

12 mining concession deals signed

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Minerals Development Oman, an affiliate of Oman Investment Authority, signed 12 exploration-to-mining concession agreements. This comes as the ministry adopts a new strategy to develop the minerals sector through concession agreements including legal, technical and financial terms. **DETAILS ON P13**



P10

LEWANDOWSKI
HAT-TRICK SINKS
SALZBURG



P13

OMAN CRUDE
SURGES TO
\$127.71



P19

'VAMPIRE' FINDS
LOVE AT FIRST BITE
WITH COMPANION



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY EMIR OF KUWAIT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on his country's National Day. In his cable, Shaikh Nawaf expressed his utmost appreciation for His Majesty's sincere sentiments and best wishes, praying to Allah the Almighty to grant His Majesty good health and well-being. He also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty and the relations between the two countries continuous development and growth.

TENDER BOARD AWARDS RO 17.56M PROJECTS

The Tender Board awarded projects worth RO 17.56 million. The most important projects were providing consultancy and administrative services for Oman Cultural Complex and National Records and Archives building; maintenance of dust roads in the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate; maintenance of dust roads in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate; upgrading the display of the Luban Land in Dhofar Governorate among others.

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INSIDE



SOUTH KOREA VOTES IN PRESIDENTIAL RACE | P6



UKRAINE A CHALLENGE TO INDIAN STRATEGY | P9



ARTIFICIAL REEFS HELP UNDERWATER LIFE FLOURISH

Duqm is getting a boost to help its underwater life flourish through the introduction of artificial reefs. The Special Economic Zone at Duqm introduced artificial reefs in key areas of the sea to create an attractive environment in the region for fish and divers and provide an unparalleled diving experience for tourists and residents of Duqm. It aims at sustaining the marine environment in the region, enhancing biodiversity, increasing fish production and creating habitats for marine creatures, including coral and other marine creatures, besides, reviving diving activity. **DETAILS ON P18**

MAJOR MEASURE TO BOOST REALTY SECTOR

Expats allowed to own real estate

VINOD NAIR
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The Sultanate of Oman continues to unveil fresh measures and incentives for foreign investors, including residents who have been staying in the country for many years.

As part of the efforts exerted to boost economic recovery and stimulate the real estate market, Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, issues a decision allowing non-Omani investors who hold a 'First Class Residency Card' to own a property in the Sultanate of Oman.

The decision clarifies that any investor wishing to get a 'First-Class Residency Card' must get a certificate from the real estate secretariat, which proves that he bought a residential unit or more with an amount of not less than RO 500,000 and RO 250,000 in



case he wishes to get the 'Second-Class Residency Card'.

In all cases, the possessing of the properties should be in the zones that are approved by the competent authorities.

The decision added that a non-Omani investor who holds a First-Class Residence Card has the right to own one property for residential, commercial, or industrial use outside the places

licensed for non-Omanis to own and this right is transferable to others, without prejudice to the law prohibiting non-Omanis from owning lands and real estate in some places based on Royal Decree No 29/2018 and the Executive Regulations issued pursuant to Ministerial Resolution No 292/2020.

The places where ownership of non-Omanis is prohibited include

Any investor wishing to get a 'First-Class Residency Card' must have bought a residential unit or more with an amount of not less than RO 500,000

MINISTRY

the governorates of Musandam, Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta, Dhofar (except for the Wilayat of Salalah), the wilayats of Liwa, Shinas, Masirah, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Jabal Shams and any other mountains of strategic importance determined by the competent authorities, islands, locations near palaces...



Erik van Scherpenzeel with Shaikh Dr Abdullah Salim al Harthi.

PDO provided 70,000 jobs through contractors

KABEER YOUSUF
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As part of the In Country Value (ICV), the Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has been able to provide 70,000 jobs and training opportunities with contractors over the past 10 years, according to the managing director.

Since the start of ICV in 2011, as much as 38 per cent of ICV value has been retained, while 73 opportunities have been operationalised and on an average, \$13 million has been spent on Social Investment Projects annually.

Speaking to the *Observer* on the sidelines of the 10th anniversary of the ICV at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Steve Phibister, Managing Director

of PDO, said that an average amount of \$520 million was spent towards SMEs and other local companies every year.

"We have been doing the ICV for the last one decade, and we are going to do it in future. A whopping 70,000 jobs and training opportunities were generated with contractors over the past 10 years."

"We will evolve how we do ICV in the coming years as we have a strategy in place," he added. He said that ICV has always been at the core of the business and ICV has always been the pivotal force to generate job opportunities.

"We are also catering new technologies for the energy transition as we usher into new phase with the motto of supporting the national economy and creating job opportunities for the youth." **SEE ALSO P15**

Turkey hosts Russia, Ukraine diplomats in bid for peace

ANTALYA: The Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers will on Thursday hold face-to-face talks in southern Turkey in the first high-level contact between Kyiv and Moscow since Russia invaded its neighbour two weeks ago.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has pushed for Turkey to play a mediation role, has expressed hope the talks can avert tragedy.

But analysts fear there are only the lowest chances of a breakthrough at the meeting in Antalya between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba.

Lavrov and Kuleba will be joined at the meeting on Thursday morning by Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. **SEE ALSO P7**

Dutch photographer documents Omani Renaissance

MUSCAT: Erik van Scherpenzeel, a dedicated photographer from the Netherlands, was wholeheartedly documenting the early stages of Sultanate of Oman's renaissance, way back from 1970 to 1974. He recently offered his exceptional collection as a special gift to the Sultanate of Oman, based on his deep love for the country and on

his keenness to enrich its national archives. His collection illuminates this pivotal era of the country's modern history.

After his engagement in the 1970s, Scherpenzeel visited the Sultanate of Oman for a second time, in the 1990s and produced another collection, which he collated with the earlier one under

the title "Oman, Past and Present".

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Scherpenzeel said that over the past four years he spent in the Sultanate of Oman in the early 70s, he was able to document a large number of scenes and landmarks of the governorates which reflected the social, cultural and heritage of the country.



Bilarab inaugurates ABA school’s new campus

KABEER YOUSUF
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His Highness Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said inaugurated the ABA Oman International School’s new world-class campus at Madinat Al Irfan on Wednesday.

HH Sayyid Bilarab, who is an alumnus of ABA, unveiled the foundation stone and toured the campus accompanied by Lamya al Kiyumi, ABA Board Chair, and Craig Williamson, ABA Head of School.

Located in Madinat Al Irfan at Airport Heights, the campus is spread over 3.5 hectares and includes a contemporary learning centre, state-of-the-art athletics centre, an avant-garde performing arts centre and an interactive learning space.

“Over the past 35 years, ABA has seen remarkable growth and we are delighted to begin the next chapter of our story at our new Al Irfan campus. To everyone who has been a part of our ABA family, this campus is the result of the vision and the culmination of the efforts of numerous heads of school,



board directors, teachers, staff, families, volunteers, architects, engineers and project managers,” Lamya al Kiyumi, chairperson of ABA Oman International School, said.

Craig Williamson, ABA Head of School, said that the vision behind the new ABA Centre was to provide the students with an enriching environment that is conducive to holistic growth.

“It took a team of dedicated individuals’ many years of hard labour to realise this long-harboured dream and the result is truly incredible. We continue to constantly strive to ensure that our ABA community has access to the best learning facilities where students thrive and flourish, building on their skills to realise their true potential,” said Williamson.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality; Lujaina bint Mohsin bin Haider Darwish al Zaabi, Member of the State Council; Bill Murray, the UK’s Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman; Thomas Friedrich Schneider, German Ambassador; and Amit Narang, Ambassador of India, were among the dignitaries present to celebrate the momentous occasion.

Oman Governance Centre holds meeting

MUSCAT: Oman Governance and Sustainability Centre (OGSC), in association with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, held a conference titled “Corporate Governance, Performance and Productivity”.

The conference, the second event of its kind organised by the OGSC, tackled governance-related issues faced by firms listed on Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. At the outset of the conference, OGSC Executive Manager Sayyid Hamid bin Sultan al Busaidi gave a speech in which he underscored the role of the centre in consolidating governance principles and regulations in the corporate milieu so that local firms could access the global

sphere, while at the same time keeping pace with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The focus is on MSX firms, which represent a wide spectrum of sectors-stems from the significance of such firms and their contribution to the Gross Domestic Product and the national economy at large, said Al Busaidi.

About 110 firms listed on MSX, operating a capital of more than RO 3.5 billion, have a market value of RO 7.3 billion, while the number of Omani shareholders stands at more than 373,000. This is in addition to 5,000 Omani business establishments that registered gains of RO 771 million in 2021. The conference targets governance in firms operating in four main sectors: state-owned firms, banks and firms operating in investment and finance, insurance sector and services and industry.

— ONA

Photographer documents Omani renaissance

FROM PAGE 1

Now, after 50 years, the Sultanate of Oman has seen a comprehensive transformation, thanks to the country’s ability to keep pace with the events of the age as they unfolded.

Scherpenzeel said that photos are more truthful in projecting reality at a time the rhythm of life is changing at a rapid pace, crisscrossing with all aspects of social interactions.

He affirmed that he was already in the Sultanate of Oman by June 1970, three weeks prior to late Sultan Qaboos accession to power in the country.

“Life in the Sultanate of Oman was marvellous and Omani people were gentle, noble, sociable and truthful in their friendship,” said Scherpenzeel, noting that one could move freely in the fascinating landscape and that one could even sleep safely on the golden dunes.

Scherpenzeel said he could still remember his visit to Sur and the long trip to the easterly wilayat from Muscat on a four-wheel vehicle on the rough roads. Everywhere he went, he could observe Omani people’s devotion

to Islamic religion and sound Arabian habits and traditions of hospitality.

Oman’s Ambassador to the Netherlands, Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy, said that these sincere reflections represent a model of the Sultanate of Oman’s soft power that distinguishes Omani people among nations of the world.

Dr Al Harthy added that, when he visited Scherpenzeel at his home in the Netherlands, he was astonished at the man’s amicable reaction. “It was as if he had known me for a very long time. His warm welcome unveiled his deep love to Oman and his thorough knowledge of the country, the reputation of its people and the grandeur of its leadership.”

Many things struck me as I entered Scherpenzeel’s home: Every corner is adorned with an image from the Sultanate of Oman. Not only that, his bedroom is bedecked with historical paintings, books, mementos and even old rifles from the Sultanate of Oman, Dr Al Harthy said.

— ONA

Expatriates allowed to own real estate

FROM PAGE 1

...security and military authorities and archaeological and old heritage lanes or streets, lands and real estate are allocated for agricultural use in all governorates.

This ban does not include lands and real estate located in Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITC) in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. This decision comes as a continuation of previous decisions in this context which allowed the sale of residential real estate units to non-Omanis using the usufruct system in multi-storey residential and commercial buildings, the ownership system in integrated tourist complexes and the system of ownership of the two Gulf countries outside the prohibited places.

“The decision was made with a focus on increasing the actual contribution of the real estate sector in economic diversification, creating a competitive business environment which attracts investors and expanding real estate development projects,” the statement added.

TRANSFERS

To facilitate the procedures for transferring the ownership of land and real estate between individuals and companies, the ministry has decided to extend the deadline for collecting the fee, when individuals transfer the ownership of land and real estate registered in their names to the names of the companies fully owned by them, for an additional six months ending on 9/8/2022 to support individuals and companies

in this aspect, considering the economic conditions.

In October 2020, the government allowed expatriates who have stayed in the Sultanate of Oman for at least two years are allowed to own flats and offices in Muscat.

Among the areas under the usufruct scheme for expatriates were phases one, two and three in Bausher, phase two in Al Khuwair and Wattayah, phases one and two in Ghala Heights, in addition to phase five of South Al Mawaleh, phase two of Al Khoudh and phase seven of South Al Mabella in Al Seeb. Al Misfah (phase two) was included. In the Wilayat of Al Amerat, phase one of Al Hashiyah, Al Amerat and Al Mahaj and Al Nahdha (phases two, three, four and five) will fall under this scheme.

Benefits worth RO 107m disbursed

MUSCAT: The number of Social Security Scheme beneficiaries stood at 72,707 till the end of February this year and they received a monthly pay of RO 7,681,915. This was unveiled at a statement issued by Ministry of Social Development on Wednesday. The statement indicated that a total sum of RO 107,546,810 is being paid on an annual basis, after the addition of two extra salaries during Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha. The ministry valued the Royal directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to disburse an additional pay for Social Security Scheme beneficiaries upon the advent of Ramadhan and to alleviate the impact of high prices. — ONA

CTF 151 COMMANDER VISITS MSC

MUSCAT: Colonel Mohammed Ismail al Tarawneh, Commander of the Combined Task Force (CTF), visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC) on Wednesday. During the visit, the guest was accompanied by the Deputy Head of the MSC. The guest and members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the maritime environment. They also toured the centre’s facilities and viewed its latest equipment. — ONA

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Tender

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
3/2022/ PEIE/ HQ-3	PRE QUALIFICATION TENDER FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDUSTRIAL SURVEY SYSTEM	20-03-2022	31-03-2022	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	FOURTH	25

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@ita.gov.om and +968 24402200.

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening.

Madaayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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Grand Prize	10,000	1
Weekly Draw For 8 Weeks		
1st Prize	5,000	8
2nd Prize	750	8
3rd Prize	500	24
4th Prize	200	80
5th Prize	100	160

Total Winners
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In brief

MUSCAT

SAF CHIEF OF STAFF
RECEIVES BRITISH
DEFENCE ADVISER



Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raeesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), received Lord Astor of Hever, Adviser of the British Minister of Defence and the British Prime Minister's Trade Envoy, in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday. They reviewed areas of military cooperation between the two countries.

MINISTRY OF
LABOUR, RGO
SIGN AGREEMENT



A joint coordination agreement for employment-related training initiative was signed on Wednesday between the Ministry of Labour and the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO). The agreement was signed by Sayyid Salim bin Musallam bin Ali al Busaidy, Under-Secretary for Human Resources Development at the Ministry of Labour, and Maj Gen Salim bin Ali al Hosani, Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman.

SQU CAREER AND
TRAINING FAIR
ON MARCH 28

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), represented by the Centre for Career Guidance, will organise the 22nd round of Career and Training Fair from March 28-30. The fair serves as a platform for a direct contact where students can get full access to job vacancies, training and career development opportunities available in the labour market through the participating establishments.

New age SMEs shift focus from trade to professional services

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SMEs in Oman is entering a distinct zone as entities are moving from strictly trade to professional services.

On Wednesday, the Environment Authority Oman and the National Employment Programme signed an agreement to privatise the Environmental Inspection in the concession areas.

Dr Abdullah al Omari, President of the Authority, signed the agreement with Dr Mansoor bin Talib al Hinai from the National Programme for Employment.

The signing of the agreement aims to launch an initiative to privatise the first phase of the environmental regulatory inspection sector, whereby the oil and gas inspection sector will be privatised and assigned to small or medium sized enterprises to provide job opportunities for environmental specialists to carry out oil and gas inspections.

According to the Authority sources, the latest development is to enhance the operational efficiency of environmental control and in line with Oman Vision 2040 vision as per governance and institutional performance. As per the plan, the specialists from the Authority will also periodically follow up with the concerned institutions assigned with the duty and its operational team to ensure they are on track as per the regulations and objectives.

Experience of SMEs
There are SMEs by qualified individuals who have been successful in securing projects opting to go independent after gaining experience in their chosen fields. The path has not been easy with the offset of the pandemic for two years.

Baida al Zedjali studied electronics and communication engineering in the UK. After graduation, she moved on to attain a master in engineering project management at the University of Leeds. She just felt natural to be a project manager, specifically in



Dr Abdullah al Omari, President of the Environment Authority, signs the agreement with Dr Mansoor bin Talib al Hinai of the National Programme for Employment.

the construction industry, and when she returned to Oman, she continued working in a lot of organisations as a project manager.

And when she felt it was time to take this a step further, she teamed up with her sister, who was an architecture engineer. Thus began their project MEEZAH.

Baida, the partner and senior project manager at MEEZAH Engineering and Project Management Consultants, said, "We do project management consultancy for construction and specifically for cultural projects. It's very specialised and we really enjoy delivering successful projects. And it's interesting because both of our professions complement each other. Actually this is what happens in the business. There are a lot of technical aspects of the business in terms of leading the project teams, working specifically on the cultural projects. Being an entrepreneur is like I am working as a project manager, but I'm also working as a business owner. You are not like a big corporation where you have a marketing team, a business development team and a finance team. As entrepreneurs, we have to do everything ourselves."

However, she points out that it is a very quick learning curve.

"It is very interesting because it's very different to what I experienced previously in the corporate world."



We need to be given the opportunity to prove ourselves to get the experience to ensure we do not get caught in Catch-22 like situation which the fresh graduates fall into — we cannot give you the job because you do not have much experience

BAIDA AL ZEDJALI
Partner MEEZHA Engineering

The sisters' project management company was responsible for delivering the Pavilion Expo 2020.

"We are very proud of this project because it is obviously a project of national importance and it is an international project. We are also working on the archaeological center with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. It is another very exciting project

because it is an archaeological center that will obviously be open for visitors at some point in the future."

Would she recommend entrepreneurship to others?

"I would say that it doesn't work for everyone, but if it does work for someone it is perfect. It is really good for me personally. I always knew that I wanted to be self-employed because I always felt that I was not working to my full capacity in a lot of the places that I was working in. It is not necessarily anyone's fault but just the way things are set up in the corporate world. You have a specific job and you have to deliver your job. Now, obviously, saying that, one has to realise that there are a lot of challenges because he/she has to be self-disciplined. If you are a person that likes jobs, security, obviously being self-employed is not something that would work for you."

Covid-19 proved out to be one one of the biggest challenges business models had not thought about.

"Before deciding to go down the route of entrepreneurship you need to know if this is something that they really want to do and also study the market. Now, you have some interesting concepts. What is important is - accept, assess and maximise. Even within ourselves,

I think that, you know, for us to develop, to improve, to grow, I think the first thing is that we need to accept our failures. A lot of people find it difficult because it hurts your ego a little bit. But I think this is necessary, you know, to accept that," she said.

The second part is assessing why one is not good at this?

"We also need to know what we are good at and need to maximise our skills. And then the anything that is falling in between, we need to find a way to develop that skill and maybe employ someone that can do that to fill the gap and to do that we need to maximise on what we have and ensure that whatever is not covered we would find a solution for it because if we do not, then we can never grow and develop."

According to Baida, what people need to realise is that SMEs include a huge sector of businesses.

"And we're not talking only about the micro businesses and I feel there's a lot of emphasis on these businesses that are selling stuff. Food, clothes etc. There is a lot of support for that segment. But then people like us return to service, business or supplies may not be visible at first," she said.

"We need to be given the opportunity to prove ourselves to get the experience to ensure we do not get caught in Catch-22 like situation which the fresh graduates fall into - we cannot give you the job because you do not have much experience." She said that the business community itself must be ready to take this initiative and not just wait for the government to bring up more opportunities.

"So our idea is that since we're working in the government project, I think it's only fair that we take someone to work with from the respective area where the project is located. If I cannot employ them, at least I give them training and they work on a project in their governorate, and it has a different feel because, you know, they are more connected to this project," Baida said.

Wood carving expo concludes in Nizwa

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MARCH 9

A wood art expo for art teachers from the Directorate of Education in Al Dakhiliyah was opened on Monday in Nizwa Grand Mall.

The three-day exhibition, which concluded on Wednesday, included 45 woodcarving works by various sculptors. It attracted people of all walks of life.

The exhibition was launched by Shaikh Rashid bin Said al Kalbani, Wali of Nizwa, in the presence of Saif bin Mubarak al Julandani, Director-General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Al Julandani said: "These initiatives highlight the talents of art teachers to portray their ideas and concepts in wood. It aims to enhance the capabilities of art teachers. I praise the achievements and works displayed in the exhibition titled Wooden Manifestations. We will continue to support such initiatives."

The artworks highlight Omani heritage that combines tradition and modernity.

The exhibition follows a training in three-dimensional wooden carving for art teachers. In October last year, Hatim



bin Humaid al Shueili presented this training programme. The Department of Educational Supervision in the Directorate

of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate implemented it at the Nizwa Cultural Centre.

RECALL CAMPAIGN
For Cadillac SRX model vehicles

Date of Campaign : 10 / 3 / 2022
Campaign Type : Safety
Recall Segment : Suspension
Product Description : Cadillac SRX 2010-2016

Model Year	Division	Vehicle Model	Affected Vehicle VIN Range	No. of Affected Vehicles in Oman
2010-2016	Cadillac	SRX	3GYFN9E30C5500234 to 3GYNFYKXAS647457	107

Description:
These vehicles may not have followed procedures for torquing the jam nut in the toe link adjusters to the proper specification. A loose toe link can cause the vehicle to sway or wander at highway speeds or allow water or other corrosive elements to enter the threads within the adjuster. If a toe link is improperly adjusted, corrosion combined with vehicle motion may eventually cause the threads within the link to wear and loosen. In very rare cases with continued use, the link could separate.

Procedure:
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For More information:
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Integrate technology in school curriculum

KABEER YOUSUF

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Technology and entrepreneurship should be made part of school curriculum to equip future generations of the Sultanate of Oman, suggests a young educationist who won the National Research Award given by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. Yasir al Shuhumi's project 'Studying the reality of pioneering education and future technology in school education in the Sultanate of Oman' won the award in the Education and Human Resources field under the Young Researcher's category.

Al Shuhumi, a young researcher from the Ministry of Education studied the reality of entrepreneurial education and technology in school education in Oman.

He analysed the role of technology in school education in Oman and explored the projects to train students in the field of future technology in Omani schools.

The study is expected to assist the decision-makers in developing the educational system in line with local and international trends in the economic and technological fields.



Most of the technology in use was presented to students in a theoretical manner that did not fetch the desired results such as empowering them with skills for entrepreneurship. Additionally, the information technology curricula were not updated in line with the development and global trends

YASIR AL SHUHUMI
Researcher

"During my study of the Education system of Oman, I found that only 28 per cent of future technology technologies were covered in school curricula and that there was no clear formal

application of future technology entrepreneurship in schools," Yasir told the Observer.

"Most of the technology in use was presented to students in a theoretical manner that did not fetch the desired results such as empowering them with skills for entrepreneurship. Additionally, the information technology curricula were not updated in line with the development and global trends, as the world tends to teach future technologies and go beyond teaching the basics of information technology," he said.

The results of his study showed that there were no organised and planned projects or activities for school principals, educational activities specialists and career guidance specialists in the field of future technology.

Added to it, the vocational guidance centre based on entrepreneurship in schools did not have any current programmes dedicated to training and mentoring students in technology.

The challenges facing entrepreneurial education in schools are the lack of specialised teachers, weak training and the ambiguity of the idea of implementing entrepreneurship in the field of future technology in schools.

OSFA plans business forum in Muscat

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The Oman-Switzerland Friendship Association (OSFA), established in 2016, has started planning for its 2nd Business Forum to be held in Muscat in the second half of the year.

It follows the first Oman Switzerland Business Forum, which took place in Bern, Switzerland, in April 2019 and brought together more than 100 businesspeople from both countries.

"The OSFA, which held its first board meeting of 2022 in Muscat last month, looked back at several successful webinars last year and also decided on new activities to further stimulate exchanges between the two countries in the sectors of tourism, logistics & industry, youth & sports and several others as the Corona pandemic wanes," Dr Anka Kästner, the first woman on OSFA board, who travelled to Muscat to attend the meeting, told the Observer.

Dr Anka used her two-week stay in the Sultanate of Oman as a 'workation, a trend that has intensified during the pandemic with compulsory home office.

"The Sultanate of Oman, with its perfect digital infrastructure and beautiful nature, is an excellent place to pursue one's commitments during the working week and explore the country and its people in the evenings or weekends," she says.

Dr Anka solicited potential new OSFA members and discovered new offers developing all over the country. She was the guest of honour at the Winter Holiday Festival in Al Naseem Park in Al



Hamra addressing the children on stage.

At the event, Dr Anka mentioned the spirit of entrepreneurship, creativity and passion that brings the Sultanate of Oman forward and is common to both countries. She also met the founder and owner, Dr Mosab al Hinai and had him explain the various activities of the company.

During her meeting with Jasmin Nutt, Managing Director of Al Maamari Travels and Tours, new ideas emerged for exciting webinars that highlight and impart knowledge on the many commonalities that unite the two countries.

Dr Anka has been a member of the OSFA since 2018. Its aim is to strengthen bilateral relations between Switzerland and the Sultanate of Oman and deepen

mutual exchanges to unlock the potential for economic cooperation and promote understanding between the two peoples.

Hani al Zubair is chairman of the association, Luca Decarli is vice-chairman, Mohammed al Kharousi is treasurer and Sayyid Abdullah bin Hamed al Busaidy is patron of the association.

Khalid bin Said al Wahaibi, Lateef Shahdad and Said bin Saif al Maskery are the other board members. The present board was elected in April 2021 for a three-year term.

The OSFA and the Omani Embassy in Bern as well as the Swiss Embassy in Muscat also work hand in hand to facilitate investments, open doors for joint projects and bring the two countries closer together.

INVITATION FOR THE ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Ahli Bank SAOG (the "Bank") is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting to be held at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, the 27th of March 2022 at the W Muscat Hotel and via the electronic platform for general meetings on Muscat Clearing and Depository's website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum for the Annual Ordinary General Meeting is not complete, the second general meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, the 31st of March 2022 at the W Muscat Hotel and via the above mentioned electronic platform to discuss and consider the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the Board of Directors' Report for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
 2. To consider and approve the Board of Directors' Report on the organization and management of the Bank (Corporate Governance Report) for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
 3. To consider and approve the auditor's report on the company's audited financial statements for the year ended on 31 December 2021.
 4. To brief the general assembly on the Shari'a Compliance Report of Ahli Islamic for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
 5. To consider and approve the proposal to distribute cash dividends of an amount of 7.5 Baizas per share to the shareholders on the date of the Annual General Meeting.
 6. To ratify the sitting fees paid to the Board of Directors and Board Sub-Committees for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021 and determine their sitting fees for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022.
 7. To consider and approve the proposal to distribute remuneration fees amounting to RO 300,000 to the Board of Directors for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
 8. To ratify the remuneration and sitting fees of the Shari'a Supervisory Board for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021 and determine their sitting fees for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022.
 9. To notify the general assembly of the related party transactions entered into by the Bank during the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
 10. To brief the general assembly of the contributions made to support community services during the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
 11. To consider and approve the proposal to allocate RO 250,000 to support community services for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022.
 12. To consider and approve the Board's Performance Report for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
 13. To approve the criteria for the Performance Appraisal of the Board of Directors of the Bank.
 14. To elect a member of the Board of Directors of the Bank for the vacant seat (comprising shareholders or non-shareholders). Anyone who wishes to stand as a candidate shall complete the form prepared for this purpose and submit it to the Bank at least five (5) days prior to the Annual General Meeting, no later than Monday, 21 March 2022. Forms submitted after this date will not be accepted.
 15. To appoint a third party for appraising the performance of the Board of Directors for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022 and determine their fees.
 16. To appoint auditors and external Shari'a auditors for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022 and determine their fees.
- Pursuant to the Bank Articles of Association and the Rules for Convening General Meetings of Public Joint Stock Companies via Electronic Means issued by the Capital Market Authority (CMA), we would like to draw your attention to the following:
- (a) Only juristic persons shall have the right to appoint a proxy to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting and vote on their behalf via electronic means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
 - (b) Voting on any of the items on the agenda shall commence no more than three (3) days before the date of the general meeting and until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. If a shareholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the shareholder must cast his vote again on the day of the general meeting.
- For further information please contact on telephone No **98051039** or email: **habib.alhamaid@ahlibank.om**

الأهلي الإسلامي
ahli islamic

البنك الأهلي
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OCCI delegation winds up Sri Lanka visit

COLOMBO: The Omani business delegation, headed by Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), winded up its visit to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The delegation held a meeting with high ranking officials from the Exporters Association of Sri Lanka. The meeting discussed means of enhancing business cooperation between the two countries and boosting exports and imports. Al Saleh also met with officials from Sri Lanka's Ministry of Tourism. This meeting explored the bilateral cooperation in the tourism field by promoting touristic attractions in both countries, organising visits for tourists and benefitting from investment opportunities in Sri Lanka for Omani investors. The delegation also toured the Port City in Colombo. They were briefed on its facilities and investment projects. — ONA

OCTAL

AGENDA OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF OCTAL HOLDING S.A.O.C

The Board of Directors of **OCTAL Holding S.A.O.C** invites all Shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting (**AGM**), which will be held on **Thursday, 24th March 2022 at 10.30 am**, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. In the event that the quorum for the first AGM is not met, **Thursday, 31st March 2022 at 10.30 am**, will be the date and time for the second meeting, at the same location mentioned above to consider the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 31st December 2021. (as per the Annexure 1)
2. To consider the Auditor's report and to approve the financial statements (Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss Account) in respect of the Company for the financial year ended 31st December 2021. (as per the Annexure 2)
3. To consider the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended 31st December 2021. (as per the Annexure 3)
4. To consider and approve transactions that the Company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending 31st December 2022. (as per Annexure 4)
5. To consider and approve the sitting fees of the directors and sub-committees of the Company during the year ended 31 December 2021 and determine the sitting fees for the next financial year. (As per Annexures 5).
6. To appoint External Auditors for the financial year ended 31 December 2022 and fix their remuneration.
7. To consider and approve the payments to be made to certain recipients of notional shares of the Company and other potential change of control payments as a result of the transactions contemplated by that certain share purchase agreement between the shareholders, Pound Capital Limited and Alpek Polyester, S.A. de C.V. dated 31 January 2022.

Each shareholder is entitled to give a written proxy to another person, who need not be a shareholder, to attend the meeting and vote on his/her behalf at the AGM.

If you wish to appoint a proxy, please complete and submit the attached Proxy Form to the Company office.

To prevent delay in starting the meeting, shareholders are requested to arrive about half an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

For further information, please contact
Ms. Zareen Austin on Telephone: +968 22030722

Chairman

South Korea votes in tight presidential race

SEOUL: Polls have officially closed in South Korea's presidential election, the country's National Election Commission said late on Wednesday. Voter turnout was 77.1 per cent, with record early voting, but exit polls showed the two frontrunners, liberal Lee Jae-myung and conservative Yoon Suk-yeol, separated by less than a percentage point.

The vote was held in a tightly fought presidential election with the deciding votes set to be cast by young people, whose top concerns are economic inequality and unemployment -- not recent sabre-rattling from the nuclear-armed North.

Official figures showed high turnout of about 65 per cent by 2 pm, after record early voting, following a campaign dominated by mud-slinging between the two front runners, the incumbent Democratic Party's Lee Jae-myung and the opposition conservative People Power Party's Yoon Suk-yeol.



Members of the Democratic Party of Korea react as they watch a TV report on an exit poll for South Korea's presidential election at the National Assembly in Seoul. — AFP

The pair, both so unpopular local media have branded it the "election of the unfavourables", have been neck and neck in the polls for months. Some 90 per cent of the electorate supports one or the other.

The choices of young swing voters will probably prove decisive, analysts said, adding the demographic's top concerns were

skyrocketing house prices in the capital Seoul, social inequality and stubborn youth unemployment.

"I'm really worried about housing prices in Seoul and I hope the new president will focus on making people's lives easier and better," Park Ki-tae, 38, said after casting his ballot.

Both leading candidates have promised to build millions of new

Voter turnout was 77.1 pc, with record early voting, but exit polls showed the two frontrunners, separated by less than a percentage point



homes, although the left-leaning Lee relies more on public housing and the conservative Yoon on market-led solutions to the crisis.

South Korean politics is famously adversarial. Presidents serve a single term of five years and every living former leader has been jailed for corruption after leaving office.

The two parties are ideologically

poles apart, and observers say the key question is whether voters will kick out incumbent Moon Jae-in's dovish liberals and usher in a new hawkish, fiscally conservative regime under Yoon.

"Young voters are not loyal to any particular political party and thus can't be defined by liberal-conservative ideology," said Shin Yul, political science professor at

Myongji University. "Turnouts and choices by those in their 20s will have a significant bearing on the outcome." Voters, wearing masks and using hand sanitiser after the country recorded a record 342,446 new Covid-19 cases on Wednesday amid an Omicron spike, lined up to cast their ballots at polling stations.

"What the country needs right now is change," 71-year-old Hong Sung-cheon said at a polling station in southern Seoul.

Polling booths opened at 6 am will shut at 6 pm. For 90 minutes after closing, Covid-positive voters will be allowed to cast their ballots.

More than a million people were isolating at home after testing positive, health authorities said. The country amended its electoral laws last month to ensure they would be able to vote. In a two-day early voting exercise last week, a record-breaking 37 per cent of the 44 million people eligible cast their ballots — the highest number since the system was introduced in 2013. — AFP

Iran N-deal: France 'worried' about 'delays'

PARIS: France warned on Tuesday that further delays could stymie a revived nuclear agreement between world powers and Iran, with the West at loggerheads with Russia over its attack on Ukraine, while Washington said it would cede nothing to Moscow.

Moscow is a direct party -- along with Britain, China, France and Germany -- to the ongoing talks in Vienna aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal to limit Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

Washington is participating indirectly, as former president Donald Trump withdrew from the agreement in 2018.

"We are very close to a deal," but Paris is "very worried about risks that further delays could weigh on the chances," a foreign ministry spokeswoman told reporters in an apparent reference to Russia's demands for extra guarantees.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has demanded written assurances from Washington that massive Western sanctions imposed on Moscow over its attack

on Ukraine will not affect its economic and military cooperation with Tehran.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said such demands are "irrelevant".

Russia said on Monday that all world powers must have "equal rights" if the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is revived.

Sanctions on Russia over its attack on Ukraine "have nothing to do with the Iran nuclear deal", Blinken said on Sunday.

France "calls on all other parties to adopt a responsible approach," the foreign ministry spokeswoman said on Tuesday.

At a hearing on Capitol Hill later on Tuesday, when asked if Washington had provided Moscow with the written guarantees requested, US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland was clear: "No."

"We're not negotiating with Russia vis-a-vis Iran," Nuland said. "Russia is trying to up the ante and broaden its demands with regard to the JCPOA and we are not playing 'Let's Make A Deal'."

— AFP

Protesters rally as Australian PM tours flood disaster

SYDNEY: Scores of protesters in a flood-wrecked city in eastern Australia vented their fury on Wednesday as Prime Minister Scott Morrison visited the heart of the disaster zone. Demonstrators demanded more help and stronger climate action as Morrison toured Lismore, which endured some of the worst flooding in a near two-week deluge along the east coast that has killed at least 21 people.

"We need help!" protesters chanted as Morrison visited the city.

Many held placards with messages blaming the climate crisis including: "Coal and gas did this" and "This is what climate change looks like."

After the second major floods in a year, chunks of rubble and discarded, water-damaged furniture were piled high along the city's streets.

Many people had to clamber onto their corrugated metal roofs to escape the fast-rising water last week as floods peaked in the city in northern New South Wales.

Some waited for hours to be rescued by locally improvised boat patrols, emergency services vessels or army helicopters as the waters surged around them. Floodwaters across much of the east coast retreated as rainfall eased on Wednesday, but major



A tree lies toppled in a park following an overnight storm in the suburb of Stanmore in Sydney. — Reuters

flood warnings were still in force in some areas including at the Hawkesbury River west of Sydney.

Evacuation orders affecting about 40,000 people in New South Wales were in force in the morning. More than 90,000 people had been allowed to return to their homes.

The death toll from the east coast deluge rose to 21 as police discovered the body of a 50-year-old delivery truck driver in

floodwaters in Sydney's west. Facing pointed questions at a news conference in the city, Morrison defended his government's climate record by stressing its commitment to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

"We are dealing with a different climate to the one we were dealing with before. I think that's just an obvious fact," Morrison said. "And Australia is getting hard to live in because of these disasters."

Morrison, who faces an election by the end of May, has underscored his support for coal-fired power stations to provide cheap electricity throughout their lifespans. Even as the floodwaters retreat, the scars on the landscape are widespread.

In Narrabeen, on Sydney's northern beaches, the rains caused landslides that cleaved chunks out of the hillside along residential streets. — AFP

NASIRIYAH

Iraqis protest rise in food prices

Protests erupted in Iraq's impoverished south over a rise in food prices that officials attributed to the conflict in Ukraine. For about a week, the price of cooking oils and flour have skyrocketed in local markets as government officials have sought to address growing anger with various statements and measures. More than 500 protesters gathered in a central square in the southern city of Nasiriyah -- a flashpoint of anti-corruption protests that gripped the coun-



try in 2019.

"The rise in prices is straining us, whether it is bread or other food products," retired teacher Hassan Kazem said. "We can barely make ends meet"

RIYADH

Air defence take centre stage at Saudi arms show

Air defence systems have been front and centre at Saudi Arabia's first defence show as drone and missile attacks increase in the Gulf. Six hundred companies from about 40 countries showed off the latest military technology at the World Defence Show in the Saudi capital Riyadh.

"There is very much high interest in the region for the capabilities to defeat drones and IEDs," said Bobby Strawbridge of US firm Allen-Vanguard, which makes equipment to block radio-



controlled weaponry. Visitors to the Riyadh show are zooming in on anti-drone and air defence systems, according to Tomas Kosowski, chief operating officer for Advanced Protection Systems.

ISTANBUL

Snow cancels over 200 flights in Istanbul

More than 200 flights have been cancelled at Istanbul's two airports because of expected snowfall, Turkey's top airlines said. Turkey's national flag carrier, Turkish Airlines, said that it had cancelled 185 flights at Istanbul airport on Thursday, 114 of them domestic and 71 international.

The airline cancelled another 20 domestic flights of AnadoluJet, its subsidiary budget carrier, at the smaller Sabiha Gokcen airport.

Turkish Airlines warned in a statement "the number of cancel-



lations is likely to increase" because of the weather conditions. Another company, Pegasus, said around 30 domestic flights expected to depart and arrive at Sabiha Gokcen airport on Thursday were now cancelled.

Ukraine, Russia agree on new safe corridors

WASHINGTON/LVIV: A US ban on imports of Russia's oil ratcheted up punishment for the attack on Ukraine on Tuesday as McDonald's and Starbucks closed outlets and Moscow promised safe passage for some people to flee.

As the number of refugees created by the biggest assault on a European country since World War Two surpassed 2 million, several of the most internationally famous brands added to the Kremlin's global isolation on the 13th day of the incursion.

McDonald's, a symbol of capitalism that opened in Russia as the Soviet Union fell, and coffeehouse chain Starbucks will temporarily close stores, while Pepsi will stop selling its soft drink brands and Coca-Cola is halting business in the country.

Washington, meanwhile, imposed an immediate ban on imports of Russian energy, sparking a further increase in the oil price, which rose around 4 per cent on Tuesday. Prices have surged more than 30 per cent since Russia's incursion began on February 24.

Russia — the world's second-largest exporter of crude — has warned the cost will skyrocket further if the West implements bans. Despite the prospect of higher household bills, US



Members of the Ukrainian Territorial Defence Forces examine new armament, launchers in Kyiv amid the ongoing Russia's attack on Ukraine. — AFP

President Joe Biden said President Vladimir Putin needed to face consequences for the assault.

“The American people will deal another powerful blow to Putin's war machine,” he said. The Kremlin describes its actions as a “special operation” to disarm Ukraine and unseat leaders it calls neo-Nazis.

Ukraine and Western allies call this a baseless pretext for an attack that has raised fears of wider conflict in Europe and could deal a further hit to the world economy as it tries to recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

Civilians fled the besieged city of Sumy on Tuesday in the first successful “humanitarian

corridor” opened since Russia's attack but Ukraine accused Russian forces of shelling another evacuation route, from Mariupol in the south of the country.

Talks between Kyiv and Moscow over safe passage have previously failed, with Ukraine opposing routes out of the country to Russia or its ally Belarus.

Moscow is ready to provide humanitarian corridors so people can leave capital Kyiv and four other cities — Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Mariupol — on Wednesday, Mikhail Mizintsev, head of Russia's National Defence Control Centre, was quoted as saying by the Tass news agency.

“In order to ensure the safety of civilians and foreign citizens, Russia will observe a regime of silence from 10 am Moscow time on March 9 and is ready to provide humanitarian corridors,” he said. It was unclear if the proposed routes would pass through Russia or Belarus.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy renewed calls on Tuesday for no-fly zones, something the West has rejected for fears of escalating the conflict. The United States turned down a surprise Polish offer to transfer MiG-29 fighter jets to a US base in Germany to help replenish Ukraine's air force.

The prospect of flying combat aircraft from Nato territory into the war zone “raises serious concerns for the entire Nato alliance,” the Pentagon said. Instead, the West has focussed its pressure on sanctions, mainly on individuals and financial institutions. Up until now, oil and natural gas had been excluded. — Reuters

Turkey hosts top diplomats in bid for peace

ANTALYA: The Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers will on Thursday hold face-to-face talks in southern Turkey in the first high-level contact between Kyiv and Moscow since Russia attacked its neighbour two weeks ago.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has pushed for Turkey to play a mediation role, has expressed hope the talks can avert tragedy and even help agree a ceasefire.

But analysts fear there are only the lowest chances of a breakthrough at the meeting in Antalya between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba. — AFP

Refugees face tougher border controls in Hungary



Children are seen in a camp for Ukrainian refugees near the Slovak-Ukrainian border crossing in eastern Slovakia. — AFP

BUCHAREST/BUDAPEST: Additional controls by the Hungarian border police have led to waiting times of several hours for refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. On Wednesday, the Romanian radio station Digi24 reported that queues of cars several kilometres long had formed at the crossing points of the Romanian-Hungarian border. However, the refugees were not being turned away by Hungary.

The day before the Romanian border guards said their Hungarian counterparts had officially announced longer waiting times. Hungary wanted to check those Ukrainians who did not have biometric passports more closely, they said.

The Hungarian authorities announced several days ago that Ukrainians without the correct documents could be stopped at the border and taken away for further questioning. Tens of thousands of Ukrainians are fleeing to Romania and from thereon via Hungary

towards Western Europe.

CANADA PLEDGES MORE MILITARY GEAR

BERLIN: Canada will send an additional \$50 million worth of military equipment to help Ukraine in the fight against Russia, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday in Berlin. He said he spoke with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky earlier in the day and “told him that Canada will soon be sending highly specialised equipment to them.”

Canada had on February 14 already said it would deliver Can\$7.8 million (\$6.1 million) worth of lethal equipment and ammunition, before adding another pledge of \$25 million in non-lethal protective gear. Beyond equipping Ukraine, Trudeau said three million dollars will go towards tackling Russian disinformation about Ukraine. “We need to stand up for truth and be vigilant against disinformation that tries to mislead us and more

tries to divide us,” he said.

KOSOVO LIFTS VISA REQUIREMENTS

PRISTINA: Kosovo suspended visa requirements for Ukrainian citizens, the foreign minister announced on Wednesday, in the latest move by Pristina to support the embattled country following the Russian attack. “We hope that the suspension of the visa regime for Ukrainian citizens would positively contribute to their entry or transit through the territory of the Republic of Kosovo,” Foreign Minister Donika Gervalla-Schwarz said in a statement.

Even with its modest economic and political weight, Kosovo has offered its support to Ukraine, despite Kyiv's years-long refusal to recognise the disputed territory's independence. Last week, Kosovo's parliament voted to condemn Russia's “illegal, unprovoked and unjustified” attack on Ukraine and launched its own targeted sanctions against Moscow.

— AFP/Reuters

ahliGlobal
equityfund

Notice of the Annual Ordinary General Meeting
of Ahli Global Equity Fund

We, the Management of **Ahli Global Equity Fund** (the “**Fund**”) hereby invite the unit holders to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting to be held at 3:00 P.M., on Monday, 28 March 2022, at Ahli Bank HQ (subject to complying with the decisions of Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the developments resulting from the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)). In the event that the quorum to convene the Annual Ordinary General Meeting is not complete, the second general meeting will be convened at 3:00 P.M., on Tuesday, 29 March 2022, at Ahli Bank's HQ to discuss and consider the following agenda:

1) To consider and approve the Fund Management Report for financial year ended on 31 December 2021.

2) To consider and approve the Auditors' Report on the balance sheet and profit and loss account for the financial year ended 31 December 2021.

3) To ratify the sitting fees for the Fund's Management Meetings for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021 and determine the sitting fees for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022.

4) To inform the general assembly of the related party transactions which took place during the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.

5) To appoint an auditor for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022 and determine their fees.

According to the Articles of Association of the Fund, any unit holder shall have the right to authorize in writing any other person to attend the meeting and vote on the resolutions taken thereat on his/her behalf. The authorization must be on the proxy forms, which is enclosed with the invitation. Natural persons must enclose copies of their IDs. Minor unitholders and unitholders who do not have IDs shall enclose copies of their passports. Non-Omani unitholders shall enclose along with their completed proxy forms copies of their passports or their resident card. Proxy forms for corporate persons shall be signed by their authorized signatories. Copies of commercial registration documents as well as ID/passport copies of their authorized signatories' must be enclosed with their completed and stamped proxy forms.

To prevent delay in starting the meeting, unitholders are requested to arrive about half an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

In case of any enquiries, please contact **Mrs. Duaa Al Zaabi** Phone No **24577922**.

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Reasons why students procrastinate



Dr Priti Sambhalwal
drpritiswarup@gmail.com

The writer is an HR expert, speaker and columnist

Have we all, at some point in our lives, as students not procrastinated on many occasions? Be it putting away an important assignment during high school by watching hours of TV, playing games, or going out instead? Or postponing test preparation till the actual date arrived? Or deferring important work on a major assignment and putting it off for a later date and instead working on smaller unimportant tasks.

There are two main reasons why students procrastinate. Firstly, fear of failure and secondly, confusion about the steps to start an assignment.

As against the common perception that students delay action because they don't care about the assignment, researchers have shown that students procrastinate more likely when the task is meaningful, and they want to execute it better.

The indecisiveness in how to start the task adds to the pressure.

In both these situations, the students resort to procrastination as a cope-up mechanism and avoid stressful experiences.

Other reasons are perfectionism, lack of motivation, task aversion, physical or mental exhaustion due to high academic workload

How does one deal with this situation?

There are two sets of people who can help a student overcome this. The student himself, and authority figures in the student's life, i.e., teachers and parents.

Spaced-out deadlines: Evenly spaced-out deadlines are proven to be more effective than a single deadline to submit everything at once towards the month end. Breaking the task into parts makes each part more manageable and helps coping with the associated anxiety of impending deadlines. It also reduces the chances of deadlines getting missed.

Zeigarnik effect: It is the psychological finding that people

STUDENTS RESORT TO PROCRASTINATION AS A COPE-UP MECHANISM AND AVOID STRESSFUL EXPERIENCES

remember unfinished tasks better than completed ones. The student can start by taking the first step, no matter how small. This way, the student will find himself/herself thinking of the task at hand until it is finished.

Pomodoro technique: It is a highly effective time management system wherein you break workday into 25-minute slots, followed by a 5-minute break to recharge yourself. After four such cycles, you take a longer break of about 15 to 20 minutes. This technique helps in working on a task without distractions, becoming more disciplined, combating multitasking and improving

concentration.

Identify productivity cycles: The student should be aware of their most productive part of the day-some work best in the morning, while others are more focused at night. Care should be taken that in case of the latter, insufficient or disturbed sleep should not be the side effect.

Starting with best or worst-some students find working on the easier problems more satisfying while others choose to get the worst out of their way first and move to simpler ones. The students should identify what works for them best and still be flexible to see what works best in what scenario.

Self-appraisals: It is a good idea to subject oneself to taking short time-bound tests or quizzes and slowly move on to longer duration tasks and start scoring them to assess your performance. This helps in instilling better time management skills in students and helps them in learning how

to take control of their situation themselves.

Improve your environment: If it is the Internet that brings distraction and hinders productivity, then it is better to switch off the Wi-Fi during study time and leave your phone outside your room or switch it off. Phone free periods are equally crucial for overall health.

Seeking feedback: Students should be encouraged to seek constructive feedback and progress about their assignments and projects from their teachers, who are the students' best guide and support system.

This is particularly important in the case of students who are afraid of failing and have relatively low self-esteem. The approach should not be only correcting the mistakes but learning alternative ways of solving problems at hand.

Keep progressing, no matter how small the progress is, it is still progress.

Telegram thrives in Ukraine disinformation battle

LOUIS BAUDOIN-LAARMAN

Two days after Russia attacked Ukraine, an account on the Telegram messaging platform posing as President Volodymyr Zelensky urged his armed forces to surrender.

The message was not authentic, with the real Zelensky soon denying the claim on his official Telegram channel, but the incident highlighted a major problem: disinformation quickly spreads unchecked on the encrypted app.

The fake Zelensky account reached 20,000 followers on Telegram before it was shut down, a remedial action that experts say is all too rare.

For Oleksandra Tsekhanovska, head of the Hybrid Warfare Analytical Group at the Kyiv-based Ukraine Crisis Media Center, the effects are both near- and far-reaching.

"For Telegram, accountability has always been a problem, which is why it was so popular even before the full scale war with far-right extremists and terrorists from all over the world," she said from her safe house outside the Ukrainian capital.

Telegram boasts 500 million users, who share information individually and in groups in relative security.

But Telegram's use as a one-way broadcast channel -- which followers can join but not reply to -- means content from inauthentic accounts can easily reach large, captive and eager audiences.

False news often spreads via public groups, or chats, with potentially fatal effects.

"Someone posing as a Ukrainian citizen just joins the chat and starts spreading misinformation, or gathers data, like the location of shelters," Tsekhanovska said, noting how false messages have urged Ukrainians to turn off their phones at a specific time of night, citing cybersafety.

Such instructions could actually endanger people -- citizens receive air strike warnings via smartphone alerts. In addition, Telegram's architecture limits the ability to slow the spread of false information: the lack of a central public feed, and the fact that comments are easily disabled in channels, reduce the space for public pushback.

Although some channels have been removed, the curation process is considered opaque and insufficient by analysts.

— AFP

To fight Covid abroad, US aims to contribute to vaccines for next disease



Sheryl Gay Stolberg

The writer is the Health Policy Correspondent, *TNYT*

The Biden administration announced that it intends to contribute \$150 million over the next three years to a global effort aimed at rapidly producing a vaccine in case a new biological threat emerges. Still, activists and health experts urged the United States to do more to fight the current coronavirus pandemic.

The financial commitment, which will require approval from Congress, is a small fraction of what is needed for the project being undertaken by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, a global foundation. The coalition's CEO, Dr Richard Hatchett, has announced a \$3.5 billion, five-year effort to "face down the next Disease X with a new vaccine in just 100 days."

Tuesday's announcement echoes a plan announced by President Joe Biden in his State of the Union address, when he pledged to invest in an effort to produce new vaccines within 100 days of the arrival of future coronavirus variants.

The contribution was announced by Samantha Power, administrator of the US Agency for International Development, during a summit convened by the British government and the coalition, known as CEPI. The coalition also supports Covax, the international effort to deliver Covid-19 vaccines to the world, which has struggled to get doses into people's arms.

"Our eyes, like yours, are also on the horizon — on the epidemic or pandemic that has yet to come," Power said, addressing the summit's attendees by video. "While we continue our current efforts to end this pandemic, we are not losing sight of our long-term preparedness goals."

The administration's commitment comes as Biden is under pressure to do more to combat Covid, as well as to prepare for the next pandemic. Last week, the administration asked Congress for an additional \$22.5 billion to fight the pandemic at home and overseas, and Biden is expected to host his own global Covid summit in the coming weeks.

The president has repeatedly said that

VACCINATION RATES CONTINUE TO LAG IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES, EVEN AS VACCINES BECOME MORE WIDELY AVAILABLE

the United States has contributed more money, and donated more coronavirus vaccine doses, to the world than any other nation.

But two recent analyses, one by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the other by Public Citizen, suggest the United States is not living up to his promise that the nation would be the "arsenal of vaccines."

The Kaiser Family Foundation's analysis found that, when donations of money and doses are measured against a country's gross domestic product, the United States does not lead the world. The

analysis found that when gross domestic product is considered, the United States ranks 12th in financial donations and sixth in donations of doses.

"It was a surprise," said Jen Kates, who directs the foundation's global health and HIV policy efforts and conducted the analysis. "The White House has said the US is doing more than any other donor. We just wanted to interrogate that a little bit and see: Does it hold up if you look at it from this perspective?"

A new analysis by Public Citizen, titled "An Incomplete Arsenal," raises questions about whether the administration is falling behind on its timeline to deliver 1.2 billion doses to the world by this fall, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged in December.

When the White House announced its new pandemic preparedness plan last week, much of which will also need congressional funding, it no longer attached a timeline to the 1.2 billion doses pledge. So far, the State Department says, nearly 487 million doses have been shipped.

—The New York Times



Vials of a Covid-19 vaccine developed by the Beijing drugmaker Sinovac at the Butantan Institute in Sao Paulo.

Fukushima region forges renewable future

ETIENNE BALMER & HARUMI OZAWA

Solar farms along tsunami-ravaged coastlines, green energy “micro-grids” and the experimental production of non-polluting hydrogen: 11 years after its nuclear nightmare, Japan’s Fukushima region is investing in a renewable future.

On March 11, 2011, an earthquake unleashed a deadly tsunami on northeastern Japan, triggering a meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant and forcing mass evacuations over radiation fears.

One year later, Fukushima’s regional government set a goal of meeting all its energy needs with renewable power by 2040, a policy intended to help residents “reclaim” the place they call home, officials say.

Substantial progress has been made, in part thanks to hefty financial support from the national government.

Renewables accounted for 43 per cent of Fukushima’s energy consumption in fiscal 2020, up from just 24 per cent in 2011. But obstacles remain, from the higher cost for consumers to lingering concern over contamination.

“A strong desire to never see a repeat of such an accident was the most important starting point” for the green energy drive, Noriaki Saito, energy director at the prefecture’s planning department, said.

A gleaming field of solar panels now lines a coastal stretch north of the stricken Fukushima plant, in a location once earmarked for the region’s third nuclear power station, a project abandoned after the tsunami.

Power from the site, which was completed in 2020 and is as big as 25 football pitches, is used to make hydrogen -- a clean fuel when generated with renewable electricity and one that Japan hopes will help it reach its goal of carbon neutrality by 2050.

Fuel produced at the “Fukushima Hydrogen Energy Research Field” in Namie has so far been used for small-scale purposes including at the Tokyo Olympics last year, and to refill locally run fuel-cell cars.

“In the near future, much more renewable energy will come to the grid” in Japan, said Eiji Ohira of NEDO, the public research body managing the facility.

The site aims eventually to draw renewable energy from the national grid on days when there is surplus production nationally, helping reduce wastage while generating new green hydrogen, he said.

The Fukushima region already had hydroelectric dams, but wind farms are appearing in its mountains, biomass power plants are being constructed and solar fields have sprung up on land abandoned after the tsunami.

Not everyone in the region has been won over, however.

Price is still a sticking point, according to Apollo Group, a small energy provider in Fukushima that has bolstered its renewable offerings in recent years.

The price of solar-generated electricity is “a little higher” than conventional power, said CEO Motoaki Sagara.

“When we explain this to our customers, they often say they prefer cheaper electricity. I feel like the understanding is still not there,” he said.

Public subsidies gave Apollo impetus to switch, but Sagara calls them a “double-edged sword”, because businesses like his may come to rely on the cash and struggle without it.

Another renewables project hoping to win over residents involves “micro-grids”, where electricity is produced and consumed in the same place.

Katsurao, a small village near the Fukushima plant, was evacuated because of radioactive contamination between 2011 and 2016 and now has only 450 residents, less than a third of its former population. — AFP



A GREEN BARRICADE

Men walk along a street past a construction site fence in New Delhi, India, on Wednesday. —AFP

Conflict in Ukraine poses a profound challenge to Indian grand strategy



Shashi Tharoor

The author is a former UN under-secretary-general and former Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Human Resource Development, is an MP for the Indian National Congress

Russia’s war in Ukraine has exposed India’s strategic vulnerabilities as few other things could, raising fundamental questions about the country’s position in the world, its regional security, and the wisdom of its long-term relationships.

India abstained in a succession of United Nations votes – in the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Human Rights Council – condemning the Russian war. In its initial “explanation of vote,” India did not even mention Russia or deplore the war. Instead, India merely urged a de-escalation of the conflict by those involved, as if both countries were belligerents, when in fact there is an obvious aggressor and a clear victim. India did not even object to Russia’s earlier recognition of the independence of the separatist Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

In subsequent statements, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government has at least reiterated India’s longstanding principles, while calling for “concerted efforts from all sides to return to the path of diplomatic negotiations and dialogue.” In the face of mounting casualties – including an Indian student killed by Russian fire while queuing for food in Kharkiv – Modi’s government continues to call in vain for peace, while ensuring that no criticism, let alone condemnation, of Russia passes official lips.

The reasons for India’s reticence are easy to discern. For starters, Russia supplies India with about 50 per cent of its weapons and defence equipment. And while India’s other commercial ties with Russia are much more modest than those it has with the United States, diplomatic relations with the Kremlin have been close since the days of the Soviet Union. Soviet vetoes at the UN frequently shielded India on Kashmir and the Kremlin’s protection was indispensable during the 1971 Bangladesh War of Independence, when the US and China supported Pakistan.

Russia’s increasing closeness to, and geopolitical affinity with, China has therefore been worrying Indian policymakers for some time. The Kremlin has also been visibly warming to Pakistan. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan was in Moscow on the day Russia declared war on Ukraine, and continued with his meetings, including with President Vladimir Putin – a clear sign that Russia’s calculations in the subcontinent have shifted. India seems to feel that it needs to cling to Russia’s goodwill in order to avoid losing it altogether.

But India has also been looking west in recent years, building a strategic partnership with the US that includes

THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE, BY SEEMINGLY DIVIDING THE WORLD INTO TWO MUTUALLY HOSTILE CAMPS, POSES A FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGE TO INDIA’S TRADITIONAL STRATEGY OF NON-ALIGNMENT. THE COUNTRY NOW FINDS ITSELF BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE, POTENTIALLY ANTAGONISING THE WEST WHILE STILL LOSING RUSSIA TO CHINA’S EMBRACE

increasingly significant defence ties. It has embraced the US-led “Quad” (an informal four-country grouping that also includes Japan and Australia) as a useful counter to China. But Indian leaders realise that their continuing failure to join their Quad partners in opposing Russia’s invasion could jeopardise these links. The government thus finds itself on a tightrope, anxious not to fall to either side. The war in Ukraine poses another strategic challenge for India. Until the crisis began to escalate late last year, the US seemed to be focusing on the global threat posed by China and on the Indo-Pacific rather than Europe. But America may now revive its adversarial obsession with Russia. That could reduce US hostility towards China, India’s menacing northern neighbour.

All this is happening at a time when the security threat from Afghanistan is at its greatest since the Taliban was last in power two decades ago. China’s buildup of military infrastructure in the region, its financial patronage of the Taliban, its opening to Iran (which cooperated

with India in countering the previous Taliban regime), and an increase in militancy in Kashmir have put India on the defensive. Russia, China and Iran recently conducted joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean.

India’s traditional allies in the region can sense which way the wind is blowing. Nepal has allowed China to build major railway lines and highways across its northern border areas. Bhutan signed a border agreement last October that surrenders territory coveted by China, giving the Chinese an advantage in any future conflict with India. Most of India’s other South Asian neighbours have signed up to China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which India strenuously opposes. China’s increasing influence over these countries undermines India’s diplomatic position in its own backyard. And to the east, the ruling junta in Myanmar has declared a “special kinship” with China, whereas its predecessor had come to see India as a valuable counterbalance to China.

In short, Russia’s war in Ukraine has placed India in an unenviable position. Ideally, India would have liked to continue strengthening its partnerships with Western democracies, especially Australia, France, Japan, the United Kingdom and the US, while maintaining its traditional closeness to Russia, in the hope of deterring China from further encroachment on India’s core security interests. Instead, India finds itself between a rock and a hard place. It could antagonise the West while still losing Russia to China’s embrace, even as Pakistan – with friendlier Afghan and Iranian neighbours – feels emboldened in Kashmir.

The conflict in Ukraine is posing a profound challenge to Indian grand strategy. ©Project Syndicate, 2021



This picture shows an apartment building destroyed after shelling the day before in Ukraine’s second-biggest city of Kharkiv on Tuesday. —AFP

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Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski celebrates scoring his team's third goal during the Uefa Champions League last-16, second-leg match against RB Salzburg in Munich. — AFP

BAYERN SAIL INTO CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTERS

LEWANDOWSKI HAT-TRICK SINKS SALZBURG

MUNICH, Germany: Robert Lewandowski scored a record-breaking 11-minute hat-trick to send Bayern Munich sailing into the Champions League quarterfinals with a 7-1 win at home to Red Bull Salzburg on Tuesday.

The Polish striker had three goals to his name by the 23rd minute -- the earliest anyone has ever completed a hat-trick in a Champions League game -- as Bayern shook off their early nerves to crush Salzburg.

"This was definitely a statement from us, and it gives us hope that there is more like this to come," Bayern captain Manuel Neuer told Amazon Prime after his side reached the last eight for a record 20th time.

Austrian champions Salzburg had held Bayern to a 1-1 draw in the first leg, but their hopes of an upset in Munich were left in tatters when Lewandowski scored a tap-in and two penalties to send Bayern on their way to a famous victory.

With just ten minutes and 27 seconds between Lewandowski's first and third goals, it was the fastest of the six hat-tricks the Pole has now scored in the Champions League. "We knew we had to attack the box early today and get Lewy into the game, because he is so hard to defend against," said Thomas Mueller. "We all knew how important this game was today. If we had been knocked out, it would have been a very sad next three months for us," he added.

LEWANDOWSKI FROM THE SPOT

Bayern started with an attack-heavy 3-5-2, but they looked nervy at the back and there were chances at both ends in the opening minutes.

Lewandowski forced a sharp save from Philipp Koehn with the first attack of the game, while Nicolas Capaldo was denied at the other end by a brilliant block from Kingsley Coman.

Lewandowski gratefully tucked away a penalty to give Bayern the lead on 12

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RESULTS ON TUESDAY:

LAST 16, RETURN LEGS

At Munich, Germany
Bayern Munich (GER) 7
(Lewandowski 12-pen, 21-pen, 23, Gnabry 31, Müller 54, 83, Sané 85)
Red Bull Salzburg (AUT) 1 (Kjaergaard 70)
Bayern Munich win 8-2 on aggregate

Liverpool, England
Liverpool (ENG) 0 Inter Milan (ITA) 1 (Matinez 61)
Liverpool win 2-1 on aggregate

minutes after he was brought down by Maximilian Woeber in the box.

Initially, the lead didn't seem to calm Bayern's nerves, and Salzburg almost equalised as Nicolas Seiwald fizzed a fierce shot over the bar at the other end.

But Lewandowski was in a predatory mood, and he soon added two more to

complete his hat-trick and put the tie beyond the Austrian side.

Having smashed a second penalty into the bottom corner to double the lead, he added a third on the counter-attack, chasing a loose ball over the line after a one-on-one with Koehn.

Bayern were now purring, and Serge Gnabry drilled home a crushingly inevitable fourth after an elegant passing move on the half-hour mark.

Mueller curled a brilliant shot into the bottom corner to make it 5-0 shortly after half time, before Bayern switched on cruise control.

The guests grabbed a consolation goal with a clinical counter-attack 20 minutes from time, 18-year-old Dane Maurits Kjaergaard smashing a Geoff-Hurst-like finish into the top corner past Manuel Neuer. But the hosts had the last word as Mueller stroked home his second and Lewandowski set up Sane for Bayern's seventh a few minutes from time. — AFP



Liverpool's English defender Trent Alexander-Arnold (R) heads the ball clear against Inter Milan at Anfield. — AFP

Liverpool into quarters despite loss to 10-man Inter

LIVERPOOL, England: Liverpool stuttered into the quarterfinals of the Champions League with a 2-1 aggregate win over Inter Milan after suffering a 1-0 loss to the Italian side, who were reduced to 10 men, at Anfield on Tuesday.

After a cagey first half, a superb drive into the top corner from Lautaro Martinez in the 62nd minute put Inter ahead on the night.

But just when they looked capable of springing a surprise, the visitors found themselves down a man after Alexis Sanchez was dismissed for a second yellow card after catching Liverpool midfielder Fabinho.

It was a harsh decision against Sanchez, who had won the ball but caught the Brazilian with his follow through and Inter's bench furiously protested.

The dismissal killed Inter's momentum with Liverpool never looking in danger of conceding again.

"Lautaro's goal had hit Liverpool, but Sanchez's expulsion influenced the last half hour of play," said Inter coach Simone Inzaghi ruefully.

"A victory at Anfield it's nice, but it's useless for the qualification," he added.

After their 2-0 loss at the San Siro, Inzaghi's Inter came to Anfield knowing that they needed to find the perfect balance of defensive security and clinical finishing and they began in confident fashion.

Inter's shape was compact and their movement clever while Liverpool struggled to get into their normal rhythm, perhaps wary of over-committing.

Still, it was the home side who came nearest to taking a first-half lead with Joel Matip heading against the bar and then Virgil van Dijk heading wide from a Trent Alexander-Arnold corner.

Hakan Calhanoglu forced Liverpool keeper Alisson Becker into action in the 42nd minute and on the stroke of halftime Trent Alexander-Arnold, finding space on the right, flashed a shot just wide.

Liverpool struck the woodwork again after the interval, with Mohamed Salah hitting the post after Inter keeper Samir Handanovic had rushed out to foil Diogo Jota.

But the game truly came alive when Martinez, having just wasted a good opportunity, picked the ball up on Liverpool's right and took a step inside before unleashing an unstoppable drive.

It was a short-lived moment of promise for Inter though, with Sanchez departing soon after, and it was Klopp's men who looked the more likely to add to the scoring. — Reuters

LOCAL FLAVOUR

Oman
Cricket's
D10 League
to begin on
March 12



MUSCAT: Oman Cricket's long-awaited inaugural edition of the D10 league in partnership with ITW ProdG, will commence on March 12. All the matches will be played on Turf 1 of the Oman Cricket Academy Ground with a round-robin format employed for the entire league stage.

Speaking on the launch, Pankaj Khimji, Chairman of Oman Cricket said, "ITW and Oman Cricket had a phenomenal run with the D20 league. The tournament far exceeded our expectations and now we feel very excited for the forthcoming D10 edition which I'm sure will surpass expectations even further – both from the players' perspective and from the team owners' perspective. We at Oman Cricket are thrilled to experiment with various new forms of local leagues and I wish everyone all the very best."

The D10 tournament will be contested by the same 8 teams that took part in the D20 tournament last December – namely Qurum Thunders, Amerat Royals, Azaiba XI, Bousher Busters, Khuwair Warriors, Ghubrah Giants, Darsait Titans and the winners Ruwi Rangers. The point of major difference as the name suggests, will be the format, with each innings consisting of 10 overs instead of 20.

All the 35 games of the D10 league will be shown live on FanCode – the premier destination for sports fans in India. In addition, it will also be carried by Sports Eye (a regional cricket broadcasting portal) and other premium platforms globally.



West Indies Shemaine Campbelle plays a shot during the Round 2 Women's World Cup match against England at University Oval in Dunedin. – AFP

WEST INDIES

STUN HOLDERS ENGLAND

WINDIES POST SECOND WIN IN WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

DUNEDIN, New Zealand: Defending champions England slumped to a second loss at the Women's Cricket World Cup on Wednesday as underdogs the West Indies continued their sparkling start to the tournament.

The West Indies, who stunned hosts New Zealand in the tournament opener, defeated England by seven runs in a thriller at Dunedin's University Oval.

England's tail-enders made a valiant effort to reel in the West Indies' 226-run target but fell just short, leaving their title

defence on the edge. "They batted outstandingly at us on a good wicket and played some brilliant shots," England captain Heather Knight said. "We felt like we were in a good position but I guess the last 10 overs cost us."

Four-time champions England, who lost to Australia in their opening match, face an uphill struggle to make the top four of the eight-team tournament and defend their 2017 title.

The West Indies made a brisk start after winning the toss and opting to bat, racing to 81 without

loss before throwing away three wickets in a single over.

Spinner Sophie Ecclestone sparked the mini-collapse when she dismissed Hayley Matthews for 45, then Deandra Dottin was run out, before Ecclestone struck again with the next ball.

Ecclestone subdued the West Indies' batters through the middle of the innings before Shemaine Campbelle and Chedean Nation staged a late charge.

Their 123-run partnership gave the West Indies a competitive total but England would have been

dominant had they not dropped a slew of chances as the catching woes that marred the recent series against Australia returned.

There were no catching issues for West Indies all-rounder Dottin, who dismissed England opener Lauren Winfield-Hill for 12 with a spectacular diving effort.

Nat Scriver, a century maker in England's first-match loss against Australia, departed for two, leaving Tammy Beaumont to try to rebuild the innings with 46 from 76 balls.

Her departure left England on 94 for five but Sophia Dunkley and

Danni Wyatt upped the tempo and scored 38 and 33 respectively to keep English hopes alive.

At 156 for eight, it then fell to tail-enders Ecclestone and Kate Cross to chase the final 70 runs.

They came close, scoring 33 not out and 27 respectively, but Cross's dismissal ended hopes of a miracle finish. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES

West Indies 225-6 in 50 overs (S Campbell 66, C Nation 49 not out, H Matthews 45; S Ecclestone 3-20) bt England 218 in 47.4 overs (T Beaumont 46, S Dunkley 38, D Wyatt 33, S Ecclestone 33; S Connell 3-38)

Jadeja tops Test all-rounder rankings after Mohali heroics

NEW DELHI: India's Ravindra Jadeja has returned as the world's number one-ranked all-rounder after his stand-out effort with bat and ball against Sri Lanka, the International Cricket Council said on Wednesday.

Jadeja, a left-hand batsman and left-arm spinner, hit an unbeaten 175 and took a match tally of nine wickets as India hammered Sri Lanka inside three days on Sunday to lead the two-match series 1-0.

"It's not the first time that the Indian spinner has topped the all-rounder rankings, and his move to the summit



comes as little surprise after a stunning individual showing during the first test against Sri Lanka in Mohali," the ICC said.

The 33-year-old Jadeja overtook fellow Indian Ravichandran Ashwin and West Indies' Jason Holder to top the table with 406 rating points. Holder, who is in action against England in Antigua, slipped to second in the rankings, with Ashwin third.

Ashwin also had a memorable match as he overtook Indian great Kapil Dev's tally of 434 wickets to become the second-highest wicket-taker in India behind Anil Kumble (619 scalps).

Bangladesh star Shakib Al Hasan remains at fourth position while England's Ben Stokes moves a place up to fifth above Mitchell Starc of Australia.

In the batting chart, Virat Kohli moved into the top five after a 45 in the previous Test — his 100th.

Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant's 96 against Sri Lanka lifted him into the top 10 among batters.

Australia's Marnus Labuschagne remains the top-ranked Test batter in the world, and teammate Pat Cummins is the number one bowler. — AFP

Bairstow century lifts England against Windies

NORTH SOUND, Antigua and Barbuda: An unbeaten century by England's Jonny Bairstow, his second in as many Tests, lifted the tourists back from the brink of disaster on the first day of their three-Test series against West Indies on Tuesday.

After losing four early wickets in an all-too-familiar tale of woe at the top of the batting order, England for a while picked up where they ignominiously left off two months ago in their ill-fated 4-0 Ashes drubbing in Australia.

But the visitors recovered to 268 for six at stumps in North Sound on the island of Antigua, with Bairstow (109) and Chris Woakes

(24) unbeaten after seeing off six overs of the second new ball.

Bairstow brought up the slowest of his eight Test centuries, his first against West Indies, shortly before the close in front of a healthy pro-England crowd.

It was a perfect Caribbean day, with a stiff cross-breeze helping the bowlers extract some swing and the spectators some relief from the tropical sun.

It was also a pretty good day for Bairstow, who scored most of his runs square of the wicket as he bided his time before punishing anything loose in a knock that included 17 fours.

"I've been fortunate enough to



Jonny Bairstow of England celebrates his century during the first day of the first Test against West Indies at Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium in North Sound. – AFP

be on a few tours over here and it's an amazing place to come," he said.

"To score a century, in any Test match but especially with the travelling fans who haven't been able to come for a couple of years, we're very fortunate to have them."

Bairstow was ably assisted by the two Bens — a gritty Stokes (36) and a tidy Foakes (42) — their efforts leaving the match finely-balanced on a dry, slow pitch at the Viv Richards Stadium.

A lively Kemar Roach, miserly Jason Holder and promising young paceman Jayden Seales all collected two wickets each.

Roach claimed the prized wicket of Joe Root for 13 when

SCOREBOARD

England 1st Innings	
Alex Lees lbw Roach	4
Z Crawley c wkpr da Silva b Seales	8
J Root b Roach 13	
D Lawrence c Blackwood b Holder	20
B Stokes b Seales	36
J Bairstow not out	109
B Foakes lbw Holder	42
C Woakes not out	24
Extras (lb-7, nb-5)	12
Total (6 wks, 86 overs)	268
Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-17, 3-27, 4-48, 5-115, 6-214	
Bowling: K Roach 16-2-71-2, J Seales 19-5-64-2, J Holder 16-9-15-2, A Joseph 19-2-69-0, V Permaul 13-4-35-0, K Brathwaite 3-1-7-0	

the England captain did not offer a shot to a ball that clipped off the bail. — Reuters

OMAN CONSOLIDATE POSITION ON TOP OF TABLE WITH 34 POINTS

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MARCH 9

Oman posted their second straight win against hosts United Arab Emirates in their ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 ODI series at the ICC Academy in Dubai on Wednesday.

The win consolidated Oman's position on top of the table with 34 points from 26 matches.

In their opening match, Oman had beaten UAE by 12 runs, while they lost by 110 runs to Namibia in the second match of the series.

Ten more matches remain for Oman as the top three teams will enter the final round of qualifiers for the ODI World Cup in Zimbabwe in June-July 2023.

The UAE (14 points from 13 matches) are third behind Scotland, who have 16 points from 12 matches.

All-rounder Khawar Ali was the main architect of the victory with 63 runs and two wickets.

Chasing Oman's modest total of 221-7 in 50 overs, the UAE ended short of eight runs in 48.3 overs.

Medium pacer Fayyaz Butt was the pick of Oman bowlers with figures of 3-23. Fayyaz also took the last wicket by trapping Junaid Siddique leg before to end the challenge of the hosts.

Leg-spinner Khawar bowled brilliantly taking two wickets for 37 runs in his 10 overs.

With the last pair on the crease the UAE required 12 from 10 balls at one stage.

Earlier, Oman won the toss and elected to bat first.

Oman started slowly with openers Kashyap Prajapati and Jatinder Singh putting on 43 runs for the first wicket. Jatinder lost his wicket when he was caught by Vriitya Aravind off the bowling of Zohoor Khan at 11.

New batsman Shoaib Khan also didn't last long when he was run out for 12. Prajapati then was trapped leg before by Basil Hameed for 44 as Oman slipped to 3-73.

Captain Zeeshan Maqsood then started the rescue act with Khawar but the skipper was out for 20 leaving Oman at 102-4.

Ayaan Khan came in next and added valuable 77-run partnership with Khawar for the fifth wicket.

UAE struck back through Zahoor Khan when he removed Khawar after a well-made 63 (78 balls) with the help of eight

OMAN
POST
SECOND
WIN
OVER
UAE

SCOREBOARD

OMAN		UAE (TARGET 222)	
Kashyap Prajapati lbw B Hameed	44	Chirag Suri c Prajapati b Fayyaz	63
Jatinder Singh c Aravind b Zahoor	11	M Waseem c Shoaib b Bilal	19
Shoaib Khan run out	12	V Aravind c Sandeep b Khawar	29
Zeeshan M c J Siddique b B Hameed	20	C Rizwan run out	15
Khawar Ali c R Mustafa b Zahoor	63	Asif Khan b Kaleemullah	6
Ayaan Khan b Zahoor	31	Basil Hameed b Fayyaz	25
Naseem Khushi c C Suri b Zahoor	1	Rohan Mustafa not out	23
Sandeep Goud not out	21	Kashif Daud run out (Ayaan)	2
Fayyaz Butt not out	9	Ahmed Raza st N Khushi b Khawar	0
Extras (b 1, lb 4, w 4)	9	Zahoor Khan lbw Z Maqsood	4
Total (50 Ov, RR: 4.42)	221-7	Junaid Siddique lbw Fayyaz	5
Fall of wickets: 1-43, 2-59, 3-73, 4-102, 5-179, 6-190, 7-190		Extras (b 3, lb 3, w 16)	22
Bowling: Kashif Daud 5-0-14-0, Junaid Siddique 10-1-56-0, Zahoor Khan 10-0-51-4, Ahmed Raza 10-0-35-0, Rohan Mustafa 8-0-37-0, Basil Hameed 7-2-23-2		Total (48.3 Ov, RR: 4.39)	213
		Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-99, 3-134, 4-140, 5-156, 6-184, 7-187, 8-187, 9-199	
		Bowling: Bilal 10-1-48-1, Kaleemullah 9-0-30-1, Fayyaz 9-3-0-28-3, Khawar Ali 10-1-37-2, Ayaan Khan 2-0-21-0, Zeeshan 8-0-43-1	

boundaries.

In the 47th over, Zahoor dealt a twin blow to Oman after sending back Naseem Khushi (1) and Ayaan (33) in two balls as Oman reached 190-7.

Sandeep Gaud (21) and Fayyaz Butt (9) batted sensibly in the remaining deliveries as Oman posted a decent 221 for 7 in the 50 overs.

Zahoor was best among UAE bowlers taking 4-51 in his 10 overs.

ALL-ROUND EFFORT

In reply, UAE lost their first wicket at 22 runs when Shoaib Khan caught opener Muhammad Waseem off the bowling of Bilal Khan in the fifth over.

Opener Chirag Suri and Vriitya



Khawar Ali with Zeeshan Maqsood

added 77 runs in their partnership before the 19-year-old departed for 29. Khawar took the wicket as Aravind's sloppy drive was caught

by Sandeep Gaud.

Chundangapoyil Rizwan (15) was run out next as UAE slipped to 4-140 in 29.3 overs.

Fayyaz took the key wicket of Suri later as the hosts only added six runs more to the total.

Suri scored 63 runs from 87 balls with the help of eight boundaries.

Kaleemullah bowled Asif Khan for 6 leaving UAE at 156-6 in the 38th over.

Basil Hameed made a good effort to score 25 but was bowled by Fayyaz as Oman got back the momentum in 44th over with UAE score at 184-6.

Khawar's 45th over saw big-hitter Kashif Daud (2) run-out after brilliant fielding by Ayaan. Next ball, UAE captain Ahmad Raza was stumped while going forward by wicketkeeper Khushi, putting the hosts at 187-8 in 44.2 overs.

Zeeshan trapped Zahoor leg before in the first ball of 47th over as UAE lost their ninth wicket for 199 runs.

All-rounder Rohan Mustafa remained not out on 23 but ran out of partners as Fayyaz's yorker ended the fight of UAE eight runs short of target after Junaid was trapped lbw for 5.

Djokovic entered on Indian Wells draw but status unclear

INDIAN WELLS, United States: Novak Djokovic was entered into the draw for this week's ATP/ WTA Indian Wells tournament on Tuesday but it is unclear whether he will take part in the tournament, organisers said.

A brief statement from tournament organisers said officials were in contact with Djokovic's team to determine whether he would play in California or even be allowed to enter the United States because he has not been vaccinated against the coronavirus.

"Novak Djokovic is on the tournament entry list, and therefore is placed into the draw today," tournament chiefs said.

"We are currently in communication with his team; however, it has not been determined if he will participate in the event by getting CDC approval

to enter the country."

Djokovic is a five-time champion at Indian Wells, where organisers have said proof of full vaccination will be required for spectator entry into the grounds for the tournament in the California desert.

Under US government regulations, all non-US citizen travellers entering the United States must be vaccinated against Covid-19.

Djokovic was barred from the Australian Open in January after officials said he did not meet requirements for unvaccinated travellers trying to enter the nation.

Djokovic's visa was eventually cancelled and, after a legal appeal failed, he departed without playing.

While Djokovic's status remains up in the air, Tuesday's draw



raised the possibility of another blockbuster showdown between newly minted world number one Daniil Medvedev and 21-time

Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal.

Russian star Medvedev is scheduled to face Nadal in the

semifinals in what would be the duo's third meeting in less than two months.

Before that however, top seed

Medvedev may have to negotiate a tricky assignment against fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas in the quarterfinals.

Nadal has won both of his meetings with Medvedev this year, winning an epic Australian Open final before claiming victory at the Mexican Open last month.

Medvedev has never won Indian Wells, and was eliminated in the last 16 at last year's tournament.

Fourth seed Nadal meanwhile is a three-time victor at the Californian showpiece, and will be playing the tournament for the first time since 2019.

The 35-year-old Spaniard reached the semifinals or better in eight straight appearances at the tournament between 2006 and 2013. Nadal, who joins the fray in Saturday's second round, could face Sebastian Korda in his opening game. — AFP

Khedmah offers smart solutions in Al Dakhiliyah

MUSCAT: Oman Investment & Finance Company ‘Khedmah’ boasts of a robust network of 68 branches across the Sultanate of Oman along with its digital platforms. Through these channels, the company seeks to meet clients’ needs and exceed their expectations.

Over the recent period, Khedmah has constantly worked toward fulfilling the payments needs of all segments of the community by expanding its network and providing smart solutions.

In Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Khedmah delivers its unique services through 10 branches. These branches are located in Bahla, Adam, Manah, Al Ghafat, Al Hamra, Barkat Al Mouz, Bisya and two branches in Nizwa in Firq and Daris.



Salim Al jadidi

Through these branches and other digital platforms, customers can easily pay their electricity, water and telephone bills, recharge their phones, and also pay their electricity prepaid meter bills. In addition, customers can make payments to the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) and recharge any entertainment subscription.

Salim bin Salam al Jadidi,

Assistant Regional Manager, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate for OIFC says: “I was witness to a strategic transformation in the operations, services provided to clients and expansion of platforms particularly digital in the 30 years of my professional career. These milestones are a result of the company’s sterling efforts to keep abreast with the latest developments by conducting detailed studies on branch locations and customers’ satisfaction levels. Khedmah branches have a qualified Omani workforce trained to address clients’ needs as per the highest standards in the customer service field.”

Along with Khedmah’s wide array of solutions, customers interested in subscribing to Awasr and Omantel home Internet

products as well as Omantel postpaid packages can also easily do so at any of the Khedmah branch offices.

Furthermore, customers can now benefit from a gamut of Oman Post & ASYAD Express services outside their working hours through a selected number of Khedmah branches. The services include post box subscriptions, subscription fee payments, subscription renewals and sending parcels locally and internationally.

Established in 1979, OIFC is one of the leading investment and services companies that specialise in billing, collection and debt factoring for electricity, water and telecom services in the Sultanate of Oman. For further information, please contact Khedmah call centre on 24727272.

Build your own plan with Shahry business digital

MUSCAT: Making it quick and easy, Ooredoo’s build-your-own Shahry Business Digital plans are giving business customers the ultimate in flexibility. With an abundance of options to choose from, businesses can select from a set of ready-made packages, or they can build their own plan, with multiple options for data, voice and data roaming, depending on their unique needs. Plus, with add-ons made directly through the Ooredoo App, customers will enjoy an easy end-to-end digital experience.

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the flexibility to build a unique business plan, it’s the perfect way to mix and match for the optimum tailor-made solution.

To sign up today, either head to the award-winning Ooredoo App or pop into any store. Customers can find out more about Ooredoo’s Shahry business solutions by visiting www.ooredoo.om/B2BShahrydigital.

ahli Islamic offers mortgage-free auto finance

MUSCAT: ahli Islamic has been building on the success of its innovative product offerings and has announced launch of a new Shari’a compliant auto finance facility under its it’s Islamic finance umbrella.

ahli Islamic’s new offer allows customers to opt for auto finance without having to mortgage the vehicle, therefore giving customers the flexibility to sell or transfer Mulkiya of the vehicle as per their convenience. By opting for mortgage-free auto finance, customers reserve the liberty to use the vehicle as per their discretion.

“At ahli Islamic, we believe in making finances hassle-free and convenient for customers. While

our auto financing product has always been well-received in the market, we wanted to enhance the convenience for our customers by putting more power in their hands. By removing the mortgage requirement, we give our customers the freedom to manage the sale of their vehicle without any restriction, thereby giving them more control over how they choose to handle their assets,” says Yousuf al Rawahi – DGM, Head of ahli Islamic.

The mortgage-free auto finance is offered exclusively to those customers who transfer their salaries to ahli Islamic and who fall under ahli Islamic’s approved employer list at the public sector and the private



sector as well as expatriate employees. The auto finance is offered for a maximum period of 10 years.

Under ahli Islamic mortgage-

free Auto Finance customers are assured of Sharia-compliant auto financing facilities that allow them to procure their desired car instantly. Based on the product,

customers need to submit an application for auto finance for their desired vehicle which the bank purchases from a third party on a spot payment basis.

The bank then sells it to the customer through Murabaha sale contract that is on a cost plus profit basis where the customers can repay the amount in comfortable installments. With the new auto finance being free of mortgage, customers will find it easier to honor the installments even if they need to sell the car.

ahli Islamic has been a popular choice amongst customers owing to its flexible policies, innovative and diverse product portfolio and excellent levels of customer service.

Maisarah launches ‘My Offers’ app with special discounts



Nasser Said Al Bahantah
DGM & Chief Retail Banking Officer

MUSCAT: Maisarah Islamic Banking Services – BankDhofar’s Islamic banking arm – recently launched a brand new mobile banking application that comes with added value and exclusive offerings to Maisarah cardholders. Available through Google Play and App Store, “My Offers – BD & MIBS” allows customers to enjoy 50 per cent discounts, including Buy-1-Get-1 deals, across more than 1,500 outlets in Oman and UAE.

Nasser bin Said al Bahantah, DGM & Chief Retail Banking Officer at Maisarah, hailed the new initiative, describing it as “value-added offers at one’s fingertips.” He noted, “As we look forward to expand our offerings to Maisarah’s customers through diverse access points, we brought in this sophisticated app that would provide to users a bundle of offers to match their lifestyle, fulfil their needs and exceed their expectations. This is just the beginning and we will definitely add up to the list of merchants and provide a matchless banking experience to our all valued customers.”

When downloading the app (<http://onelink.to/26anyu>), users get digital discount vouchers handy and would be set to take advantage of the expansive collection of dining, entertainment, lifestyle and wellness options, including top brands and luxurious items.

Premium automotive brand ‘Bestune’ launched

MUSCAT: Gulf Great Sands (GGS) LLC has launched Bestune, a popular automotive global brand in the Sultanate of Oman. Bestune, brand is owned by the Chinese automaker FAW Group which is ranked 66 among global fortune 500 companies. Bestune is positioned as a mid-to-high-end brand in the mainstream automobile market.

GGS LLC is part of the Bahwan International Group Company (BIG), which is a reputed distributor of many international automotive brands in Oman. FAW Group produces and distributes passenger cars, commercial trucks & buses, Established in 1953, the company is China’s oldest and largest automotive company.

A spokesperson for GGS LLC said, “We are pleased to be the official distributor for Bestune brand of vehicles produced by FAW Group, a respected name in the automobile industry. Customers will be able to experience the dynamic design, sporty character mixed with absolute elegance, high quality, high performance from Bestune brand of vehicles which will be at par with some luxury end cars which has cutting edge technologies and radar-based features. We are certain that auto



enthusiasts in Oman will find the premium models very impressive. To begin with models including compact crossover Bestune T77, mid-size crossover Bestune T99 and mid-size sedan Bestune B70 will be available in Oman.”

Founded in 1953, FAW Group employs 175,000 people around the world and sells products in over 70 countries and has five production bases and 14 factories. FAW is a diversified maker of quality automobiles with total sales in excess of seven million vehicles worldwide. FAW maintains the lead market position within China while continuing to expand into new

international markets, executing a carefully planned strategy to build a comprehensive global organisation. FAW takes advantage of the latest cutting-edge technologies, process and management practices to bring customers the latest in automobile world.

Adhering to FAW Group’s long history of automobile manufacturing, Bestune brand is representative of high-quality performance. Bestune brand is present in 30 countries including Latin America, Middle East, Europe, Asia and Africa. Bestune has won several prestigious automobile

awards which demonstrates its strong comprehensive strength in performance, research and development.

Bestune’s factory covers an area of 270,000 square metres, with a construction area of 200,000 square metres. The production capacity can reach 200,000 vehicles per year. The factory includes four workshops of stamping, welding, painting and assembly. Most of the internal production equipment is imported from Europe. With a highly automated production line, it’s a Chinese automobile production base of leading high quality and high level.

Following the principle of “developing original and innovative technologies”, FAW Group has continuously infused powerful technology vitality into new Bestune brand and established a global R&D. FAW has established a global R&D layout and organised a global R&D team with more than 5,000 top technologists. The R&D system is seen in nine regions of three countries in the world, focusing on innovations and breakthroughs in pioneering design, new energy vehicles, artificial intelligence, 5G application, new materials and process and intelligent manufacturing.



OPAZ promotes use of drones, AI technologies



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 8

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) held meetings with individuals and start-ups specialising in the operating unmanned aircrafts (drones) to introduce them to the opportunities afforded by the Artificial Intelligence Zone covering 18 sq km in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

Issa bin Hamood al Sumri, Secretary of the Steering Committee for Supervising the Artificial Intelligence Zone, said: "These interactions are aimed at exploring the role of modern technology and applying the latest technical developments and artificial intelligence in developing businesses in the SEZAD. They yielded insights from the different stakeholders on business opportunities that can be pursued within this zone."

GreenBird 3D, a company specialising in underwater surveys and inspection, deployed a special drone to take photographs of the commercial berth at Port of Duqm. The photography helped uncover issues of dust settlement, rust and leakage and other challenges.

Mohammed bin Salim al Riyami, Manager of Geomatics Department at GreenBird 3D, said: "An attempt was made, during these experiments, to discover opportunities where modern technologies and artificial intelligence could be implemented in various marine works in the SEZ at Duqm. We highly value the efforts of OPAZ to support local companies specialised in using artificial intelligence techniques and urge them to conduct their experiments in Duqm."



5 local Omani firms win prestigious ICV awards

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MARCH 9

The first set of In-Country Value (ICV) awards instituted in honour of the Raoul Restucci, former Managing Director of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), were handed out on Tuesday, at a ceremony held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. In attendance at the event, among other dignitaries, was Restucci, who is credited with introducing the ICV concept in Oman's oilfield sector and overseeing its successful rollout across the energy industry.

The winners of the Raoul Restucci Award for In-Country Value (RICVA Awards), previously known as the ICV Awards, went to: Arabian Industries Clad LLC (Best Local Manufacturing Facility); Al Shawamikh Oil Services SAOC (Best

National Objectives Employer); Al Baraka Oilfield Services (Best Contractor in ICV Delivery); Al Ghalbi International (Best Performing Local Community Contractor); and Rihal — Data Migration and Services LLC (Best Performing SME).

PDO, the biggest energy producer in the Sultanate of Oman, hosted the awards to mark the 10th anniversary of the launch of the ICV programme. The initiative is credited with achieving unparalleled success throughout the past 10 years by maximising the total spend retained in the country to benefit business development, contribute to human capability development and stimulate productivity in the Omani economy.

Speaking on the occasion, PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister said: "This is truly a special event recognising the excellence of our partners who contribute to ICV and support a positive and competitive business culture where

the words "local content" are a badge of distinction. We look forward to continued collaboration with our contractors and fellow operators to ramp up our efforts and achieve the full potential within ICV as we continue our journey and maintain momentum."

He further added: "We have new themes that our ICV strategy will focus on to accommodate shifts in the industry over the coming years including Technology, Digitalisation and Energy Transition."

Also on the occasion, PDO unveiled the first phase of the "Rakhaa" digital platform which aims to build the capabilities of young Omanis and provide opportunities in the field of content creation. The platform will connect freelancers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with local customers including government and private institutions and individuals who will be able to request for relevant services through the same platform.

Oman crude surges to \$127.71/b

FROM PAGE 13

Russia ships 7 million to 8 million barrels per day of crude and fuel to global markets. European allies are not expected to join the United States in the ban, but major buyers there are already shunning Russian oil. Shell, the one notable major that did buy Russian crude, faced a torrent of criticism, including from Ukraine's foreign minister. On Tuesday, Shell said it would no longer buy Russian oil.

The disruption could ripple through other energy markets, as Russian oil and products are used for refining into other goods. read more

"We are at the beginning of that shockwave in energy markets," said Roger Diwan, vice-president of financial services at S&P Global.

MDO wins 12 mining concessions covering 21,500 sq km

FROM PAGE 13

- Providing the required size and quantities of the primary metallic ores so it can be commercially invested in the minerals processing operation to increase the concentration levels and consequently increase its market value. These quantities of minerals reserves will facilitate the creation of in country value to the mineral ores available in the Oman through establishing downstream mining and manufacturing industries.
 - Facilitating funding from the bank sector for investment in mining sector through developing a long-term agreement with the investor.
 - Focusing Ministry efforts resources in the high strategic minerals (metallic minerals) especially the ones related to Fourth Industrial Revolution, while enhancing industrial mineral production (non-metallic minerals) through attracting international specialised companies and enable the establishment of mining industries and creating various job opportunities.
- The Ministry is also working towards regulating investment in the mining sector to insure the optimal utilisation of the mineral reserves locally, by creating a mechanism to ensure the sector's sustainability. By offering 'Ready for Investment' mining opportunities based on concession areas, the Ministry hopes it will help in the development of an investment portfolio and organised sector, in addition to reducing the environmental impact.

Sustainability Week to spotlight strategic projects of Nama Group companies

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 9

Nama Group (NG) will have a significant presence at Oman Sustainability Week (OSW), which takes place from March 13 – 17, 2022, under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

As a Strategic Sponsor, NG will provide visitors with a firsthand narrative of its ongoing sustainability ventures at the exhibition, including various renewable energy schemes and the North-South interconnection Project (Rabt). In addition, a total of three papers will be presented by key officials of NG subsidiaries.

Suleiman bin Khamis al Qasbi, Chief of Planning and Asset Management, at Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC), will speak on integrated water resources management. The paper will shed light on the company's market-



ready technological innovations that can substantially contribute to making the water sector sustainable.

OWWSC intends to meet the requirements of 98 per cent of customers through water networks

connections. Currently, four strategic transmission projects are underway to provide upstream transmission infrastructure till 2040 and beyond. In addition to major networks projects, OWWSC is executing a significant

number of small and medium size networks.

Discussing regional and national success stories, Eng Yaqoob al Kiyumi, CEO of Oman Power and Water Procurement Company, will speak on national

and international programmes for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI). His session will focus on concrete regional and national programmes that support the transition to sustainable industrial development and the circular economy.

There will also be a presentation on 'Sustainable Energy and Energy Positive Communities' by Rodrigo Costa, Chairman and CEO, REN (Portugal), who will outline major technological innovations that are enabling energy provision for the masses and what is needed to deploy these at scale in the region.

"Considering the scale of Nama Group's operations in Oman, we are aware that our business operations can have a far-reaching and positive impact, within and outside the country," said Ghada al Yousef, Executive Manager, Group Communication and Sustainability.

UK initiative pushes for more women to head FTSE-100 firms

VÉRONIQUE DUPONT

LONDON: Two years ago Tara Cemlyn-Jones, a former investment banker who helped in the financing of start-ups including lastminute.com, returned to the UK after years spent abroad. She was struck by the progress of women in several sectors, especially politics, but also by the low numbers of female business leaders.

Cemlyn-Jones’ organisation 25x25 wants to change that and has set itself an ambitious target: to get 25 women at the head of the 100 biggest businesses in the UK by 2025.

Currently there are just nine female chief executives on the FTSE-100, the index of leading firms on the London Stock Exchange.

Two years ago, it was six per cent. But in the wider FTSE-350 index, the figure is even worse — just five per cent.

On Wall Street, female chief executives make up six per cent of the S&P 500 while in France, there are currently three women heading firms listed on the CAC-40.

“We specifically wanted to tackle the CEO position because we felt it was the only way to get women into the executive stream compared to non-executive positions where a lot of work has already been done,” Cemlyn-Jones said ahead of International Women’s Day.

One recent study showed that in the last 10 years women’s representation on the boards of FTSE-100 companies had jumped from 12.5 per cent to 39.1 per cent. “Women are already in the system, they’re just not making it to the role of CEO,” Cemlyn-Jones said.

In France, which has been leading the way, 43.8 per cent of posts on the boards of CAC-40-listed companies are women.

That followed legislation which imposed a quota of at least 40 per cent.

“In the UK there hasn’t been a tradition of imposed quotas,” said Cemlyn-Jones.

Yet the country has still more women on boards than countries such as Norway, which pioneered such quotas and is currently third behind France and the UK on 38.2 per cent.

UK progress has notably been spurred by government statistics and reports, which have been put in the public domain, which have forced companies to act.

But for Cemlyn-Jones, for women’s progress to bear fruit, they need to be in decision-making roles. — AFP

We specifically wanted to tackle the CEO position because we felt it was the only way to get women into the executive stream

TARA CEMLYN-JONES
Former Investment Banker



BRANDS
PULL OUT
CONTINUES:

People have lunch in a McDonald’s restaurant in Moscow. Major brands have continued to pull out of Russia, with McDonald’s, Coca-Cola, Starbucks and others among the latest to join the international chorus of outrage. — AFP

Evolution of Sultanate of Oman’s banking sector



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCI

The Omani banking industry is one of the most vital economic sectors at the heart of daily national life and development.

Just about every individual and organisation in society depends on the sector for access to the world of finance, banking, credit, remittances, savings, deposits and other services of a day-to-day nature.

Now a new book has been launched that provides a scientific look at how the sector has evolved — a valuable reference source to bankers, researchers and students, among others in society.

It documents all of the key developments and events of significance in the Sultanate of Oman’s modern banking era and is thus invaluable to researchers in their studies.

“48 Years in the Service of the Omani Banking Sector” is authored by Hamoud bin Sangour al Zadjali, the former Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), who has overseen an important phase in the evolution of the banking sector during his tenure as head of the apex bank.

Addressing banking sector employees

— past, present and future — the book underlines the important role they play as sentinels of the ‘savings and national wealth’, which in turn powers economic and social development.

In the book, the writer recalls his lengthy stint spanning key aspects of the domestic banking industry. The first chapter chronicles the development of the modern Omani currency and the Central Bank of Oman.

Preceding this era was the prevalence of foreign currency, from the ‘black baisa’ to the paper riyal currency — that was in circulation before the advent of modern currency.

As the country did not have its own national currency, the local population depended on the Indian rupee, Maria Theresa dollar and a special series of Gulf Indian rupees alongside the sterling pound as an intervention currency, which remained in circulation in Oman until 1970.

The copper coin “black baisa” is considered the first national coin issued

during the reign of Sultan Faisal bin Turki in 1311 AH and was minted in the city of Muscat.

During the past decades, the Sultanate’s of Oman developmental march witnessed major strides, such as the establishment of some foreign banks, the creation of Muscat Monetary Authority in April 1970, followed by the establishment of the Omani Monetary Council in 1972 and finally the founding of the Central Bank of Oman in April 1975, which ushered in a new era of monetary stability in the country.

The book also discusses the objectives and philosophy of CBO and challenges faced to the apex bank in subsequent years.

The chapter covers the services provided by the Central Bank to the banks and financial institutions, and the policies applied with regard to licences and so on.

The writer stresses in his book that the banking sector has emerged as the backbone of the national economy — an institution that depends on professionals to play their role to sustain monetary and financial stability.

How the Ukraine war might affect the world economy



Paul Krugman

The writer is an American economist and public intellectual

When Vladimir Putin attacked Ukraine, I think it’s fair to say that most observers expected him to get away with it. Surely Russia’s huge military would take Kyiv and other major cities within a few days; surely the West would respond with its usual timidity, giving Russia no more than a minor slap on the wrist.

Instead, here we are, 13 days in, with Kyiv and Kharkiv still standing and attacking forces bogged down by fierce Ukrainian resistance (helped by a rapid influx of Western weapons) and disastrous logistical problems. At the same time, Western sanctions on the Russian economy are clearly already having severe effects and may get even stronger.

Obviously all this could change: Russian forces could regroup and resume the offensive; weak-kneed Western governments could

start lifting sanctions. For now, however, Putin is facing far worse consequences than he could have imagined.

Unfortunately, standing up to aggression doesn’t come free. Events in Ukraine and Russia will, in particular, impose serious costs on the world economy. The question is, how serious?

My tentative answer is that it will be bad, but not catastrophic.

Specifically, the Putin shock seems unlikely to be nearly as bad as the oil shocks that roiled the world economy in the 1970s.

As in the 1970s, the blow to the world economy is coming from commodity prices. Russia is a major exporter of oil and natural gas; both Russia and Ukraine are — or were — major exporters of wheat. So the war is having a big impact on both energy and food prices.

Start with energy. So far, the sanctions being applied by Europe against Russia conspicuously don’t apply to oil and gas exports; the United States is banning oil imports from Russia, but this won’t matter that much, because America can buy and Russia can sell elsewhere.

Markets are nonetheless reacting as if supplies are going to be disrupted, either by future sanctions or because global energy companies, fearing a public backlash, are “self-sanctioning” their purchases of Russian crude. Indeed, Shell, which bought Russian oil at a discount the other day, has apologised and says it won’t do it again.

As a result, the real, inflation-adjusted price of oil has shot up almost to the level it hit during the Iranian revolution in 1979.

To be honest, I’m a bit puzzled

by the size of this price spike. Yes, Russia is a major oil producer. But it accounts for only about 11 per cent of world production, whereas Arabian Gulf producers extracted a third of the world’s oil back in the 1970s.

And Russia will probably find ways to sell a significant fraction of its oil despite Western sanctions.

Furthermore, the world economy is much less dependent on oil than it used to be. Oil “intensity” — the number of barrels of oil consumed per real dollar of gross domestic product — is half what it was in the 1970s.

What about natural gas? Europe depends on Russia for a lot of its supply. But gas consumption is strongly seasonal.

So the impact of Russian disruption won’t be that big until late this year, giving Europe time

to take measures to make itself less vulnerable.

Overall, then, the Putin-made energy crisis will be serious but probably not catastrophic. My biggest concern for the United States, at least, is political. You mightn’t think that Republicans could simultaneously demand that we stop buying Russian oil and attack President Joe Biden for high gasoline prices. That is, you mightn’t think that if you’d spent the past 25 years sleeping in a cave. In fact, that’s exactly what’s about to happen.

Politics aside, food may actually be a bigger issue than energy. Before Putin’s war, Russia and Ukraine combined accounted for more than a quarter of the world’s wheat exports. Now Russia is sanctioned and Ukraine is a war zone.

— The New York Times

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement of Capital Reduction

IN accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Ejaada Engineering**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1393078**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from **RO 25,000 to 20,000**. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

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features



Artificial reefs to help Duqm underwater life flourish

By Zainab al Nassri

Duqm is getting a boost to help its underwater life flourish through the introduction of artificial reefs.

On December 14, 2021, the Department of Duqm Special Economic Zone introduced the said artificial reefs in key areas of the sea to create an attractive environment in the region for fish and divers and provide an unparalleled diving experience for tourists and residents of Duqm.

Two pipes, 225 and 250 meters long respectively attached with synthetic concrete every 10 meters to create a balance were sunk near Hamr Rock. The site is considered an attractive environment due to its stunning views of the clear blue waters.

This project is managed by a group of employees of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm in cooperation with a number of govern-



ment agencies and projects operating in the zone.

It aims at sustaining the marine environment in the region, enhancing biodiversity, increasing fish production and creating habitats for marine creatures, including coral and

other marine creatures, besides, reviving diving activity.

"This pipe, in addition to the balance concretes, will constitute a fertile environment for attracting many marine life, and will constitute an unparalleled experience for diving hobbyists

as an extension of the rocks scattered around Hamr Rock", Mohammed bin Hamad Al Mahrouqi from the Environmental Control Department at SEZD.

Officials called upon fishermen to avoid fishing with nets

near Hamr Island to avoid potential impacts. Inspection teams will follow up the project continuously through the process of diving and survey to monitor the growth of marine organisms and ensure the safety of the pipes and their status according to the plan.

Artificial coral reefs projects in the Sultanate of Oman are not new. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries continues its efforts through the strategic plan to develop the fisheries sector, which aims to increase fish production and raise the efficiency of its performance in a way that ensures its sustainability and protects its natural fisheries. Over the past years, it has deployed artificial coral reefs in a number of coastal governorates of the Sultanate, with models and materials that provide food and protection for fish; Thus, enhancing natural fish resources, especially in coasts where natural coral reefs and rocks are not available.

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Stella McCartney nods to Ukraine crisis with Lennon's anti-war song at winter show

In a nod to the war in Ukraine, Stella McCartney closed her namesake label's winter catwalk show to the music of John Lennon's anti-war ballad "Give Peace a Chance".

Models wound around glass-encased corridors

atop the Pompidou Center, parading sleek, bohemian-flavoured dresses with pockets and slit balloon sleeves while the rhythmic music played, with sweeping views of Paris as a backdrop.

"I believe very firmly in peace and love and obvious-

ly to use John's song, who was my dad's best friend... it just shows for me, it's a personal song that reflects the whole world's thoughts, I hope, right now", McCartney told reporters after the show, referring to her father, Paul McCartney.

Some fashion designers have spoken publicly about their struggle to find the right tone for their shows and make the decision to carry on with Paris Fashion Week events while the world is focused on the Ukraine crisis.

The French capital hosts the final stretch of industry shows that also took place in New York, London and Milan, and wraps up on March 8.

In Milan, Giorgio Armani acknowledged the crisis by cutting music from his cat-

walk show.

In Paris, Balenciaga Creative Director Demna Gvasalia spoke of his experience as a refugee from Georgia and offered guests Ukrainian flag T-shirts, while Isabel Marant took a bow for her label's show wearing a blue and yellow top.

"Obviously I'm anti-war... My heart goes out hugely to the people of Ukraine and it's heartbreaking, it's a traumatic experience to witness so one can only imagine what those poor people are going through", said McCartney.

Her label is part of luxury group LVMH, which, along with Hermes, Gucci-owner Kering and Chanel, announced on Friday a suspension of operations in Russia. — Reuters





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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Nigeria's 'Waste Museum' showcases art to raise awareness on waste



INSIDE NIGERIA'S 'Waste Museum' in Ibadan city, Jumoke Olowookere works on her latest creations made out of used tyres to add an addition to a wide collection produced from used plastic and fabric, wine corks and corn husks, among other material.

Olowookere, who says her museum is the first of its kind in Africa, joins a growing number of Nigerians who are using waste material to make art and fashion to highlight the damaging impact of waste on the environment.

In Nigeria, Africa's biggest oil producer with more than 200 million people, plastic waste in particular, in the form of discarded bags, food and drink packaging, is ubiquitous and dropping of litter is common place.

Olowookere said she had the idea when she saw the amount of waste generated in her kitchen, such as plastic, nylon and corn husks. She started piling them up in a corner of a room while reading up on how to reduce and recycle.

The 44-year-old former visual arts teacher spoke as UN member states were meeting in Nairobi to agree plans for the first global treaty to tackle plastics pollution.

"We have a long way to go to get to that sustainable world without waste. We need to get up and take responsibility for our waste. Stop littering the world with your waste," she said.

In Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos, a lot of waste ends up in waterways that lead into the Gulf of Guinea, prompting concerns about the amount of plastic entering the sea.

Olowookere said she collected some of her waste material from people's homes and also makes equipment for school playgrounds.

Work from other artists is also featured at her museum, which includes ottoman furniture and ceiling panels made from worn-out car tyres as well as curtains and jewellery produced from bottle tops. -- **Reuters**

DISCOVERY

Stellar 'vampire' finds love at first bite with companion star



ASTRONOMERS HAVE gotten a good look at what happens when a "vampire" star sucks the outer layers of material from a companion star, stripping this "bitten" victim down to a mere stellar core.

Researchers said on Wednesday data obtained using Chile-based European Southern Observatory (ESO) telescopes clarified the nature of a star system called HR 6819, showing that its two companion stars were not accompanied by a black hole as was previously proposed.

The two stars instead exist as a binary system, gravitationally married in an orbit lasting about 40 days. While binary systems are common, what makes this one so unique is that it has provided a rare glimpse of the immediate aftermath of what is dubbed stellar vampirism.

"What we mean by stellar vampirism is that one star has sucked the outer material off of another star", said astronomer Abigail Frost of KU Leuven in Belgium, lead author of the research published in the journal Astronomy & Astrophysics.

"This can be done if the stars travel close enough to each other and the gravitational pull of one star pulls material off the other star."

Stars slowly grow as they age. Those in binary systems with two orbiting closely - as in this case - can grow in size

beyond a threshold at which their gravity can protect them from the tug of the companion. So it is the star that grows more quickly that falls victim to vampirism.

"When this is done, the inner areas of the star that's been 'bitten' can be exposed, showing signatures of elements that we otherwise wouldn't be easy to see", Frost said.

This binary system is located roughly 1,000 light years - the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km) - from Earth.

A 2020 study proposed that this system contained what would have been the closest black hole to Earth - in a three-way marriage with one star orbiting near the black hole and the other orbiting far away - but new data indicates otherwise. Researchers who questioned the 2020 conclusion joined in the new study with scientists involved in that earlier work.

"It is still a special system, and in my view even more", said ESO astronomer Thomas Rivinius, co-author of the new study and lead author of the 2020 research.

"Black holes exist in abundance, as once they've formed they are permanent. Not so with what it turned out to be: This is a short-lived - well, say some 10,000 years - transitional stage in the evolution of

a special double-star system."

The system has two B-type stars, which are large, very hot, very bright and bluish in color. By way of comparison, our sun is a G-type star, less hot and smaller than its B-type counterparts.

The rapid spin observed in the "vampire" star may have been caused by material from the other star that previously crashed into its surface. The "vampire" also now has a disc of material around it. The stars orbit quite close to each other - a third of the distance separating Earth and the sun - though not as close as some binary stars.

The current mass of the "vampire" star is roughly four to five times that of the sun. The other star's mass, originally perhaps five to six times the sun's mass, now may be less than one solar mass.

With vampirism, most of the outer material sucked from the bigger star ends up incorporated into the thirsty companion.

"Since these outer layers have not been touched by the nuclear burning in the centre of the original star, this material is 'fresh'", Rivinius said. "And so the other aspect of 'vampirism' is that this supply of fresh hydrogen does actually 'rejuvenate' the star receiving it, making it appear more blue than it should be for its age." -- **Reuters**

CULTURE

Traditional Afghan 'goat-pulling' sport draws fans despite crisis



DUST RISES as men spur their horses onto a field, signaling the start of another game of buzkashi, Afghanistan's often-violent national sport designed to showcase the riders' horsemanship and warrior spirit.

Buzkashi, which translates roughly as "goat pulling," has been played for centuries across Central Asia. Similar to polo, the sport involves two teams trying to accumulate points by propelling a headless

members of the Taliban.

Previous games were often shadowed by fears of attacks, and players faced threats from people in their own province if they played for another provincial team.

But the Taliban's harsh crackdown on crime has eased the minds of many, including Gulbuddin Ismail Khail, captain of the Kandahar team, last year's league champion.

"We had a good year last year, but this year is even



goat carcass to the scoring area. These days, fake goat carcasses are used.

Amid foreign invasions, civil wars, insurgent attacks, and more recently, the resumption of Taliban rule, Afghans have always gathered to cheer on their favorite "chapandaz," as the riders are known.

National league matches resumed on Feb. 24 for the first time since the Taliban took over in August last year.

A knockout match was played last week between the Kandahar and Badakhshan provincial teams in front of about 5,000 Afghans, including

better, because people are cheering for all teams with a calm mind," said the 37-year-old, who is from Balkh province, but has chosen to play for the Kandahar team, which won the match.

For fans, the game's significance will weather the country's current crisis, just as it has outlasted previous wars.

"Although there is a lot of poverty and unemployment in our country, we still came from Balkh province to watch this game, because we are very interested in the sport," said audience member Abdul Saboor. -- **Reuters**



“A Fragment of Feelings” taps into old things and nostalgia

Staff Reporter

For an artist like Zahra al Ghatrifi, regardless of the many challenges of the pandemic, it is important to look at the positive side of things explaining that many of the artists were provided with an amazing opportunity to connect with what's important to them and translate the human experience to art.

“When we were made to stay at home due to either quarantine or because of the lockdown, I think the artists were the biggest beneficiary as the isolation and time, looking at the positive side of things, allowed them to reflect and exploit the opportunity and translate into a fruitful production of artistic and creative work,” Zahra said.

The opportunity to be stuck at home allowed Zahra to look inward and resulted in an art exhibit currently on display at Bait al Zubair.

“In this exhibit, there are three sets of artworks all having their own series. I used materials that can be recycled from wood to fabric crumbs including decaying materials from nature as well as items from my father's old house in Al Aqar in Nizwa. These items carried with them memories and stories of intrinsic values that deserved to be told,” she shared.

“I think this is important because as humans, we are a group of feelings, a collection of stories from our past creating an amalgam of who we are today,” she added.

Zahra is showcasing more than thirty contemporary artworks — an intelligent use and mixture of materials put on different frames and canvases using earthy and vibrant colours.

Titled “A Fragment of Feelings,” the displayed artworks have a



deep human dimension to appreciate and highlight the values and achievements of the old generation. She brought back stories of the past through vibrations that she felt in her hands while carrying the remains of wood and heritage pieces, in addition to some old embroidered fabrics from the closet of her mother and grandmother.

In some of her works, Zahra employed the remains of an old tool she had taken from her father's farm called Al-Manjour — a serrated wooden wheel that rotates around an axis called (Hataba Al-Manjour), where the animal is constantly dragging the rope back and forth in an inclined path.

Laila Al Najjar, the exhibition curator, said, “The use of the



AlManjour has a philosophical and profound human dimension more than just using it in the artwork as an ancient material. The artist sheds light on the simple and primitive man's thought at that time in finding smart and creative solutions to improve life in the manufacture, and creative thought in the design and engi-

neering of AlManjour as a tool to be used to facilitate the process of extracting water from the well and developing productivity.

Al Najjar added, “In addition to this, the artist reflects core values, which are the principle of charity and patience, which the generation of grandparents and fathers who planted a fruitful present with their own hands. The artist was able to convey this feeling and evoke that warm time by presenting the subject in a contemporary artistic style. Due to that we curated this exhibition in a special way that fits and harmonizes the subject matter of the

showcase d works, where we used lamps instead of lighting, to let the audience live and indulge the atmosphere of the past and its warm stories tailored in the details of each painting in Gallery Sarah.”

Zahra has been a member of the Oman Society of Fine Arts (OSFA) since 2003 and participated in almost all the exhibitions of OSFA and The Omani Youth Studio as well. She has won many local awards and her works had been part of the

collection of some governmental and private institutions and individuals.

The exhibition was opened under the patronage of the Honorable Lujaina Bint Mohsen Darwish, Member of the State Council, and will run until April 7, 2022, at Gallery Sarah, Muscat.