrastructure, including Duqm Airport and its fa-

cilities such as cold stores, aviation fuel filling stations, and sea fishing port, which contains facilities for this type of industry integrated with the Port of Duqm, in addition to a modern road network and other investment incentives and benefits offered by the zone, such as exemption from income tax, zero value-added tax, customs exemption, no restrictions on capital and services, and a unified electronic system, which is a facilitator for investment projects.

Sohar International donates for 500 MRI scans in private hospitals

Sohar International has announced its contribution to the country's healthcare system through a donation to the Royal Hospital. The contribution aims to transfer 500 MRI scans to private hospitals to reduce waiting lists for examinations and provide better services to the community.

As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) umbrella, Sohar International is committed to making a positive impact on society, driving holistic well-being, and transforming lives.

Mohamed Mahfoodh al Ardhi, Chairman of Sohar International, emphasized the bank's commitment to supporting pioneering initiatives that benefit every segment of society.

"Our paramount objective has always been to promote comprehensive well-being within the community and effectuate transformational changes by supporting groundbreaking initiatives that cater to all segments of society," Ardhi stated.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with the Royal Hospital to address societal welfare. Sohar International's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy



stems from the bank's conviction that the private sector has a duty to make a positive impact on society through sustainable business practices that benefit the community."

"Through such contribution, Sohar international proactively endeavors to make a meaningful contribution to society," Ardhi added.

Sohar International has a track record of supporting initiatives that benefit society, and this meeting is another step towards achieving that goal. Recently, the bank provided financial aid to the Ihsan Association to purchase a fully equipped ambulance and supported the procurement of

medical equipment for Hai Al Mina health centres in Muttrah.

The Royal Hospital conveyed its heartfelt appreciation to Sohar International, acknowledging the paramount significance of providing access to top-notch healthcare amenities for the overall welfare of the population.

Dr Sami bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Director General of Royal Hospital said that the bank's "gracious contribution to transfer 500 MRI scans to private hospitals will bolster the health system's logistical capacity to cater to a broad spectrum of the community, thus enabling them to carry out their duties with utmost efficacy and expediency".

Dubai deputy ruler Sheikh Ahmed opens Arabian Travel Market

Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Second Deputy Ruler of Dubai, has officially inaugurated Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2023, marking the start of the 30th edition of the Middle East's largest travel and tourism exhibition.

Sheikh Ahmed was accompanied at the inauguration by Vasyly Zhygalo, Portfolio Director, RX Global; Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director Middle East, ATM; and a host of other VIPs who embarked on a tour of the show floor as the four-day event got underway in Dubai.

To continue until Thursday at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC), participation of exhibitors this year witnessed a 27 per cent rise compared to the last year, a press release said.

The 30th edition of the show, which is expecting 34,000 attendees over the course of the next four days, is hosting more than 2,000 exhibitors and repre-



sentatives from over 150 nations.

In line with its theme, 'Working Towards Net Zero', ATM 2023 is enabling global tourism professionals to forge new connections, share knowledge and showcase innovations with the

potential to expedite the sector's journey towards decarbonisation.

Day one of ATM 2023 includes 20 sessions across its Global Stage, Travel Tech Stage and brand-new Sustainability

Hub. In addition to the opening Ministerial Debate, highlights include Technology: The Enabler of Sustainable Travel, Sustainability in the Travel Industry: Who Pays? and Enhancing the Customer Experience Through AI.

In addition, the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance is addressing the importance of protecting the locations, livelihoods and communities in which hotels are located as part of the Achieving Net Positive Hospitality session.

Looking ahead to day two, John Strickland will engage in conversation with Sir Tim Clark, President of Emirates Airline, on the ATM Global Stage as part of the session, Emirates Returns to Growth. This discussion will cover a range of pertinent topics such as rising passenger traffic, as well as the challenges and opportunities that the carrier expects to encounter over the coming years.

Over on the Travel Tech stage, day two will begin with 'Getting Into the Mind of a Digital Consumer', which will feature speakers from Euromonitor, TikTok and Amadeus.

Taking place at the Sustainability Hub tomorrow afternoon, Green Technology for Responsible Tourism will see experts share insights into the role of innovation in helping to minimise carbon emissions, water consumption and waste across the sector.

The 30th edition of ATM is taking place as part of Arabian Travel Week, a festival of events dedicated to enabling industry professionals from all over the world to collaborate and capitalise on market opportunities through exhibitions, conferences, breakfast briefings, awards, product launches and networking events.

Those attending ATM 2023 in person can get involved in the conversation online by using the hashtag #ATMDubai when posting on social media channels.

ATM 2023 is being held in conjunction with Dubai World Trade Centre, and its strategic partners include Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) as the Destination Partner, Emirates as the Official Airline Partner, IHG Hotels & Resorts as the Official Hotel Partner, and AI Rais Travel as the Official DMC Partner.

IN BRIEF

Santiago Pena wins Paraguay election

Asuncion, Paraguay - Paraguayans on Sunday elected a president from the rightwing party in power for nearly eight decades, rejecting a center-left challenger who had railed against endemic institutional corruption. Economist and former finance minister Santiago Pena, 44, took the election with more than 42 per cent of the vote to continue the hegemony of the conservative Colorado Party, results showed.

Sixty-year-old challenger Efrain Alegre of the Concertacion center-left coalition garnered nearly 27.5 per cent despite having gone into the vote with a narrow lead in opinion polls.

The outcome bucked a recent anti-incumbency trend in Latin American elections with voters repeatedly punishing establishment parties, often in favour of leftist rivals.

Will keep traveling, says Pope Francis

Aboard The Papal Plane - Pope Francis described on Sunday an 'acute and strong' pneumonia that led to his hospitalisation last month, but the 86-year-old pontiff said he was determined to keep travelling.

'I felt a strong pain at the end of the (March 29) audience,' the pope told reporters aboard his papal plane on his return to Rome from Budapest, where the pontiff made a three-day visit. 'I did not lose consciousness but I had a high fever' and the doctor 'right away took me to the hospital,' he said.

Francis called it an 'acute and strong pneumonia, in the lower part of the lung'.

Murder of Abiy ally: Ethiopia arrests 47

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Ethiopian security forces said on Sunday they had arrested 47 suspects after the killing of a leading member of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's ruling party, accusing them of having plotted to overthrow the authorities.

Girma Yeshitila, the head of the Prosperity Party in Amhara, was among five people killed in an attack on Thursday, according to the northern region's government. Ethiopia's Joint Security and Intelligence Task Force said 47 'terror' suspects had been detained, and found in possession of weapons, bombs and communication equipment.

AFP

Uzbekistan approves reforms, allows president prolong term

Tashkent, Uzbekistan - Uzbekistan has overwhelmingly approved constitutional changes that will allow President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to remain in power until 2040 in a tightly-controlled referendum, election results showed on Monday.

Mirziyoyev, 65, became president in 2016 after the death of dictator Islam Karimov.

Uzbeks voted on Sunday on reforms that extend presidential terms from five to seven years, allowing Mirziyoyev to serve two more terms and prolong his time in power.

According to the preliminary results released on Monday, the changes were approved by 90.21 per cent of votes with a 84.54 per cent turnout.

Despite undertaking recent reforms, government critics and rights groups say Uzbekistan remains authoritarian.

Mirziyoyev has insisted that the overhaul of the constitution will improve governance and quality of life in Uzbekistan.

But he is set to benefit from the changes the most.



Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev visits a polling station in Tashkent on Sunday (AFP)

Neighbouring Kazakhstan was the first to congratulate the Uzbek leader, with President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev saying the result was evidence of 'trust' in his rule and 'firm support from the Uzbek nation.'

Mirziyoyev has presented himself as Karimov's modern

successor. He had served 13 years as a loyal prime minister under Karimov's brutal rule.

He then won two elections, in which international observers say he did not face real competition. Following Karimov's death, Mirziyoyev spearheaded a series of reforms in Uzbekistan, includ-

ing a clampdown on forced labour in the country's cotton fields.

After years of being cut off from the world under Karimov's regime, Uzbekistan now wants to join the World Trade Organisation. But activists say rights abuses persist, and authorities

have shown no sign of allowing a political opposition to emerge.

Voting tightly controlled

The constitutional changes also include a ban on capital punishment and the protection of

beyond doubt after a one-sided campaign, in a state where the press is still largely controlled.

Two journalists from state media interviewed by AFP claimed on condition of anonymity to have 'received instructions to cover Uzbekistan, the referendum and the president in a positive way'.

They said censorship strengthened as the election approached. The government went to lengths to give the vote a veneer of legitimacy, enrolling local celebrities at large rallies and concerts to praise the proposals and the president.

Uzbekistan's population is emerging from a particularly harsh winter marked by shortages of fuel, and is faced with poverty and corruption.

During unrest in July 2022, demonstrations against a constitutional amendment in Karakalpakstan, which would have reduced the autonomy of the vast territory, were put down in a bloody crackdown. Dozens of people were jailed.

AFP

Uzbeks voted on Sunday on reforms that extend presidential terms from five to seven years, allowing Mirziyoyev to serve two more terms

PROTEST ON MAY DAY



A demonstrator holds a placard depicting French president disguised as a king and reading 'No to the Macron's pension, 60-year-old for everyone', as he takes part in a protest during the May Day celebrations, outside the Greek Parliament in Athens on Monday (AFP)

Indigenous man shot dead by miners in Brazil, say police

Brasilia, Brazil - Brazilian authorities were investigating on Sunday the death of an Indigenous man who they say was shot by miners illegally encroaching on territory belonging to the Yanomami people.

The incident, which occurred on Saturday in the northern state of Roraima, also left two people injured, according to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples (MPI).

"With much regret, we learned of the gun attack by illegal miners on three Indigenous Yanomami," the ministry said on its official Instagram page.

"One dead and two others receiving attention, in critical condition," the statement said.

The federal police, which are investigating the attack, confirmed that 'Indigenous people confronted and exchanged fire with miners', with three Yanomami people shot, one fatally. According to the G1 news outlet, the person who died was a 36-year-old man who had been shot in the head.

"Two Federal Police teams traveled to the scene, in the Indigenous community of Uxiu, early on Sunday morning to investigate what happened and to prevent any further potential



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva kisses a girl during a visit to the Terra Livre Indigenous Camp in Brasilia last week (AFP)

hostilities," the force said in a statement.

The federal police said on Sunday they were working to 'identify, locate and capture the perpetrators' and that 'the work to expel the invaders from Indigenous lands continues', while the MPI said they were also sending a team to Roraima state as reinforcements.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in February launched a police and military operation to force out thousands of miners illegally occupying

protected reserves belonging to the Indigenous Yanomami people in the Amazon rainforest along the border with Venezuela, where gold prospectors are accused of sparking a humanitarian crisis.

"The situation of invaders in the Yanomami Indigenous lands goes back many years," the ministry added on Sunday, saying the efforts to kick out the 'invaders' was ongoing.

Yanomami leaders say some 20,000 clandestine miners have invaded their territory, killing In-

digenous people, sexually abusing women and adolescents, and contaminating rivers with the mercury they use to separate gold from sediment.

Federal police are investigating possible acts of 'genocide' against the Yanomami people, after Lula's government found earlier this year that at least 99 children under the age of five had died on Brazil's largest Indigenous reservation last year, mainly due to malnutrition, pneumonia and malaria.

AFP

Armed attackers kill 10, wound 3 in Ecuador port Guayaquil

Guayaquil, Ecuador - At least 10 people were killed overnight when heavily armed assailants opened fire outside a shop in Guayaquil, Ecuador's main port city and economic hub that is under a state of emergency due to rising drug violence, police said on Sunday.

The gruesome attack occurred at a mechanic shop in the city's southwest as people were inside drinking and watching a soccer match on TV, witnesses said.

Several people drove up in a black truck, stepped out without saying a word, and opened fire using 'long weapons,' said General Willian Villarroel, the police commander for Guayaquil and

neighbouring Duran and Samborondon. Hours later, bodies could be seen lying on the sidewalk in pools of blood, as people cried and hugged one another while police cordoned off the area, AFP saw.

"I don't feel comfortable living like this," one neighbour told AFP, asking not to be named. "We can't go out with our families, with our children."

In addition to those killed, three people were wounded, 'unfortunately including a five-year-old girl who is stable and is going to be operated for shrapnel,' Villarroel said.

He said police believed the massacre was the result of 'a fight between organised criminal



Ecuadorian police officers inspect a workshop after a multiple murder in Guayaquil, Ecuador on Sunday (AFP)

groups - a fight for power and territory'.

Ecuador's attorney general's office said on Twitter that it had

opened a preliminary investigation. Guayaquil has become one of the country's increasingly bloody centres of a turf war be-

tween rival drug-trafficking gangs.

The port city's position on the Pacific coast makes it a strategic

launch point for shipments of drugs to the United States and Europe.

The killing is the latest in a recent surge of violence, including gang- and cartel-related murders and multiple prison riots and massacres, as authorities crack down on gangs and seize drugs.

Police have yet to report any arrests from the latest attack. They tweeted on Saturday night that 'intelligence units' were working 'to identify those responsible'.

Police did not identify the shooting victims, but said that five of them had criminal records for drugs- and weapons-related violations.

Amid the rise in crime, the

government of President Guillermo Lasso has declared criminal groups to be terrorists.

Since April 1, Guayaquil has been under a state of emergency, which allows the military to patrol the streets and implement curfews.

As the fight against criminal gangs goes on, the number of drug seizures has risen but so have violent deaths in the streets and in prisons.

Clashes between inmates have left more than 420 prisoners dead since 2021, while outside the prisons the murder rate soared in 2022, nearly doubling from 14 to 25 per 100,000 inhabitants, the authorities say.

AFP

34 wounded in Russian strikes on central Ukraine: Official

Kyiv, Ukraine - Russian missile attacks across Ukraine early on Monday wounded 34 people in the central Dnipropetrovsk region, including children, regional authorities said.

The barrage followed another wave of attacks last week that ended a weeks-long pause after systematic Russian strikes during winter targeting key infrastructure.

"There are already 34 wounded due to a missile attack on the Pavlograd district," Sergiy Lysak, the head of the Dnipropetrovsk region, said on social media.

"Five of them are children. The youngest is a girl and only eight years old," Lysak said.

Ukraine said Russia attacked at around 2:30am (2330 GMT), adding it had downed 15 out of the 18 missiles launched by Moscow's forces.

The Russian defence ministry meanwhile said it had launched long-range precision strikes on Ukrainian ammunition production facilities.

"All assigned facilities were hit," the defence ministry said in a statement.

Ukraine over the winter strengthened its air defences, in-



People pay their respects as flowers are laid in front of a damaged multistory residential building, where a Russian strike killed 23 people, in Uman, Cherkasy region, on Sunday (AFP)

cluding with US Patriot systems after it appealed to Western allies to help fend off Russian attacks on the energy grid.

Ukrainian officials also said on Monday that Russian forces had killed one person and wounded three others in the southern Kherson region within the last 24 hours.

Russia still controls part of the Black Sea region, having withdrawn from the eponymous regional capital last November.

Most of the fighting in Ukraine in recent weeks has centered on the eastern Donbas region, particularly the city of Bakhmut.

Russia has been posting slow incremental gains in the industrial town and controls some 80 per cent of it.

The commander of Ukraine's ground forces, Oleksandr Syrsky said on Monday that his troops had led small counterattacks in the now-destroyed city.

"In certain parts of the city, the enemy was counter-attacked by our units, and left some positions," he said.

Russia is 'failing to take control of the city', Syrsky said, adding that the situation was still 'quite complicated'.

AFP

New Sudan clashes despite truce, UN says country at breaking point

Khartoum, Sudan - Fierce fighting broke out again on Monday between Sudan's army and paramilitaries despite the formal extension of a truce, after the United Nations warned the humanitarian situation reached 'breaking point'.

More than 500 people have been killed since battles erupted on April 15 between Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who leads the regular army, and his ex-deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Millions of Sudanese around the capital have since hidden in their homes with dwindling food, water, and electricity as warplanes on bombing raids have drawn heavy fire from anti-aircraft guns.

"Warplanes are flying over southern Khartoum and anti-aircraft guns are firing at it," said one resident, while another witness told AFP he was also hearing 'loud gunfire' in the area. Burhan and Daglo have agreed multiple, poorly observed ceasefires, and extended the latest formal truce on Sunday by 72 hours, with each side repeatedly blaming the other for the frequent violations.

Millions of Sudanese are trapped in the country, where aid workers are among the dead, humanitarian facilities have been looted, and foreign aid groups have been forced to essentially halt all aid operations. Top UN humanitarian official Martin Griffiths said on Sunday he was heading to the region to help 'bring immediate



Smoke billows over residential buildings in Khartoum on Monday as deadly clashes between rival generals' forces have entered their third week (AFP)

relief to the millions of people whose lives have turned upside down overnight'.

"The humanitarian situation is reaching breaking point," he said. "Goods essential for people's survival are becoming scarce in the hardest-hit urban centres, especially Khartoum."

"The cost of transportation out of worst-hit areas has risen exponentially, leaving the most vulnerable unable to locate to safer areas."

50,000 flee overland

Some 50,000 people have fled the raging conflict, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries including Chad, Egypt, and the Central African Republic, said the UN refugee agency.

The fighting has also triggered a mass exodus of foreign-

ers and international staff, with countries the world over launching frantic evacuations by land, sea, and air.

Daglo's RSF is descended from the Janjaweed unleashed by former strongman Omar al-Bashir in Sudan's Darfur region, leading to war crimes charges against Bashir and others.

Further complicating the battlefield, Central Reserve Police were being deployed across Khartoum to 'protect citizens' properties' from looting, the Sudanese police said, confirming an army statement.

The RSF had warned police against joining the fight.

The US Treasury Department last year sanctioned the Central Reserve for 'serious human rights abuses' related to its use of 'excessive

force' against pro-democracy protests after the October 2021 coup that brought Burhan and Daglo to power.

Conflict and looting

At least 528 people have been killed and almost 4,600 people wounded in the violence, according to Sudan's health ministry, but the death toll is feared to be far higher.

Fighting has also spread across Sudan, especially in the long-troubled Darfur region, where witnesses reported intense conflict and looting.

At least 96 people were reported killed in El Geneina, West Darfur, the UN said.

The UN World Food Programme has warned the unrest could plunge millions more into hunger in a country where

The humanitarian situation is reaching breaking point. Goods essential for people's survival are becoming scarce in the hardest-hit urban centres, especially Khartoum

MARTIN GRIFFITHS

15mn people already needed aid to stave off famine.

Only 16 per cent of health facilities are functioning in Khartoum, according to the World Health Organisation, with many facilities shelled.

On Sunday, a first Red Cross plane brought eight tonnes of humanitarian aid from Jordan to Port Sudan, which is so far untouched by the fighting and has served as an evacuation hub.

The aid included surgical material and medical kits to stabilise 1,500 patients. Regional powers have joined negotiations to help end the violence.

An envoy of Burhan's met on Sunday in Riyadh with the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, who called for the restoration of calm in Sudan, his ministry said.

Egypt has called an Arab League meeting of its permanent delegates on Monday to discuss the 'situation in Sudan'.

AFP

'Soviet Dior' Slava Zaitsev dead at 85



This file photo shows Slava Zaitsev walking on stage surrounded by models during the Fashion Week in Moscow on March 29, 2013 (AFP)

Moscow, Russia - Russian fashion designer Viacheslav 'Slava' Zaitsev, dubbed the 'Soviet Christian Dior', has died at the age of 85, his fashion house told AFP on Sunday.

Confirming Russian media reports, a spokeswoman added that when Zaitsev had celebrated his birthday in March with friends, 'we could already see he was very, very, weak'.

"The couturier Viacheslav Zaitsev has died," Russian state channel Perviy Kanal reported, paying tribute to a man who 'dictated Soviet and Russian fashion for decades, an innovator who wasn't afraid of bold experiments'. "It's a great loss for the world of international fashion," Ria Novosti news agency quoted Russian stylist Sergei Zverev as saying.

Russia's most famous fashion designer, Zaitsev achieved global success with bright dresses adorned with the flower patterns found on traditional Russian shawls.

From a modest childhood in Ivanovo, a town of 400,000 people to the northeast of the capital, his career took him to the catwalks of Paris, New York and Tokyo.

The French press in the 1960s dubbed him the 'Soviet Christian Dior'.

Watched closely by the KGB because of his contacts with Western designers and his flamboyant character, Zaitsev was initially refused permission to leave the Soviet Union and his first collections were shown abroad without him.

In 1962, Zaitsev's first collection of clothes - a uniform for female workers that featured skirts with the flower patterns of traditional Russian shawls and multi-coloured boots - was rejected by Soviet authorities.

"The colours were too bright and contrasted with the greyness of Soviet everyday life, where an individual should not differ from the rest of society," Zaitsev said in an interview with AFP in 2018.

But the collection, nonetheless, attracted international attention. In 1963, French magazine *Paris Match* became the first Western media outlet to describe Zaitsev as a pioneer of Soviet fashion.

AFP

'Suspected Islamic State group chief killed in Syria'

Istanbul, Turkey - The suspected leader of the Islamic State group has been killed in Syria in an operation carried out by Turkey's MIT intelligence agency, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Sunday.

"The suspected leader of Daesh, codename Abu Hussein al-Qurashi, has been neutralised in an operation carried out yesterday (Saturday) by the MIT in Syria," he announced on television, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State organisation.

The Islamic State group announced the death of its previous leader, Abu Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, on November 30, replacing him with Abu Hussein al-Qurashi.

An AFP correspondent in northern Syria said Turkish intelligence agents and local military police, backed by Turkey, had on Saturday

sealed off a zone in Jindires, in the northwest region of Afrin.

Residents told AFP that an operation had targeted an abandoned farm that was being used as an Islamic school. Turkey has deployed troops in northern Syria since 2020, and controls entire zones with the help of Syrian auxiliaries.

The United States carried out a helicopter raid in northern Syria in an operation in mid-April, saying the Islamic State group had been planning attacks in Europe and the Middle East.

US Central Command said they had killed a senior leader of the IS group in the operation. They named him as Abd al Hadi Mahmud al-Haji Ali.

Suspected Islamic State group fighters killed at least 41 people, 24 of them civilians, on April 16 in Syria.

AFP

Kenya starts autopsies of 'starvation cult' deaths

Malindi, Kenya - Forensic experts on Monday began autopsies of more than a hundred corpses found in mass graves linked to a Kenyan pastor accused of inciting his followers to starve to death.

"Officially the process of post-mortem of the bodies starts immediately," Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki told reporters outside a hospital morgue in the coastal town of Malindi.

"We are here to witness a very critical stage," he said. "That process is expected to take roughly a week, all going well."

Investigators will also take DNA samples to help identification, though the full results may take months, the chief government pathologist, Johansen Oduor, said.

Mass graves in the nearby Shakahola forest have revealed scores of dead, most of them children. But the death toll of 109, which includes a small number of people who were found alive but died on their way to hospital, is still provisional.



Kenyan government officials and pathologists wearing protective clothing stand by before the start of postmortem analysis on victims of the Shakahola massacre, in Malindi on Monday (AFP)

"The process of exhumation was temporarily stopped because the experts advised us (that) when it is raining, that process cannot continue," Kindiki said.

Paul Mackenzie Nthenge, a former taxi driver who created a Christian-based cult called the Good News International Church,

is accused of telling followers that starvation offered a path to God.

But Kindiki said on Friday that preliminary reports suggested 'that some of the victims may not have died of starvation. There were other methods used, including hurting them'. The discovery of the bodies deeply shocked Kenya - an impact amplified last

week by the announcement that a prominent televangelist would face charges over the 'mass killing' of his supporters.

Ezekiel Otero, the flamboyant head of the New Life Prayer Centre and Church, who was arrested on Thursday, is suspected of crimes including murder, aiding suicide, abduction, radicalisa-

tion, crimes against humanity, child cruelty, fraud and money laundering. Prosecutor Peter Kiprop said last week that there was 'credible information' linking the bodies found in the forest to the deaths of several 'innocent and vulnerable followers' of Otero.

Otero and Nthenge share a 'history of business investments' including a television station that was used to pass 'radicalised messages' to followers, Kiprop said in court documents.

The two pastors are currently in detention and are to appear in court in different towns on Tuesday. Newly elected President William Ruto, in remarks on April 24, said there was no difference between rogue cult leader and 'terrorists'. "I have instructed the agencies responsible to take up the matter and to get to the root cause and to the bottom of the activities of... people who want to use religion to advance weird, unacceptable ideology," he said.

AFP

CHARLES' CORONATION

Debut role for minority faiths, languages

The May 6 service will feature a prominent role for Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jewish leaders

London, UK - The UK's non-Christian faiths and its Celtic languages will play a prominent role for the first time in a royal coronation when King Charles III is crowned next week, organisers said on Saturday.

The May 6 service at Westminster Abbey will be overwhelmingly drawn from the Christian liturgy as Charles takes an oath, in English, to serve as 'Defender of the (Protestant) Faith' and to protect the established Church of England.

But in a first, it will also feature a prominent role for Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jewish leaders, according to the order of service released by the office of Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.

At the end of the coronation, they will deliver a greeting in unison to Charles declaring that 'as neighbours in faith, we acknowledge the value of public service'.

"We unite with people of all faiths and beliefs in thanksgiving, and in service with you for the common good," they will say.

Members of the House of



This file photo shows King Charles III and Camilla, Queen Consort, looking at their throne seat covers during a visit to the Royal College of Needlework at Hampton Court Palace in East Molesey, south-west London on March 21, 2023 (AFP)

Lords from the minority faiths will hand non-Christian regalia to the king, such as gold bracelets and the royal robe.

Rishi Sunak, Britain's first Hindu prime minister, will give

a reading from the Bible at the service, which will also be attended by Scotland's First Minister Humza Yousaf, the first Muslim to hold the post and to lead a Western Euro-

pean government.

Nightly prayer

Charles is a committed Christian and, according to the memoir 'Spare' by his younger son

Prince Harry, prays every night.

But the king also has a lifelong interest in other religions, and has spoken in the past about defending all faiths, not just Anglicanism, as Britain

grew more multi-cultural.

Before his mother Queen Elizabeth II's state funeral in September last year, he held a reception at Buckingham Palace for faith leaders, and described himself as a 'committed Anglican Christian'.

But he recognised that the country he inherited is very different from the one his mother did 70 years previously.

"I have always thought of Britain as a 'community of communities'," he said.

"That has led me to understand that the sovereign has an additional duty... to protect the diversity of our country, including by protecting the space for faith itself." In another coronation first, Charles will pray aloud during the service, to ask God that 'I may be a blessing to all thy children, of every faith and conviction'.

He will also receive blessings from other Christian leaders, including from the Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Scottish Free Church denominations.

A Greek choir will sing as a tribute to his late father, Prince Philip, who was born on the island of Corfu. A Gospel choir

will also perform.

Four tongues

Diversity in the coronation service will extend to a role for the English-speaking UK's other native languages: Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic.

As heir, Charles was the first Prince of Wales in seven centuries to learn Welsh, which today counts nearly 540,000 speakers.

During the coronation, after a greeting and introduction by Welby, a prayer will be sung in Welsh. After the archbishop's sermon, verses of a hymn will be sung in all three minority languages. "The coronation is first and foremost an act of Christian worship," said Welby, who leads the worldwide Anglican communion.

'At the same time, the service contains new elements that reflect the diversity of our contemporary society.

"I am delighted that the service will recognise and celebrate tradition, speaking to the great history of our nation, our customs, and those who came before us."

AFP

Who's coming to the coronation?

London, UK - The coronation of King Charles III will be attended by 2,000 people.

Here's what we know about who is expected to be there.

TURNING UP

► Prince Harry, estranged from most members of his family after quitting royal duties and airing his grievances in public, confirmed he would attend after months of reported negotiations with Buckingham Palace.

► World leaders including the French President Emmanuel Macron; Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese; German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier; Polish President Andrzej Duda; President of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos Jr, Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins; Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

► China vice-president Han Zheng.

► Northern Ireland's nationalist first minister-elect Michelle O'Neill. Her party, Sinn Fein, wants reunification on the island of Ireland and opposes the monarchy.

► UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty along with members of the cabinet.

► Hundreds of community heroes honoured by the monarchy including English schoolboy Max Woosey who slept in a tent in his garden for three years to raise money for charity, and Richard Thomas who delivered 10,000 prescriptions to people during the COVID-19 lockdown.

► Four hundred young people from organisations supported by the royal family.

► Royals including King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia of Spain; Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary of Denmark; Crown Prince Fumihito and Crown Princess Kiko of Japan; Crown Prince Haakon and Crown Princess Mette-

Marit of Norway; King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima of The Netherlands; Prince Albert II and Princess Charlene of Monaco; King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of Belgium; King Abdullah II and Queen Rania of Jordan; Queen Anne-Marie and Crown Prince Pavlos of the Greek royal family; Margareta, custodian of the Romanian crown and Prince Radu; Grand Duke Henri and Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg; Maori King Tuheitia; King Carl XVI Gustaf and Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden; King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida of Thailand.

► Around 80 members of the lower and upper houses of the UK parliament.

► Food writer Tom Parker Bowles and art curator Laura Lopes, Queen Camilla's children, as well as their father Andrew Parker Bowles, Camilla's first husband.

AFP

British people urged to swear allegiance to the king

London, UK - All Britons will be called on to swear allegiance to King Charles III at his coronation, an oath hitherto reserved for British nobility, in a move that has upset anti-royalists.

The office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who will lead the coronation ceremony on May 6 at Westminster Abbey, announced on Saturday that the traditional 'Homage of Peers' - during which representatives of the nobility kneel before the king and pledge allegiance to him - would be scrapped.

Instead, the ceremony will include a 'Homage of the People', with the archbishop calling on all people in the United Kingdom and other places where King Charles is the head of state to swear allegiance.

The archbishop will call on 'all persons of goodwill in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and of the other realms and the territories to make their homage, in heart and voice, to their undoubted king, defender of all'.

The order of service will read:



People walk beneath flags of the Union and Commonwealth along The Mall, in central London, on Sunday (AFP)

"All who so desire, in the abbey, and elsewhere, say together: I swear that I will pay true allegiance to Your Majesty, and to your heirs and successors according to law. So help me God."

British parliamentarians, but also Canadians since the British sovereign is their head of state, already swear allegiance to the monarch when they take office.

On Sunday, several elected representatives interviewed in the British media indicated that they will take the new oath during

the coronation.

However, the plans to ask the public to pledge their allegiance to the king during the coronation have been branded 'offensive, tone deaf and a gesture that holds the people in contempt' by an anti-monarchy group.

Graham Smith, a spokesman for Republic, which campaigns for the abolition of the British monarchy, said: "In a democracy it is the head of state who should be swearing allegiance

to the people, not the other way around."

The anti-monarchist movement plans to demonstrate on Saturday.

The introduction of the new oath is one of the changes to the centuries-old ceremony, which the palace wants to evolve, particularly to reflect the country's diversity. The last coronation was 70 years ago when Charles' mother, Queen Elizabeth II, was crowned.

AFP

UN holds Afghanistan crisis talks sans Taliban officials

Doha, Qatar - The Taliban authorities will be absent from UN-led talks on Afghanistan that open on Monday in Qatar, as a government spokesman rejects linking international engagement with women's rights in the crisis-stricken country.

Envoys from the United States, China and Russia - as well as major European aid donors and key neighbours such as Pakistan - are among representatives from about 25 countries and groups called for two days of talks by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, however, have not been invited to the meeting which would focus on how to deal with them and press them to ease a ban on women working and girls going to school.

The Taliban government's deputy spokesman, Bilal Karimi,

said on Monday it 'wants positive engagement with the world'.

But 'internal issues' - such as curbs on women's rights - should not factor into decisions about diplomatic engagement and formal recognition, he said in Kabul. "These should not be used as political tools," he said. "Countries should have the moral courage to independently come forward for positive engagement."

On Saturday, a small group of Afghan women staged a weekend protest march in Kabul to oppose any moves to recognise the Taliban government.

In an open letter to the Doha meeting, a coalition of Afghan women's groups said they were 'outraged' that any country would consider formal ties with the government that the UN calls the 'de facto authorities'.

AFP

Nurses in England walk out as dispute intensifies

London, UK - Nurses in England walked out again on Monday, with some critical services due to be hit for the first time.

The industrial action is the latest stoppage in an increasingly bitter dispute with the government over pay and conditions.

The 28-hour strike, which started at 8pm (1900 GMT) on Sunday, comes after members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) earlier this month voted to reject a five-per cent government pay increase offer.

The walkout is one of many across the private and public sector over the past year as workers have grappled with double-digit inflation.

All hospitals have been guaranteed a minimum level of cover for intensive care and trauma.

But the latest strike is the first time areas such as intensive



Healthcare workers hold placards as they demonstrate on Westminster Bridge, near to St Thomas' Hospital in London on Monday (AFP)

care, chemotherapy and dialysis have been hit, although some exemptions had been agreed.

In previous walkouts, such services had been completely excluded from strike action.

RCN General Secretary Pat Cullen called on the health minister Steve Barclay to 'come back around the table and put a better offer on the table'.

"We need to pay nurses de-

We need to pay nurses decently... (or they) will be left with no option but to continue with the action that they are taking

PAT CULLEN

cently and what we need to see now is the NHS standing up and being very clear with the government that they need to address the nursing crisis that they've got right throughout the NHS," she told Sky news.

'And until they do so our nurses unfortunately, will be left with no option but to continue with the action that they are tak-

ing," she said.

Unions representing other health care workers including Unison and the GMB have voted in favour of the government's pay offer. Unite and the RCN have voted against.

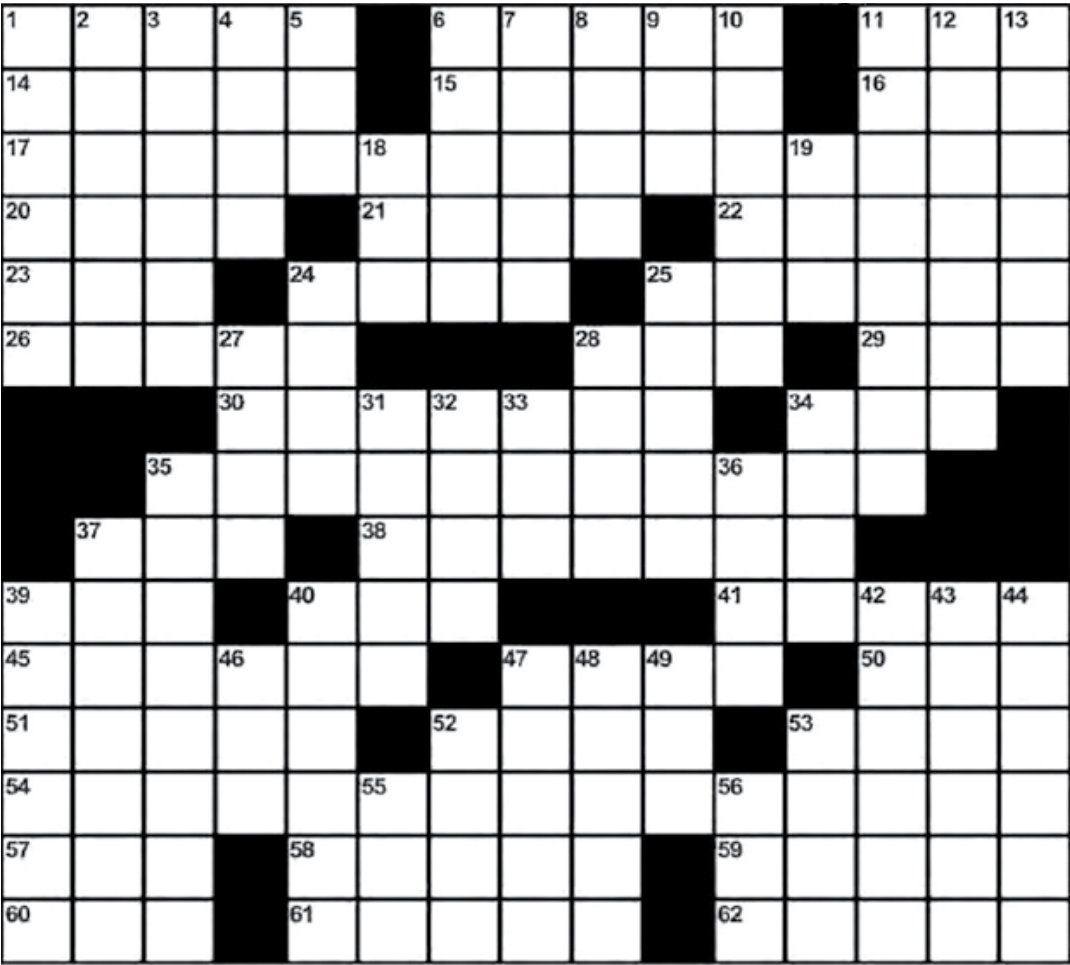
Barclay described the RCN's decision to go ahead with the walkout as 'hugely disappointing' despite 'the government's fair and reasonable offer on pay'.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said big pay hikes are unaffordable and risk fuelling inflation. Doctors have also staged strike action and are demanding a 35 per cent pay increase.

Their last stoppage earlier this month lasted four days with doctors leaders arguing that pandemic backlogs coupled with staff shortages are massively increasing workloads, endangering patients.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

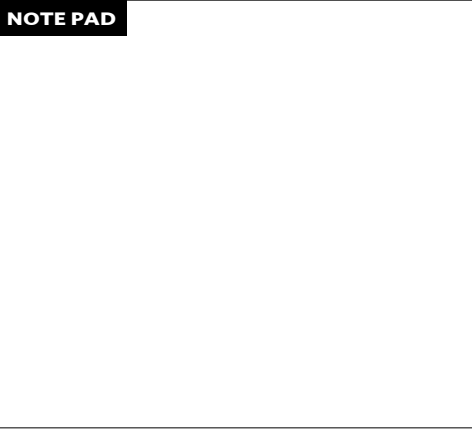
- 1) Deep-space mission
6) Buy-one-get-one-free item?
11) Blue
14) Satisfy a debt
15) Bridal path
16) Stray dog
17) Zane Grey novel (with "Riders")
20) Clubs or hearts
21) Four's inferior
22) Republic on the Bay of Bengal, formerly
23) Suffix with "manner"
24) Low islands
25) Compare opinions
26) Do schoolwork?
28) Lodge frequenter
29) "... day now ..."
30) Traveler's need
34) Do a thespian's job
35) Theme of many films
COUNTING CANDLES
37) Wrinkly faced dog
38) Baton wielder
39) Drivel
40) Be decisive
41) Actress Samantha

- 45) Some kitchen gadgets
47) "Give that_ cigar!"
50) "To a Skylark," for one
51) Japanese port
52) Utah lily
53) Ponzi scheme, e.g.
54) Draw attention to one-self
57) Vane direction, some-times
58) Discover
59) Cut down
60) Criminal patterns, for short
61) Cereal killer
62) Dilettantish
DOWN
1) "To your health!"
2) Decline
3) Kia model
4) Thai currency
5) Ball in a socket
6) Long-beaked fish
7) Puts on the payroll
8) Catch a glimpse of
9) Winner's take, often
10) Nike rival
11) Al Pacino gangster film
12) Make greater

- 13) Depressing
18) Home and school link, briefly
19) Juliet, to Romeo
24) Ground-up bait
25) Chin indentation
27) Blockage
28) Narcissists' problems
31) Hobbles
32) Buzzing pest
33) Gray, or this puzzle's theme
34) All excited
35) Some bakery products
36) Side squared, for a square
37) Buddy
39) For the time being
40) Ancient prophet
42) Mini-racer
43) Wise sayings
44) Treatment that works
46) Barely make (with "out")
4 7) Paris transport
48) Insurance company worker
49) Easter lead-in
52) Knit goods problem

- 53) Antares, for one
55) Bard's "always"

- 56) Bath bath



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Effective communication isn't as easy for everyone to achieve as it is for you, so be on the lookout for people who really need help getting their meaning across. You can step in at the right moment to clarify their thoughts and help them get on the right track. Also, expect to have a very interesting conversation with a random person today, someone next to you in a line, a fellow commuter, or just someone riding the elevator with you. Don't miss your chance to connect.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
You should share your unique, open-minded perspective with someone close to you who is struggling right now. They need your help, even though they might not realize it. You see their dilemma in a way that they should know about. It will be uplifting for them and give them some hope. You can help them see what's possible, not what's problematic. So make some time today to take a walk with them, cook them a meal of comfort food, or just ask them how they're feeling.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You need to be very careful when you're dealing with other people today. Not everyone is up to speed on the latest goings-on, and you could be listening to people who don't really know what time it is. It will be important to make sure that you know who's in the know and who's totally out of the loop! Find out who's giving out all the directions or booking the reservations for a social event. Make sure they know that you're coming!



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Wear your emotions on your sleeve today and let the special people in your life know what you're feeling! When you meet up with that person you're dying to get to know better or someone you need to impress, get down to communicating your real feelings right away. Speak in honest terms and ask for what you think you deserve. When you stop playing games, you start understanding other people. Being up front and honest can be challenging, but it's always worth it in the end.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Communication could be a problem today. The people you'll be dealing with aren't patient enough to listen to each other, and conflict could ensue. At the very least there could be some serious misunderstandings that cause delays and confusion. Don't be surprised if people look to you to get everyone back on track and calm again. You're just about the only person who can get everyone's attention for any significant period of time, and you're definitely ready for the job!



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Your charm is bubbling out of you like champagne today, and you'll be able to attract a lot of diverse people. Unfortunately, in that mix there will inevitably be some very flighty folks, the kind of people who always talk about getting together but also always back out of your plans at the last minute. Just don't put too much faith in these good-time friends and you won't be disappointed if they let you down. Keep things light and you'll stay bright!



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
This is a great day to make big plans with your friends! They have the time, you have the time, and everybody has the desire. You all just have to grab hold of the energy that surrounds you and put things in motion. Send some group messages and get those plans rolling. Before the end of the day you should have narrowed things down to a time or at least a place. Consider putting together a budget everyone agrees on. Don't let money issues get in the way of a good time.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Don't be afraid to ask for things to change in one of your relationships. You are well within your rights to want to make things more the way you want them to be. Today, you should talk about new things you'd like to see added to your relationship and which old things you'd like to do away with once and for all. The only rules in this thing between the two of you are the ones you two agree on. And none of them will change until you start that conversation.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
If your love life hasn't been going through a very active phase lately, that could all change today! You could experience a strong intellectual connection with someone who everyone thinks is single and ready to mingle. If you are too, this could be a golden opportunity. But if you're attached, use this spark of energy to inject new life into your current relationship and leave this person be! Just enjoy this meeting of the minds for what it can be: platonic.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
It's time to get totally flirtatious today. You've been making eye contact at that cutie for a while now, and where has it gotten you? Maybe a jolt of excitement here and there, but no real progress has been made. Luckily, there's no better time than today to kick it up a notch. Linger a little bit longer with that eye contact. Say hello. Ask about their weekend. Start some harmless small talk and just see where it goes.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
When you see a chance to get ahead today (and you will), you have to take it, no matter how complicated it might make your life. Save all of your conventional thinking and deep contemplation for another time. Right now, your life should be all about taking risks because they're bound to pay off big time. You've been playing things safe for long enough. Today, go out into the world ready to roll the dice and bet big. You're overdue for a big win.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
If you're in a partnership that isn't exactly what you want, then don't move forward with it, no matter how great it looks on paper. This holds true whether it's a romantic relationship, business partnership, or even a casual friendship. If you aren't getting as much as you're giving, or not feeling supported by this other person in the manner you require, stop moving it forward. Wait for them to take things to the next level. You can't be the only one driving this.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Luge and skeleton racing were developed in the late 19th century in which country?
A. Switzerland
B. England
C. India
D. Australia
2. What compound in the human body acts as a neurotransmitter and helps to regulate temperature?
A. Cortisone
B. Serotonin
C. Haemoglobin
D. Insulin
3. Countries with territory in the Sahel include Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and ...?
A. Zimbabwe
B. Morocco
C. Mauritania
D. Mozambique

Answers: 1. A 2. B 3. C

KIDS COLOURING

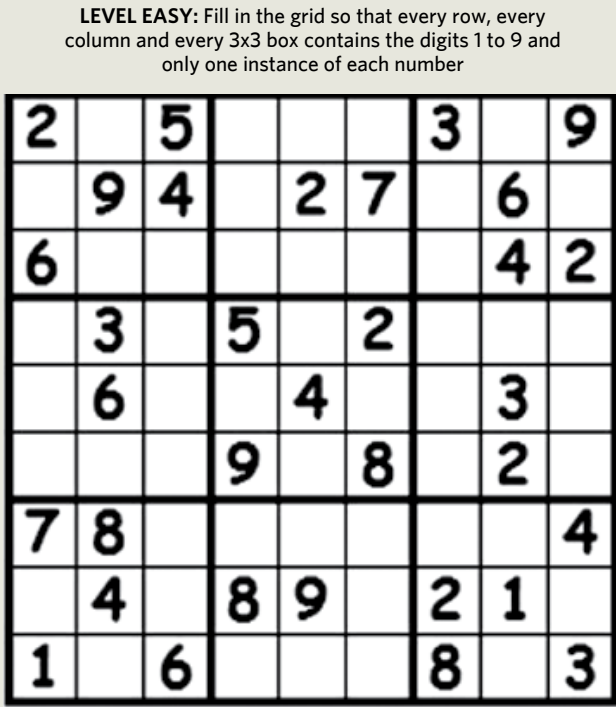


BOGGLER



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

DO YOU SUDOKU?



WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.
Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



'REALLY STUPID'

Achraf Hakimi sent off as PSG lose at home to Lorient

Paris, France - Paris Saint-Germain's lead at the top of Ligue 1 was cut to five points on Sunday after Achraf Hakimi was sent off in their 3-1 home defeat by Lorient and nearest rivals Marseille beat Auxerre 2-1.

Mid-table Lorient were already ahead through Enzo Le Fee's early goal at the Parc des Princes before Hakimi was dismissed for a second yellow card inside the opening 20 minutes.

Kylian Mbappe equalised for the home side in opportunistic fashion, pouncing to score after Lorient goalkeeper Yvon Mvogo had thrown the ball to the ground wrongly thinking the referee had blown for a free-kick.

Yet Lorient deservedly retook the lead before half-time when Darlin Yongwa converted from close range, and they made sure of the win late on when Bamba Dieng ran through unchallenged to score at the second attempt after Gianluigi Donnarumma had stopped his shot.

The final whistle was met with loud jeers from the home support in a stadium where one end was closed as punishment after fans let off flares during a recent defeat by Lyon.

It was PSG's sixth Ligue 1 loss of 2023 and it allowed Marseille to close in, casting new doubt on the capital club's quest to win a French record 11th league title.

Marseille win

Marseille came from behind to win at home to Auxerre, with Cengiz Under's 75th-minute strike cancelling out Birama Toure's opener for their relegation-threatened opponents.

Alexis Sanchez then clinched all three points for Marseille on 77 minutes with his 13th league goal this season.

Third-placed Lens will move to within six points of PSG if they

Everyone in the dressing room is disappointed, and what I expect now is a reaction from everyone, from the players, the staff and everyone who works for the club

LUIS CAMPOS

beat Toulouse away in midweek.

"Our second half of the season has been very, very average. Too many players seem distracted," said PSG coach Christophe Galtier, who called Hakimi's second yellow card "really stupid".

"Everyone in the dressing room is disappointed, and what I expect now is a reaction from everyone, from the players, the staff and everyone who works for the club," Luis Campos, who is effectively PSG's sporting director in his role of football advisor, told broadcaster Canal Plus.

"There must be a reaction and we have to win the title. I am sure



Paris Saint-Germain's coach Christophe Galtier was unimpressed with Achraf Hakimi (L) who leaves the pitch after receiving a second yellow card during their French L1 match against FC Lorient on Sunday (AFP)

we will do it but we need to make sure we don't lose our heads. We need to be conscious of the fact we can do better and must do better."

PSG, who had Neymar watching in the stands as he continues

his recovery from an ankle injury, had not lost a home league game while conceding three goals since October 2010.

That was the final season before the Qatari takeover that transformed the club.

PSG's next four games are against Troyes, Ajaccio, Auxerre and Strasbourg, four clubs who are either in the relegation zone or fighting to avoid the drop.

Marseille and Lens also play each other next weekend, and it

remains highly unlikely that the Parisians might fail to retain their league crown.

Monaco's hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League were dealt a new blow in a comprehensive 4-0 home de-

feat against Montpellier.

Arnaud Nordin scored twice for Montpellier, with Faitout Maouassa and English former Arsenal winger Stephy Mavididi also on target.

AFP



Liverpool's Curtis Jones celebrates with team-mates after scoring against Tottenham in their English Premier League match on Sunday (AFP)

Last-gasp Jota ruins Spurs fightback as Liverpool win seven-goal thriller

Liverpool, United Kingdom - Liverpool kept alive their slender hopes of finishing in the Premier League's top four as Diogo Jota's stoppage-time strike ruined Tottenham's comeback from three goals down in a thrilling 4-3 victory on Sunday.

Jota blasted his dramatic winner just moments after Richarlison had headed Tottenham level in stoppage-time at Anfield.

Curtis Jones put Liverpool ahead and Luis Diaz, starting for the first time since October after an injury-plagued campaign, netted the hosts' second goal in the opening five minutes at Anfield.

Mohamed Salah's penalty extended Liverpool's dominant start before Harry Kane reduced the deficit with his 208th Premier League goal.

The Tottenham striker is level with Wayne Rooney as the Premier League's joint second highest all-time scorer behind Alan

Shearer. Kane's strike was followed by late goals from Son Heung-min and Richarlison in an astonishing finale that climaxed with Jota's winner.

A wild celebration from Jurgen Klopp left the Liverpool manager limping after injuring himself and earned a booking, with Tottenham caretaker boss Ryan Mason furious with the German's show of emotion in front of the visitors' bench.

Klopp's passion play came amid Liverpool's bid to salvage a disappointing season by qualifying for next season's Champions League.

The Reds still have a mountain to climb to reach the top four as they sit seven points behind fourth placed Manchester United, who have a game in hand. While Tottenham's top four hopes are in tatters, Liverpool are unbeaten in their last six games.

Atletico beat Valladolid to close on Madrid

Madrid, Spain - Atletico Madrid moved back within two points of second-placed Real Madrid in La Liga after surviving a Real Valladolid comeback in a 5-2 victory on Sunday.

Goals from Nahuel Molina, Jose Maria Gimenez and Alvaro Morata had visitors Atletico 3-0 ahead inside 38 minutes.

Valladolid hit back through a Cyle Larin penalty and Sergio Escudero's goal, but Atletico sealed victory thanks to Joaquin Fernandez's late own goal and an injury-time strike from Memphis Depay.

Atletico have little to play for in La Liga, sitting 13 points behind leaders Barcelona and 13 clear of fifth-placed Villarreal.

But Diego Simeone's men are finishing the season strongly and aiming to take second from Real.

They have won eight of their last nine league games, with the only blip a 1-0 loss at Barca.

Earlier on Sunday, Valencia's bid to avoid slipping out of La Liga for the first time since 1987 suffered another blow with a 2-1 loss at fellow strugglers Cadiz.

Valencia are now only two points and one place above the



Atletico Madrid's Nahuel Molina scores past Real Valladolid goalkeeper Jordi Masip in their Spanish league match on Sunday (AFP)

drop zone, although Espanyol's 1-0 win over Getafe prevented the six-time Spanish champions from falling into the bottom three. Ruben Baraja's side are two points clear of both 18th-placed Espanyol and second-bottom Getafe in the relegation dog-fight.

Cadiz moved above Valencia with their win and sit four points clear of danger.

The visitors were sunk by two goals either side of half-time from Gonzalo Escalante and Sergio Guardiola for Cadiz.

Samuel Lino pulled one back but Valencia failed to mount a comeback and now need a response against Villarreal in midweek. Villarreal gave their slim hopes of qualifying for the Champions League a boost with a 3-1 victory over Celta Vigo to

move within five points of fourth-placed Real Sociedad.

Senegalese youngster Nicolas Jackson scored twice as the Yellow Submarine also edged four points clear of Real Betis to strengthen their grip on the Europa League spot.

Betis were beaten 4-0 by Barcelona at the Camp Nou on Saturday as the Catalan giants maintained their 11-point lead

over Real Madrid at the top of the table with six games to play.

Espanyol ended a dreadful run of seven defeats and one draw in eight games thanks to Joselu's first-half penalty against Getafe.

The Spain striker has scored 14 La Liga goals this season, fewer than only Robert Lewandowski and Karim Benzema.

AFP

Bayern sink Hertha to move top of Bundesliga

Berlin, Germany - Bayern Munich moved top of the Bundesliga and ahead of Borussia Dortmund on Sunday as second-half goals from Serge Gnabry and Kingsley Coman gave the reigning champions a 2-0 home win over rock-bottom Hertha Berlin.

Bayern are now one point clear of Dortmund, who drew 1-1 at Bochum on Friday, and back on course for a record-extending 11th straight Bundesliga title with four matches remaining.

Lowly Hertha defended well for long periods against a Bayern



Bayern Munich's Serge Gnabry scores against Hertha Berlin during their Bundesliga match on Sunday (AFP)

side still struggling to find the fluency they displayed earlier in the season.

Gnabry broke the deadlock, heading in a Joshua Kimmich chip in the 69th minute, his first league goal since early February.

The goal broke Hertha's stubborn resistance, Coman scoring 10 minutes later, again assisted by Kimmich.

"(We) need to keep believing in ourselves," Coman told DAZN. "We can be champions. We will try everything."

Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel

said: "(The win) will do us good, it'll give us a bit more self-confidence and trust."

Hertha coach Pal Dardai was coaching just his second match since returning for a third stint in charge of the club who are six points from safety and facing relegation.

"The team fought hard. I saw a team today," he said.

In Sunday's late game, a double from Jonas Wind sent Wolfsburg past Mainz into seventh with a 3-0 win.

AFP

THE TOP GUNS

Oman's Al Zubair and team-mate Schiller lead International GT Open Series after finishing second in race two in Portugal

Portimao, Portugal - Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair and German team-mate Fabian Schiller followed up a stunning win in race one with the runner-up spot in the shorter second race at round one of the 2023 International GT Open at the Autodromo Internacional Algarve, in Portimao, Portugal, on Sunday.

The Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes AMG GT3 crew had qualified in pole position and led for much of the second race before losing vital seconds during the driver change over.

With a little over 11 minutes to go, Al-Zubair - who had taken over from Schiller for the second part of the race - was trailing Team Motopark's Marcos Siebert by 4.408 seconds but the Omani closed to within 2.257 seconds at the finish, as Siebert and his Mexican team-mate Diego Menchaca claimed victory in the second race in their Mercedes AMG GT3.

Eastalent Racing's Simon Re-

icher and Christopher Haase rounded off the podium places at the helm of their Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II.

The second place, to add to the win in race one, means that Al Zubair and Schiller now lead the International GT Open series by two points after the opening

result.

"To leave the first round of the International GT Open as the first round leaders is a strong indicator of the strength of the team we have built. I am excited for the next races and looking forward to it."

Picking up where they left off

It has been a great weekend and I am feeling very comfortable with the team and the car. It has boosted my confidence. I couldn't re-ally have asked for much more

AL FAISAL AL ZUBAIR

round.

Al Zubair said: "It has been a great weekend and I am feeling very comfortable with the team and the car. It has boosted my confidence."

"I couldn't really have asked for much more. P1 yesterday and second today with a 10-second handicap. This was an amazing

on Saturday, Schiller put the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes take at the top of the standings by claiming pole position for the weekend's second race on Sunday morning.

The German beat Optimum Motorsport's Charlie Fagg by 0.258 seconds to claim the perfect star position for the race.



Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair in action at the 2023 International GT Open in Portimao, Portugal, on Sunday

Alcaraz sets up Zverev French Open revenge chance in Madrid

Madrid, Spain - World number two and defending champion Carlos Alcaraz on Sunday set up a Madrid Open last 16 duel with Alexander Zverev, the German rival who handed him a heart-breaking, reality-check defeat at Roland Garros last year.

Alcaraz defeated Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria 6-2, 7-5 in the Madrid third round as he continues his bid to win a 10th tour title before his 20th birthday.

The Spanish crowd-pleaser was briefly troubled when 31-year-old Dimitrov broke for a 4-2 lead in the second set.

However, that merely delayed the inevitable as Alcaraz wrapped up victory in 90 minutes, making just four unforced errors. It was his 25th win of 2023 against just two losses and a 15th victory on clay.

The 19-year-old swept past Zverev in the Madrid final in



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates after beating Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov in the Madrid Open on Sunday (AFP)

2022 for the loss of just four games.

However, just weeks later, the German claimed a four-set victory in the French Open quarter-finals. That was Zverev's third win in the pair's four meetings.

"I really want to play that match. We played a few times, head-to-head he is up," said Alcaraz. "I really want to show my great level here in front of my home crowd. I have great memories from last year in the final."

Finau holds off Rahm to win Mexico Open

Mexico City, Mexico - American Tony Finau held off the threat from Masters champion and world number Jon Rahm to win the Mexico Open on Sunday, shooting a final round 66 to win by three strokes from the Spaniard and claim his sixth PGA Tour title.

Rahm, the defending champion at Vidanta, put himself in contention after a 10-under course-record 61 in his third round on Saturday put him within two strokes.

But his four-under round of 67



Tony Finau with the trophy

on Sunday was not enough to close the gap on Finau, who produced a calm and solid bogey free round, completing a consistent week where he had shot 65, 64 and 65 before the final round.

The Vidanta course in Puerto Vallarta is a happy hunting ground for Finau, who ended tied for second behind Rahm last year.

That result sparked an upturn in form for Finau, who went on to win three events in seven starts with victories in Minnesota, Detroit and the Houston Open.

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BANGALORE BEAT LUCKNOW IN LOW-SCORING AFFAIR

MATCH 43



Royal Challengers Bangalore's Virat Kohli (R) celebrates with team-mate Faf du Plessis after taking the catch to dismiss Lucknow Super Giants' Ayush Badoni during their Indian Premier League match on Monday. Karn Sharma and Josh Hazlewood took two wickets each as Bangalore choked Lucknow to win the low-scoring match by 18 runs. Earlier, Kohli made 31 and Du Plessis top-scored with 44 as Bangalore made 126 for 9 which proved more than enough in the end.

MATCH 44

6 PM



GUJARAT TITANS



DELHI CAPITALS

Chris Jordan joins Mumbai Indians for remainder of IPL

Mumbai, India - England fast bowler Chris Jordan has joined Mumbai Indians as a replacement player for the remainder of IPL 2023.

Jordan went unsold at a base price of INR 2 crore at the auction that was held in December last year, but has previous IPL experience with Royal Challengers Bangalore, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Punjab Kings and Chennai Super Kings.

The 34-year-old has picked up 27 IPL wickets in 28 innings at an average of 30.85 and an economy of 9.32. Jordan last played in the IPL in 2022 for Super Kings, where he managed two wickets in four outings.

Mumbai have struggled with their international fast bowlers this season with Jasprit Bumrah unavailable, Jhye Richardson ruled out and Jofra Archer recently returning from Belgium after meeting an elbow specialist. While Riley Meredith replaced Richardson, it is not yet known who Jordan has replaced



Chris Jordan

in the Mumbai camp.

Jordan has recent T20 experience with a season with eventual champions Gulf Giants at the ILT20 tournament in February. He finished the tournament as the leading wicket-taker, picking 20 wickets in ten innings, averaging 13.80. He also played three T20Is against Bangladesh last month.

Archer played a big part in the win on Sunday evening against Rajasthan Royals, as they moved up to seventh on the points table. ESPNcricinfo

From homeless to hero

Rajasthan opener Jaiswal is one of the stars of the IPL

New Delhi, India - He once lived in tents and sold street food to pursue his cricketing dream. Now, sizzling talent Yashasvi Jaiswal is the toast of the Indian Premier League.

On Sunday the Indian 21-year-old smashed 124 off 62 balls for Rajasthan Royals in front of a huge crowd in Mumbai, the city he moved to as a child from a poor family in Uttar Pradesh.

"What a story, what a special talent. Yashasvi Jaiswal is a superstar in the making," former Australia batsman and ex-IPL coach Tom Moody tweeted.

"He has got real talent. The kind of domestic season he has had, he has taken that form into IPL. Good for him, good for Indian cricket and good for RR as well," India's all-format captain Rohit



Rajasthan Royals' Yashasvi Jaiswal celebrates after scoring a century during their match against Mumbai Indians on Sunday

Sharma said.

The left-hander's maiden IPL century was not only the highest score of the current season -- it also put him on top in the league's 2023 batting rankings.

With a strike rate of 159.70,

he has now racked up 428 runs, ahead of South Africa's on-fire Faf du Plessis (422 - Royal Challengers Bangalore) and New Zealand opener Devon Conway (414 - Chennai Super Kings).

Jaiswal moved to Mumbai -

without his parents - when he was just 11.

"I used to sleep in a dairy and then stayed at my uncle's place but it wasn't big enough and he asked me to find a different place," Jaiswal told AFP in an interview in 2020.

"I then started to stay in a tent near Azad Maidan (a Mumbai sports ground) and would play cricket there during the day.

"I sold pani puri at night, to help earn some money for food," he said, referring to a popular street snack.

Jaiswal also did some cricket scoring and fetched balls in club games to help finance his career before being noticed by coach Jwala Singh, who became the boy's legal guardian.

"I saw in Yashasvi a younger me and thought God is giving me another chance to play well in my second innings of life," Singh, who played state-level cricket, told AFP in 2020.

Jaiswal won a place in the Mumbai state team in 2019 and became the youngest batsman,

at 17 years and 292 days, to score a domestic one-day double century. His big break came when the youngster was snapped up by Rajasthan for \$338,000 in the 2019 auctions of the world's richest T20 tournament.

In 2020, Jaiswal was the leading scorer for India's under-19 team, and player of the tournament at the 2020 under-19 World Cup.

Losing cause

His first three IPL seasons were ordinary, but this year he has formed a fearsome opening pair with England white-ball captain Jos Buttler.

His sparkling innings on Sunday was in a losing cause, with Mumbai Indians winning with three balls after Australian axeman Tim David blasted three sixes in a row in the final over.

But Jaiswal was still named player of the match and was typically humble afterwards, even after his innings with 16 fours and eight sixes.

AFP

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FIGHT AGAINST COVID

VACCINE PATCHES

SCIENTISTS DEVELOP MOBILE PRINTER FOR MRNA JAB PATCHES

Scientists have developed the first mobile printer that can produce thumbnail-sized patches able to deliver mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, hoping the tabletop device will help immunise people in remote regions.

While many hurdles remain and the 3D printer is likely years away from becoming available, experts hailed the 'exciting' finding.

The device prints 2cm-wide patches which each contain hundreds of tiny needles that administer a vaccine when pressed against the skin.

These "micro-needle patches" offer a range of advantages over traditional jabs in the arm, including that they can be self-administered, are relatively painless, could be more palatable to the

vaccine-hesitant and can be stored at room temperature for long periods of time.

The popular mRNA COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna need to be refrigerated, which has caused distribution complications - particularly in developing countries that have condemned the unequal distribution of doses during the pandemic.

The new printer was tested with the Pfizer and Moderna jabs, according to a study in the journal Nature Biotechnology, but the goal of the international team of researchers behind it is for it to be adapted to whatever vaccines are needed.

Robert Langer, co-founder of Moderna and one of the study's

authors, told AFP that he hoped the printer could be used for 'the next Covid, or whatever crisis occurs'.

Ana Jaklenec, a study author also from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said the printer could be sent to areas such as refugee camps or remote villages to 'quickly immunise the local population', in the event of a fresh outbreak of a disease like Ebola.

Vacuum-sealed
Micro-needle patch vaccines are already under development

for COVID-19 and a range of other diseases, including polio, measles and rubella.

But the patches have long struggled to take off because producing them is an expensive, laborious process often

involving large machines

for centrifugation.

To shrink that process down, the researchers used a vacuum chamber to suck the printer "ink" into the bottom of their patch moulds, so it reaches the points of the tiny needles.

The vaccine ink is made up of lipid nano particles containing mRNA vaccine molecules, as well as a polymer similar to sugar water.

Once allowed to dry, the patches can be stored at room temperature for at least six months, the study found. The patches even survived a month at a balmy 37° C.

Mice which were given a vaccine patch produced a similar level of antibody response to others immunised via a traditional injection, the study said.

The printed patches are currently being tested on primates,

which if successful would lead to trials on humans.

A real breakthrough?

The printer can make 100 patches in 48 hours. But modelling suggested that - with improvements - it could potentially print thousands a day, the researchers said.

"And you can have more than one printer," Langer added.

Joseph DeSimone, a chemist at Stanford University not involved in the research, said that "this work is particularly exciting as it realises the ability to produce vaccines on demand".

"With the possibility of scaling up vaccine manufacturing and improved stability at higher temperatures, mobile vaccine printers can facilitate widespread access to RNA vaccines," said DeSimone, who has invented his own micro-needle patches.

Antoine Flahault, director of the Institute of Global Health at the University of Geneva, said that production and access to vaccines could be "transformed through such a printer".

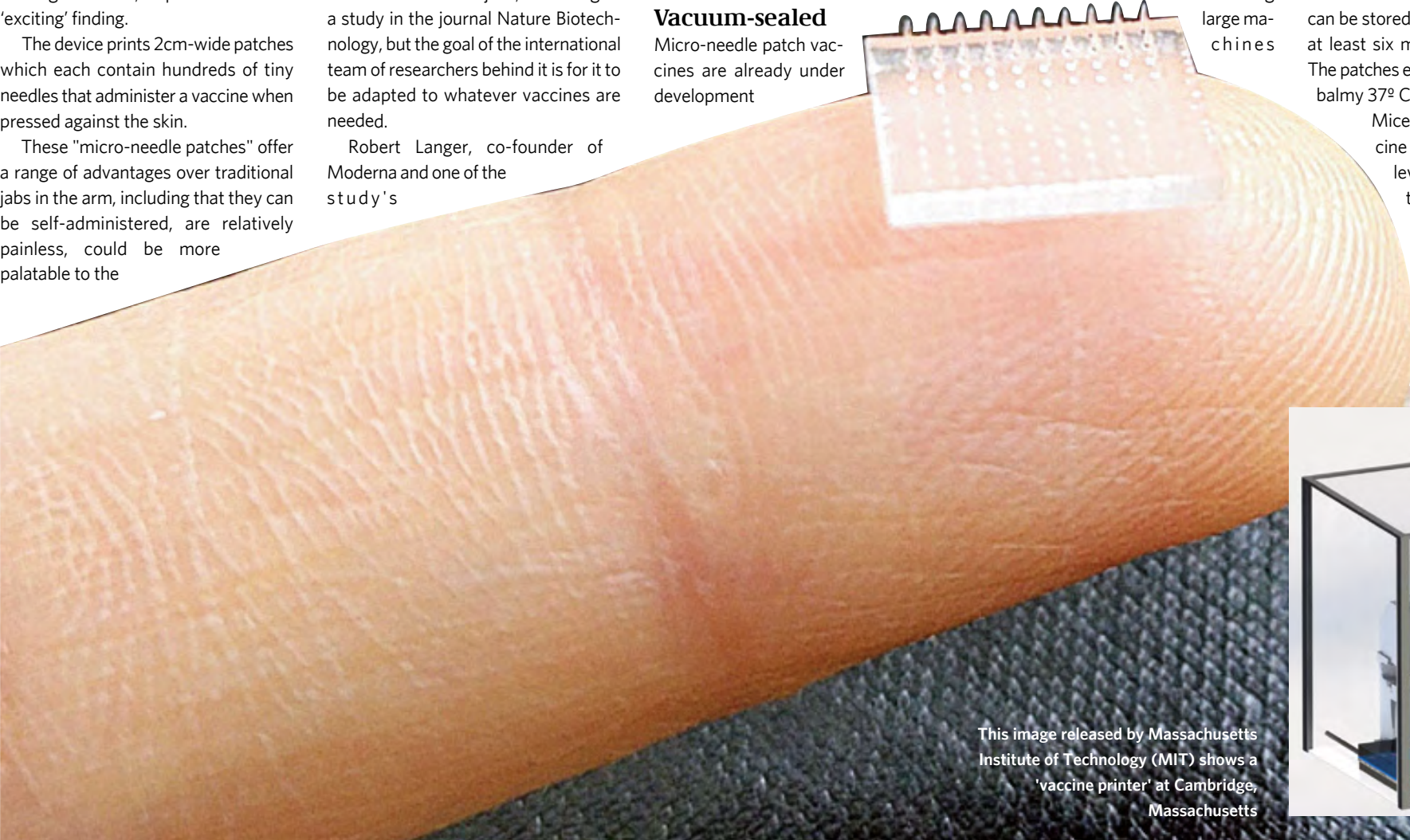
"It might become a real breakthrough," he told AFP, while warning that this depended on approval and mass production, which could take years.

Darrick Carter, a biochemist and CEO of US biotech firm PAI Life Sciences, was less optimistic.

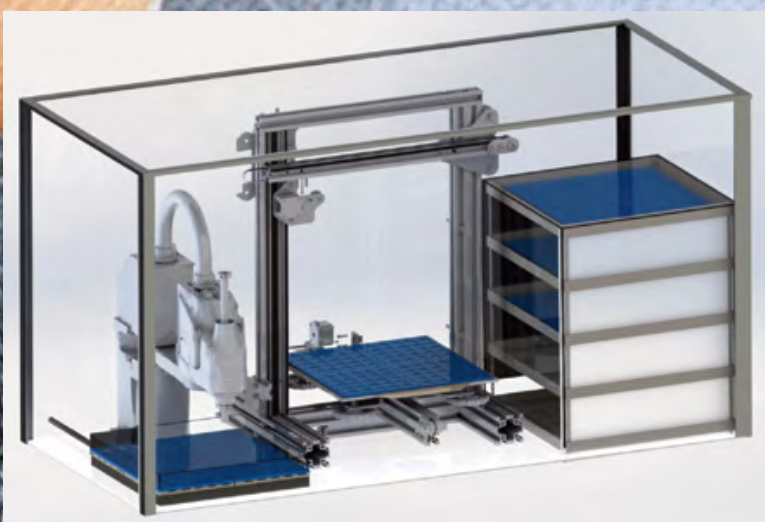
He said that the field of micro-needle patches had "suffered for 30 years" because no one had yet been able to scale up manufacturing in a cost-effective way.

"Until someone figures out the manufacturing scale-up issues for micro-needle patches they will remain niche products," he said.

AFP



This image released by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) shows a 'vaccine printer' at Cambridge, Massachusetts



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Hasan Faraj was brushing his teeth on the morning of April 15 when gunfire erupted outside his building near Khartoum's airport, early shots in a war that caught him totally unprepared.

The Pakistani national had recently handed in his passport to a government office, complicating any effort to leave, and his paltry stash of food and other supplies meant he would struggle to wait out the fighting at home.

His solution finally came early Sunday morning when, after days of haggling with multiple Pakistani embassies, Faraj joined 51 other evacuees on a Saudi warship bound for Jeddah, clutching a special travel permit allowing him to fly home to Karachi.

"I feel very privileged," the 48-year-old told AFP, recounting 'very scary' days cowering from constant gunfire, shelling and aerial bombardment.

At the same time, he said he was worried for the many millions of Sudanese who have little hope of escaping the ongoing fighting that pits army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, head of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The violence has killed at least 528 people and wounded about 4,600, according to the health ministry, but those figures are likely to be incomplete.

"My friends, I'm really worried about them, especially in Khartoum," he said. "I know quite a few people, they have relocated to other locations which are safer, but for how long? Nobody knows."

Losing a country

Sunday's operation was carried out by the Saudi navy, which for more than a week has dispatched its fleet to Sudan to help evacuate thousands of civilians from all

ing a peaceful Ramadan and Eid al Fitr holiday with Sayed's relatives, but they were soon caught up in intense urban battles.

"Usually during Eid people distribute sweets, but this Eid they have distributed bullets," she said.

The family's journey to Port Sudan involved days of overland travel and, at one point, five hours of walking on a road too rough for vehicles.

Pulling away from Sudan's coast on Sunday morning, Sayed told AFP she was grateful for their safety but could not shake the feeling she was 'losing a country'.

"All of the Sudanese people are sad," she said. "There's no house which has happiness inside it."

Painful departure

It's a feeling that Mohammed Ali, a 44-year-old Pakistani national who lived for 13 years in Khartoum, can easily relate to.

The engineering professor had left his wife and children back in Pakistan several months ago so his daughters could sit for secondary school entrance exams -- a blessing in retrospect, given how much easier it made his flight from Sudan.

It also meant that, during the long passage to Jeddah, Ali was on his own to reflect about how the war had upended their lives and would force them to start over.

"It's very painful really. Because you know, my children were born here. They were studying here," he said, beginning to tear up. "Now I'm coming blank. I left everything. My house, everything. All the memories."

Nine hours later, as the warship approached the Jeddah port, Ali began crying again, this time for a different reason: he was envisioning a reunion with his family.

"They have been waiting for me for days," he said.

AFP

'USUALLY, DURING EID PEOPLE DISTRIBUTE SWEETS, BUT THIS EID, THEY HAVE DISTRIBUTED BULLETS,' SAID BADRIYAH AL SAYED, ONE OF THE EVACUEES IN SUDAN WHO ARE FACING A HARROWING TIME

over the world.

Well before dawn, the beleaguered passengers quietly lined up on a dock in Port Sudan, which has so far been untouched by the fighting, to board a tugboat that transported them out to the 102-metre-long corvette.

As choppy Red Sea waters rocked the vessel, Saudi naval and special forces

hoisted the passengers - and their luggage - aboard, where they were greeted with dates, juice and Arabic coffee.

Some had clearly left in a rush, carrying only plastic bags with stray articles of clothing, while others like Faraj had managed to bring multiple suitcases.

Faraj had even managed to pack a large white shell and bag of hibiscus leaves, souvenirs from a happier trip he made to Port Sudan as a tourist just four months ago.

Sunday's group also included Badriyah al Sayed, one of the relatively few Sudanese nationals who has participated in the evacuations, aided by her husband's home country, Oman.

In early April, the couple and their son had travelled to Sudan in hopes of spend-



Sudanese Badriyah al Sayed (C) stands with her disabled son aboard a tugboat on April 30 during a rescue operation from Port Sudan to Jeddah

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