

Holy Quran memorisation for children

A week-long programme to identify the best child who recites the Holy Quran following all the rules governing the recital, will be conducted by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. The programme named 'Risalah Mohammed', is aimed at children up to 10 years of age from all the governorates, and will see prizes to be taken home at the end of each session. **DETAILS ON P2**



P10

EVERTON BEAT
TOOTHLESS MAN
UTD AS CHELSEA
RUN RIOT

P13

OMAN HAS
ADEQUATE
QUANTITIES OF
WHEAT

P20

COFFEE
HUNTING IN
OMAN'S OLD
VILLAGES

MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY TURKMENISTAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Dr Serdar Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable on the occasion of being sworn in as his country's new president. In his cable, President Berdimuhamedow expressed his sincere appreciation to His Majesty and underscored the cooperation relations between the two countries. He also wished His Majesty good health and happiness and the Sultanate of Oman further progress and prosperity. — ONA

UN official says Oman’s efforts in Yemen ceasefire tangible

NEW YORK: The United Nations described the efforts undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman in the declaration of Yemen truce, as tangible and appreciated.

David Gressly, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, met Dr Mohammed bin Awadh al Hassan, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, at the headquarters of Oman's delegation.

Gressly said that the truce has revived hope of the possibility of finding a peaceful solution to the crisis in Yemen in a way that restores security and stability

in the country, affirming that the UN won't give up providing support and assistance to the people of Yemen.

SPECIAL ENVOY

The permanent representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, reiterated Oman's support to the efforts of the United Nations and the special envoy for Yemen.

Meanwhile, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Sunday received Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen, who is visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

DEALS FOR STEEL, CEMENT FACTORIES

Khazaen Economic City signed an agreement with Al Janabi International Investment Company to establish a factory to produce cement products to the tune of RO 2 million in the first phase. The project will be set up on a total area of 5,000 square metres. Another agreement was signed between Khazaen Economic City and Muayyad Omair Investment Company to establish a factory for steel industries worth RO 1.5 million for the first phase. **DETAILS ON P15**

9
RAMADHAN
1443 AH

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr
04:33 AM

Dhuhr
12:13 PM

Asr
03:41 PM

Maghrib
06:31 PM

Isha
07:43 PM

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Al Najd Unit for Environmental Protection and Wildlife Preservation at the Directorate-General of Environment in Dhofar Governorate, has achieved first place in the annual competition organised by the Environment Authority among the environment protection units. Al Buraimi came second and Al Saleel claimed third place.

Heatwave to continue this week

VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

The current spell of heatwave will continue for another week, according to Oman Meteorology.

An official at Oman Met told the 'Observer' that the current spell of heatwave would continue this week. Temperatures, however, would drop to 30s by April 18.

"It is expected to rise again towards the following weekend."

"We expected the temperatures to be milder during the fasting month of Ramadhan, and that has been not the case earlier. But still, days are shorter and a reprieve



for us", Sulaiman, a resident of Maabela, said.

For the second straight day, several governorates, including Muscat, witnessed temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius,

according to Oman Meteorology. The hottest places were Al Seeb (41°C), Al Amerat (42°C), followed by Al Buraimi (42°C), Fahud (43°C) and Adam (42°C).

Meanwhile, in the last 24 hours, the following places recorded the highest and lowest temperatures.

According to experts, the average high temperature seen in Muscat during April is generally 34.7 degrees Celsius, while low temperatures are generally around 24.7 degrees Celsius.

Several countries in the region such as Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar reported strong dust storms from Iraq.

Nephro cases among children on the rise

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

Kidney diseases among children have been on the rise in the past few years, and parents need to be watchful of their children's eating habits to protect them, according to doctors.

There are more than 2,700 patients with kidney failure in the Sultanate of Oman awaiting donors, while many others are waitlisted for a liver transplant. This number of cases among adults is again a matter of concern, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH).

In a study by Dr Mohammed al Riyami and Maryam al Shehi, it is revealed that the most common aetiology of CKD found was congenital anomalies of the kidney and urinary tract (CAKUT) in 110 children (52.9 per cent) of whom 59 patients (28 per cent) had obstructive uropathy followed by renal dysplasia/hypoplasia in 29 children (14 per cent).

According to Dr Neven bint Ibrahim al Kalbaniyah, Head of Organ Transplant Department at the Royal Hospital and Vice-President of Omani Association for Organ Transplantation, an awareness campaign needs to be done in the community as the cases tend to rise.

"The number of registered people has increased and we would like to start awareness campaigns in cooperation with

We would like to start awareness campaigns in cooperation with the National Programme for Regulating Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues as the kidney cases tend to rise

DR NEVEN BINT IBRAHIM AL KALBANIYAH
Royal Hospital

the National Programme for Regulating Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues and the Omani Association for Organ Transplantation", she said at the launch of an App called 'Shifa' which streamlines patients needing organ transplant.

The Sultanate of Oman has carried out 330 organ transplant procedures since the beginning of the programme in 1988, of which 317 were kidney transplants and 13 liver transplants.

The first liver transplantation programme since it began in 2017 at the Royal Hospital was performed on October 24, 2021, on a five-year-old child. **TURN TO P5**

INSIDE

TUNISIANS DEFY RIOT POLICE TO PROTEST

P6

AVOIDING COVID COMPLACENCY

P9

FRANCE VOTES AS MACRON SEEKS NEW TERM IN TIGHT POLL

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron faced a tough test on Sunday as he sought re-election in a vote projected to produce a tight run-off duel with far-right leader Marine Le Pen.

Some 48.7 million voters were eligible to vote in the election after an unusual campaign overshadowed by Russia's war on Ukraine, which analysts have warned could lead to unpredictable outcomes especially if turnout is low.

Initial indications showed that mid afternoon turnout was over four percentage points lower than at the same stage in 2017, indicating that participation could be the lowest since 2002, when record numbers of French stayed away.

Polls predict that Macron will lead Le Pen by a handful of percentage points in round one, with the top two going through to a second-round vote on April 24.

Far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon is snapping at their heels in third place and still fancies his chances of reaching the second round at the expense of Le Pen or even — in what would be an extraordinary upset — Macron himself. Macron cast his ballot in Le Touquet on the northern French coast, accompanied by his wife Brigitte, at around lunchtime. **SEE P7**



■ UN HAILS OMAN’S EFFORTS IN YEMEN TRUCE



David Gressly, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, met Dr Mohammed bin Awadh al Hassan, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman, to the United Nations, at the headquarters of Oman's delegation. Gressly described the efforts undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman in the declaration of Yemen truce, as tangible and appreciative. – ONA

Myna menace: Efforts on to reduce the number of invasive bird

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

There has been a sharp increase in the number of myna birds in the Sultanate of Oman. The Environment Authority is making all possible efforts to combat the number of this invasive bird and finding solutions with the help of experts. Similar is the case with the Indian crows.

According to the Environment Authority, myna birds have spread in all governorates in varying numbers, especially in agricultural and residential areas. They were seen in large numbers, specifically in several wilayats of the Dhofar Governorate. They were monitored in the Wilayat of Salalah in farms, public gardens and parks with a presence of 80 per cent compared to the Wilayat of Taqa at 12 per cent, Mirbat and the rest of the regions at 8 per cent. Sulaiman bin Nasser al Akhzami, Director General of Nature Conservation at the Environment Authority, stated serious efforts made by the Authority, in cooperation with various relevant bodies, to develop mechanisms to manage invasive alien species of birds in the Sultanate of Oman aiming at reducing its risks and negative impacts on local species and ecosystems. “This comes within



the framework of the Environment Authority’s endeavour to protect biodiversity, wildlife and various ecosystems”, he added. Al Akhzami confirmed: “Because of the increasing numbers of the mynas and Indian crows, a working group was formed from various relevant parties to find the best ways to combat these species, and a survey was conducted to find out the behaviour of these birds and ways to control them.” A contract was signed with Susana Saavedra, one of the international experts in combating invasive birds, who said: “I

contracted with the Environment Authority, which works to develop a strategy to deal with invading birds to protect ecological diversity, farms and people in general.” She visited Muscat and Salalah, where her team will start initial projects monitoring crows and myna birds. “I touched the readiness and cooperation of the country, whether the government or the people, to solve this problem.” The myna birds can adapt to different environments and feed on everything (plants, small reptiles, small mammals and even

the corpses of dead organisms). It reproduces throughout the year, and the female lays 3-6 eggs per year. The two parents incubate the eggs for 17 days, and the young leave the nest after about 22 days. Mynas can cause many environmental problems, as they spread rapidly and directly affect the ecological balance. They also pose a serious danger to fruit plantations (including grapes, apricots, apples, pears, strawberries and figs), corn, wheat and rice fields. Mynas are highly reproductive, and their numbers can reach up to 160,000 birds. They compete with endemic birds for food and habitat, where habitat loss is one of the five factors threatening biodiversity. The World Environment Organization has classified those invasive birds among the three most damaging birds to the ecosystem. In addition, myna birds destroy eggs and young birds inside the nests of local birds in the environment, which affects their future numbers, and thus directly affects the increase in the number of insects and agricultural pests. They are found mainly in tropical and temperate regions from the tropics to southern Europe to northern France. The Indian subcontinent is considered its original home.

Students invent multi-purpose cooling bag

NIZWA: A students’ company at the University of Nizwa has invented a multi-purpose cooler bag. Mariam bint Yusef al Rawahiyah, Project Financial Director said: “The idea emerged from the fact that electronic devices like laptops and mobile phones are affected by high temperature. The cooler bag protects devices from high temperature.” She added: “We decided to set up a 7-member students’ company which we named Breeze. We laid down the initial indicators and conducted a market survey and the results motivated the team members to move ahead and turn the idea to reality. Now we are striving to obtain a patent for our invention. The device has several uses whether for electronic devices protection or food preservation.” — ONA



Holy Quran memorisation programme for children

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

A week-long programme to identify the best child who recites the Holy Quran following all the rules governing the recital, will be conducted by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. The programme named ‘Risalah Mohammed’, is aimed at children up to 10 years of age from all 11 governorates and will see big prizes to be taken home at the end of each session. “The Holy Quran memorisation competition is to identify the best ‘Qari’ (one who recites the holy book with all its rules) from our children in different governorates,” said Dr

Ismail al Awfi, Scientific Adviser at the Office of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the press event announcing the details of the contest, Dr Al Awfi added that winners will receive prizes including mobile phones, laptops, computers, and finally 10 cars will be awaiting the best child Qari from each governorate. The contest will be held on Ramadhan 20 to 28 in all governorates, added Al Awfi, who is also the Chairman of the Competition Organising Committee. Anyone wishing to register in the contest can do so by logging on to the ministry’s website.

Expat arrivals on the rise

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

Reversing the downturn in the 2020-2021 period, the expatriate population in the Sultanate of Oman has registered a significant rise in recent months. According to the population clock at National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the expat number reached 1,819,461 as of April 9. This is 39.20 per cent of a total population of 4,639,234 in the Sultanate of Oman. The number of nationals now stands at 2,819,773 forming the remaining 60.80 per cent.

As for the sectors that recruit, the graph shows a remarkable fall of 10.7 per cent in various government jobs to reach 36,298 at the end of February 2022 against 37,996 in the corresponding month in 2021. According to figures from the state-owned statistical agency, it is the private sector that started showing an increase in the number of expatriates in the recent months. Out of a total of 1,175,030 foreign workers in the private sector at the end of February, 369,043 were in construction, followed by 213,015 in retail and wholesale trade and the automotive repair sector. Family and dependents reached 249,568 against 239,951 in February 2021. The Governorate of Muscat continues to house the largest number of 608,571 expatriate workers including their dependents followed by Al Batinah North with 207,086. With regard to nationalities, Bangladeshis are in the first spot with 546,182 at the end of February 2022 up from 531,053 during the corresponding month in 2021. Indian expatriates, who number about 490,114 against 471,178 a year ago, are in the second position followed by Pakistanis with 206,083



although they increased by 12,035 during the one-year period. The number of Filipinos, Egyptians and Sri Lankans rose to 46,240, 31,817 and 20,306 by the end of February. Arrivals from other countries including Nepal, Tanzania and Sudan also increased during the period. According to experts, expat arrivals may see further momentum from June this year when the revised work permit fee will come into effect. “With the slash in the permit fees, private sector companies will be able to recruit specialised expat manpower in accordance with their needs without spending on hiring”, said Hamed al Balushi, a human resource manager with a financial institution. The second half of the current year will witness the arrival of more foreign workers to the country, he said adding, “the Sultanate of Oman is the friendliest country for expats in the world”. In the Expat Insider 2021 Index, Oman scored sixth highest position in the ease of settlement with the majority 83 per cent of expats were satisfied with the friendliness of the local population towards foreign residents compared to the global 67 per cent. It also came at the top in terms of safety and security for expats, as well as in terms of friendliness shown to them.



Follow us on **facebook**
omanobserver



OMAN OBSERVER

FIRST DEDICATED ENGLISH NEWS APP IN OMAN

www.omanobserver.om

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

DOWNLOAD TODAY



Oman celebrates ratification of Maritime Labour Convention

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will today mark the signing of the instrument of ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006.

An official ceremony will be held to celebrate the 100th ratification of the convention with representatives of the Sultanate of Oman and in the presence of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, the secretaries-general of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) at the headquarters of the International Labour Organization.

The Sultanate of Oman is the first Gulf country to ratify this agreement. On March 29, it became the 100th member state of the ILO to have ratified the convention, based on Royal Decree No 62/2021 that approved the accession of the Sultanate of Oman to the Maritime Labour Convention on October 26, 2021. The convention will enter into force for the Sultanate of Oman on March 29, 2023, one year after its ratification.

Nasser bin Salem al Hadhrami, Director of International Cooperation in the Ministry of Labour, said that the Maritime



Labour Convention is an international labour agreement issued by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and is widely defined as 'the rights charter of sailors' and was approved by representatives of governments, employers and workers at the ILO working conference in February 2006.

This convention is aimed at achieving decent work conditions for sailors and to secure economic interests by ensuring fair competition between high-quality shipowners, where the agreement recognises the minimum international standards for work onboard ships that will enhance the protection of working conditions in all aspects of their work and life onboard ships. These



conditions include: Minimum age; Employment contracts; Hours of work and rest; Paying wages; Paid annual leave; Repatriation at the expiry of the contract; Medical care on board ships; Use of licensed private placement services; Housing, food, and catering; Health, occupational safety, and accident prevention; Handling seafarers' complaints.

Also, Al Hadhrami said that the strategic geographical location enabled the Sultanate of Oman to be a leader in the world of seas. It has been home to some of the famous navigators or sailors such as Ahmed bin Majid, and Nasser bin Ali al Khadoori, the owner of the manuscript 'Maadan al Asrar fi Elm al Bahar,' which was selected in the UNESCO Memory of the World Program as the first Omani document to be included in this World Register of Documentary Heritage.

The Omanis have a huge marine heritage that is a source of pride and joining this convention will undoubtedly make marine work more attractive, which is in line with Oman Vision 2040 indicators.

Tarassud Plus helped the fight against Covid-19

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

The Ministry of Health has issued an update about the Tarassud Plus application, which emerged as an important tool to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. The application was helpful in tracing the infected as well as making the vaccination process smooth.

Tarassud Plus is the Sultanate of Oman's official Covid-19 application for citizens, residents and travellers. The application's authority is limited within the country until the epidemic officially ends. This application provides citizens and residents with data related to infectious diseases. The App is developed and maintained by the Ministry of Health and provides features such as quarantine tracking, digital vaccination certificate, RT PCR results and Covid-19 related statistics.

According to the MoH, Tarassud Plus was helpful in appointments, vaccination and issuing certificates.

The MoH has employed artificial intelligence technology by launching a system of epidemiological investigation based on artificial intelligence technology through Tarassud Plus, supported by the medical detector programme and medical supervisor programme.

Individuals use this application as this system is distinguished by the feature of speaking with the virtual support team through the



medical detector icon. It helps evaluate the health status through symptom analysis, facilitating continuous follow-up of people.

It is helpful in tracking and isolation of infected people or contacts and directing them to health institutions promptly.

The medical detector application is also available in five languages: Arabic, English, Hindi, Bengali and Urdu, so that it can be used by different nationalities residing in the Sultanate of Oman. The system aims to limit the spread of the disease by raising the efficiency of geographical tracking of cases to which isolation has been applied and assessing the extent of their commitment and adherence to the isolation instructions, as well as tracking contacts, especially in light of the increasing number of cases and the expansion of their geographical area.

CDAA warns against gas cylinder hazards

LAILA AL HASANIYAH
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) on Sunday cautioned against unsafe use of cooking gas cylinders at home, calling on the public to abide by safety standards to avoid loss of lives and properties resulting from fires caused by cooking gas leakage.

The CDAA said it is crucial to take safety precautions when dealing with gas cylinders, especially those used for cooking at home due to their high risk.

On its Twitter account, the Authority said



that cooking gas cylinders should be kept at a well-ventilated sheltered place outside the

kitchen and not to be exposed to the sun's heat.

Flammable materials should be kept away from gas cylinders and the safety valves should be closed when a gas cylinder is not in use, CDAA said, advising the public to use special pipes approved by the Authority.

CDAA called for periodic maintenance of gas cylinders by the operating companies.

In case of gas leakage, the electric current should be disconnected, the electric switches should be turned off and the windows and doors should be open. Also, in this case it is important not to ignite matches, cigarettes or any other heat source, CDAA said.



Philippine elections: Filipinos in Oman cast votes as overseas voting begins

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

Filipinos in the Sultanate of Oman can now cast their votes for the 2022 national elections. The overseas voting for the 2022 Philippine national and local elections started on Monday (April 10), which will continue till May 9.

In an interview with Oman Observer, Philippine Ambassador Imelda Panolong, called upon the Filipino community members in the Sultanate of Oman to exercise their vote and make their voice heard. She said, "Filipinos should take this opportunity to vote. It is not just for us, the present

generation, but also for the future of the next generation. If we vote for the right person to lead our country, the benefits of the vote we cast will be felt for the generations to come. So it is very important for all of us to vote."

Recently, the embassy announced that it is conducting a mapping of the Filipinos in the Sultanate of Oman. The Ambassador said, "we have been wanting to do a mapping of the Filipino community for many years now. Although it is difficult to get everyone on board, it is important for us to get their details and the actual numbers of Filipinos in the country. With that information



we can easily disseminate such information. This is also important when we have to evacuate people in an emergency situation. With correct data we will have an idea

how many people are there, so we can come up with a contingency plan based on actual figures."

"And since it is the election period, we also need to know how many Filipinos are staying in areas outside Muscat who are registered voters. If we get the actual figures, we would know if we need to go and send people there to conduct the voting. Filipinos in those far-flung areas need not come to Muscat to vote," she said. The embassy plans to hold elections in Salalah and Duqm, they are just waiting for some administrative requirements.

"For areas that are not really far from Muscat, like Sur or Nizwa, we would request our 'kababayans' (fellow Filipinos) to come to the Embassy and vote. Anyway, it's a one-month exercise and we are open on weekends, so they can plan their trip to Muscat," the Ambassador added.

The ambassador made an important announcement. "To our kababayans who are registered in other countries (except Philippines) and are currently in Oman now, but failed to transfer their records, they can do so by accomplishing a transfer form, available at the embassy's website, and submit by April 30. The embassy will then send the form to the Commission on Elections to act on it, hopefully, before May 9, so that they can vote"

The voting at the Philippine Embassy is open daily from April 10 until May 9, including Fridays and Saturdays, from 8 AM to 5 PM. Registered Filipino overseas voters in Oman are requested to bring a copy of their Philippine passport and/or an identification document with verifiable photo and signature while voting. The certified list of Overseas Voters for Oman may be viewed on the website of the Embassy (muscatpe.dfa.gov.ph) and is posted at the bulletin board of the Embassy's Consular Section. Overseas voting in Oman for the 2022 Philippine national and local elections will close on May 9 at 3 PM.

Fasting strengthens unity



KABEER
YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

THE HOLY MONTH of Ramadhan is all about compassion, solidarity, understanding and helping each other on the path to knowing the hunger and thirst of each other.

In the Holy Quran, Almighty Allah has said, “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Aware.”

The ways of enhancing human interactions and unity among His creatures, mass prayers, social iftars, sharing food, helping the weak, orphans, destitute and the zakat stand testimonies to the same.

Prophet Muhammad, May Peace Be Upon Him, said, “Unity brings people together, creating love, harmony and generosity between them. As believers, we can use unity as a platform to spread kindness to others, as well as an opportunity for our spiritual growth to become closer to Allah.”

“Islam calls for unity because it is the basis for happiness, progress and hardly any nation can achieve progress or enjoy welfare unless its people come together, a sermon by Mufti Menk has noted.

With this in mind, a call to non-Muslim communities is

made by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs to assemble and get to know about fasting, feel the spirit of fasting and understand the values of the same.

“Have you tried fasting? If not, we are pleased to invite you to “Let’s fast together” initiative. On the 9th day of Ramadhan, any non-believer can try to fast on and feel the camaraderie of iftar with scores of others”, said a spokesperson from the ministry.

The event, happening within the initiatives of the Dar al Ritaj Foundation and the Metro Muscat Foundation, in cooperation and supervision of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs represented by the Department of Islamic Information, all expatriate communities in the Sultanate of Oman can come under one roof to “Let us fast together” event 1443 AH.

LIVE THE EXPERIENCE

“This is a call to all non-Muslims communities who have not fasted before but want to live the experience of fasting and enjoy the

Ramadhan atmosphere with us and iftar during the event”, he added.

The evening which will be held at the Prince’s Palace Banquet Hall, in Al Seeb from 5 pm on April 11 will be in English, and it includes religious lectures, discussion panels on introducing Islam and educational films about introducing Islamic tolerance.



■ **GOOD RESPONSE TO BLOOD CAMP**



Chiru Mega Youth Force (CMYF), a voluntary organisation, conducted a blood donation camp. The camp held at Bausher Blood Bank, opposite to the Royal Hospital, received good response as many volunteers turned out to donate blood. CMYF founder-president Ramdas Chandaka thanked all those who came forward for this humanitarian cause.

Nephro cases on the rise

FROM PAGE 1

“Three hundred kidney transplants were conducted from living related donors and 17 from brain-dead donors”, said Dr Neven.

Approximately 2,500 patients have a renal failure on haemodialysis and 200 patients on proton dialysis. Fifty children under the age of 13 are on one of either type of dialysis.

“Eating junk and fatty food very frequently can cause damage to kidneys and can affect the person in many ways”, says Dilip Singhvi, a specialist in internal medicine and diabetes at a private hospital.

What happens mostly among children is the accumulation of sugar in the blood which can trigger type 2 diabetes, cause kidney damage and the like, according to the studies.



Beach cleaning marks community service under Sewa Utsav

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, APRIL 10

Beach cleaning was organised simultaneously at five different beaches across four different cities in the Sultanate of Oman on Friday as part of Community Service Fortnight -- Sewa Utsav. The event evoked enthusiastic participation from Indian social club members, school students and others from the community.

In Muscat beaches in Athaiba and Shati al Qurum were cleaned with participation of more than 150 volunteers each at both the locations. The social clubs in Suhar, Sur and Salalah took up the task of cleaning Sallan beach, Ayjah hanging bridge and Dahariz beach respectively.

The beach cleaning activity was organised with the support of local municipal authorities and contributed to their efforts



in enhancing the awareness and sensitivity towards cleanliness and environment protection. All the participants were sensitised on the importance of not littering in public places and protection of environment. All the participants pledged to continue to work together for environment and climate awareness and maintaining the pristine beauty of beaches in the Sultanate of Oman.

Ambassador Amit Narang commended the efforts of Indian

community and thanked the Omani government for its support. “Both the countries play an important role in climate advocacy and protection of environment and this initiative has the potential to become a joint movement between citizens of India and Sultanate of Oman to raise consciousness for environment preservation,” he said. This was a collective initiative of Indian community to contribute to cleaner and greener Sultanate of Oman.



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

TENDERS NOTICE

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
185/2022/MAFWR/HQ-17	Rehabilitation and Improvement of Al-Batin Falaj in Al-Batin village at Wilayat Al-Kamel Wa Al-Wafi at AL-Sharqiyah South Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Tuesday 26/4/2022	Monday 16/5/2022
186/2022/MAFWR/HQ-18	Rehabilitation and Improvement of Al-Fath Falaj in Al-Fath village at Wilayat Al-Mudaybi at North AL-Sharqiyah Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Tuesday 26/4/2022	Monday 16/5/2022

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

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Holding invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
EHC/2022/008	Supply/Distribution SLA & Supply Business Process Review Providing Electricity Services Expert consultants to support the separation of the supply & distribution business in the electricity sector in Oman & the creation of the operational SLA. In addition, the consultant is expected to review all Supply business internal processes and create the digitization strategy for the supply services. The consultants are expected to work fulltime on site, and it is expected to need TWO consultants.	18-April-2022	8-May-2022	(100/- Plus VAT Amount: 5 OMR) Total: 105 OMR (Non-Refundable)

- To purchase this Tender, Online payment is available on our website (www.nama.om) as following:

Instructions to the bidders:

- Enter the CR Number and check the eligibility.
 - If CR number is available, you can make online payment using the link provided at website.
 - If you are a new supplier, kindly register yourself using the registration link available at the website.
 - Once the supplier administrator approved, you will get the mail.
 - After receiving the mail, kindly make payment for the tender using the link available in the website.
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00pm.
 - Bids shall be submitted online through using isupplier portal. No hard copies are accepted.
 - The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
 - In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



Nama Holding
In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559200 / 246
E-Mail: Sharifa.AIShukaili@Holding.nama.om



Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
30/2022	Construction of villa at Al Amrat	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Tuesday 26-4-2022 02:00 PM	Monday 16-5-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
31/2022	Construction of villa at As Seeb	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Tuesday 26-4-2022 02:00 PM	Monday 16-5-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
32/2022	Construction of villa at Al Amrat	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Tuesday 26-4-2022 02:00 PM	Monday 16-5-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
33/2022	Construction of villa at Al Amrat	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Tuesday 26-4-2022 02:00 PM	Monday 16-5-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
34/2022	Construction of villa at Al Amrat	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Tuesday 26-4-2022 02:00 PM	Monday 16-5-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On Thursday 7/4/2022.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. **(24402200)**.

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

www.mosd.gov.om



Sharif set to become next Pakistan PM

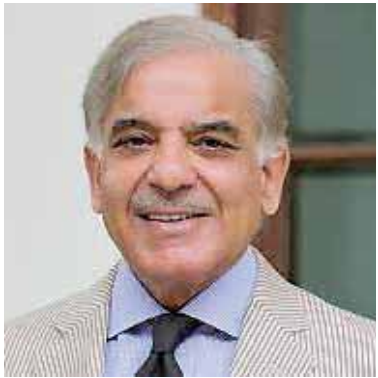
ISLAMABAD: Imran Khan was dismissed on Sunday as Pakistan's prime minister after losing a no-confidence vote, paving the way for an unlikely opposition alliance that faces the same issues that bedevilled the cricket star-turned-politician.

A new premier will be chosen on Monday, with centrist Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) chief Shehbaz Sharif already anointed to lead the nuclear-armed nation of 220 million people.

His first task will be to form a cabinet that will also draw heavily from the centre-left Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), as well as find space for the smaller conservative Jamaat-ul Ulema-e-Islam-F (JUI-F) group.

The PPP and PML-N are dynastic parties that have dominated Pakistani politics for decades -- usually as bitter rivals -- and their relations are sure to fray in the lead-up to the next election, which must be held by October 2023.

Shehbaz Sharif is the brother



Shehbaz Sharif

of disgraced three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif, while PPP leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is the son of former president Asif Ali Zardari and assassinated ex-premier Benazir Bhutto.

Khan's exit was met with a mixture of glee and sympathy. "Back to the pavilion," screamed the influential Express Tribune newspaper, using a cricket metaphor headline writers have found difficult to resist during Khan's tenure. No prime minister has ever served a full term in Pakistan, but Khan is the first to lose office via a vote of no-



Opposition supporters chant slogans against dismissed Pakistan's prime minister Imran Khan outside the parliament house building in Islamabad. — AFP

confidence. "Sad day for Pakistan... a good man sent home," his former

information minister Fawad Chaudhry said on Twitter. There had been high hopes

for Khan when he was elected in 2018 on a promise of sweeping away decades of entrenched

corruption and cronyism, but he struggled to maintain support with soaring inflation, a feeble rupee and crippling debt.

Khan had vowed to fight "until the last ball", and he certainly took his exit to the wire on Sunday.

He tried everything to stay in power after losing his majority in parliament -- including dissolving the assembly and calling a fresh election.

But the Supreme Court deemed all his actions illegal and ordered them to reconvene and vote.

Still, there was drama right until the midnight deadline ordered by the court, with the speaker of the assembly -- a Khan loyalist -- resigning at the last minute.

The session restarted after midnight with a replacement, and the vote was finally held. Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmakers stormed out, but the no-confidence motion passed with 174 votes in the 342-seat assembly. — AFP

Tunisians defy riot police to protest

TUNIS: More than a thousand Tunisians rallied on Sunday decrying what they said was a misuse of power by President Kais Saied and his proposed constitutional reforms.

"Get out," protesters in the capital Tunis shouted at a rally organised by the Ennahdha party that dominated the now-dissolved parliament, and a movement named "Citizens Against the Coup".

Saied -- a former law professor elected in 2019 amid public anger against the political class -- on July 25 last year sacked the government, froze the assembly and seized wide-ranging powers.

He later gave himself powers to rule and legislate by decree and seized control over the judiciary.

"The people want to dismiss the president," the crowds chanted, many waving national flags. "Down with the coup."

Last month, the president dissolved parliament, dealing another blow to the political system in place since the North African country's 2011 revolt, which sparked the Arab Spring uprisings in the region.

"There is no democracy without legislative power," shouted other protesters, who defied a large deployment of riot police to take to the streets.

Saied has been repeatedly criticised by Western



Tunisians take to the streets of the capital Tunis to protest against their president. — AFP

governments and rights groups for his moves, which have sparked fears of a return to autocracy 11 years after the overthrow of ruler Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

13 MIGRANTS KILLED: Meanwhile, Tunisian authorities recovered the bodies of 13 migrants, including six women and six children, after their boats capsized trying to make the dangerous sea crossing to Italy, a court official said on Saturday.

The migrants were all from sub-Saharan Africa and had set off in two boats, said Mourad Turki, spokesman for the court in the Mediterranean port city of Sfax.

Rescuers pulled 37 migrants from the water on Friday and

Saturday but a dozen more remained unaccounted for, he said.

Tunisia and neighbouring Libya are key departure points for migrants seeking to reach European shores, often in vessels that are barely seaworthy.

The United Nations' refugee agency UNHCR has said that around 1,300 migrants drowned or went missing in the central Mediterranean in 2021, making it the world's deadliest migration route.

The International Organization for Migration estimates that more than 18,000 migrants have died or disappeared while attempting to make the crossing since 2014. — AFP

UN seeks \$80m to avert 'imminent' Yemen oil spill

DUBAI: The United Nations said last week it is seeking nearly \$80 million for an emergency operation to prevent a catastrophic oil spill in the Red Sea off Yemen.

The 45-year-old tanker FSO Safer, long used as a floating oil storage platform with 1.1 million barrels of crude on board, has been moored off the Yemeni port of Hodeida since 2015, without being serviced.

"The Safer is at imminent risk of a major spill, which would create a humanitarian and ecological catastrophe centred on a country already decimated by more than seven years of war," the United Nations said in a statement.

"International support -- including funding -- is needed now to implement the UN-coordinated plan to address the threat before it is too late."

The UN said that the emergency part of a two-stage operation would see the toxic cargo pumped from the storage platform to a temporary replacement vessel at a cost of \$79.6 million.

In a second phase, a replacement platform would be installed.

At a press conference in New



York, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, David Gressly, said recourse to another ship would cost around \$25 million.

"We need to finish this operation by the end of September to avoid the turbulent winds and currents that start in October, November, December, increasing the risk in conducting any operation," Gressly said.

The UN stressed that "the plan cannot begin without donor funding," adding that the Nether-



David Gressly

lands will host a donor meeting.

It said "rapid donor commitments of funds" were needed to begin work by the second half of May.

Yemen's Ansar Allah fighters already agreed a "framework for cooperation" with the United Nations on the issue last month.

The UN has said an oil spill could destroy ecosystems, shut down the fishing industry and close the lifeline port of Hodeida for six months. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

JAKARTA

14 nations take part in Indonesian-US war games

The annual military exercises between Indonesian and US armies will include more than a dozen countries this year, officials said. The 'Garuda Shield' joint training will see militaries from 14 countries -- including Britain, Australia and Japan -- participate in ground drills and beach-landing exercises from August 1-14 in Indonesia's South Sumatra archipelago and the East of Borneo island, the Indonesian Army said.

A US official said an estimated



3,000 soldiers will participate in the event. That would make it "the largest" edition since Garuda Shield was established in 2009, Albert Tambunan, an Indonesian military spokesperson said.

COLOMBO

Protests against Lankan govt continues

Tens of thousands of Sri Lankans joined ongoing protests against the government, decrying its failure to resolve fuel and gas shortages, police said. Protesters arrived in small groups throughout the day, eventually building up to a crowd of more than 25,000 in the evening opposite the president's office, demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The protest was the largest since a campaign commenced on March 31 following a protest



outside the president's private residence.

The protests included mostly young people, including students, media representatives, lawyers, business people and film actors.

SYDNEY

Australian premier calls May 21 election

Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison called federal elections for May 21 on Sunday, launching a come-from-behind battle to stay in power after three years rocked by floods, bushfires and the Covid-19 pandemic. Morrison's conservative government is struggling to woo Australia's 17 million voters, lagging behind the opposition Labor party in a string of opinion polls despite presiding over a rebounding economy with a 13-year-low jobless rate of four per cent.



"It's a choice between a strong future and an uncertain one. It's a choice between a government you know and a Labor opposition that you don't," Morrison told a news conference in Canberra.



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

MONDAY | APRIL 11 | 2022

7

In brief

■ MADRID



SPAIN SEIZES HUNDREDS OF STUFFED ENDANGERED ANIMALS

Spain said it seized over 1,000 taxidermied animals, including hundreds of endangered or extinct species, in one of the largest hauls of its kind. The Civil Guard said the private collection, estimated to be worth nearly €29 million, was discovered in a shed in Betera, near Valencia in eastern Spain.

Among the 1,090 animals seized, 405 are classified as protected, endangered or extinct, including the scimitar-horned oryx once found in parts of Africa.

A stuffed Bengal tiger, considered near extinction, was also found, along with cheetahs, lynxes, polar bears, white rhinos and 198 elephant tusks.

■ HELSINKI



FINLAND GEARS UP FOR HISTORIC NATO DECISION

Finland is preparing for a potentially historic decision “before midsummer” on whether to apply to join Nato as a deterrent against Russian aggression. The Nordic nation of 5.5 million has traditionally been militarily non-aligned, in part to avoid provoking its eastern neighbour, with which it shares a 1,300 kilometre border.

But Russia’s attack on Ukraine on February 24 saw public support for joining Nato double from 30 to 60 per cent, according to a series of polls. “Never underestimate the capacity of Finns to take rapid decisions when the world changes,” former Finnish prime minister Alexander Stubb said.

■ MEXICO CITY



MEXICANS VOTE IN PRESIDENTIAL POLLS

Mexicans began voting on Sunday in a divisive national referendum championed by President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on whether he should step down or complete his six-year term. While recall elections in other countries tend to be initiated by political opponents, Mexico’s vote is the brainchild of Lopez Obrador, who enjoys an approval rating of nearly 60 per cent.

The 68-year-old president, who was elected in 2018, attended a polling station near the presidential palace with his wife soon after voting began at 8 am across most of the country. “Let no one forget that the people are in charge,” he said afterward.

France votes with Macron seeking new term

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron faced a tough test on Sunday seeking re-election in a vote projected to produce a tight run-off with far-right leader Marine Le Pen.

Polls opened in mainland France at 06:00 GMT after an unusual campaign overshadowed by Russia’s attack on Ukraine that analysts warned could lead to unpredictable outcomes with turnout a major factor.

Early indications showed that turnout was around three percentage points lower than at the same stage in 2017, although above 2002 when record numbers of French stayed away.

Polls predict that Macron will lead Le Pen by a handful of percentage points in round one, with the top two going through to a second-round vote on April 24.

Far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon is snapping at their heels in third place and still fancies his chances of reaching the second round at the expense of Le Pen or even — in what would be an extraordinary upset — President Macron himself.

Macron cast his ballot in Le Touquet on the northern French coast, accompanied by his wife Brigitte, around lunchtime.

Le Pen voted in Henin-Beaumont, also in the north of the country while Melenchon cast his ballot in the southern port city of Marseille.

Although her opponents accuse her of being an extremist bent on dividing society, Le Pen has with some success sought to show a more moderate image and



France’s President and LREM party presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron after voting for the first round of France’s presidential election at a polling station in Le Touquet, northern France. — AFP

Vote turnout at midday lowest since 2002

PARIS: Participation in the French presidential election stood at 25.5 per cent at 12 pm on Sunday, the interior ministry said, the lowest level since the 2002 upset that saw a far-right candidate advance to the second-round run-off.

Analysts have warned that turnout this year could be the lowest since direct popular vote of the president was ratified in 1962, injecting a high level of uncertainty into a race where President Emmanuel Macron is seeking re-election.

The result is likely to prove consequential for France and

Europe in the coming years.

Midday turnout was three percentage points lower than in 2017, when Macron upended the French political landscape by knocking out traditional parties on the left and right with an ambitious reformist platform.

He advanced to the run-off against Marine Le Pen, the far-right leader who is again forecast by polls to qualify for the second round this year and who has seen a sharp jump in opinion polls over the past week.

But turnout at noon was above the 21.4 per cent of April 21, 2002, when Marine’s father,

Jean-Marie Le Pen, disproved polls by squeezing past the Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin to advance to the second round against incumbent president Jacques Chirac.

Chirac went on to win re-election in a crushing defeat of Le Pen, just as Macron beat out Marine Le Pen in the 2017 run-off with 66 per cent of the votes to her 34 per cent.

Polls suggest a repeat of the Macron-Le Pen contest would be much closer this year, in line with a rightward drift among the French electorate in recent years. — AFP

concern with voters’ daily worries such as rising prices.

Macron by contrast has campaigned relatively little, by his own admission entering the election campaign later than he would have wished due to the war in Ukraine.

French television channels will broadcast projections of the final results, which are generally highly accurate, as soon as polls close at 18:00 GMT on Sunday.

If Macron and Le Pen as forecast reach the second round, analysts predict that their clash will be far tighter than in 2017 when the current president thrashed his rival with 66 per cent of the vote.

“There is uncertainty,” said French political scientist Pascal Perrineau, pointing to high numbers of voters who were still undecided or who changed their minds during the campaign, as well as absentee voters.

Analysts fear that the 2002 record of the number of French voters boycotting a first round of 28.4 per cent risks being beaten.

Early voting patterns seemed to confirm such forecasts, with voter turnout by midday at 25.48 per cent, three points below the level recorded at the same time in the 2017 election, the interior ministry said.

“It’s a duty and a right to vote, we decide who gets elected,” said Mohammed Idriss, a 68-year-old retired soldier voting at the French consulate in Pondicherry, India. “If you don’t vote you’re not a good citizen.”

— AFP

Pro-Russian rallies spread unease in Germany

FRANKFURT/HANOVER: About 2,500 people were expected at a pair of pro-Russian events in Germany on Sunday, with organisers saying they are fighting against Russophobia, while onlookers worry about overt signs of support for the war on Ukraine.

About 2,000 people were expected at Frankfurt for a rally billed as being “against harassment and discrimination of Russian-speaking residents” and “against war - for peace.”

Organisers had hoped to be accompanied by a convoy of 700 cars, but the city had ruled that out of order.

Further north, in Hanover, about 600 people with 350 cars gathered for a separate pro-Russia convoy. Many participants were waving both German and Russian flags. However, the start was delayed because police had decided that the cars’ bonnets were not allowed to be covered by flags.

Germany has a large Russian-speaking population and several incidents of anti-Russian harassment have been reported since Russia began its war on Ukraine on February 24.

However, the recent move towards pro-Russia convoys has left Germans feeling uneasy, with many questioning whether they are not thinly disguised shows of support

for the war. A similar convoy in Berlin on April 3 upset many, coming as it did on the same day as allegations of Russian war crimes in Bucha, Ukraine, were released.

Already, about 850 people had gathered for a counter demonstration in Hanover. In Frankfurt, multiple smaller groups had gathered to protest the Russian war. Many participants were waving banner surging for Russia to be stopped and for an end to imports of Russian gas.

“We’re not going to leave Frankfurt to the war supporters”, urged one group of counter demonstrators.

City organisers also set ground rules for the pro-Russia protests. Participants have been ordered not to display the letters V and Z, which have become associated with support for the war. A similar ban has been put on the black-and-orange ribbon of Saint George.

Participants have also been ordered not to publicly support the war or to denounce Ukraine, its people or victims of the Russian war.

The display of Russian paraphernalia at the events is drawing criticism from Ukraine.

The country’s Ambassador to Berlin, Andriy Melnyk, says he has called for a ban on the display of the Russian flag and other such symbols at the demonstrations. — dpa

Ukraine braces for ‘important battles’, Pope urges Easter truce

KRAMATORSK: Ukraine is preparing for “important battles” against Moscow’s forces in the east of the country, officials in Kyiv said, as Pope Francis on Sunday called for an Easter truce to end the war.

Evacuations continued from Kramatorsk, in eastern Ukraine, where a missile strike on Friday killed 52 people at a railway station, while an airport in the central city of Dnipro was completely destroyed in fresh shelling on Sunday.

President Volodymyr Zelensky again condemned atrocities against civilians and after speaking with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said they agreed “that all perpetrators of war crimes must be identified and punished”.

Ukraine’s prosecutor general Iryna Venediktova said the country was examining the alleged culpability of 500 leading Russian officials for thousands of war crimes, including President Vladimir Putin.

Pope Francis meanwhile called for an Easter ceasefire in Ukraine to pave the way for peace through “real negotiation”.

“Let the Easter truce begin. But not to provide more weapons and pick up the combat again — no! — a truce that will lead to peace, through real negotiation,” he told a public mass at Saint Peter’s Square.

The pontiff denounced a war where “defenceless civilians” suffered “heinous massacres and



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky walk in central Kyiv. — AFP

atrocious cruelty”.

But Russia’s Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, a key Putin ally, issued his own appeal against Russia’s “enemies”.

“In this difficult period for our fatherland, may the Lord help each of us to unite, including around power,” he said.

“This is how true solidarity will emerge in our people, as well as an ability to push back external and internal enemies and to build a life with more good, truth and love.”

The appeals came after Zelensky said Kyiv was readying for a Russian onslaught.

“Sadly, in parallel we see

the preparations for important battles, some people say decisive ones, in the east,” he said on Saturday at a press conference with visiting Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer.

“We are ready to fight and to look in parallel to end this war through diplomacy.”

The UN on Sunday said 4,232 civilian casualties had been recorded in Ukraine to date, with 1,793 killed and 2,439 injured.

Ukraine said Kremlin propaganda had laid the groundwork for the bloody campaign, accusing Russian media of long sowing hatred towards Ukrainians. — AFP

Time for building forward better



Khalid al Huraibi
khalidalharibi@gmail.com

The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

No topic is receiving more global attention in this century, so far, than sustainability, or how we as more than 7 billion people on this planet can balance between our future needs, with energy security and climate action.

This could mainly be because that we are the fortunate generations - the most learned, connected and technologically advanced generations that walked the earth. And with a younger generation that is making it clear that they are aware that the traditional way we have been consuming the earth's resources needs improvement. One way nations have been working on turning this common goals into collective action in global gatherings dedicated to the future of energy and climate.

The Sultanate of Oman has been

active in participating in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC's climate summits and conference. The UNFCCC, is organising the global climate conferences such COP26 in Glasgow, United Kingdom and the upcoming COP27 in Egypt and COP28 in the UAE.

Recently, during March 28-31, the Sultanate of Oman participated in Middle East North Africa Climate Week - MENA CW strategically hosted in our region, in Dubai, by the Government of the UAE.

In this conference, hundreds of experts and representatives from the public, private and civil society sectors debated and negotiated over bottlenecks where agreements need to be reached in areas such

CLIMATE FINANCE HAS BEEN RECOGNISED AS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MEANS BY WHICH NATIONS WILL BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS

as Climate finance, Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs, climate technology and innovation, resilience and adaptation in addition to youth and gender issues.

While gathering in this conference was a positive progress in the roadmap towards agreeing on Paris Agreement climate action goals, such as halving the

world's GreenHouse Gas or GHG emissions by 2030 it left more to be desired.

First, while climate finance has been recognised as one of the most significant means by which our nations will be able to achieve their Nationally Determined Contributions not more than five global financial and banking institutions offered any initiatives in this regard, with only the World Bank Group- WBG and HSBC taking to the stage to share about the climate finance products.

Second, while innovation, diversity and inclusion are among the main topics, little concrete alliances were operationalised that are led by youth or by cross sector groups.

Moreover, leveraging emerging climate technologies such as carbon

removal could have received more attention given the breakthroughs in these technologies over the past decade.

At the conclusion of this conference it was declared "the window for climate action has not yet closed". We have a responsibility to embark on a paradigm shift and leverage international gatherings in a way that engages our most significant stakeholders - our youth.

Youth are more impressed with down to earth, authentic and original initiative and ideas that are designed with them in mind than by costly and cumbersome global events that produce more talking points.

May the rest of this decade not only be a time for "building back better", but also the time for building forward better.

Iraqis clean up river as first green projects take root

AMMAR KARIM

Garbage clogs the banks of Iraq's Tigris River in Baghdad but an army of young volunteers is cleaning it, a rare environmental project in the war-battered country. With boots and gloves, they pick up soggy trash, water bottles, aluminium cans and muddy styrofoam boxes, part of a green activist campaign called the Cleanup Ambassadors.

"This is the first time this area has been cleaned since 2003," shouts a passer-by about the years of conflict since a US-led invasion toppled Saddam Hussein. The war is over but Iraq faces another huge threat: a host of interrelated environmental problems from climate change and rampant pollution to dust storms and water scarcity.

The 200 volunteers at work in Baghdad want to be part of the solution, removing garbage from a stretch of one of the mighty rivers that gave birth to the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia.

"It breaks my heart to see the banks of the Tigris in this state," said one 19-year-old volunteer, who gave only her first name, Rassel, working under Baghdad's Imams Bridge.

"We want to change this reality. I want to make my city more beautiful." The task is Herculean in a country where it remains common for people to drop their trash on the ground.

The green banks of the Tigris, popular for picnics by families and groups of friends, are usually littered with waste, from single-use plastic bags to the disposable tips of hookah pipes, especially after public holidays. "There is a lot of plastic, nylon bags and corks," said Ali, also 19 and an organiser of the cleanup event.

The group then handed their collected waste to the Baghdad City Council which took it away, bound for a landfill. More often the garbage ends up directly in the Tigris. It is one of Iraq's two major waterways, along with the Euphrates, that face a host of environmental pressures.

The rivers or their tributaries are dammed upstream in Turkey and Iran, over-used along the way, and polluted with domestic, industrial and agricultural waste.

The trash that flows downriver clogs riverbanks and wetlands and poses a threat to wildlife, both terrestrial and aquatic. When the water empties into the Gulf, plastic bags are often ingested by turtles and dolphins and block the airways and stomachs of many other species, says a United Nations paper. In Iraq — which has suffered four decades of conflict and years of political and economic turmoil — separating and recycling waste has yet to become a priority for most people. — AFP

After Covid blues, French saxophone maker hits the right note



BORIS CAMBRELENG
The writer is a news reporter with AFP

After the financial blues of the Covid pandemic, the French saxophone maker favoured by American jazz greats celebrates its 100th birthday looking to expand further in Asia and the United States.

Selmer experienced two difficult years after the pandemic began in 2020, the company's executive chairman Thierry Oriez tells.

"The Covid crisis affected us together with our customers" because "the world of music stopped", whether that meant shows or conservatory classes.

But now Oriez looks to the future, with sales brimming once more. "(I'm) convinced we could do more in the United States."

Around 90 per cent of sales are international, with China accounting for one-fifth of them ahead of Japan, South Korea and the United States. The company did not provide any sales figures.

While order books are full, Selmer, like many other companies, faces recruitment difficulties while Covid-19 continues to pose absenteeism problems.

The company was founded by clarinet player Henri Selmer in 1885 but produced its first saxophone in 1922.

Selmer's instruments have been played by jazz legends including John

Coltrane, Stan Getz and Sonny Rollins.

The family business was sold in 2018 by its heirs to European private equity group Argos Soditec. A delivery subsidiary for Asia was established in 2020.

Oriez took over the business in July from Jerome Selmer, a great-grandson of Henri Selmer.

SELMER'S INSTRUMENTS HAVE BEEN PLAYED BY JAZZ LEGENDS INCLUDING JOHN COLTRANE, STAN GETZ AND SONNY ROLLINS

The instruments are made at a factory in Mantes-La-Ville, just west of Paris. The company also owns a laboratory that works with musicians to develop new models.

Finishing touches and assembly of Selmer's Axos series, a new collection less expensive than the company's other instruments, are completed in China. An alto saxophone costs €3,150 (\$3,430) while a tenor is worth €4,150 (\$4,500).

Oriez says the new collection "allows us to be more aggressive in the market".

While the Mantes-La-Ville factory has motorised precision machinery to craft some of the 700 pieces that make up each instrument, a large part of the work is still carried out by hand.

Artisans cut sheets of brass, use blowtorches to bend them into shape, mount the keys on the tube, polish the instrument and engrave Selmer's logo on it.

Engraver Morgane Duhamel spots an imperfection and adds by hand "a small engraving that will be personalised and will offer the customer a unique instrument".

Eric Bruel, who makes the saxophones' horns by turning the brass tubes on a mandrel, said the search for new tones "has an influence on the treatment of the metal: The reheating temperature with the blowtorch, it will be more or less strong, more or less long".

"Selmer has always walked the line between modernity regarding tools and the other slightly Amish side: We still do the forging, the welding and polishing by hand", Bruel said.

"In almost 30 years at the company, I've seen many changes in tools, the families of instruments, the musical evolution with young saxophone players who do not necessarily have the same sounds as their elders", he said. — AFP



An employee assembling a Saxophone at the Selmer Saxophone factory in Mantes-la-Ville outside Paris. — AFP

A month of sharing and caring



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

As people are usually sociable creatures by nature, they like gatherings to celebrate different happenings and enjoying good times. During the year, they commemorate various moments, occasions and days, some of which are very special either to people, their friends or loved ones. Probably, joining family, friends, colleagues or neighbours to commemorate a particular occasion or just to enjoy one's time with others are just to name a few reasons to celebrate social

gatherings. In fact, many of these days and moments are listed in people's calendar; all have special impact on their minds and memories. Though, people experience a different impression when moments sometimes happen during seasonal or spiritual period of time in the year. The month of Ramadhan, for instance, comes on top of these distinguished times of observing such celebration. It is basically about people getting together more than other times of the year.

Ramadhan is extremely significant for all Muslims worldwide. This holy month is actually about sharing its spiritual moments with others around us.

THE SPIRIT OF RAMADHAN BRINGS THE STRONG FEELINGS OF IMPORTANCE OF SHARING TOGETHERNESS AND BEING CLOSE TO FAMILY AND LOVED ONES IN PARTICULAR

Family, friends, colleagues and neighbours are mostly the ones we share moments of joy and spirituality with. The importance of sharing such moments in Ramadhan is marked through different images of gatherings, some of which are during iftar (breaking fast), Taraweeh prayers (special ritual in Ramadhan) and evening meetings where most people are spending their evening together by

exchanging informal visits. Men, for instance, prefer to break their fast together in masjids with other Muslims regardless their nationalities, languages or origins. What brings them all together is being all brothers of Islam and collectively practicing their worship and religious rituals as Muslim brothers. This behaviour reflects the commendable unity and harmony of Muslims, just in one religious ritual, which is always observed wherever they converge and meet for prayers and worship the Almighty Allah. Another thrilling scenario of people's interest to frequently get together during Ramadhan is the habit of daily commuting to hometowns. Some people like those who work out of their hometowns commute everyday back and forth to home just to enjoy breaking their fast with their families and loved ones. They intend not to miss the lovely moments of sharing iftar with family, not for a single day even.

For those homesick people especially during Ramadhan, it is unique feelings indeed as they set around their children and family at home enjoying the month's spirit together during the iftar, dinner or suhur (late meal before the dawn) too. Being at home at such times is one of the much-liked experiences that people try hard not to miss during Ramadhan.

Friends and colleagues at work also portray another situation of sharing spiritual moments of Ramadhan together. Every now and then, they come together to break their fast, have dinner or spend their evening either at home or outdoor in a restaurant or a coffee shop perhaps. For them, Ramadhan marks a significant occasion to meet and strengthen their ties.

Ramadhan has always been a great time for togetherness and experiencing the tradition of moment-sharing. All the enjoyable moments that one shares with family, friends, colleagues, neighbours or those less privileged will definitely etch in people's minds and last forever. They will be stored in their box of memories and will be recalled someday in the years to come. Just remember that life is not what we gain, but what we give for others; the moments you share with others are what really matters most!

In view of that, Ramadhan is becoming a month in which people usually learn patience, giving and caring for others within society. Most significantly, it is a month about appreciating, reviving and strengthening relations between people. The spirit of Ramadhan essentially brings the strong feelings of importance of sharing togetherness and being close to family and loved ones in particular.



Avoiding Covid complacency



José Manuel Barroso

The writer is a former president of the European Commission (2004-14) and prime minister of Portugal (2002-04), is Chair of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

History has shown that some of the most dangerous periods of pandemics come when life returns to normal too soon. A century ago, a premature "all clear" helped the second wave of Spanish influenza claim far more lives than the first, after a more virulent strain emerged. Today, many G7 and G20 countries are relaxing Covid-19 restrictions and shifting their focus away from pandemic response to pandemic prevention and preparedness (or to other issues entirely). But until every country achieves its national vaccination target, we cannot know whether we are out of the woods.

With 2.8 billion people unvaccinated, the coronavirus still has ample opportunity to circulate and mutate, potentially giving rise to new, more dangerous variants and fresh resurgences. Even in the face of other pressing crises such as the war in Ukraine, Covid-19 must remain a high global priority. The only way to eliminate the uncertainty and put the pandemic behind us is for global leaders to finish the job they started, by helping the dozens of lower-income countries that are still struggling to achieve adequate vaccine coverage.

These countries need help scaling up their vaccine delivery systems and turning doses into actual vaccinations. Now that high-income countries have achieved high coverage rates, the hoarding and bottlenecks that previously hindered global supply have eased. In fact, global vaccine supply is outstripping global demand for the first time. That's good news for the global vaccination effort, and particularly for low-income countries where less than 15 per cent of people have received their first shot. But it also underscores the challenge of getting doses into the arms of people living in difficult-to-reach, resource-poor environments.

The last mile was always going to be the longest. In what has been the largest, most complex global immunisation effort ever, even wealthy countries have struggled with their vaccine rollouts. In lower-income countries, political fragility often compounds the problem of weak health systems.

Yet even with these challenges, 40 per cent of people (on average) in the world's 92 lower-income countries have received two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine. That is remarkable, and much of it is thanks to COVAX, the global effort to deliver vaccines equitably. COVAX has made available 1.4 billion doses, with nearly 90 per cent going through the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) to lower-

income countries that would have struggled to get access otherwise. This is extraordinary progress compared to six months ago; but it is still not enough to reduce the risk of future resurgences, let alone end the pandemic.

WHILE WEALTHY COUNTRIES EASE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS AND WELCOME A RETURN TO NORMAL LIFE, MANY LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES ARE STILL STRUGGLING TO GET VACCINES INTO PEOPLE'S ARMS. THE LONGER THEY REMAIN SHORT OF THE 70 PER CENT IMMUNISATION TARGET, THE MORE CHANCES THE VIRUS WILL HAVE TO ACQUIRE DANGEROUS NEW MUTATIONS

While many lower-income countries have come far in their immunisation efforts, dozens of others are still struggling to administer vaccines fast enough, and to reach those most at risk. That is why we at Gavi are proud to join with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government in hosting the Gavi COVAX AMC Summit in Berlin this week, as part of the German G7

presidency, together with co-hosts Senegalese President Macky Sall and Indonesian President Joko Widodo. There, we will launch a new phase of COVAX to help countries scale up their delivery systems, and to ensure that they receive the right vaccines, in the right volumes, at the right time.

By helping to cover ancillary costs for essential items — such as syringes, transportation, and insurance — this new phase will do more to ensure that donated doses reach more people in the countries that need them.

And to address issues such as the risk of further supply shocks or the possible need for variant-specific vaccines, we are launching a new Pandemic Vaccine Pool to protect COVAX's supply from future disruptions.

Even, or especially, during periods of geopolitical friction, the best solutions often can be found in global public goods that serve everyone's interest. Fostering their provision requires all countries to work together in a spirit of multilateral cooperation, even if they remain at loggerheads on other issues. Vaccinating the world remains the only way to end the pandemic and the uncertainty that comes with it. But this effort can succeed only with the support of wealthy countries.

Political leaders are increasingly focusing on the need to strengthen preparedness for future pandemics. They are right to do so. But to demonstrate their resolve, they must commit the funds needed to prepare for whatever else the current pandemic may throw at us.

©Project Syndicate, 2022



A health worker prepares to inoculate a person with a dose of vaccine against the Covid-19 coronavirus at a vaccination centre in New Delhi, India, on Sunday. — AFP

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



OMAN SECURE SPOT IN ASIAN CUP FUTSAL

ZAMIL AL BALUSHI'S LATE GOALS POWER OMAN PAST UAE

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

Oman futsal team secured the last available spot in the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 which will be held in September this year. The national futsal team, coached by Younis al Fahdi, edged UAE 5-3 in the West Asia Play-off late on Saturday to book their berth in the top Asian Cup futsal finals.

Five teams from West Asia have qualified to the 2022 AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait including Lebanon, Saudi Arabia from Group A while Iraq and Bahrain

made the finals from Group B and Oman entered through play-off.

At the Zayed Sports Complex, Oman's Motasim al Shamsi put the national team ahead in the fourth minute and UAE could get the equaliser only after 14 minutes through Abdullah al Falasi.

Al Shamsi started strongly again in the second half as he netted the lead for Oman in the 24th minute. Two minutes later, Rashid Ali equalised again for the hosts.

After the equaliser, the UAE players pressed hard for a third goal and they took the lead for the first time as Khalid al Hamadi



netted the third goal in the 27th minute. Oman's Samer al Balushi restored parity soon to make it 3-3. In the dying minutes, Oman's Zamil al Balushi was the star of the match as he stunned UAE with a brace. Zamil found the target in the 34th and 39th minutes to make Oman a 5-3 winner.

Oman had started their campaign in Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 Qualifiers with a 2-1 loss against Lebanon in the opening game on Tuesday. Then, they played out a 2-2 draw against Saudi Arabia in their second match before earning a 1-1 draw against Palestine in the

concluding group match.

LEBANON SEAL TOP SPOT

Lebanon secured the top spot in Group A and advanced to the Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 finals with seven points. Second-placed Saudi Arabia also qualified with five points.

Lebanon played a 2-2 draw with Saudi Arabia on Wednesday and the draw was enough for Lebanon to secure the top position. In Group B, Iraq and Bahrain ended their clash at a 1-1 draw and both teams moved to the finals as they shared four points at the top of the group.

Everton beat toothless Man Utd as Chelsea run riot

LONDON: Relegation-threatened Everton earned a priceless win against misfiring Manchester United on Saturday as Chelsea hammered Southampton 6-0 on a potentially decisive day in the race for the Premier League top four.

Arsenal slipped to their third defeat in four matches, losing 2-1 against Brighton, while Leeds pulled further away from the drop zone with an emphatic 3-0 win against struggling Watford.

Frank Lampard has struggled to inspire Everton since taking over from the sacked Rafael Benitez in late January, winning just two of his nine league games before United's visit.

A 3-2 defeat in midweek against Burnley left the club just one point above their relegation rivals and desperately short of confidence.

But goalkeeper Jordan Pickford made two fine saves to deny Marcus Rashford in the early stages in the spring sunshine at Goodison Park.

The decisive moment in the

“
I have ambitions for this club to stay up, play well, but in the position we are in, fighting comes first and foremost
FRANK LAMPARD

1-0 win came midway through the first half when young forward Anthony Gordon hit a shot that took a huge deflection off England defender Harry Maguire and wrong-footed David de Gea in the United goal.

The visitors — with top-scorer Cristiano Ronaldo back in the team — huffed and puffed but looked toothless in attack and slipped to an eighth league defeat of the season.

Lampard said he was proud of his battling side, who are trying to maintain Everton's proud

record of being ever-present in the English top flight since 1954.

“Beautiful football can come later on,” he said. “I have ambitions for this club to stay up, play well, but in the position we are in, fighting comes first and foremost.”

RAMPANT CHELSEA

Third-placed Chelsea suffered a shock 4-1 defeat at the hands of Brentford last week before losing 3-1 against Real Madrid in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal.

But they restored confidence on Saturday by putting Southampton to the sword, racing into a 6-0 lead in the 54th minute, with two goals apiece for Mason Mount and Timo Werner.

“The performance changed, the commitment and the discipline,” Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel said.

“This is how we want to play and we gave an answer finally because you could see it on the scoreboard. — AFP





5 Omani athletes to get Olympic Solidarity Committee grant

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) has completed preparations to announce the names of the athletes for the Olympic mission of the Olympic Solidarity Committee.

The names of the five athletes representing individual games will be officially announced in the coming days. This is part of the plan to prepare the athletes to earn qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympics.

The Oman Olympic Committee had nominated the five athletes in coordination with the sports federations and committees to benefit from the grants provided by the International Olympic Committee. Based on their achievements each athlete will receive support from the Olympic Solidarity Committee from the next period until the final qualifiers for the Paris Olympics. The athletes will be assisted in a training plan aimed at qualifying for the Olympic Games.

The grants provided by the Olympic Solidarity of the International Olympic Committee aim to assist the athletes who are selected and proposed to participate by the National Olympic Committees

in the stages of preparation and qualification for the Olympic Games 2024. This programme allows the National Olympic Committees to obtain financial and technical support for an unlimited number of athletes with high level, who are seeking to qualify for the Olympic Games.

Regarding the financial support, the International Olympic Committee has allocated financial support to the players for a programme to prepare and qualify them to participate in the Paris 2024 Olympics, which will continue until the start of the Olympics. There will be continuous follow-up of the technical levels of the athletes through the preparation plans and executive programmes established by their sports federations, technical reports and results achieved at the level of regional, continental and international.

The Olympic Solidarity Committee of the International Olympic Committee provides four support programmes to the National Olympic Committees every four years according to a budget allocated for that, and these programmes are meant for athletes, coaches, Olympic values and for the management of Olympic committees and knowledge exchange.

Gunners hope of top-four dented by Brighton

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, APRIL 10

Arsenal suffered a significant setback in their attempt to qualify for Champions League with Brighton inflicting a 2-1 defeat on them. As their remaining matches include fixtures against strong oppositions such as, Chelsea, Manchester United, West Ham and Tottenham, it will not be easy for them to haul themselves up into the top-four of the Premier League by the end of the season.

Their manager Mikel Arteta said: "We know this road is taking us nowhere especially considering where we want to be. We still have everything to play for in our last eight games but the first half was really poor again.

"After everything we talked about after losing at Crystal Palace, we did not make it happen on the pitch. We were sloppy with the ball, we were second best in a lot of situations and we didn't show any purpose or build any momentum."

He added: "It's not a problem of attitude. It's a problem with the courage we showed to play. We didn't step in and provoke the situation we wanted. We were looking at each other too many times instead of taking ownership. You cannot play like that. You have to make yourself count and today we didn't do it."

Arteta went on to say: "So what happens now is that we criticise ourselves a lot and take the slaps we deserve again and then we lift ourselves up. We need to visualise the beautiful challenge ahead and not just sit back and say let's see what happens."

There was a lack of intensity in Arsenal's play from the early chance they missed to score when Gabriel Magalhaes headed wide from a cross by Bukayo Saka. Soon after that, in the 28th minute Brighton took the lead with a long clearance from deep defence that found Enock

After everything we talked about after losing at Crystal Palace, we did not make it happen on the pitch. We were sloppy with the ball, we were second best in a lot of situations and we didn't show any purpose or build any momentum

MIKEL ARTETA

Mwepu. The Zambian cut-back a pass to Leandro Trossard who firmly drove inside the right post.

In added time at the end of the first half, Arsenal were disallowed an equaliser after long check by VAR which found the header from Martinelli was from a marginally offside position. To make things worse for the Gunners, Brighton extended their lead halfway through the second half with Mwepu's half volley finding the net from the edge of the box after a fine move from the left by Brighton.

Arsenal hit the cross bar twice from shots by Martin Odegaard and Eddie Nketiah during relentless pressure on the Brighton goal towards the end and finally it resulted in the 89th minute goal by Odegaard whose long-range shot took a deflection from Danny Welbeck to beat the goalkeeper. There were six minutes of stoppage time but that was of no help to the Gunners.

Brighton manager, Graham Potter, said: "To say I'm pleased is an understatement and I'm really pleased for the boys because we've been having a tough time lately. It was really a good performance and an even better result against a team that are pushing for the Champions League spaces."



Woods's challenge fades, Scheffler in command at Masters

AUGUSTA, UNITED STATES: Tiger Woods's hopes of a victorious return from career-threatening injuries evaporated on Augusta National's greens on Saturday while Scottie Scheffler seized a three-stroke Masters lead.

Woods, 14 months removed from a car crash that left him with injuries so severe he feared he might lose his right leg, saw his hopes of a stunning comeback for a sixth green jacket come undone with his worst-ever Masters round, a six-over par 78.

The fact that the 46-year-old was even able to tee it up -- and make a 22nd consecutive Masters cut -- was astonishing.

But at nine off Scheffler's lead to start the day, Woods knew he needed something sensational to give himself a chance come on Sunday and instead he posted a round worse than the third-round 77 he shot in his 1996 debut as an amateur.



"It's just like I hit a thousand putts out there on the greens today," said Woods, whose prior mastery of the unforgiving, undulating greens of Augusta helped him to five Masters titles.

"I felt like I didn't really hit it that bad, but I had four three-putts and a four-putt," Woods said. "I just could not get a feel."

Woods's seven-over par total of 223 put him 16 strokes behind

Scheffler, who survived drama at the 18th to card a one-under par 71 for a nine-under total of 207.

The 25-year-old Texan takes a three-shot lead over Australian Cameron Smith into the final round. On a cold, windy day where scores soared, Smith carded the only round in the 60s with a four-under par 68 for 210.

Smith was two strokes in front of third-place South Korean Im Sung-jae, who shot a one-under 71.

But, once again, it was Woods who drew the spotlight.

A three-putt at the opening hole proved a harbinger, a birdie at the second -- where his shot out of a greenside bunker barely missed finding the cup for eagle -- proving only a short respite.

From the fairway at the fifth, Woods left himself 65 feet, and he could only watch in disbelief as his three-foot bogey effort circled the cup and stayed up. — AFP

Oman joins International Olympics Academy

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

The Oman Olympic Academy officially joined the membership of the International Olympic Academy to benefit from the support and programmes provided by the International Olympic Academy for athletes and officials in sports institutions.

With Oman joining as the new member, the total number of the National Olympic Academies in the International Olympic Academy now stands at 151.

The programmes offered by the International Olympic Academy that can be benefited include a master's degree programme in Olympic Studies, Olympic Education, and Olympic Events Organisation and Management, which aims to

The programmes offered by the International Olympic Academy that can be benefited include a master's degree programme in Olympic Studies, Olympic Education, and Olympic Events Organisation and Management

qualify competencies to promote and develop Olympic education programmes. It also includes a number of international seminars and courses on Olympic studies and Olympic Youth Ambassadors Courses for university professors of physical education, sports journalists and Olympic medallists and courses on sports, society and culture.

The programmes also include visits to the International Olympic Academy by the member National Olympic Committees and academies, a group of conferences and educational visits, and the Youth Symposium on World Cultural Heritage organised annually by the Greek Cultural and Educational Club of Unesco.

Since its inception, the Oman Olympic Academy has organised 19 training courses with the participation of more than 300 administrators in sports institutions in many fields represented in sports law, advanced sports management diploma, sports training, sports media, sports events management, Olympic education and rehabilitation of people with disabilities in sports institutions and others.

‘Not close to winning’: IPL giants Chennai and Mumbai slump again

PUNE: IPL big guns Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings fell to their fourth loss of the season on Saturday to raise fears of an early exit from the Twenty20 tournament.

Holders Chennai and Mumbai have nine IPL title between them but reputation took a beating when they were outplayed by Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bangalore respectively.

Suryakumar Yadav lifted Mumbai from 79-6 to 151-6 but the total barely tested Faf du Plessis’ Bangalore who achieved their target with nine balls and seven wickets to spare in Pune.

Up and coming Indian talent Anuj Rawat hit 66 and put on 80 runs with Virat Kohli (48) to guide the team, who hunt for their maiden Indian Premier League title, to their third win in four games.

Five-time champions Mumbai remain winless so far along with Chennai and skipper Rohit Sharma said it’s high time the team stands up.

“I have always spoken of collective performance both from bat and ball, that seems to be missing at the moment”, said Rohit. “Once that comes through, I think we should be good.”

Mumbai’s director of cricket



Zaheer Khan said, “It’s a long season, so we have to keep things tight, keep things together.”

“There are still 11 league matches to go, so we got to get on a roll. It’s just the matter of first win.”

‘Nobody saw that coming’

In reply, Bangalore lost Du Plessis for 16 but Rawat, a left-handed batter, took the attack to the opposition as he hit sixes in his 47-ball blitz before being run out.

Kohli fell two short of his fifty

after being trapped lbw off South African leg-spinner Dewald Brevis but looked unhappy with his dismissal after his umpire review was turned down.

In the first match of the day, Kane Williamson’s Hyderabad hammered Chennai, four-time IPL champions, by eight wickets as they chased down a target of 155 with 14 balls to spare.

Chennai coach Stephen Fleming said the team, now led by

Ravindra Jadeja after Mahendra Singh Dhoni stepped down ahead of the season, needs more belief to get back to winning ways.

“Probably each facet (of the game) is a concern, if not at one stage then altogether”, Fleming told reporters.

“We are not winning any games. Not being close to winning any games, you get a bit of self-doubt, and the players get a little bit niggly. — AFP



Sarco LLC crowned A-Division T20 Champions

MUSCAT: Sarco LLC defeated Zawawi Powertech by 5 wickets in the final of Oman Cricket’s A-division T20 season 2021/22 at the Oman Cricket Academy on April 2, 2022. Electing to bat first after winning the toss, none of the Zawawi Powertech batsmen managed to get going.

Arun Dev and Vijay Anand Dayanandan were the only ones to cross the 20-run mark. The latter led the scoring with a 21-ball 23.

A high turnover rate for batters at the crease cost Zawawi dearly. The opening partnership of 19 was their highest of the innings and bar Arun and Vijay, Prabhakaran Kannan was the only other player to reach double figures. They were bundled out for 81, with 3 overs to spare.

Sarco LLC on the other hand were brilliant. Their alert fielding scuppered the batsmen’s hopes of keeping the scoreboard ticking with routine singles and doubles. That pressure came to benefit the bowlers and all of them ended the innings with a minimum of 1 wicket next to their name.

Player of the Match Pradeep Salian, who received his award from Varun Khimji, Director of Khimji Ramdas at the post-match presentation ceremony, impressed the most. He finished on figures of 3/17 after 3 overs.

Nazish Mohammad was the other one to claim more than 1 scalp. In response, despite a wobble in the middle overs, Sarco LLC got over the line in 14.2 overs. Openers Sathisha Achary and Rakesh Patel made their way to scores of 19 and 18 and took their side halfway home. However, both of them were unable to stay put and seal the victory.

BRIEF SCORES:
Zawawi Powertech 81/10 in 17 overs (Vijay Anand Dayanandan 23(21) 1 x 4, 1 x 6; Pradeep Salian 17(3) lost to Sarco LLC 82/5 in 14.2 overs (Sathisha Achary 19(12) 3 x 4; Vijeesh Velunni 16(2) by 5 wickets



رمضان فيه الخير ينساب

AS'SIR CONTEST

**2 Toyota Yaris, 2022
YM, S/D 1.5 Classic**

**VALUABLE PRIZES
UP TO RO
35000**

For participation
90458
Send to SMS

**Presented by
Nada Al Balushi**

MCT 13:00

Comes through General Radio & Shaba Radio

@ShababRadioOman

@GeneralRadio

business

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
4,240.878



CRUDE
OIL PRICE

Brent Crude \$102.36
Light Crude \$97.84



Follow us on
omanobserver.om/business



A world of exclusive offers
for Maisarah cardholders.
Download “My Offers - BD & MIBS” App now!



Available on:
Download on the
App Store



GET IT ON
Google Play



TRAVELLERPASS
your online travel app



MAJLIS



MAJLIS

OOMCO, Wakud to introduce biodiesel in Oman

Low-carbon fuel: Wakud's waste cooking oil processing plant at Khazaen Economic City can produce around 500,000 litres of biodiesel per month

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) and Wakud International LLC (Wakud) have signed an agreement to introduce Biodiesel blends to the Sultanate of Oman. The two companies will explore the potential of selling different blends of Biodiesel to customers in the Commercial and Marine segments.

For corporations developing de-carbonisation strategies, biodiesel can produce immediate impact without any capital expenditure. With almost no sulphur, biodiesel is attractive



to marine customers looking to abide by IMO standards and specifications for low sulphur fuel.

“OOMCO has been successfully leading the fuel marketing sector in the Sultanate of Oman by being customer-centric and providing the highest level of service to its customers. This collaborative work with Wakud is another example of how OOMCO has always been focusing on customers' needs as this will allow OOMCO to provide new products that support its customers to achieve their de-carbonisation target and drive the Oman 2040 vision towards sustainability. We are proud of Wakud as Omani SME and we trust both of us can contribute to the growth of Oman economy”, said Tarik al Junaidi CEO of OOMCO.

“We are very excited to work partner with OOMCO to maximise the benefits of the circular economy within Oman. Together, with Wakud's waste-based biodiesel and OOMCO's vast distribution network and

BIODIESEL LIFECYCLE CO2 EMISSIONS ARE UP TO 85 PER CENT LESS THAN PETROL DIESEL. REPLACING 1 LITRE OF PETROL DIESEL WITH ONE LITRE OF USED COOKING OIL BASED BIODIESEL CAN SAVE 2.6 KGS OF CO2 EMISSIONS.

logistics expertise, we believe we can help customers meet their carbon reduction targets without the need for expensive investment”, said Maher al Habsi, CEO of Wakud.

Biodiesel lifecycle CO2 emissions are up to 85 per cent less than petrol diesel. Replacing 1 litre of petrol diesel with one litre of used cooking oil based Biodiesel can save 2.6 kgs of CO2

emissions.

Biodiesel has been a part of the energy mix in Europe, UK and USA for the past 20 years and is typically sold as a blend with petrol diesel (between 5 per cent and 20 per cent biodiesel mixed with Petrol Diesel). Using a blend requires no changes to existing engines, and virtually all engine manufacturers support biodiesel blends without affecting engine warranties.

Wakud, an Omani SME, operates a Biodiesel plant in Khazaen Economic City, Barka.

The plant declared commercial operations at the beginning of 2022 and has a capacity to produce 500 tonnes (500,000 litres) of biodiesel per month. The plant recycles used cooking oil, collected from hotels, restaurants and catering companies within Oman into biodiesel that can serve as a direct replacement for petrol diesel.

Oman has adequate quantities of wheat



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

The Sultanate of Oman is well-gearred to meet any shortfalls in the import of key food grains and essential staple stemming from the Ukraine crisis, according to a food industry official.

Eng Ibrahim al Ameri, Chief Operations Officer at Oman Flour Mills Company, said the Sultanate of Oman has stockpiled on certain essentials, notably wheat, and has begun to tap new markets to secure the country's requirements.

The comments came in response to a recent report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warning that global food commodity prices have reached “all-time highs” due to the Russo-Ukrainian war that began in March, hampering wheat and grain exports. Impacted by the crisis are the prices of grains, vegetable oils, dairy, meat and sugar, the UN agency noted.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Move to enable alternative financing and investments through real estate tokenisation

Financial inclusion: Real estate tokenisation will add to a growing list of financing options available to property developers to raise funds for their projects through the capital market

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Real estate tokenisation – a rapidly growing global trend in real estate financing and investments – may soon become a reality in the Sultanate of Oman as part of efforts by the Capital Market Authority (CMA) to provide alternative financing and investment options for real estate companies and investors.

According to a high-level official, the introduction of real estate tokenisation is a possible option for consideration under the proposed new regulatory framework for virtual assets and virtual asset service providers currently being established by the CMA to regulate and develop the virtual assets industry in Oman.

The “Regulatory Framework for Virtual Assets (VAs) and Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs)” currently being established by the Authority will, upon its formal promulgation, allow the issuance of virtual

assets such as real estate tokens for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman, said Kemal Rizadi Arbi, Expert/Adviser at the Capital Market Authority.

“Real estate tokenisation enables the developer to convert pieces of real estate into blockchain-based tokens that can then be offered to investors, similar to the securitisation of bonds and Sukuk.

This tokenisation approach will further open up investment opportunities in the real estate sector for both local and foreign investors, thereby injecting liquidity into the market”, he explained.

The official made the observations during a presentation on the theme, “Alternative Financing & Investments in Real Estate through the Capital Market”, at the 2022 Oman Real Estate Exhibition & Conference held in Muscat recently.

As part of the initiative to enable fundraising options through real estate tokenisation, the CMA will explore the introduction of virtual asset exchanges such as crypto exchanges under the proposed virtual assets regulatory framework, said Arbi.

“Crypto exchanges will enable investors – both local and international – to invest in real estate tokens, thereby



Crypto exchanges will enable investors – both local and international – to invest in real estate tokens, thereby providing more liquidity to property developers interested in raising funds for their projects. Tokenised assets being more liquid are preferred by investors, especially when listed on a crypto exchange, allowing investors to buy or sell at their choosing, thus attracting a far wider investor base to enter this market

KEMAL RIZADI ARBI
Expert/Adviser, CMA

providing more liquidity to property developers interested in raising funds for their projects. Tokenised assets being more liquid are preferred by investors, especially when listed on a crypto exchange, allowing investors to buy or sell at their choosing, thus attracting a far wider investor base to enter this market.”

According to the official, the CMA is currently engaging with experts to help draft an “internationally benchmarked regulatory framework” governing virtual assets, which may include crypto currencies and tokenised assets.

“We are targeting to introduce this regulatory framework, hopefully by the third quarter of this year”, he stated.

Significantly, real estate tokenisation – when formally approved and rolled out – will add to a growing list of financing options available to property developers to raise funds for their projects through the capital market, says Arbi.

The issuance of fixed-income instruments, such as bonds and Sukuk, has already been a popular route for many companies, including real estate companies. More recently, Real Estate Investment Trust funds (REITs) were added to the list of options. Also being primed for implementation in this

regard is through crowdfunding platforms, following its authorisation by the CMA and the licensing of the first global and Islamic crowdfunding platform, Ethis.

The Authority's efforts to introduce new financing options through the capital market are in line with Oman's Vision 2040 strategy to diversify the economy and providing an alternative financing solution to support the diversification programme, said the official.

“To this end, we have introduced a number of conventional and Islamic financing and investment methods through the capital market for companies and investors, especially to attract foreign investors into Oman.

All these initiatives by the CMA also aim to provide an alternative financing platform for companies, including SMEs – some of which are property developers – to raise their funding requirements directly from local and global investors, without having to go through financial intermediaries such as banks.

In offering these alternatives, the CMA is also supporting financial inclusion by enabling fundraising access to everyone, not only the big players, but also other smaller players for their funding needs”, Arbi added.

Alizz Islamic Bank AGM commends accomplishments

MUSCAT: During its Annual General Meeting held in Crowne Plaza Al Qurum, Alizz Islamic Bank commended the bank's accomplishments over the past two years and its success in overcoming the difficult times.

The meeting, chaired by Yahya bin Said al Jabri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Alizz Islamic Bank, with the presence of other board members. In addition to Shaikh Issam bin Khalaf al Enezi, Head of the Sharia Supervisory Board of the Bank, and Sulaiman bin Hamad al Harthi, the bank's CEO, witnessed the approval of the resolutions submitted to the Board of Directors along with relevant recommendations, in addition to approving different reports, the bank's business strategy during the next phase and the Sharia Supervisory Board's report. Attendants also discussed the auditor's report and agreed to allocate an amount of RO 100,000 to CSR programmes. Moreover, a new board of directors, presided by Yahya bin Said al Jabri, was elected.

The bank's CEO said that a year after Oman Arab Bank's acquisition of Alizz Islamic Bank in 2020, Alizz Islamic Bank was able to realise profits; in addition, its main sectors witnessed remarkable



improvements and growth, as the bank announced a net profit after tax of RO 4.4 million, compared to a net loss of RO 7.6 million in 2020. Through adopting prudent and conservative policies, the bank managed to improve the level of expected credit losses (provisions) against exposure to credit risks, and they had a good coverage ratio against non-performing assets.

In 2021, the bank performed its obligations to its customers by offering financial solutions, with priority given to customer service, through a customer-centred philosophy.

Moreover, the bank continued to invest in the existing digital platforms and offer fin-tech solutions. The bank also remained focused on building on the key pillars that ensure meeting customers' needs while adopting a culture of innovation within the

institution.

Al Harthi added that the performance of most sectors in Alizz Islamic Bank was aligned with the strategic plan, which was considered as the compass that directed these achievements, i.e. a growth of all major indicators, which enhanced the bank's profitability, despite the challenges witnessed during most months of last year due to the ongoing pandemic. Such success is attributed to the focused efforts made with regard to the re-alignment of business, cost rationalisation, financial discipline and improvement of asset quality.

"The year 2022 has started positively as confidence in the market was renewed and the economy recovered its ability to achieve growth, yet depending on external sources of income this time, due to the rise in oil and gas

prices. Moreover, the Sultanate of Oman will witness growth in investment as after the rise in oil prices, public investments related to Vision 2040. In addition, it is expected that recovery of household spending will continue in 2022 though it will remain affected by the Covid-19 restrictions."

He concluded that the bank continues its efforts to develop a technology-based business model to keep pace with customers changing requirements and the need for disruptive technology. In addition, the bank's vision focusing on enhancing long-term benefits, together with the approach of realigning business models, cost rationalisation, financial discipline, and enhancing asset quality remaining the key factors that contribute to the success of the bank's journey.



Buy a GAC Motor vehicle & get a chance to win a GAC sedan

MUSCAT: If you are a fan of high quality, dependable and reliable vehicles, then head to any GAC Motor showroom for a fantastic Ramadhan campaign offer. Buy any of your favourite GAC Motor vehicle and get manufacturer's warranty – 5 years/150,000 kms, comprehensive Insurance 1 year (Oman & UAE) and a chance to win Raffle – one GA4 GB 1.3 T. The campaign is valid until June 9, 2022 (Conditions apply. For more details, please visit any GAC Motor showroom).

In Oman, GAC Motor has high quality sedans or SUVs to match the desires of every customer. The range includes sedans like the GA4, GA8; SUVs include the GS3, GS4 and GS8 and the MPV includes the GN8.

GAC Motor vehicles are painstakingly designed and engineered to offer customers some of the finest experiences in the automotive world. GAC Motor International is devoted to the production and sales of world-class vehicles, engines, auto parts and car accessories as well as R&D of automobile engineering technology. Since its establishment, GAC Motor International has adopted a global vision and adhered to international standards, forming a world-class car manufacturing system

with GAC Motor International's global R&D network, world-class production model, global supply chain system and GAC Motor International's marketing approach as its core.

GAC R&D Centre has established a rigorous and well-organised automobile development management system with the vehicle design and development control programme as its core components, major system standardisation development process as an extension, and supported by standardisation of management process in each stage of vehicle development.

It has passed the examination of ISO:9001 Quality Management System for certification review and approval. GAC R&D Centre has worked with world famous partners many times in thorough and complete chassis performance optimisation. Joint effort was also made in testing and tuning in different road conditions and/or under various temperatures on major proving grounds home and abroad.

GAC Motor has blazed a development path that is high-end focused, quality-first and innovation-driven with its development speed and profit level being among the best.

Changan Oman announces attractive Ramadhan promotional offers

MUSCAT: Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC (AGAE), part of Bahwan International Group, has announced an attractive offer on a range of Changan Model variants and its a part of its exclusive Ramadhan promotion to mark the holy month.

The 'Driving Forward This Ramadhan' offer is available on models including CS95 (2.0L Turbo Engine, 224 hp, 6-speed AT, 4 WD, seven seater) CS75 Plus (2.0 L Turbo Engine, 220 hp, 8 speed AT); CS85 Coupe (2.0L Turbo Engine, 224 hp, 8 speed AT); CS35 Plus (1.4 Turbo , 155hp) EADO Plus (1.4 Turbo,155hp and 1.6L Engine, 116 hp) and

Alsvin (1.5L Engine, 105 hp), Hunter.

The Ramadhan offer which the customers can avail during the period includes free service, (2 years/35,000 kms to 3 years/55,000 kms), free insurance, free registration, Manufacturer's warranty (6 years/250,000 kms) and assured fuel card to all customers buying Changan model variants in addition customer purchasing CS95 4WD, CS85 Coupe and CS75 Plus will get exclusive gift of Apple Watch 41mm 7 series till May 20, 2022 and this special Ramadhan promotion is exclusively designed for individual showroom customers not applicable for fleet /corporate buyers.

MCBS celebrates 28th graduation for 2019-2021

MUSCAT: In a span of three joyful days, the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) proudly celebrated the 28th graduation for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021. The achievements of one thousand three hundred and fifty-two male and female students from various disciplines and academic levels from the associate degree, bachelor's, and master's degree was celebrated in an event that took place at the Grand Millennium Hotel, Muscat.

The ceremony was attended by representatives from MCBS's affiliate Franklin University, Dr Munir al Maskari, college founder and Executive Chairman of the Modern College of Business and Science, and Dr Moosa al Kindi, Dean of the College, Members of the Board of Governance, as well as senior members of the community, students, parents,



faculty members, and college administrative staff.

In a series of motivational speeches, the chief guest, His Excellency Ambassador Dr Adnan al Azri, Chair of the Commission on the Limits of The Continental Shelf at the United Nations, graciously delivered an uplifting speech and shared his own personal experience

and learning journey with the students and encouraged them to continue keeping their high spirits and never give up on their dreams.

Throughout these jubilant days, the graduates expressed their delight, enthusiasm, and high sense of achievement, especially after they had experienced exceptional

circumstances since the outbreak of the pandemic that took over the world in 2020.

MCBS recently celebrated its silver jubilee and enjoys a reputation of being one the most important and leading educational intuitions in the Sultanate of Oman. It continues to ensure the diversity of its academic and training programmes and provides high-quality educational services in various disciplines to meet the needs of the labour market in the Sultanate of Oman and globally. Its mission is to guarantee the highest quality of education by providing a team that is highly specialised and trained to support the comprehensive development of the national economy and equip its graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills that will enable them to work efficiently and effectively.

MEC celebrates graduation ceremony for Batch 2021

MUSCAT: Middle East College (MEC) celebrated the graduation of its 2021 batch in ceremonies organised over two days on March 27-28, 2022 at the MEC Student Hub. 1,294 students graduated across several Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes in Engineering, Science and Technology, Business and Management, and Archives and Records Management.

The ceremony was conducted in seven sessions across two days in the presence of dignitaries, the members of the Management, members of the College Board,

parents of graduates, faculty members, academic support staff, and the professional services team.

Dr Kiran GR, Dean of Middle East College, presided over ceremonies for awarding Undergraduate Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas in programmes offered in affiliation with Coventry University, the University of Wolverhampton, and Breda University of Applied Sciences.

Hilal bin Hamed al Sarmi, Shura Council member presided over the ceremony to award Undergraduate Bachelors in programmes offered in affiliation with the University of



Wolverhampton.

Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development presided over the ceremony to award Undergraduate Bachelor's in Computing and Business Administration programmes

offered in affiliation with Coventry University.

Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage presided over the ceremony to award Undergraduate Bachelor's in Civil Engineering, Mechanical

Engineering and Electronics and Telecommunication programmes offered in affiliation with Coventry University.

Sulayem bin Ali bin Sulayem al Hakmani, Chairman of the Consumer Protection Authority presided over the ceremony to award the postgraduate degrees.

The final ceremony of Batch 2021 was presided over by Issa bin Hamad al Azri, The Governor of South Al Batinah to award undergraduate awards in Archives and Records Management.

Yazan bin Issa al Muharrami, a graduate in Archives and Records

Management said:

"I am proud and happy about this moment, as I consider it a well-deserved celebration after the continuous hard work and efforts, and determination to achieve this success. I congratulate and wish all the success to my fellow graduates and invite them to hold on and carry the college's message and their education everywhere. I am ambitious to continue my studies in MEC by pursuing the master's programme in my domain. Once again, congratulations to everyone who worked hard and achieved what they were waiting for"



Mala'a wins Global Business Outlook 2021 Award

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, APRIL 10

Oman Credit and Financial Information Centre (Mala'a) won the Global Business Outlook Award for the "Fastest Growing Consumer & Commercial Credit Information Reporting in the GCC" for the year 2021.

The achievement is a testament to Mala'a's efforts in developing the credit system in the Sultanate of Oman since its inception in 2019 with the support of its data providers (Royal Oman Police and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion) as well as its member banks, FLCs and SME Funds.

Mala'a, under the supervision of Central

Bank of Oman, represents a National Data Bank for credit and financial information.

The centre provides Credit Reports and the Mala'a Credit Score for individuals and corporates.

The membership of the centre spans across the banking and financial sectors, with the addition of the SME Funds recently. The centre aims to add new sectors under its membership in the upcoming phase such as Telecom and Insurance.

It also aims to grow its connections with several data providers from the government sector.

Mala'a is a 3-phase project, the first phase has been successfully implemented and the second phase is under way.



The first phase of the project included the development of the Mala'a system, onboarding banks and FLCs, SME Funds and connecting to Royal Oman Police, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, rolling out enhanced credit reports for individuals and corporates and the launch of Mala'a Credit Score.

Mala'a aims to support boosting the national economy by reinforcing financial inclusion and granting access to credit to all society segments, increasing the financial balance level of the Sultanate of Oman, supporting responsible lending and mitigating the credit risk in Oman.

The centre is also a vital component to accomplishing Oman Vision 2040

priorities and their strategic goals, especially Economic Diversification and Financial Sustainability.

On Mala'a winning this prestigious award, Bassam al Jamali, Mala'a General Manager, said: "Mala'a winning this award is the result of the dedicated efforts carried out by the Mala'a team to position Mala'a as a National Data Bank providing credit and financial information. We are proud of this recognition that adds up to Mala'a's achievements, and we look forward to more in the future. I would also like to thank the Central Bank of Oman and its Board of Governors for their continuous support." Global Business Outlook is a UK-based publication dedicated to covering vital industry sectors.

Egypt inflation rises to 12.1%

CAIRO: Egypt's annual inflation rate hit 12.1 per cent in March, official figures showed on Sunday, as foreign reserves declined by \$4 billion during the same month, according to the central bank.

"The annual headline inflation rate recorded 12.1 per cent for March 2022, compared to 4.8 per cent for the same month last year", the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) said in a statement.

The latest figure marks an increase of more than two per cent compared to the 10 per cent inflation rate recorded in February — already at a near three-year high.

This comes less than three weeks after the Egyptian pound depreciated against the dollar, losing about 17 per cent of its value in one day.

The Arab world's most populous country has been struck by mounting economic pressures since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February caused global commodity price to shoot up.

As the world's largest importer of wheat, Egypt relied on the two countries for 85 per cent of its supply, as well as 73 per cent of its sunflower oil.



A woman holding her baby shops at a vegetable market in Cairo. — Reuters

THE ARAB WORLD'S MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY HAS BEEN STRUCK BY MOUNTING ECONOMIC PRESSURES SINCE RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE IN LATE FEBRUARY CAUSED GLOBAL COMMODITY PRICE TO SHOOT UP

CAPMAS attributed the latest hike to a surge in food prices, specifically an 11 per cent increase in bread and grain prices and a 36.2 per cent increase in the price of

cooking oil.

It comes after the Central Bank of Egypt said on Thursday that foreign reserves saw a \$4 billion decline, registering \$37 billion at the end of March 2022, compared to \$41 billion in February.

It attributed the decline to its mobilisation of foreign reserves "to calm the markets" in the wake of the Ukraine war. Egypt has rolled out a series of measures to mitigate the economic fallout from the conflict, including announcing a \$7 billion relief package to shield society's most vulnerable.

It also announced it was applying for a new loan from the IMF. — AFP

Oman has adequate quantities of wheat

FROM PAGE 13

The FAO food commodity price index rose by 12.6 per cent between February and March, "a giant leap to a new high since it was introduced in 1990", according to the organisation. Publicly listed Omani Flour Mills dispelled fears of a wheat shortage in the markets of the Sultanate of Oman for the current year.

The government has concluded alternative contracts to purchase wheat from India, Australia and Argentina. Oman Flour Mills has around 160,000 tonnes of wheat stockpiled at its siloes at Port Sultan Qaboos, which accounts for around 50 per cent of the country's total consumption of 350,000 tonnes annually.

Eng Al Ameri added: "The company has alternative and reliable supply lines from different countries at the same time, such as India, Argentina and Australia. Also, our stockpile is very strong and there is no fear of shortage of basic materials.

For example, the siloes in Sultan Qaboos Port are all full with around 120,000 tonnes. Also, there are 160,000 tonnes that will reach us soon, which is being shipped to us through our corporate suppliers."



People walk past the headquarters of Central Bank in Moscow. — Reuters

Russia increases its emergency spending fund by \$3.5 billion

MOSCOW: The Russian government said on Sunday it has increased its reserve fund used for emergency spending by 273.4 billion roubles (\$3.52 billion) to ensure economic stability against the backdrop of Western sanctions over Ukraine.

The sanctions, imposed after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 in what Moscow describes as a "special military operation", cut Russia off from the global financial system and supply channels.

Western nations are also moving closer to a complete ban

on energy from Moscow to strip the Kremlin of its biggest source of revenue.

The government has already pledged more than 1 trillion roubles in anti-crisis support to businesses, social payments and to families with children, which will take up all of this year's incoming revenues, so there will be no budget surplus.

"The funds, among other things, will be used to implement measures aimed at ensuring economic stability in the light of external sanctions", the government said in a statement on Sunday. — Reuters



Khazaen attracts two new projects

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, APRIL 10

Khazaen Economic City has signed an agreement with Al Jinaibi International Investment Company for the establishment of a cement products manufacturing plant at a cost of around RO 2 million in the first phase. The facility will come up on a 5,000 sq metres site within the hub.

The agreement was signed on behalf of Khazaen Economic

City by Eng Salem bin Sulaiman al Thuhli, CEO, with while it was signed by Sabah al Jinaibi, CEO of the company.

A second agreement was inked with Muayyad Omair Investment Company for setting up a steel workshop at a cost of RO 1.5 million in the first phase. Set on an area of 7,500 sq metres, the facility will produce 4,000 tonnes of structural steel per month targeted at the local and regional markets. (With inputs from ONA)

63.5 per cent increase in average price of crude in Jan-Feb 2022

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, APRIL 10

The Sultanate of Oman's production of crude oil and oil condensates increased by 8.2 per cent at the end of February 2022 to reach 60.929 million barrels, up from 56.300 million barrels a year earlier, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Crude oil production alone recorded an increase of 11.5 per cent during this period, while oil condensates dipped 2.4 per cent.

The average price of Oman crude oil also increased by 63.5 per cent at the end of February 2022 to reach \$76.7 per barrel, compared to \$46.9 per barrel at the end of February 2021.

Crude exports climbed 18.3 per cent during this period China's share of imports of



Omani crude jumped 21.2 per cent to reach 46.511 million barrels (38.374 million barrels in 2021), while India saw its share drop by 7.6 per cent during this period.

On the other hand, natural gas production (including imports) in the Sultanate of Oman at the end of last February decreased by 4 per cent to reach 7.505 billion cubic metres, compared to 7.819

billion cubic metres last year.

Gas consumption in industrial areas increased by 14 per cent while oil fields consumed 12.6 per cent less oil.

(With inputs from ONA)

Putin's finances can survive a European energy ban

Russia's economy will screech along even if it stops exporting energy to Europe. Sanction-free reserves, higher oil prices and a well-oiled propaganda machine would cushion the blow. That makes President Vladimir Putin's threats to cut the bloc off from gas more credible.

On the face of it, an energy embargo, either imposed by Russia or foisted on Putin by Europe, sounds like a death blow for the country's finances. Its economy is already forecast to contract as much as 15 per cent this year thanks to Western sanctions.

Still, Putin's budget could prove relatively resilient. Around 9 trillion roubles, or \$125 billion, of government revenue came from oil and gas last year. Europe accounted for around 40 per cent of exports by value, implying a hit to Moscow's revenues of up to \$50 billion, or 15 per cent of last year's figure. Then, the budget surplus was \$7 billion.

Yet higher energy prices will help. While a lack of pipelines makes it hard to reroute gas, oil can be shipped elsewhere.

And crude oil and oil products represent three-quarters of Russia's energy export value. Last year, the average oil price was around \$71 per barrel, while today crude trades at around \$108. That implies Russia could cut oil exports by roughly a third without losing revenue.

Of course, an expected 15 per cent GDP decline this year will also hammer revenues and push up the budget deficit. But Putin's wartime propaganda efforts will help.

The Kremlin has used pro-government media to prime the population for tough times, giving it a freer hand to reduce expenditures such as \$20 billion spent on healthcare last year, while ring-fencing the \$49 billion defence budget. Putin could allow the rouble to depreciate. That would boost rouble revenue generated by exports.

Lastly, Putin still has around \$160 billion of reserves that are unhampered by Western sanctions, once you subtract around \$140 billion in gold which Washington is trying to stop being monetised.

Dipping into those and around \$50 billion in budget funds he stashed away could buy time until more exports can be redirected, say to India or China. An energy embargo would hurt Russia, but may not cripple Putin.

That means the Kremlin's warning to cut off the West is no wild threat. And if Europe does block Russian exports, the tragic war is unlikely to end overnight. — Reuters

On the face of it, an energy embargo, either imposed by Russia or foisted on Putin by Europe, sounds like a death blow for the country's finances.



NOT ENOUGH SUPPLY

A vendor waits for customers at a market in the war-torn Yemeni capital Sanaa. The wheat fields of northern Yemen stretch into the distance but they aren't enough to nourish a country where millions go hungry. Already teetering on the edge of famine, war-ravaged Yemen fears a shortage of the staple food ingredient because of a different war – in Ukraine, which is one of the world's major suppliers of the grain. — AFP

The dollar's reserves of strength



GENE FRIEDA

The author, a global strategist at PIMCO, is a senior visiting fellow at the London School of Economics.

ON ITS OWN, THE SANCTIONING OF RUSSIA'S RESERVES WILL LIKELY REINFORCE THE PRIMACY OF THE DOLLAR AS THE BACKBONE OF THE FIAT CURRENCY SYSTEM.

The freezing of much of Russia's official foreign reserves has inevitably led some again to predict the imminent demise of the dollar's "exorbitant privilege" as the world's reserve currency of choice. But we should not write the greenback's obituary just yet.

On its own, the sanctioning of Russia's reserves will likely reinforce the primacy of the dollar as the backbone of the fiat currency system. Only if the United States were regularly to use such financial sanctions as an offensive foreign-policy weapon might a more rapid erosion in the dollar's status occur.

True, in the past four years, a period marked by a US-China trade war and the Covid-19 pandemic, the dollar has accounted for only 40 per cent of new reserve accumulation, compared to 23 per cent for the euro.

The Chinese renminbi's share of new reserves has jumped to 10 per cent, while the Japanese yen and British pound have gained ground as well.

Despite this, it is far from clear that confidence in the dollar is waning.

First, global reserve growth over the past four years was a fraction of the rapid growth seen in the five years before and after the 2008 global financial crisis, reflecting reduced global imbalances.

The dollar's share of reserves has fallen from 73 per cent in 2001 to 59 per cent last year. But most of this decline took place in the 2000s, when reserves surged by \$8.1 trillion (compared to \$2.6 trillion in the last decade).

Second, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) new allocation last year

of \$650 billion in special drawing rights (SDRs, the IMF's reserve asset) artificially deflated the dollar's share of global reserve growth during the pandemic. SDRs are based on a currency basket in which the dollar's share is only 42 per cent, while those of the euro, renminbi, yen and pound are 31 per cent, 11 per cent, 8 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively.

As SDRs accrue principally to advanced economies that never use them, these shares effectively inflate the shares of non-dollar foreign reserves.

Finally, countries with strong security relationships with the US, including the vast majority of states with the largest holdings of foreign-exchange reserves, typically maintain a larger-than-average share of their reserves in dollars. As long as America's Asian and European allies deem US security guarantees to be credible, these countries have little incentive to shift away from the dollar.

Reserve freezes are not new, but the measures against Russia mark the first time that they have been applied to a G-20 country with a high degree of global trade and financial integration.

For foreign investors, reserve freezes that aim to create a financial panic pose an existential threat, in terms of the potential for capital to be either lost or trapped onshore.

The potency of the sanctions imposed on Russia's reserves stemmed not from US actions alone, but rather from the concordant steps taken by Europe and Japan. Their participation ensured de facto near-unanimity, because Chinese banks became reluctant to deal with Russia for fear of being sanctioned in turn.

But for now, the sanctions risk premium on foreign-exchange reserves realistically applies only to countries at high risk of globally coordinated measures, namely China.

For the vast majority of other countries, sanctions risk should remain low. Reserve diversification will continue to make sense, but it is likely to benefit currencies of countries deemed to be "sanctions-remote".

And while the US trade war with China and the freeze of Russia's reserves have again raised fears of an exodus from the dollar, the question is "where to?" Strong network effects underpin the dollar's "exorbitant privilege", and the Russia sanctions have arguably reinforced its anchor status. All things considered, a 60/40 reserve split between the dollar and other currencies looks appropriate.

While the renminbi should continue to benefit from China's strong trade linkages with smaller countries and commodity exporters, its challenge to the dollar is likely to suffer from greater uncertainty regarding the rule of law and the sanctions risk premium.

Larger central banks may be more reluctant to hold renminbi due to Western sanctions risk and the corresponding risk that China would be forced to reimpose capital controls on foreigners. The Chinese currency should therefore remain a fractional share of global reserves.

The euro's share of global reserves should rebound if yields return to positive territory. Recent progress in reducing the risk of a eurozone breakup is the precondition for both higher rates and a larger share in global reserves.

©Project Syndicate, 2022.

UK bets on nuclear power to boost energy independence



ESHE NELSON

The author is a business and economics reporter for The New York Times in London

The British government revealed its plan to increase the country's energy independence as European nations try to quickly reduce energy imports from Russia over the war in Ukraine.

The cornerstone of Britain's plan is an increase to nuclear capacity, with goals to deliver up to eight reactors this decade. Under the energy security plan, the country will aim to increase its capacity to 24 gigawatts of nuclear power by 2050, or one-quarter of estimated electricity demand.

There will also be more oil and gas projects in the North Sea and

an expansion of offshore wind and solar power. The government said it wanted to wean Britain off expensive fossil fuels.

The plan "will reduce our dependence on power sources exposed to volatile international prices we cannot control," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said.

Last month, Britain announced it would phase out imports of Russian oil by the end of the year. Russian gas supplies weren't affected. But prices for wholesale natural gas and to a lesser extent oil, had soared even before Russia attacked Ukraine, impeding industrial production and squeezing household budgets.

In Britain, energy bills jumped 54 per cent this month for most households and were expected to surge again in October because energy prices were still volatile

But the government's plan was met with swift criticism. Industry groups and campaigners said the energy security strategy failed to address the problems households faced now from rising energy costs because it didn't include a plan for increasing energy efficiency — particularly through housing insulation — or new targets for onshore wind.

This was "the perfect opportunity to set out a decade-long plan to insulate people from

volatile energy prices," Adam Scorer, CEO of National Energy Action, a fuel poverty charity, said.

"It is silent on that crucial issue." The government's plan includes an incentive to accelerate the manufacture and use of heat pumps, an alternative to household gas boilers, worth up to 30 million pounds, or \$39 million.

Others denounced the plan to expand oil and gas projects in the North Sea, even as Britain has ambitious climate-change goals enshrined into law. The government said it would support domestic oil and gas in the "nearer term," as it hopes to make 95 per cent of electricity "low carbon" by

2030.

The government's plan is aiming for a fivefold increase of offshore wind capacity by 2030 with expedited planning permissions. But goals for onshore wind were muted amid internal opposition in the governing Conservative Party.

The government said it would consult on developing partnerships with a limited number of communities that were willing to have wind turbines. The plan also included a goal of increasing low-carbon hydrogen production capacity to 10 gigawatts by the end of the decade as part of Britain's efforts to reduce emissions.

— The New York Times

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

Tally
POWER OF SIMPLICITY

TALLY FOR VAT

For Tally Sales, Services or Customization

Contact: Guruprasad +968 79248644, 98753781
Email: guru.prasad@asiasolutions.net
ASIA SOLUTIONS

<https://www.asiasolutions.net>

TallyPrime

MONDAY APRIL 11, 2022 | RAMADHAN 9, 1443 AH

Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.com

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

SIT. WANTED

FINANCE graduate, working in one of the finance company's in Oman with more than 15 years of experience is looking for a job. Contact: 99841436

CIVIL Engineer, B Tech, Male Graduate experienced in the field of construction & site management providing technical expertise & leadership qualities in Construction & Maintenance Projects. Immediate joining & available for interview on any working day. Please contact Aqeel Uz Zama, Email: aqeeljob0129@gmail.com Phone +968 78187050.

INDIAN male graduate Executive Secretary/ Stenography/ Oman DL and Muscat experience available. Contact 79256679.

PREVIOUS Oman experience in Outdoor Sales & Operations looking for suitable job opportunity. Oman Driving Licence. Expected Salary 850/. 00918281058000 igin.tom@gmail.com

21 YEARS of experience in Oman as an Accountant in different industries with 14 years of continuous service in a real estate company. Oman D/L and NOC available. Contact 92583726. Email: georgetvm@live.com

SERVICES

A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketeers.** Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

AUTOCAD/ REVIT ARCH MEP, part/full-time. Contact WhatsApp: 79037728.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

RENT A CAR

Buttercup Rent A Car
AMAZING OFFERS
○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.
All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts.
☎972494490.

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/ monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

FOR RENT

FLATS, 2BHK and 1 BHK in Mumtaz ☎99341138/ 90991079.

FLATS, 2BHK in Ghubra near Indian School. ☎99341138/ 90991079.

SITUATION VACANT
SALES SECRETARY

Graduate with minimum 4 years of similar working experience, preferably at an executive level, aged around 30 years, thoroughly conversant with excel, word, power point and other packages, hardworking and having pleasant disposition, required by renowned Trading Company. Oman experience preferred.

Apply asap / within 5 days to :
venkat@bigllcoman.com / vimal@bigllcoman.com

M M T CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE

MUSCAT: 95605353, 95605454
BARKA: 95893242, 93743308
SOHAR: 96773031, 95347988
FALAJ: 94002341, 95136067
SALALAH: 94575905, 97858656
DUQUM: 97218831, 94002341

ROAD, SEA & AIR TRANSPORT WORLD WIDE

GTC Building, Near Badr Al Sama Hospital, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail: mmtcargo@yahoo.com
Customer Care: 96773031 / 97695454

Sea Cargo 800 Bz/Kg Express Cargo to Kerala 5 to 7 days*

AL KHOORY EQUIPMENT EST.
P.O.Box 545, P.C. 117, Al Wadi Al Kabir Area, Sultanate of Oman

Official distributor of **Schneider Electric**

Stockist & Wholesaler of Low Voltage Switchgear Products and a One Stop Solution for all Switchgear Products and Assembly

Tel: +968 24832474, +968 79474556
E-mail: alkhooory@omantel.net.om • www.alkhooryoman.com

Quality Comes First

Tower Cranes & Passenger Lifts:

- Sales and Rental Services
- Installation
- Maintenance Service
- Breakdown Service
- Spare Parts Supply
- Hoist & Lowering
- Support Fixation
- Dismantling

Steel Fabrication Works

NEW MANARA TECHNICAL SERVICES LLC
Mobile: +968 9853 1975, 9853 1970
E-mail: info@newmanara.com / newmanaratechnical@gmail.com
Website: www.newmanara.com

JOB SEEKING

Indian Male. 16 years working experience in senior position in finance and accounts in Oman. Able to work independently upto finalization, banking, tax matters etc...

GSM: 95392251
Mail ID : regi.lukose@ gmail.com

SITUATION VACANT
Required for Ras Al Hamra Recreation Centre (PDO Club)
SWIMMING POOL LIFEGUARDS/ATTENDANTS (Male & Female) OMANIS ONLY

Qualification & Skills: Accomplished swimmer with recognized Life Saving and First Aid qualifications and certifications. Must be fluent in written & spoken English.

Experience: 2 years working as Life Guard & Pool Attendant.

Job Responsibilities: Supervise swimming activities, children and other weak swimmers and ensure pool and safety guidelines are followed. Must be willing to work shift duties and on weekends.

Note: A swimming test will be conducted to test the candidates swimming and rescue skills
Please email CV to: **oceanint@omantel.net.om**

SITUATION VACANT - OMAN

A well reputed diversified group in Oman is seeking the following positions for their Interior Fit-out division:

SALES MANAGER
5+ years experience in sales/ business development role in interior fitout & office furniture industry with a proven track record for growing sales.

SALES EXECUTIVE
3+ years experience in project sales of commercial furniture/ interior fitout.

INTERIOR DESIGNER
2+ years experience in designing commercial interiors. Well versed in Autocad, Photoshop & 3 D Max.

ASSISTANT PROJECT MANAGER
3+ years experience in Interior fit-out project execution and preferably with Civil Engineering background. The candidate must be familiar with joinery operations and estimation.

ESTIMATOR
5+ years experience in joinery, woodworks, and interior fit-out. Graduate/ Diploma in Engineering

All applicants must be well versed in English, proficient in MS office and have good presentation skills. Applicants are requested to send their CVs with color photograph attached to: **recruitments007@gmail.com**

JOB SEEKING

General Manager. 16 Years Oman Experienced. Projects Executed in ROP, MODES, Government and Private Sectors.

Contact No. : 91123511

VIGAS CARGO
WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR

Transportation, Packing & Cargo Services

- ♦ CARGO SERVICES BY AIR & SEA WORLD WIDE
- ♦ DOOR TO DOOR DELIVERY IN INDIA, INDONESIA & UK
- ♦ PROFESSIONAL PACKERS & MOVERS
- ♦ MUSCAT - DUBAI - MUSCAT REGULAR TRANSPORT

H.O. Ruwi
99851366
92495068

Ghubrah : 93571703
Falaj : 93571704
Store : 93571823
Misfa : 98119561
: 93260956

vigas.cargo@yahoo.com

AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

INDIA • BANGLADESH
NEPAL • SRILANKA • INDONESIA
PHILIPPINES • AFRICA • EUROPE
USA • ALL GCC

TOLL FREE NUMBER
80066766
www.alnamanicargo.com

FREE PICK UP 24/7

Branches : Ruwi, Hamriya, Ghala, Seeth, Barka, Sowaig, Sohar

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

Our Services

- KST Spare Parts
- Car Accessories
- KST Rent a Car

9478 2288

سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

- PIPING SYSTEMS
- VALVES
- DRAINS
- INTERCEPTORS

Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax: 24503566
Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com
Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com

Al Eman Dental Clinic

Flat 22, Floor 2
Abu Zaki Trading Building
Opp. Al Nahda Hospital
Sultan Qaboos Street

Our Mission: To preserve your teeth and smile for a lifetime

د. نورا بركات
أخصائية في الأمراض الجلدية والعلاجات التجميلية

DR. NORA BARAKAT MD, MS
DERMATOLOGY AND AESTHETICS MEDICINE SPECIALIST

CONSULTATION AVAILABLE
SAT TO WED 10AM TO 6PM
THU 9AM TO 2PM

CONTACT US
+968 24451726 - +968 79235354

EMERGENCY NO
+968 94602100

Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suham Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
soharaiddaily@outlook.com

@omanobserver
www.omanobserver.om

Go slow when exercising during Ramadhan



By Kabeer Yousuf
@kabeeryousef

THE HOLY MONTH of Ramadhan inspires believers to be open to refining and purifying one's body and soul for the better. As one also spends nearly 15 hours during the day for fasting and leaning towards lighter meals to break the fast, one can also expect changes in one's physique. Those who do exercises for physical fitness don't have to skip their routine, instead, they can

continue to work out and follow a proper diet to stay fit. Yoga Trainer Ruth Carvalho said that one can actually still do workouts an hour after iftar but rather than doing heavy lifts, one should opt for lighter exercises. She also advised that starting a new exercise routine should not be done during the month but instead, once the holy month is over and regular meals are back. When doing exercises, the trainer shared that "try to opt for more liquids and soft meals compared to heavy meals so that you

will be hydrated enough." The foods that we take in immediately after iftar really matter, shared Mini Padikkal, Clinical Dietician, NMC Ghubra. "Take light foods, mostly fruits and vegetables besides dates, watermelon and lukewarm water. Before beginning any workouts, make sure you have re-hydrated enough", she added. She also concurred that it's better to opt for more cardio workouts than heavyweights. "Whatever you do, go slow. Make sure that you do physical activities

everyday especially if you have been exercising or are used to working out", she shared. "Intense exercise while fasting can lead to reduced muscle mass and muscle strength. However, it is advisable to do medium-intensity workouts during this month. Apart from going to the gym, one can go for a walk, cycle or even do light jogging", adds Carvalho. "Those who are working or sitting for long hours in front of the computer, need to make a change to their routines. Try to avoid sit-

ting at your desk for too long else it will make you lazy and crave food", she noted. The natural tendency is that your body will push back if you try to push yourself to do any kind of strenuous work out as during fasting your immune system is slightly low, especially for those who are not used to fasting. "Keep your mind occupied with your work or some activity that keeps you busy. Always, the focus should be to listen to your body and to act accordingly", she added.

QURAN

VERSE OF THE DAY

Say, "O disbelievers. I do not worship what you worship. Nor do you worship what I worship. Nor do I serve what you serve. Nor do you serve what I serve. You have your way, and I have my way.
(al Kafirun)



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

FATWA

QUESTION:
Is external usage of ointment considered breaking the fast?

ANSWER:
External usage does not affect fasting. Just like bathing during days of Ramadhan is acceptable, in the same context, using external ointments is also permissible.

HADITH

A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Sahl b. Sa'd (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger as saying:

In Paradise there is a gate which is called Rayyan through which only the people who fast would enter on the Day on Resurrection. None else would enter along with them. It would be proclaimed: Where are the people who fast that they should be admitted into it? And when the last of them would enter, it would be closed and no one would enter it.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



naimoo811
Muscat, Oman

Follow



CULTURE OF WEAVING



nicolepamp
Ad Dimaniyat Islands

Follow



GREEN PARADISE



sivaprakashyadav
Salalah, Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman

Follow



TIPTOE

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.



AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

Jennifer Lopez announces engagement to Ben Affleck (again)



SINGER AND ACTRESS Jennifer Lopez has announced her engagement to Ben Affleck, 18 years after they ended their relationship for the first time.

The 52-year-old posted video of herself appearing emotional and admiring a green ring in her newsletter, "On The JLo." Her representatives then confirmed the engagement announcement to People magazine.

US media reported that the ring was an emerald-cut pale green diamond.

"Bennifer" -- the couple's nickname from their first highly publicised relationship -- set the Internet alight last year when photos of them together again began circulating.

The pair first met on the set of the widely panned movie "Gigli" in 2002. They postponed their planned 2003 nuptials, then announced their relationship was over in early 2004.

It will be the fourth marriage for Lopez and the second for actor and director Affleck, who is 49.

Lopez was previously married to actor Ojani Noa, dancer Cris Judd and singer Marc Anthony, with whom she shares 14-year-old twins Max and Emme.

Affleck was married to actress Jennifer Garner and they are the parents of Violet, 16, Seraphina, 13, and Samuel, 10.

Lopez discussed her renewed relationship with Affleck in an interview with People in February.

"It's a beautiful love story that we got a second chance," she said. — **AFP**

ART

Life and work of New York artist Basquiat showcased by sisters



THE PERSONAL and professional life of American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat is being shared in a new experience titled, Jean-Michel Basquiat: King Pleasure in New York City.

Over 200 never-before or rarely seen paintings, drawings, ephemera and artifacts by Basquiat, who died of a drug overdose at age 27 in 1988, fill the space at the landmark Starrett-Lehigh building. Basquiat's sisters, Jeanine Heriveaux and Lisane Basquiat, created the exhibit to showcase Jean-Michel, his work and the context of where he came from and how he lived.

"We wanted to make sure that we had -- the passion that we're feeling for the project and for him and the love that we have for him," said Jeanine Heriveaux. "One of the things that we wanted to do was to ensure that people who appreciate Jean-Michel's art had a fully immersive experience," added Lisane Basquiat.

It took the sisters 18-19 months to fully realise the space that was created with ISG Productions. The pair spent hours pouring through his work. The experience starts with "1960 -- Introduction", the year he was born where his self-portrait is found and then transitions to "Kings County" the location where the family grew up in Brooklyn. Other environments include "World Famous" and "Ideal" that showcases his studio and track the different periods of his life.

A replica of NYC night-

club Palladium's VIP -- Michael Todd Room, was also constructed to showcase the two paintings, "Nu-Nile" and "Untitled", his very strong expression of the world with three galleries in the "SoHo" section that use titles of his work "Royalty," "Those Who Dress Better" and "The Irony of a Negro Policeman." In 2017 Jean-Michel's vibrant, untitled 1982 portrait sold at auction by Sotheby's for \$110.5 million. At that time, it was the second-highest price ever for a work of contemporary art.

All of the items displayed are owned by the estate, which the family says they will never sell. The experience will open on Saturday. — **Reuters**

AUCTION

Rodin 'Thinker' auction expected to reach up to 14 million euros



A CAST OF "The Thinker" by Auguste Rodin will be auctioned in Paris on June 30, expected to reach between 9 and 14 million euros (\$10-\$15 million), Christie's said on Thursday.

One of the most iconic works of art in the world, it features a man resting his chin on his hand and was originally conceived as a representation of Italian author Dante.

Around 40 copies are in existence -- many of them made after the artist's death in 1917.

The copy on sale in Paris, with black and brown patina, was part of a private Parisian collection and was made in 1928 by the Alexis Rudier foundry that cast several of Rodin's most famous bronzes.

"The Thinker" was initially conceived as a much smaller sculpture in the 1880s, part of Rodin's "Gates of

Hell" series based on Dante's "The Divine Comedy".

It was later enlarged and became a standalone piece.

The French state commissioned 26 copies of the statue between 1919 and 1969, and there have been long-running legal battles over other versions of the statue.

As well as copies at the Rodin Museum and his grave just outside Paris, some of the most valuable are found at Columbia University in New York, the Legion of Honor in San Francisco and the Ca'Pesaro museum in Venice.

The statue being auctioned at Christie's will go on tour from Friday, showing in New York and Hong Kong before being presented in Paris from June 23.

The record for a Rodin "Thinker" was set at a Sotheby's auction in New York in 2013, when one sold for \$15.2 million. — **AFP**



Coffee hunting in Oman's old villages

By Yeru Ebu
Insta: @yru_here

Coffee is life. If you subscribe to this mantra then this article is definitely for you as we are introducing you not just on a historical drive around Oman but also on a coffee hunting adventure with a purpose.

If there's one trend sweeping the nation today, it's definitely the coffee trend. Coffee joints are popping up everywhere from next to your favourite roadside petrol station, to your favourite mall even in remote villages far deep into the mountain or progressive coastal villages.

In Muscat, some of the hangout hot spots have four or five coffee shops to choose from and we are not talking about the 200 baisa coffee joints but the themed ones some with big branding and a big social media to boot.

For this coffee hunting adventure, we are recommending five different locations all within a 2-hour drive from the capital. These coffee shops are also located in historic spots so you will not only be going for coffee but also learning something about the place and discovering Oman's beautiful villages.



THE COFFEE SHOP OF BAIT AL SABAH

To get here, you would have to take the long road to enjoy the full experience. Drive through lush gardens under the shade of towering date palms. Pass through the only Roman-inspired aqueduct where the waters from Falaj Al Khatmain flow. Enter the old village of Birkat Al Mouz and drive through a narrow road to reach the entrance of Bait Al Sabah. From here, climb through the renovated steps of the house by the gate towards the first floor. Here you will find the Bait Al Sabah coffee shop ready to serve you their interesting selection of hot, frappe and artisanal coffee. After getting your order, you can either roam around or head to the second floor where you will have a good view of the surrounding village and the tower ruins in the distance. This can serve as your starting point for a 15-minute hike to the tower that overlooks the village. Talk to a villager to gain more knowledge about the place. Otherwise, start your own research. The key takeaway is that Birkat Al Mouz is also known as the city-state of seven towers. To spot those towers from the top is a great way to pass your time.

KAWA KAVA AT THE FOOT OF AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR

The name origin remains a mystery to us but it's definitely a good conversation starter with the owner.

Kawa Kava is located at the foot of Al Jabal Al



Akhdhar just across the old mosque that has become an iconic pitstop for exploring Birkat Al Mouz. Unlike Bait Al Sabah, Kawa Kava is chicer and has expanded to include a wide sitting area inside. This is often a good stopover for those going to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. They offer artisanal coffee but other than the typical frappe, hot and black coffee, they also offer some nice cookies and interesting desserts. They also have a few books available on the property for those wanting to catch up on some reading while passing time as others take a much-needed loo break. We love how this coffee joint used some wood elements in its decors.

ANAT CAFE BY NIZWA'S OLD VILLAGE

Their production area is a small room carved out on the wall but whatever is missing, they make for an amazing space on top of the wall. There are multiple sitting areas to choose from. You can either sit on chairs scattered along the side of the alley or in the main coffee room that overlooks the long walkway on top of the wall. The walkway is a good two-minute walk from end to end and one side is a good view of a heritage inn with its date palms-dominated gar-



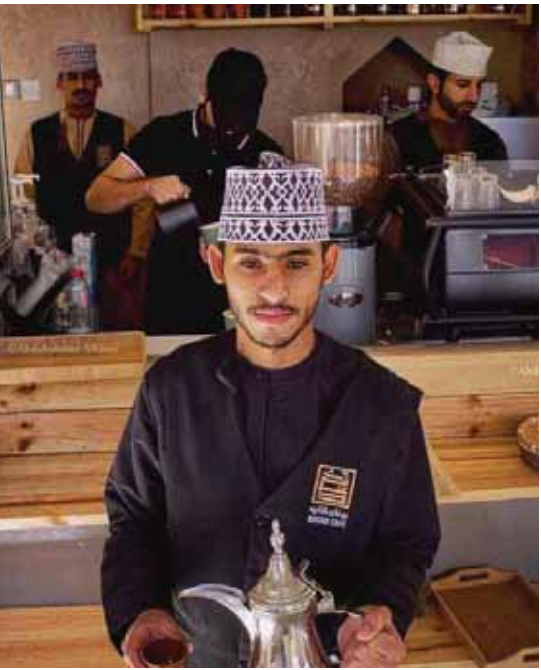
den while the other is the sprawling old city where some of the houses are still in shambles. There are also seats available on the balcony by the wall and from the looks of it, the owners are expanding and we may soon see an even bigger coffee production area. They have about 20-selection of speciality coffee and a limited amount of sweets. If you're coming here on a weekend, be ready for some queue as this place has become popular and may soon become a tourist trap because of its historical and Instagram-worthy sections.

KADM OF BAHLA SOUQ

Similarly, the coffee production area and the



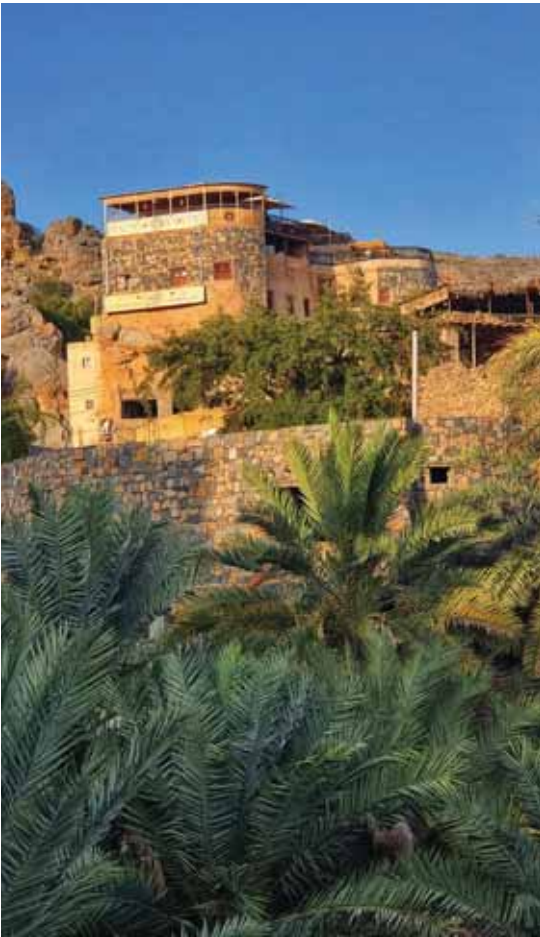
place where you order your coffee are quite small. But once you finish your order and be patient, you will be ushered into some of the most interesting majlis in this part of Bahla. Kadm boasts 6 different themed rooms that you can choose from. If you're in the mood for Arabic, Greek, or Artsy room, you may have to book it in advance but get over the small main coffee area and you will have an amazing experience walking around the souq. Located opposite the historic Bahla Fort, Kadm offers around 15 artisanal coffees and a few sweets to go with it. I will recommend taking your coffee to go as there are quite a lot of things to see if you visit when the souq is open. Check out the old trees scattered across the souq. Talk to a local and you can inquire about their fascinating stories. Visit a small antique shop cum museum just a few steps away from Kadm. You won't find a more informative place to spend an afternoon than by this coffee joint in Bahla.



ROGAN CAFE AT THE GARDENS OF MISFAT

Just a stone's throw away from Hissen Al Misfat is Rogan Cafe — a chic coffee shop that mixes the old with the new located right at the edge of Misfat

Al Abriyeen's garden. There are many things that we find impressive about this coffee shop. Yes, typical of these old village cafes, it also has a very small and compact production area but there are several levels to choose from for your seat all facing the garden or the houses of the old village. They have about 20 artisanal coffees to choose from and for us, the true experience is visiting before it rains as the location is perfect for a hot cup of coffee while the rain is hammering outside and the gardens. Both Halwa and Rogan Cafe offer easy access to the renovated old village. From these coffee shops, you can walk around and see the old pit where the village used to cook their shuwa. There are also a few heritage inns you can choose from to stay for the night. My recommendation, if you're visiting Misfat Al Abriyeen, have your drink to go and bring it along as you take a hike along one of Oman's most scenic and green hiking alleys.



HALWA COFFEE OF MISFAT AL ABRUYEEN

It's hard to miss Halwa Coffee. After taking the scenic drive to Misfat Al Abriyeen, once you are at the parking area and you look up, then you'll definitely know where to go. It is the highest point in this beautiful, old village. But you have to prepare for 50 or so steps to get to the top. Halwa Coffee is located at the very top of Hissen Al Misfat or the castle of Al Misfat offering a sweeping view of this Unesco-awarded village. They have an amazing selection of coffees but their bestseller is the halwa coffee where you would have to ask the barista how it came to be. After several visits here, we realised we love having their traditional Omani coffee. Word of caution, this place can be packed even on regular days so parking spaces can be difficult to find. If you're going on a weekend, be ready for a long queue but what we love about this place is that watching the sunset from here is one of the best experiences you can have in Oman.