

Crackdown on tampering Omani attire

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A wave of foreign imitations and alternative styles has prompted Oman to take tough action to preserve its unique national dress, threatening hefty fines on those who tamper with the traditional dress of Omani men. The traditional attire includes the kummah (cap) and dishdasha, the long, elegant robe.

Omani men wear the embroidered brimless kummah or a turban-style headdress, known as mussar, to complete their outfit. The striking ensemble is a distinctive part of life in Oman.

Recently, H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), issued Ministerial Decision No 21/2022 specifying a standard for the kummah and stating that a fine will be awarded to those who breach the specification.

Article 1 of the decision states that 'Standard Specification No OS1646/2021' is set as the obligatory criteria for making Omani kummahs.

Article 2 stipulates a fine of RO1,000 to violators of the provisions of the decision and doubles the fine in case of repetition



An Omani tailor displays a dishdasha at a shop in Muscat on January 10, 2022 (AFP)

of the offence.

Article 3 states that the decision will be enforced from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

The decision is intended to safeguard the kummah industry.

According to MoCIIP, the design of the dishdasha is based on 'certain criteria'. It stipulated that it should be made mostly of cotton with embroidery only on the collar, front slit and cuffs. "The fabric must be of a single colour,"

a ministry official told AFP, adding that white or neutral colours were preferred.

A person or manufacturer caught violating the specifications will be fined RO1,000 or double that in the case of a re-

peat violation.

While similar ankle-length robes are worn by men in neighbouring countries, Oman's dishdasha is distinguished by its subtle embroidery around the neckline (mahar), which contin-

ues down a front central slit (shaq) over the chest.

'Personal freedom'

Some respondents in Muscat observed that while the recent announcement can be considered an infringement on personal freedom, they understood the need to preserve national identity. "The decision may be good to set certain standards but in-

robe and larger patterns and embroidery," the 35-year-old told AFP.

"We have also seen different colours of dishdasha, instead of the traditional white, brown or black," he said, adding that Omani society, especially the older generation, is averse to this kind of change.

The effort to preserve Omani culture in the face of evolving

Among the most notable changes are the shortening of the robe and larger patterns and embroidery. We have also seen different colours of dishdasha, instead of the traditional white, brown or black

NABEGH AL QARNI

terferes with personal freedom," said Ouahib al Jadidi, a 36-year-old entrepreneur. "There are men who want to wear dishdashas that match their own tastes, but this ruling will prevent them from doing so."

Nabegh al Qarni, who owns a store that sells dishdashas and accessories for men, said modifications to the traditional dress had become noticeable.

"Among the most notable changes are the shortening of the

tastes comes as the country grapples with social and economic change, introducing measures to attract foreign investment as it attempts to reduce its reliance on oil.

These have included developing its tourism industry, as well as issuing long-term residence permits for foreigners - who make up 40 per cent of its 4.5mn population - while reserving certain jobs for citizens. (With inputs from AFP)

RAJEH WINS AL MAKTOUM CHALLENGE CUP



Owned by Basil bin Masoud al Kasbi, Rajeh made the Omani equestrian fraternity proud by winning the Al Maktoum Challenge Cup at the 22nd Dubai World Cup Carnival on Monday. Rajeh, jockeyed by Antonio Friso and trained by Mosbeh al Muhairi, won in the category of purebred Arabian horses (Supplied photo)

4,352 violations of Marine Fishing Law in 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As many as 4,352 violations of the Marine Fishing Law and Protection of Living Aquatic Resources were registered in the sultanate in 2021, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR).

An MAFWR official said that specialists in the ministry arrested 378 expatriates.

"Among the total number of violations, 2,834 were for violating fishing licensing regulations, 455 cases of use of prohibited fishing methods and possession of unauthorised equipment, 80 violations of fishing in prohibited areas and time, 266 cases of employment of unlicensed expatriate workers, 373 instances of non-compliance with the placement of number plates on boats and ships, ten commercial fishing violations and 334 other violations," he added.

According to the official, 3,225 pieces of equipment were seized, including 45 boats, 66 engines, 2,345 fishing nets and 245 trapping cages. The specialists also seized more than 9,524kg of fish and other marine resources that were caught and traded during prohibited seasons in 2021.

The official added that the ministry organises monitoring campaigns in cooperation with



(Supplied photo)

the relevant authorities, such as the Coast Guard of the Royal Oman Police, the Royal Navy of Oman, the Maritime Security Centre and the Ministry of Labour at all fishing sites.

Eng Tariq bin Darwish al Alawi, director of the Fisheries Control and Licensing Department in MAFWR, said, "The ministry has installed automatic tracking devices for fishing boats and vessels."

He explained that the ministry's work includes monitoring fishing boats, coastal and commercial activities, selling live aquatic resources in local mar-

kets, controlling fish exports through land, sea and airports and monitoring commercial fishing fleet through an electronic tracking system linked to satellites.

He added, "The ministry's Fisheries Control Operations Room also uses modern technology and a remote sensing system to monitor the movement of commercial and coastal fishing vessels."

The official added that the ministry registered 4,298 violations of the Marine Fishing Law and Protection of Living Aquatic Resources in 2020.

MoL, RGO announce recruitment drive for Sultan's Armed Forces

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL), in coordination with Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), announced new job opportunities on Monday as part of an overall recruitment plan of Sultan's Armed Forces.

An MoL statement said, "The Ministry of Labour, in coordination with Royal Guard of Oman, is pleased to announce the opening of recruitment of citizens (males) holding a General Education Diploma or equivalent as new re-

cruits for the year 2022.

'Royal Guard of Oman will start receiving applications from jobseekers who meet the conditions of recruitment and want to join the Sultan's Armed Forces starting February 8 to February 12.'

According to RGO, conditions of recruitment include Omani nationality of applicants (males only) and completion of General Education Diploma (12th grade).

Details of the recruitment drive are available at taj.nce.gov.om

Muscat-based Indian writer chronicles BPL Group

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat-based Indian writer Rajan V Kokkuri's fourth novel - titled *Born to Dream* - will be available on Amazon starting February 12. The book will also be available in Kindle and Google Books. Hardcopies are currently being shipped by order to readers.

The novel narrates the story of BPL Group and the growth of the company to become a world-class Indian consumer electronics brand detailed in 393 pages.



(Supplied photo)

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Kokkuri said, "*Born to Dream* is about the founder of BPL, TPG Nambiar and two other outstanding contributors to the business, KPR Nambiar and MA Uppal."

For the book, Kokkuri spoke with 122 former and current BPL employees to collect anecdotes and articles.

The book opens with an emotional account of TPG Nambiar - titled *Closer to Heart*. *Born to Dream* tells the story of the three pillars of the company who set out on a rail journey from Bom-

bay to Palakkad in 1963 to start BPL's first plant, and how the business grew to become one of the leading electronic corporations in India.

Kokkuri's three earlier books are titled *I remain forever yours*, which is also available as an audio book, *My Precious Dreams* and *The Invisible Love*.

A fan of Ayn Rand, Kokkuri said, "The habit of reading is dying. This is happening due to long working hours, stress, need for immediate entertainment and excessive usage of gadgets."



Thousands queue for jabs daily

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Almost 3,000 people turned up for the ongoing vaccination campaign (including the booster dose) at the old Muscat Airport building in Seeb on Monday. Long queues snaked down the parking areas till the entrance of what was once the Departure Area. There were as many as ten queues of mostly expatriates - Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshi, Nepalis, Sri Lankans, Egyptians and Filipinos among others.

Asif Hamdan, a Pakistani national, said, "I have been waiting for this opportunity for long. I failed to register two times and

There has been a good response and we are aiming to vaccinate as many people as possible

OFFICIAL AT SEEB VACCINATION CENTRE

luckily I got my slot today. I don't mind that it is crowded and I'm fine with standing in the sun but I will not miss getting vaccinated; even if I'm late for work."

However, the process at the vaccination centre was fast and well-organised. Volunteers from the Ministry of Health and Royal Oman Police were deputed at the airport premises for assistance. Women, families and senior citizens were given priority

over others.

A senior official in the registration desk at the vaccination centre said, "There has been a good response and we are aiming to vaccinate as many people as possible. On Thursday, we had almost 4,000 people and yesterday (Sunday), we recorded almost 3,500. Registration opens online on Thursdays and we ask all to stay alert and register at the earliest."

COVID-19 UPDATE

Hospitalisations cross 400



Muscat - The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Monday announced 2,401 new infections registered in a 24-hour period on Monday, taking the total number of COVID-19 cases registered in Oman to 354,597. Eight deaths were reported in this period. 'The total number of COVID-19 related deaths reported in the country now stands at 4,180,' an MoH statement said. The ministry added that 2,355 new cases have recovered, accounting for a total of 328,215 recoveries. 'There were 103 new hospitalisations in the past 24 hours. The total number of COVID-19 patients currently in health institutions now is 402, including 63 in intensive care units,' it stated.

Blood stocks to run dry in few days; MoH urges donations



Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to support patients with cancer, The Royal Hospital launched a blood donation campaign on Monday.

An official of The Royal Hospital said the campaign to donate blood for cancer patients coincides with the Gulf Cancer Awareness Week.

On Monday, the Ministry of Health (MoH) appealed for urgent blood donations at the Central Blood Bank in Bausher due to an acute shortage in all blood types.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ahmed bin Hamad al Kharusi, who has donated blood 177 times, said, "Children with cancer need a lot of blood and platelets. We must support them. Humans are the only source of blood donation."

According to Kharusi, blood banks are suffering from a severe shortage, especially with the spread of COVID-19.

He said that blood banks in all wilayats of the sultanate currently need blood due to the pandemic.

"These banks need about a

thousand units of blood every week," Kharusi said.

During the pandemic, Kharusi has so far been involved in 17 blood donation campaigns in several wilayats conducted in co-operation with voluntary teams.

He informed that stocks of some blood types will run out in a few days at the Department of Blood Banks Services.

"Stocks of AB+ blood will be

The Royal Hospital started a blood donation drive to support patients with cancer on Monday

over in two days, AB in three days, A+ in five days, O+ in three days, AB- and B- in less than one day, O- in two days, while A- will get over in a day," said Kharusi.

People can donate blood from Saturday to Thursday, between 8am and 7pm, and on Friday from 3pm to 7pm. 'To book an appointment for donation, send the word 'appointment' via WhatsApp at 94555648,' MoH said.

ASMED launches Jahiziayh



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has launched a programme called Jahiziayh to support and finance small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

An official from ASMED said, "The programme targets job-seekers who wish to establish SMEs and startups. The programme is mandatory to obtain financing and incubation services and to obtain land with usufruct rights to establish projects."

According to the official, the training programme aims to

spread the culture of entrepreneurship and develop the capabilities of target groups in all governorates of the sultanate. The programme will last for three weeks and target about 150 people.

He explained, "The authority has set conditions for participation in the programme, including the participant must be an Omani national, have a project idea ready for implementation, and attend the full training course. The participant must also prepare a preliminary file on the project idea and pass the initial evaluation to participate in the programme."

The last date to register for the programme is February 14.

According to the ASMED official, the number of Omanis working in SMEs, who were registered with the authority until December 2021, was 69,594, and the contribution of SMEs in exports until the end of September 2020 had amounted to around RO2.15mn.

"The authority is working on developing SMEs during this year and launching many initiatives such as incubating around 50 new institutions, launching 60 new Sanad service centres and adding around 40 new services," said the official.

WEATHER WATCH

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	22	15
Doha	22	13
Kuwait City	21	11
Manama	20	14
Muscat	24	16
Riyadh	21	8

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	5.27am
Sunrise	6.44am
Duhr	12.26pm
Asr	3.39pm
Maghrib	6.03pm
Isha	7.15pm

Tender Notice

Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), announces following E-Tenders for 2022:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tender bids	Tender Price
04/2022	Renewal of F5 Devices Subscription and Support for One year	17 Feb 2022	03 Mar 2022	25 RO
05/2022	Supply of Computers Equipment with Accessories	17 Feb 2022	03 Mar 2022	25 RO

Interested companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender document from the E-Tendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. The Vendors must provide **Electronic Bank Guarantee** issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (2%) of the Tender value valid for (120) days on website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> and addressed to Public Authority for Social Insurance.

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender inquiry : All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at E-Tendering system (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

2. E-Tendering system inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: Tel : +968 24402200 , E-mail : etenderhd@ita.gov.om

PASI is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other tender that may be received

PASI
With you .. For You

www.pasi.gov.om | [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/PASI) | [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/PASI) | [TaminatOman](https://www.taminatoman.gov.om) | Contact us 800 77 600



Mwasalat wins UITP award

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mwasalat won an award from the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) during the MENA Transport Congress and Exhibition held in Dubai from February 6-8.

In a statement, Mwasalat said the award comes in recognition of its role in encouraging women and families to use public transportation by promoting priority seating in buses.

"The initiative contributed to



increasing the percentage of female passengers in public transport.'

In December 2021 Mwasalat launched a smart transport system with an aim to improve the efficiency of the public transport network in the sultanate.

The national transport company carried 760,000 passengers in its bus services in the first six months of 2021, ensuring commitment to COVID-19 precautionary measures.

"The number of Omani employees in Mwasalat has reached 1,412 - an Omanisation rate of 90 per cent," it said in a statement.

MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,132.69
BSE Sensex	57,621.19

FOREX RATES
(RO1 equals)

Indian Rs	194.05
Pakistani Rs	453.25
Bangladeshi Taka	223.28
Philippine Peso	133.87
Sri Lankan Rs	526.88

*Rates as on February 07
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Abu Dhabi Ports closes AED4bn issuance

Abu Dhabi Ports Group (AD Ports), one of the UAE's leading integrated ports, logistics and industrial zone operators, Monday announced the listing of its shares on the main market of the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX). Trading is set to begin today under the ticker symbol "ADPORTS".

Ahead of the listing, AD Ports Group raised new capital through a primary issuance. The AED4bn of cash proceeds from this primary issuance will be used to fund the company's organic and inorganic growth plans, allowing the company to accelerate its local and international expansion plans.

ADQ, an Abu Dhabi-based investment and holding company, remains a majority shareholder with a 75.44 per cent stake in the listed entity.

Phase 1 of Barka Desalination IPO oversubscribed 4.8 times

Phase 2 of Barka Desalination Company's IPO for retail investors opens today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Barka Desalination Company (BDC) on Monday announced the successful closing of the phase 1 of its initial public offering (IPO) for the listing on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

Based on the price discovery mechanism completed through book-building process by large and institutional investors, the allotment price for shares has been determined at 145bz at the highest end of the price range of 115bz to 145bz per share.

The first phase of BDC's IPO, being managed by Bank Muscat, received a strong response with an oversubscription of 4.83 times of the phase 1 offer shares.

The investors included a cross-section of Oman's leading corporates, banks, insurance companies, asset management companies, sovereign entities, pension funds, as well as high net worth individuals. As anchor investors to the IPO, each of National Power and Water Company (an investment arm of Bahwan Engineering Group), and Bank Muscat had provided commitments to invest up to 10 per cent of the IPO at 145bz per



share.

A high number of bids submitted by investors also came at the 145bz per share, the top end of the price range. The interest from institutional and large investors demonstrates the strong interest in this offering from the investor community in Oman as an attractive offering.

Phase 2 of the IPO, where shares would be offered to retail

investors at the price of 145bz, would open for subscription from February 8 to February 14.

As per the company's prospectus, the IPO investors are expected to receive first dividend of 6bz per share in April 2022. Further, BDC is expected to declare semi-annual dividends of 6bz per share in April and October every year.

As per the prospectus, the

IPO investors could expect a stable annual dividend yield of 8.4 per cent on issue price of 145bz (excluding the 2bz issue expenses) paid through two dividend payments each year.

Earlier, the IPO received positive coverage from the leading brokerages in Oman, including Ubhar Capital and United Securities with a recommendation to 'subscribe' to the IPO.

In a press statement, Patrick Thienpont, CEO of BDC, said, "We are extremely pleased with the success of Phase 1 of the IPO, which is a positive indication of the confidence in the industry and BDC. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all investors who have made Phase 1 process a success. Wide and strong participation in the Phase 1 of the IPO is in line with our expectations and endorses the response we received during our investor meetings."

Speaking about Phase 2 for retail investors, he said, "Retail investors now have the advantage to see the strong response from the large investors and can now apply to become part of the success story of Barka Desalination and earn average yearly dividend yield of 8.4 per cent (excluding the 2bz issue expenses) and get the first dividend in month of April 2022."

Phase 2 offer to the retail investors will be through the process of E-IPO aimed at providing investors with the convenience to apply using mobile banking or internet banking channels of collection agents. Investors may approach any of the collection agents for the IPO to seek further clarifications to their questions.

Bank Muscat is the financial advisor and sole issue manager for the IPO transaction. BDC has also appointed the largest ever collection syndicate for any IPO in Oman consisting of Ahlibank, BankDhofar, Bank Muscat, Oman Arab Bank, Sohar International Bank, Ubhar Capital and United Securities.

Mining activities start at new copper-gold project in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mining activities have started at Al Hadeetha Resources Company's Al Wash-hi-Majaza copper-gold project in Oman, the project's primary contractor Alara Resources announced on Monday.

Al Wash-hi-Majaza copper-gold project is 51 per cent-owned by Alara Resources, an Australia-based precious and base metals explorer and developer which has projects in Oman and Saudi Arabia.

A formal ceremony celebrating this watershed moment in the development of the copper-gold project was attended by board members and senior management of Alara, Al Hadeetha Resources and other companies associated with the project.

According to a statement issued by Alara, the initial mining activities underway comprise pre-stripping of waste from the first stage of Al Wash-hi-Majaza. Pre-stripping will continue through the first quarter of calendar 2022.

Ore mining is projected to commence during the June 2022 quarter, with consistent ore recovery expected to commence in



the last quarter of calendar 2022, the company said.

Al Hadeetha Resources has prepared a pre-strip schedule, which it plans to deliver over a ten-month period, commencing February 2022 and concluding November 2022. The latter has been premised on an assumed plant commissioning date and forecast ore requirements for its first three months' operation.

"The quantity of material mined over the ten-month pre-stripping period is forecast to be 4.27MT. Over the first three months of this period, the projected total mining quantity is 260KT. During this period, 15.6KT of ore is expected to be mined," Alara said.

A new mining fleet has arrived at the project and is currently being commissioned. Alara Resources expects this equipment to be operational shortly, opening the way to ramp up the pace of pre-stripping and other development activities at the site.

Alara's managing director Atmavireswar Sthapak said, "We are thrilled with the continued good progress being made in the development of the Oman-based Al Wash-hi-Majaza copper project. With initial mining activities, including pre-stripping of waste material, now underway, the project is just months away from becoming an ore-producing mine. An added bonus is that Alara Resources LLC, an Alara

Wellbeing at Work Summit to be held from February 21

Muscat - The sixth edition of Wellbeing at Work Summit Middle East will take place during February 21-23 both in-person in Dubai and available virtually across the region.

The three-day festival will attract senior-level HR, reward, wellness, benefit and business leaders from across the region who want to take their health and wellbeing strategies to the next level and make it a priority in their organisations.

The Wellbeing at Work Summit Middle East takes place in-person in Dubai in a safe environment and delivers strategic direction, advice and inspiration from employers and experts to help you create a more compassionate corporate culture that delivers results.

The design and implementation of a holistic wellbeing and mental health programme that delivers healthy outcomes and a more productive organisation is paramount right now. Over 40 expert speakers and leaders from across the world will take to the stage including Kerry Adler, CEO from SkyPower Global; Melissa Salibi, chief human resources officer from Kempinski Hotels; global wellness specialist Martin R Goldmann, CEO and founder of ASPA International from Portugal; Dr Debbie Kristiansen, GM at Bahrain IECC from ASM Global; Paula Leech, human resources director ME&A at Microsoft; Rohit Manucha, chief people officer at Aujan Group and Belgin Ertam, vice president - HR, Middle East North Africa & Turkey at GE.

In addition to expert content, attendees will be provided with invaluable leadership round-tables on specific areas of delivering a successful workplace wellbeing strategy, up to the minute data and case studies from the world's leading employers and entertainment throughout the three-day festival.

Chris Cummings, CEO of Sonas Group, the organiser of the summit, said, "Whilst health and wellbeing in the workplace was rising in importance in recent years, 2022 is the year when every organisation have to prioritise the health of their employees.

Companies who want to build back successfully must prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of their people and the Wellbeing at Work Summit provides the tools, advice and information business leaders need to achieve this effectively."

The Wellbeing at Work Summits are annual conferences organised by Sonas Group. For further information, contact Sarah Walker, VP EMEA, Wellbeing at Work - Sarah.Walker@wellbeingatwork.world.

Muscat Daily is the media partner of the summit. To get a 25 per cent discount, use offer code MUSCAT25 and visit <https://wellbeingatwork.world/summit/wellbeing-work-summit-middle-east-2022/#Tickets>.



Companies must prioritise mental health and wellbeing of their people

CHRIS CUMMINGS

new

Move over mayo!

PERinaise has arrived!

Distributed by

Please contact
+968 22060236/237

UAE income tax could affect private corporates, Fitch says

London, UK - The recently announced mid-2023 introduction of the Federal Corporate Tax in the UAE could have uneven credit implications on rated corporates, with privately owned corporates and government-related entities (GREs) rated on a bottom-up basis most affected, Fitch Ratings said.

Many details have not been made public yet and the potential impact on individual ratings will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and communicated to the market in due course, Fitch said in a press statement.

Fitch differentiates the likely credit impact of the tax introduction depending on the type of corporate and splits Fitch-rated issuers into three broad groups: (a) GREs rated on a top-down basis, (b) GREs rated on a bottom-up basis and onshore companies rated on a standalone basis, and (c) offshore entities in free zones.

For GREs rated on top-down basis, Fitch said the corporate tax will not affect its expectations of state support and links with the government, and therefore the ratings agency expect limited risk of pressure on those ratings.

'UAE's GREs rated on a bottom-up basis and onshore privately owned companies rated as standalone entities are likely to be most affected by the tax introduction,' Fitch added.

The impact on individual credit profiles will be determined by a number of factors, including issuers' ability to pass on increased costs and to mitigate the impact of income tax on cash flows, an individual issuer's rat-



ing headroom and their financial flexibility, as well as sector and business profile characteristics.

Additionally, the proposed UEA tax rules do not differentiate tax rates for entities with local and foreign ownership, unlike rules in some other GCC countries, Fitch noted.

'We expect offshore entities located in the UAE's free zones to continue to benefit from tax incentives, potentially increasing the attraction and benefits of operating in such locations. However, further guidance for application of the new tax brackets for multinational corporations is yet to be announced in the UAE,' the ratings agency said.

It added that nearly 85 per cent of Fitch-rated UAE corporate issuers currently have 'stable' outlooks.

'Many standalone rated is-

suers continue to recover from the volatile market conditions in 2021. We will assess any additional pressures from the corporate income tax introduction in conjunction with the impact of high input cost inflation and supply chain bottlenecks. Furthermore, UAE corporates continue to incur non-tax-related expenses, such as municipality and other government-related fees,' Fitch said.

Most GCC countries have adopted income tax regimens for corporates. Saudi entities pay corporate tax rates ranging from 5 per cent to 20 per cent on net adjustable income, depending on the percentage of foreign ownership, in addition to a 2.5 per cent Zakat rate.

Oman's corporate tax rate is 15 per cent, which does not differentiate between companies

with local and foreign ownership.

The UAE introduced a standard value-added tax of 5 per cent in line with some GCC nations in 2018. Furthermore, the Emirates eased foreign ownership restrictions to 100 per cent from 49 per cent for certain sectors in the mainland, which continues to test the effectiveness of the free zone framework.

'We understand the new tax will not cover natural-resource companies.

The new regulation might impose an additional administrative burden on corporates due to the need to set up reporting processes, although we expect this to be largely one-off. New rules could also potentially reduce the competitiveness of the corporate tax environment in the country, as in other economies,' Fitch concluded.

Toshiba unveils new plan to split into two companies

Tokyo, Japan - Japan's Toshiba on Monday announced plans to split into two companies, revising a controversial proposal to divide into three following a tumultuous period for the storied industrial conglomerate.

The group said it plans to spin off its device segment, including its semiconductor business, in a bid to speed up decision-making and boost stock performance.

Shareholders, who have clashed with management on the best way forward for the troubled company, must still approve the proposal in a vote expected in March. The original spin-off plan faced stiff opposition from some key investors.

The firm also said it will unload its stake in air-conditioning business Toshiba Carrier and seek to sell its elevator and lighting units.

"We believe a spin-off is optimal," president and CEO Satoshi Tsunakawa told investors, promising it would "enable more agile and flexible operations."

He said the sprawling business "struggled with the conglomerate discount and slowness in decision-making" in the past, and streamlining operations would allow investors to choose the portion of the business that interested them.

Toshiba initially unveiled a plan to split into three last November, in what analysts called a test case for other Japanese giants.

But it said Monday that "since this is the first large-scale spin-off transaction in Japan... it turned out there were obstacles which were not initially expected". Among those were higher-than-expected costs, and an extensive process to list the two new entities.

A two-way split instead "can significantly reduce separation costs, secure financial soundness for each company, and significantly reduce spin-off uncertainty", the company said.

The spin-off is expected to cost 20bn yen (US\$173mn) over two years, with running costs



The logo of Japanese industrial group Toshiba is seen on top of a building at its headquarters in Tokyo on Monday (AFP)

also increasing by 13bn yen a year.

But Tsunakawa said that would be offset by plans to reduce operating costs by 30bn yen annually.

Years of turmoil

The Japanese giant wants the split finalised by the second half of the 2022-23 financial year, but it could yet face shareholder opposition.

General Electric and Johnson & Johnson have announced spin-offs in recent months - a move analysts say is in large part forced on them by financial markets.

Spin-offs can be a way for large corporations to create more value and rationalise operations, but they can also limit coordination between sectors, experts say.

Toshiba dates back to 1875 and was once a symbol of Japan's advanced technological

and economic power, but it has been mired in turmoil for several years. Last year, shareholders voted to oust the board's chairman after a series of scandals and losses, in a rare victory for activist investors in corporate Japan.

As part of the overhaul, the company on Monday declared Toshiba Tec and its air-conditioning, elevator and lighting units "non-core businesses".

It has already agreed to the sale of Toshiba Carrier to the US-based Carrier Corporation in a deal reportedly worth some 100bn yen.

The conglomerate currently owns 60 per cent of the air-con company's shares and will retain only 5 per cent when the sale is completed later this year.

It said it hoped to reach deals to offload the elevator and lighting units within the next two months.

AFP

Bottlenecks squeeze German output

Frankfurt, Germany - German production fell in December, pulled down by a suffering construction sector, official figures published Monday showed, as Europe's largest economy struggled to shake off the drag caused by widespread supply bottlenecks. Output was down 0.3 per cent in the last month of the year, cancelling out a revised 0.3 per cent rise in November, according to figures from the federal statistics agency Destatis.

Over the whole of 2021, industrial production was three per cent higher than in 2020, but still 5.5 per cent lower than 2019, before the onset of the coronavirus crisis.

Production of capital goods was up 2.5 per cent in December, while intermediate goods were up 0.6 per cent. The production of consumer goods fell by 0.5 per cent, and construction fell by 7.3 per cent.

The poor figures in construction masked a result that was "not as bad as it looks at first glance", as industrial output excluding energy and construction actually grew for the second month in a row, said Carsten Brzeski, head of macro at the ING bank.



The skyline of the high-rise buildings of the banking district of Frankfurt, Germany, is pictured on early morning of February 3 (AFP)

"Despite these first positive signs, German industry remains in the stranglehold of global supply chain frictions," said Brzeski.

Shortages of raw materials and components, which steadily increased over the course of 2021, meant that while order books for industry are full, pro-

duction has struggled to keep pace.

Supply bottlenecks had cost industry "about 70bn euros (US\$80bn) in lost added value" last year, according to the economic think tank IfW Kiel.

The disruption caused by missing inputs was a "major rea-

son why economic output in Germany was still behind its pre-crisis level" at the end of 2021, the think tank said.

Germany's economy grew by 2.8 per cent in 2021, according to figures published by Destatis in January.

AFP

Gas storage in Europe drops to 37%

Brussels, Belgium - The occupancy rate in Europe's natural gas storage facilities fell to 37.5 per cent in January 2022 from 52 per cent in January 2021, according to data from Gas Infrastructure Europe.

In January 2021, there were approximately 60bn cubic meters of gas in all of the natural gas storages across Europe, and the occupancy rate was recorded at 52 per cent.

In the same period of 2022, this amount decreased by 18bn cubic meters to 42bn cubic meters, and the occupancy rate of the storages decreased to 37.5 per cent.

Italy has the most natural gas in Europe with 10bn cubic meters (47 per cent occupancy rate in storage). Germany follows Italy with 8.7bn cubic meters (35 per cent occupancy rate in storage) and France with

4.4bn cubic meters (33 per cent occupancy rate in storage).

Regarding the natural gas storage occupancy rate, Portugal led Europe with 80 per cent (200mn cubic meters). The UK followed with 75 per cent storage occupancy (750mn cubic meters). Currently, the occupancy rate of storage in Europe stands at 36.6 per cent.

The colder-than-expected

winter season and the increase in energy demand have led to more use of natural gas in storage.

The decrease in the amount of natural gas sent by Russia to Europe via Ukraine and the decrease in production from hydroelectric power plants were also influential in decreasing gas in the storages, Anadolu News Agency reported.

ONA

HITACHI

The way you live will be the way we innovate

جنتكو
Genetco
GENERAL ELECTRIC & TRADING CO. LLC

51
years of excellence
★★★★★

C.R. No. 1009680
MUSCAT
97693496, 96742452
Available at
Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

SALALAH
79011363

Meethaq wins Oman's Most Trusted Brand Award for Islamic Banking

Meethaq Islamic banking from Bank Muscat recently won Oman's Most Trusted Brand Award in the Islamic Bank category for 2021 at a glittering event hosted at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel under the auspices of H E Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals. The award was handed over by H E Rumhy to Sami Arfah Bait Rashid, assistant general manager, Meethaq Personal Banking, in the presence of Saleh Zakwani, executive chairman, Apex Media.

The Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards function was attended by a number of dignitaries and senior executives from the sultanate's corporate sector. It endorsed top performing brands in Oman, based on public feedback obtained in a consumer survey conducted by Apex Media. The fifth edition of the annual survey is a validation of public trust in various brands. Every year, the prestigious award is presented to the most trusted brands in Oman based on what the general public perceives as the brands they trust the most. This year's awards generated over 700,000 votes in over 45 different categories.



Speaking on the occasion, Rashid, said, "As the pioneer of Islamic banking in Oman, Meethaq is delighted to win this prestigious award, which affirms its unrivalled position in Oman. Driven by a strong customer-centric vision, Meethaq has been delivering world class innovative Islamic banking products and services in the sultanate. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our valued customers for their trust

and strong confidence in Meethaq Islamic Banking." Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat is the most popular and largest Islamic banking services provider in Oman, offering a full suite of sharia'a-compliant retail, corporate and wholesale banking products and services. Since its inception in January 2013, Meethaq Islamic Banking has been enjoying phenomenal growth and continues to set new

benchmarks. In line with its excellent customer-centric vision and full commitment to offer a world-class Islamic banking experience, Meethaq has established the largest Islamic branch network in Oman consisting of 12 branches in the Governorate of Muscat and 12 branches across other governorates. In addition to its already excellent network of branches, Meethaq has a dedicated network of over 40 ATMs/CDMs

while also providing free access to more than 740 plus ATMs and CDMs of Bank Muscat across the country for customers to conduct their banking transactions with ease. This has resulted in Meethaq enjoying the tremendous confidence of its extensive base of customers. It is noteworthy that with close to 30 per cent market share of the total Islamic banking assets in Oman, Meethaq Is-

lamic Banking is significantly bigger than both full-fledged Islamic banks and other Islamic windows operating in Oman. In 2021, Meethaq once again demonstrated its leadership in the sultanate's Islamic Banking sector with Islamic financing receivables reaching RO1.4bn and customer deposits growing close to RO1.2bn as of December 31, 2021. Meethaq's Total Asset base stood at RO1.63bn at the end of 2021.

Ooredoo App offers awesome on-the-go service

Giving its customers total control at their fingertips, the Ooredoo App is bigger and better than ever. Designed to make life easier, it allows users to manage their subscriptions, whether using Hala prepaid, Shahry post-paid or Home Internet services. Users can also get instant updates on Ooredoo's promotions and services, access to the Nojoom rewards programme, and so much more!

The award-winning app, which now has more than 1.8mn downloads, gives customers convenient access to services and transactions that would normally be done through the Contact Centre or an Ooredoo store. No more waiting on the phone or in queues. And if you need help, Saeed and Saeeda, the first-of-their-kind Artificial Intelligence Chatbots, are on hand to answer queries in both English and Arabic. It's a simple, fast and stress-free service, wherever and whenever.

Download now for free from the App Store or Google Play.



Oman Air moves to new Terminal 1 at Jeddah's KAIA

Oman Air has moved to the new Terminal 1 at King Abdulaziz International Airport (KAIA), signaling the airline's ongoing commitment to scheduled passenger service linking Muscat and Jeddah. The transition was marked by an official ceremony attended by H E Mubarak al Hanai, the Consul General of Oman along with a number of Omani and Saudi officials on January 29, and coincided with the arrival of Oman Air flight

WY1675 which was welcomed with a traditional water salute. Passengers disembarking the flight were presented flowers while the flight's crew had their photo taken with H E Hanai during an Oman Air-themed cake cutting. Hamad al Harthi, Oman Air senior manager of sales (GCC, Middle East & Africa), said, "We're delighted that our flights will now arrive and depart from the new Terminal 1 in Jeddah,

which offers passengers a seamless travel experience in a truly state-of-the-art facility. Oman Air has a long-standing presence in Jeddah and this transition reflects our renewing of that presence as we look forward to growing our flight frequencies in the years ahead." Originally launched in December 1998, direct wide body flights between Muscat and Jeddah have proved popular with passengers.

Celebrate Valentine's Day at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar

Make your way to the stunning Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort this Valentine's Day and celebrate in style with your loved one. The luxurious elevated resort - located 2,000m above sea level - offers an exquisite array of elegant dining experiences and cuisines, as well as exclusive spa retreats. Diners can enjoy and indulge in dishes from authentic Italian to exotic Asian, all with breath-taking views of the Green Mountain. Anantara has also included vegetarian friendly options for diners with dietary requirements.

Dine in the privacy and comfort of your Villa

Enjoy a private dinner with your loved one with dinner served in the comfort of your Villa when staying at the resort. Guests can dine on delectable classics such as Marinated Jumbo Prawns with lemon jelly and asparagus, Veal Tenderloin with butternut squash puree and a Bordeaux sauce, Wild Mushroom Soup, and Mediterranean Sea Bass with caviar beurre-Blanc. For vegetarian diners, highlights include an Organic Quinoa Salad, Wild Mushroom Soup and a Winter Veggies Wellington with a green veggies velouté sauce. Sweet your romantic night on a sweet note with a pomegranate cheesecake, ideal to mark the day of love. **Where:** Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort Villas **When:** February 13-19 **Price:** RO80++ per couple

The 'Bella' dining experience!

Staying true to its name meaning 'Beautiful View', Bella Vista is a worthy name for one of the most unique and inspiring fine dining poolside restaurants in the world that re-imagines a traditional Italian kitchen with contemporary flair. Indulge in gourmet classics such as Oyster and Caviar with a strawberry mignonette, Lobster Medallions, Cream of Roasted Pumpkin Soup and Wagyu Short Ribs with



Jerusalem artichoke and champagne puree, seasonal vegetables and veal jus and Atlantic Cod Fish with seafood bisque. Vegetarian diners can enjoy Italian classics such as Poached Asparagus with a Strawberry salsa, Leek Cannelloni with Ricotta Cheese, caramelized walnut and saffron, Cream of Roasted Pumpkin Soup and a Wild Mushroom Risotto with truffle oil. The romantic night ends with a red dessert, the colour of love, in the form of Rose & Raspberry with white chocolate mousse, velvet sponge and a mango sorbet **Where:** Bella Vista restaurant **When:** February 14 **Time:** from 6:30 to 10pm **Price:** RO80++ per couple

Modern flavours of Arabia!

Inspired by the Khasab Castle in Musandam, Oman, Al Qalaa boasts a constellation of hanging lanterns and a sweeping mountain backdrop with authentic recipes from Oman and across the Gulf presented with flair. Dine and romance your significant other with an enticing set menu, with regional flavours included in dishes such as Omani Lobster 'cocktail', Lamb Shuwa 'Croquettes', Arabian Seafood Soup, Braised Lamb Shank with an eggplant puree, and Char-

Grilled Snapper Fish Fillet with a Lemon butter sauce Vegetarian friendly options include Avocado Hummus with Lavash Crackers, 'Croquettes', with a tomato salsa, Arabian Lentil Soup and Vegetable Tajine with couscous. The themed dessert is Rose Mohalabia with a hibiscus sauce, whipped cream and double roasted pistachio, a perfect way to end the night! **Where:** Al Qalaa Arabic Restaurant **When:** February 14 **Time:** from 6:30 to 11pm **Price:** RO80++ per couple

Panoramic views and more with Dining by Design!

Anantara's most exclusive option yet, the Dining by Design package is a top-of-the-line package, set up only on request. With a private table, roses and all the trimmings, this package will create the ideal romantic setting for you and your significant other. Dine amongst the clouds, with spectacular views of the mountains, and complete privacy to truly get the one-on-one time you and your loved one deserve. The luxurious gourmet menu includes highlight dishes such as The Royal Beluga Caviar with Blini, chives and cream Fraiche, Foie Grass with Brioche, braised figs and veal jus, Fresh

Oysters with caviar and a strawberry mignonette, a Lobster Capuccino, Wagyu Short Ribs with Jerusalem artichoke & champagne puree, seasonal vegetables and veal jus and Atlantic Cod Fish with a Seafood bisque. True to the theme of the night, The Love of Chocolate will add the final sweet note with its dark chocolate mousse, orange sponge and caramel sauce, making this the ultimate royal experience. **Where:** Royal Edge and Diana's Point **When:** February 14 **Price:** RO500++ per couple

Pamper yourself at the Anantara Spa

There is nothing more intimate than getting a relaxing couple's massage with your loved one. The Anantara Spa provides sensual spa journeys that can be experienced in five luxurious spa treatment rooms including two couple's suites, a private Hammam and a beauty salon. Spoil yourself with the special Rose Rescue Ritual for 90 minutes, inspired by fragrant roses that have been cultivated for centuries in Al Jabal Al Akhdar. **Where:** Anantara Spa **When:** February 1-28, 2022 **Price:** RO135++ per couple

Elevate romance this Valentine's Day at Al Bustan Palace

On the sand and under the stars, there's no better way to celebrate the most romantic night of the year than at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel. On February 14, the luxury resort is inviting guests for a one-of-a-kind dining experience at The Pavilion featuring a selection of specially curated dishes to celebrate the month of love. Bathed in moonlight and accompanied by the sound of gentle waves, Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel is what Valentine's dreams are made of.

For RO45 net per person, couples can enjoy a special set menu featuring an array of fresh seasonal delicacies and a complimentary glass of bubbles. Those looking to elevate the romance can also reserve a private table for two on the water's edge. For



RO200, guests can charm their loved one with an intimate set-up right on the beach and a lavish set menu that is completed with a cake, beverages, and flowers. From mouthwatering cuisine to unmatched surroundings, all delivered with the legendary Ritz-

Carlton hospitality, it's certain to be an unforgettable Valentine's Day. Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel is a hidden jewel amongst luxury hotels and one of the world's most sought-after destinations.

Alizz Islamic Bank offers a variety of services to 'Hiyya' female banking card holders

Alizz Islamic Bank has developed a suite of exclusive sharia'a-compliant banking services for female customers that have the 'Hiyya' card that was designed exclusively for women.

'Hiyya' is designed to meet all the investment, health and financial needs of female customers and will provide customers with a tier based savings account to enhance their profits. The sharia'a-compliant account is based on the principle of Mudaraba where you will be Rabb-ul mal, and the Bank will be the Mudarib. Your funds will be invested in the common pool along with the other Mudaraba-based accounts. The generated profit will be shared between you and the bank according to a profit sharing ratio specified earlier.

Profits will be shared between customers and the bank according to the previously agreed distribution ratios. Instant debit cards will be offered with exclusive benefits to ensure an open platform for women to enjoy a host of discounts and special offers at spas, beauty salons and beauty products, while availing deals from health clubs, fitness centres and perfume stores. Ex-



clusive stores and branded outlets for clothing and accessories, home décor, restaurants and flower shops are all pegged onto the account, which also includes priority express service at all Alizz Islamic Bank branches.

Women who opt for the Hiyya account will also get free Takaful insurance services - this is designed specifically for women, as it covers some of the most common cancers that affect women and will also include insurance

cover to obtain a second medical opinion.

Additionally, it will also cover insurance on hand luggage and travel, the Takaful insurance provision also assures compensation for the loss of hand luggage while traveling anywhere in the world.

It will also provide compensation for the loss of personal documents or keys on account of the loss of handbag; the onus will be on the insurance company to re-

imburse the customer for the expense incurred in obtaining new personal documents/keys.

The only condition for availing the Takaful insurance scheme, which has some of the best offers to meet all health needs of women and add value to their lifestyles, is that the woman must not be less than 18 years old and not more than 65 years old, and that she be of Omani nationality or have a valid Omani residency visa.

Bank Nizwa launches sustainable financing

Built on strong Sharia'a-compliant values of finance, Bank Nizwa has been consistent in its endeavours to highlight the importance of following sustainable practices of business that promotes positive environmental and social impacts, especially in the face of growing climate concerns.

In line with the same, in a recent event, the bank launched its sustainable finance initiative that further attests to its commitment to achieving sustainable economic growth with minimal impact on the environment.

Commenting on the launch, Khaled al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa said, "While financial stability is essential to attain sustainable economic growth in the sultanate, it is also imperative that we promote an all-inclusive ecosystem that factors in sustainable programmes. These focus on climate change, environmental protection and transitioning to a green, circular economy, which essentially implies enhancing the living conditions of people, and giving opportunities to the local workforce to make their mark in society. Aligning ourselves to the Oman Vision 2040, we want to continue to contribute towards building an economic system that is more sustainable and integrates sustainability into all our



core functions. Bank Nizwa has also remained invested in harnessing technology and innovation to readdress financial services from the perspective of sustainability. We will undertake all such initiatives that will help Oman achieve its goal to be listed among the top 20 countries in the worldwide Environmental Performance Index."

By implementing credible and transparent sustainability strategies and conceptualising innovative sustainable financing solutions for its clients, the bank has been at the forefront of supporting the collective efforts of the country as it moves towards Net Zero emissions and attaining a sustainable future. With a keen focus on helping clients integrate

environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria into their businesses, financing activities that support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and encouraging customers to invest in practices that lower energy emissions, Bank Nizwa has paved the way forward with its sustainable finance solutions. The newly launched programme is designed to incentivise companies towards applying more effort into achieving their sustainability goals.

Such initiatives will directly impact other sectors like housing, infrastructure and transport making them more affordable for the masses while also providing the community equal access to essential services.

ahli islamic launches 'ahliconnect' call centre

Reflecting its commitment towards providing secured and advanced banking solutions to its customers in line with the dynamic environment, ahli islamic announced the launch of a new, technologically advanced call center - 'ahliconnect'. Through the new centre, ahli Islamic aims at enriching customers' experience, upgrading the provided services, and addressing the challenges facing them.

Yousuf Salim al Rawahi, DGM - head of ahli Islamic said, "At ahli islamic, we are keen to keep up with the requirements of our customers and provide sharia'a-compliant services, characterised by efficiency and speed. Reflecting our understanding of the importance of providing solutions commensurate with the lifestyle of customers, the bank



has strengthened the level of its services in the call centre under 'ahliconnect' umbrella. We take into account the adoption of advanced solutions that serve all customer segments."

Through 'ahliconnect', ahli islamic customers can request a new, lost or damaged debit card, increase debit/credit card limit, and update their personal information such as email address, passport details, and residence address.

Indian restaurant Qureshi Bab-Al-Hind reopens

Indian chefs Ashaque Qureshi and Irfan Qureshi along with Chef Kishore reopened Qureshi Bab-Al-Hind at Hormuz Grand, a Radisson Collection Hotel.

Carrying their father's Chef Imtiaz Qureshi culinary torch, the Qureshi brothers, along with Radisson Collection's Chef Kishore are cooking up a storm of flavours with their newly crafted a la carte menu. With a focus on contemporary light and healthy organic ingredients, Qureshi's signature delicacies from North Indian regional cuisines will create an unforgettable experience for guests.

"This cuisine has far more delicate balance of spices than many other cuisines around the world allowing all to enjoy the finely crafted dishes we serve," said Chef Kishore

"We are thrilled to be reopening Qureshi Bab-Al-Hind in Mus-



cat, as it has been loved by foodies over the past decade," said Panos Panagis, district director of Radisson Collection Group in Oman. The Qureshi family dates back

60 years, making them India's first family of food. Their expertise blends perfectly with the vision of Radisson Collection that embraces and offers unique ex-

periences. The result is a timeless culinary journey that welcomes you to the exceptional.

The iconic restaurant is ideal for entertaining business clients,

family gatherings and special occasion dinners. The staff known for their friendly approach to service, yet with an old world charm, go to great lengths to personalise your choice of food and ensure an experience like no other.

Qureshi Bab-Al-Hind has been lauded at several worldwide luxury awards. 'We are proud to be recognised as the best Indian and North Indian restaurant by Oman Restaurant Awards. They restaurant was also awarded as the best Indian cuisine at the World Luxury Restaurant Awards 2019.'

Opened for dinner service only from Tuesday to Saturday from 6:30pm to 11:00pm, Qureshi also welcomes guests for private events for lunch either in the main restaurant or in its beautifully decorated private dining rooms.

Ahmad al Harthy unveils Aston Martin Vantage GT3 at Expo

Ahmad al Harthy, Oman's most successful international racing driver and brand ambassador for MHD-ITICS, the Infrastructure, Technology, Industrial and Consumer Solutions cluster of Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC, officially unveiled the Oman Racing team's Aston Martin Vantage GT3 car to the world at the Oman Pavilion in Expo 2020, Dubai. Launched at a grand ceremony, the new car with its magnificent livery created a buzz among those gathered right from the time it was unveiled.

The event also saw Oman Racing launch its Asian Le Mans Series (ALMS) programme for 2022. Present at the event were H E Sheikh Salim al Katheeri, chairman of the Sultanate of Oman Commercial Office in Dubai, Brig Jamal al Tai, deputy chairman of Oman Automobile Association, Hon Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, chairperson of MHD-ITICS, and members of the senior management of MHD-ITICS. Commenting on the launch H E Mohsin al Balushi, Oman's General Commissioner at Expo



2020 said, "Ahmad is a wonderful ambassador for Oman, and it has been our absolute pleasure to facilitate the launch of his and Oman Racing's Asian Le Mans Series programme here at Expo 2020. His success on the international stage, over many years,

is something of great pride to the Omani people. On behalf of all involved with the Oman Pavilion, we are delighted to have supported the launch."

"For more than 170 years, World Expos have offered a platform to showcase the innova-

tions which help to shape and develop the world in which we live. Being part of Expo 2020 is hugely important for Oman as we continually develop our trade, business, innovation and tourism and share our culture and traditions with the world."

As he has been doing so successfully since beginning his motor racing career well over 15 years ago, multi-time motor racing champion Harthy will once again challenge for top honours in the ALMS alongside British team-mates Sam De Haan and

Aston Martin factory driver, Charlie Eastwood. The trio will share the No.69 Oman Racing Aston Martin Vantage GT3, which will once again be prepared and engineered by Tom Ferrier's TF Sport team, the UK-based outfit with which Oman Racing has had a fruitful partnership since 2017.

"Ahmad al Harthy has always been an exemplary Omani talent on the circuit and one we are proud to associate ourselves with and stand behind. He has continued to raise the Oman flag proudly wherever he races around the globe. Moreover, owing to the team's prominence on the circuit, having our brand adorn his new car will help showcase our brand values and promote MHD-ITICS on an international scale," said Hon Lujaina.

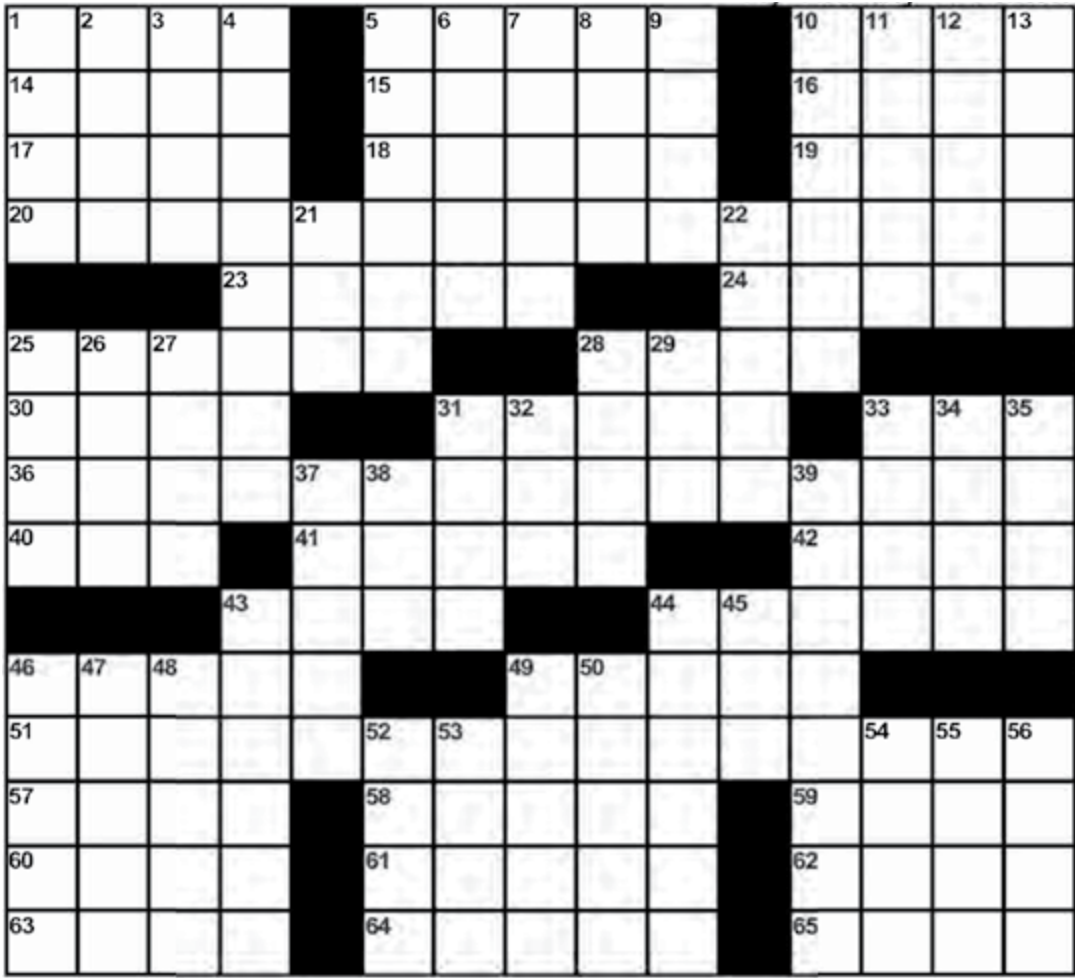
She added, "Ahmad and MHD-ITICS share the same values of commitment, perseverance and determination. We believe in being the best in what we do, and there is no one better than Ahmad to exemplify this."

Beginning at Dubai Autodrome, round one will take place on Saturday, February 12, followed by round two on Sunday, February 13. The championship will then move to Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi for round three on Saturday, February 19, and round four on Sunday, February 20.

Commenting on the upcoming series, Harthy said, "What an amazing honour it has been to launch Oman Racing's Asian Le Mans Series programme at Expo 2020, especially at the Oman Pavilion. I must say the biggest thank you to the Head of Oman Pavilion, H E Mohsin Al Balushi, and also to my incredible partners and sponsors who have made the coming season possible."

Hon Lujaina said, "We are thrilled to see the MHD-ITICS brand on the Oman Racing car for the first-ever time, and we are very confident that Ahmad and his team will bring glory for all of us in Oman, racing in the ALMS in Dubai and Abu Dhabi over the next few weeks."

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Big party
 - 5) Frequently
 - 10) Spellbound
 - 14) Voice above bass
 - 15) Norse love goddess
 - 16) Large pitcher
 - 17) Bookbinding leather
 - 18) Inspirers of passing thoughts?
 - 19) Cautious
 - 20) Some preservers of order
 - 23) Two-masted vessel
 - 24) Take from
 - 25) Frank Robinson was one
 - 28) Emulated Pinocchio
 - 30) Western showdown time
 - 31) Cathedral topper
 - 33) 40 winks, collectively
 - 36) Greeting card section
 - 40) Dash lengths
 - 41) Mournful poem
 - 42) Bananas' relatives?
 - 43) Obey a dentist, at times
 - 44) High-flying elite
 - 46) Electric dart shooter
- 49) Fan's sound
 - 51) Gradually trespassing
 - 57) Catch in a stocking
 - 58) "How am I,?"
 - 59) Novel type, once
 - 60) Suffix with "folk"
 - 61) Broadway show

DOWN

 - 1) Some candy purchases
 - 2) Hand lotion ingredient
 - 3) Telephone button
 - 4) Pearl River city
 - 5) Recently
 - 6) Swiss capital?
 - 7) Extra inning
 - 8) Spud bumps
 - 9) U.S. astronaut's insignia
 - 10) Intriguing poster heading
 - 11) Well-apprised
 - 12) Long-lasting curls
 - 13) Date not on a calendar?
- 21) Sushi selection
 - 22) Canary's call
 - 25) Second word of many limericks
 - 26) Apartment division
 - 27) Charged particles
 - 28) Easter flower
 - 29) Tax shelter type
 - 31) "Let it stand" editorially
 - 32) Slangy boxer
 - 33) Entre_
 - 34) Card-game stake
 - 35) "Check this out!"
 - 37) Printer's proof, briefly
 - 38) Legendary 32-Across
 - 39) Unwelcome visitor
 - 43) Twilled woolen fabrics
 - 44) Like a janitor's keyring
 - 45) Bit of work in physics class
 - 46) Electric car brand
 - 47) Bother
 - 48) Cause to panic
 - 49) Tories' opponents
 - 50) Cheryl of TV or Gregory of dance
 - 52) TV Batman West

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
When you're in this kind of mood (totally in tune with others), there are lots of people who may try to take advantage of you, weird as that may seem. You need to remember who's in charge and refuse to let it happen. The good news is you can see the grifters coming from a mile away. Ask all the questions you want. Don't be afraid of offending anyone! They're not worried about offending you, after all.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
You have a rather fiery nature, and right now, that fire is burning hot, as anyone who tries you is sure to discover. Still, there's something to just being nice to people, particularly if you're dealing with an authority type who doesn't care about your future. Save the flame strike for recreational pursuits tonight. For the time being, be as accommodating as you can be.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
After all the work you've done to give yourself a social life, including making time, finishing chores, and (reluctantly) delegating overtime responsibilities, you totally deserve to have as much fun as possible now. You're the only one who can ensure it, so if obstacles or delays pop up, don't let yourself slink back home. You need to enjoy yourself! Go out with your bestie, enjoy some window shopping and dinner.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Anything that seems like a good idea works for you today. For now, you're totally cooperative when it comes to new offers, so go ahead and say yes. If you're single and someone close wants to introduce you to someone new, accept that offer as well. Why say no to such a sweet gesture? Life is too short to think everything through every time. Enjoy the moment with the best people you choose to be with.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
That restless feeling is a clear signal that it's time to try something new. If you haven't made plans today, don't wait. A faraway place is calling and you can't resist much longer. You're due for a change and a little break in the action. It could be the beach, a rain forest, or a museum in Europe that is screaming for your attention. Choose the best place that can entertain you and make a quick but wonderful plan to enjoy.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You need to make a big decision regarding someone special, but you're not quite sure what to do yet. On the one hand, you're totally ready to get closer to them. On the other, you may be thinking about how much time you already spend at work and how constant overtime isn't exactly beneficial to a relationship. You may not realise yet just how helpful a relationship can be to putting off that overtime entirely.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You have something you need to share, but if it's personal and you're not quite comfortable with it yet, hold back for a bit. You usually have no problem keeping quiet about others' secrets, but being quiet about your own is quite a bit harder for you. That doesn't mean you should never share, just that you need to take care when deciding who gets to hear the news and when.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You can talk your way out of almost anything. That skill in combination with your innate charm helps you find your way through plenty of difficult situations. You're just about to add a new success to that list. Someone close has been wandering in the fog for quite some time, but you can tell they're unhappy and you can't let them keep on this way. Get on it! Let them know that they can talk to you about what's going on.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
You're not the most patient of souls, so few people who know you are ever surprised when they hear about your shenanigans. Eyebrows might be raised, but you're used to dealing with that. For now, though, someone close is asking for help that requires an objective mind and dedication to fairness. Can you get it together for them? Sure you can. Just lay off the caffeine this morning.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Everyone has the right to be cranky. That doesn't mean everyone has to take pleasure in our crankiness, but they should at least try to give us time to get past it. Today is your turn to be cranky, but sadly, your sweetie or BFF may be under the mistaken impression that's it's their turn as well. Putting a little distance between you is probably the smart thing to do, but a bang-up argument may be even better!

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
No one can talk you out of taking life a little too seriously now. That's even more true of duties handed down to you when someone else drops the ball. You do have other responsibilities, of course, like to your family members, who have been patient and understanding throughout the time you've been paying your dues. Let them know exactly how much you appreciate them. Your family would love a simple dinner cooked by you.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You are almost certainly getting a little tired of deep conversations, truth or dare, and anything else that even hints at revealing true feelings, for now, anyway! You've paid your emotional dues, and as far as you're concerned people need to be been satisfied with that. If you can't persuade them to let go and just have fun, you need to find someone else. There should be some friend who is ready to have fun and fun only.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which of these won the Grammy Award for Record of the Year in 2008?
A. Beat It by Michael Jackson
B. Rehab by Amy Winehouse
C. Hotel California by The Eagles
D. Killing Me Softly with His Song by Roberta Flack

2. Football athlete, broadcaster and actor, O J Simpson, ran in the Torch Relay for which Olympic Games?
A. 1976 Winter Olympics
B. 1986 Winter Olympics
C. 1996 Summer Olympics
D. 1984 Summer Olympics

3. Who were the Persians defeated by in the sea battle at Salamis in 480BC
A. Phoenicians
B. Rome
C. Greece
D. Venice

Answers: 1. B 2. D 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	Y	U	I
S	E	D	L
T	F	R	X
F	L	A	I

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

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

		2	7				9	
					3	2		4
	6	4	8	9			3	5
						7	2	1
	2		6		1		4	
9	4	1						
3	1			2	6	4	5	
4		6	1					
	7				8	6		

WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

6	1	9	8	4	3	5	7	2
2	8	3	5	7	1	9	6	4
7	5	4	9	2	6	8	1	3
8	9	5	7	3	2	1	4	6
3	7	6	1	5	9	7	2	8
1	2	7	6	8	4	3	5	9
5	3	1	2	6	8	9	7	4
4	7	2	3	9	5	6	8	1
9	6	8	7	1	2	3	5	4

President Abbas pledges reform as embattled PLO holds meeting

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories - Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas pledged commitment to reform on Sunday as the embattled Palestine Liberation Organization, where he serves as chairman, held a rare meeting to name new key leaders.

The PLO, tasked since its creation in 1964 with steering the struggle against Israel for Palestinian statehood, has faced growing questions over its relevance in recent years and criticism for failing to hold regular elections to fill leadership roles.

"We pay great attention to the reform process, which is a continuous process, and we are ready to do what is necessary to make it successful," Abbas said.

Sunday's meeting of the PLO's 124-member Central Committee - the first in four years - was expected to fill several executive committee vacancies, including that held by ex-chief negotiator Saeb Erekat, who died in 2020 after contracting the coronavirus.

Highlighting Palestinian frustration with the PLO and Abbas, Sunday's meeting was boycotted by several leftist factions, and protests demanding his resignation were held in the occupied West Bank and in Gaza, ruled by Hamas Islamists.

Ghassan Khatib, a political scientist at Khzeit University in the West Bank, told AFP that 'the very significant questions about the legitimacy' of the PLO have been fuelled by 'the lack of elections'.

Abbas has been accused of maintaining a tight grip over the PLO, an umbrella group representing various Palestinian factions, and the Palestinian Authority, which has civilian control over parts of the West Bank.



Palestinian supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP) lift placards and national flags during a rally in Gaza city on Sunday, to protest the meeting of PLO's Central Committee in Ramallah (AFP)



Khatib said the fact that Sunday's decisions would be made only by Abbas' inner circle 'will further deepen the debate and the question over legitimacy'.

Favoured choice?

Palestinians have not been to the ballot box for 16 years, and their aspirations for a two-state solu-

We pay great attention to the reform process, a continuous one, and we are ready to do what is necessary to make it successful

MAHMUD ABBAS

tion are strongly rejected by Israel's right-wing nationalist Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

Violence flares almost daily in the West Bank, while Abbas has seen his support dive to historic lows in opinion polls, accused of autocracy in rare street protests last year.

Widely tipped to take over

Erekat's chief negotiator role when results are announced is Hussein al-Sheikh, the current Palestinian civil affairs minister who is charged with dealing with Israel.

Analysts have speculated that Sheikh could be Abbas' preferred choice as a presidential successor, with the vote offering a chance to elevate his profile.

The meeting was also due to fill the executive committee slot vacated by Hanan Ashrawi, who resigned in 2020 saying Palestinian politics needed 'renewal and reinvigoration'.

Hamas is not part of the PLO, a source of friction with Abbas' secular Fatah movement that has in part hindered unified Palestinian governance.

At the Gaza protest against the Ramallah meeting, Hamas official Mashir al-Masry told

AFP the PLO's central committee had 'no legitimacy' and was out of touch with 'the will of the Palestinian people'.

He re-affirmed Hamas' demand for Abbas to call elections across the Palestinian territories. Abbas has said he scrapped the elections that had been scheduled for last year because Israel refused to allow voting in annexed east Jerusalem, which Palestinians claim as their future capital.

But analysts said Abbas likely balked when polls showed Fatah would be trounced by Hamas.

Abbas again on Sunday said he was committed to elections 'as soon as we are able to hold them in Jerusalem'.

Israel bans Palestinian political activity in the city, which it regards as its 'undivided capital'. AFP



Fire is seen at Aberdare national park in Kenya on Monday (AFP)

Arson suspected behind forest blaze in Kenya

Aberdare, Kenya - Dozens of forest rangers, firefighters and volunteers struggled on Monday to stem a blaze that broke out in Kenya's Aberdare national park at the weekend, as suspicions of arson emerged.

The fire started on Saturday and was still ravaging the park some 36 hours later, as firefighters sought to bring it under control before it spread deeper into the forest.

The park was etched in history when Britain's Elizabeth II, then a princess on a visit to Kenya, received news of her father's death while staying at the Treetops hotel, a remote game-watching lodge built high into a tree in the Aberdare forest.

Rhino Ark, a conservation charity in Kenya, said it had sent in helicopters to conduct aerial surveys of the area to estimate the extent of damage to the forest cover.

"Thirty-five trained firefighters have been deployed by chopper on the southern fire-line," the group said on Twitter on Monday.

"We have firefighters who are doing a decent job up there. So far so good, they are managing to control it but it has not been

completed," Rhino Ark official Adam Mwangi told AFP.

"Definitely it is a fire caused by human activities," Mwangi said, as speculation mounted about the possibility of arson.

The park lies some 100km north of the capital Nairobi in the Aberdare mountain range.

It is home to spectacular waterfalls and lush bamboo jungles as well as a variety of wildlife including leopards, elephants and critically endangered black rhinos.

The Aberdares are the third highest mountain range in Kenya, reaching a summit of just over 4,000 metres.

In recent days, concern has grown over a contentious proposal before parliament which could allow politicians to determine if public forest can be carved out and handed over to private interests.

The amendment to the Forest Conservation and Management Act - reforms passed after decades of rampant land clearing - has roused significant community anger and sparked fears that it could result in unchecked logging and environmental destruction.

AFP

Iran nuclear deal talks to resume in Vienna today after stalemate

Vienna, Austria - Diplomats trying to revive the Iran nuclear deal will resume talks in Vienna on Tuesday with parties citing progress in recent weeks.

"The 8th round of the Vienna Talks... attended by China, France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom, Iran and the United States, resume tomorrow in Vienna," EU spokesman Alain Matton tweeted. Parties to the 2015 nuclear deal have been negotiating in the Austrian capital since last year to revive the landmark agreement with the US indirectly participating in the discussions.

After months of stalemate, progress has been made in recent weeks to revive the agreement that was supposed to prevent Iran from acquiring an atomic bomb, a goal it has always denied pursuing.

Former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the pact in 2018 and reimposed tough economic sanctions on Iran, prompting the Islamic republic to begin pulling back from its commitments under the deal.

Talks on reviving the agreement were halted at the end of last month and the negotiators returned to their capitals for

After months of stalemate, progress has been made in recent weeks to revive the agreement that was supposed to prevent Iran from acquiring an atomic bomb

consultations.

Iran's top security official said on Sunday that Washington and Tehran had so far failed to produce 'balance' in their commitments during the Vienna talks.

"Despite limited progress in the #ViennaTalks, we are still far from achieving the necessary balance in the commitments of the parties," Supreme National Security Council secretary Ali Shamkhani said in a Twitter post. "Political decisions in #Washington are requirements for balance of commitments to reach a good agreement."

AFP

Cuba marks six decades under US sanctions

Havana, Cuba - Cuba on Monday marked 60 years under a US economic blockade that has deeply affected the communist nation's fortunes and showed no signs of being lifted.

Decreed by US president John F Kennedy on February 3, 1962, the embargo on all bilateral trade came into effect four days later.

Its purpose, said Kennedy's executive order, was to reduce the threat posed by the island nation's 'alignment with the communist powers'.

Despite failing to force a change in tack from Havana since then, the sanctions remain in place six decades later, and are blamed by Cuban authorities for damage to the country's economy amounting to some US\$150bn.

Cuba is experiencing its worst economic crisis in 30 years, with inflation at 70 per cent and a severe shortage of food and medicines as the COVID-19 pandemic dealt a hefty blow to a key source of income: tourism.

Long lines for essential goods are common, as food imports have been slashed due to dwindling government reserves.

Havana blames the sanctions for all the island's woes.

The message that 'the embargo is a virus too' has been hammered home by authorities for months, as they organise caravans of cars, bikes and motorcycles to criss-cross the country and denounce the sanctions.

But detractors say inefficiencies and structural problems in the economy controlled by the one-party state are also to blame.



This file photo shows a worker holding up a sign condemning the US economic embargo against the communist nation during the traditional Labour Day parade in downtown Havana on May 1, 1998 (AFP)

'Counterproductive'

"The real blockade was imposed by the Cuban state," said activist Rosa Maria Paya of lobby group Cubadecide, which she directs from exile.

The embargo would only be lifted, she believes, through 'a transition to representative democracy'.

Cuba has little productive capacity and relies on imports for about 80 per cent of its food needs.

A monetary reform launched a year ago to try and alleviate pressures on Cubans brought about a significant wage increase in a country where most

workers are employed by the government, but further fueled price inflation.

Since 2000, food has been excluded from the US blockade, and between 2015 and 2000, Cuba imported some US\$1.5bn worth of food from its neighbour.

But the purchases have to be paid in cash and upfront, onerous conditions for a country with limited reserves.

According to Carlos Gutierrez, a Cuban-American and former US Secretary of Commerce, the embargo has proven to be 'counterproductive'.

'Absolutely nothing has been obtained from Havana' in re-

sponse, he said.

Geopolitical interests

Instead, Cuba has looked to US rivals such as China and Russia for support.

Two weeks ago, Cuba's President Miguel Diaz-Canel and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin discussed 'strategic partnership' in a phone call.

And Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov recently said Moscow would not rule out a military deployment to Cuba - just a few hundred kilometers from Miami in the US state of Florida - if tensions with Washington over ex-Soviet state

Ukraine escalated.

For some, such posturing recalls the Cold War and the Cuban missile crisis between the United States and the former Soviet Union, which brought the world to the brink of nuclear warfare and was a major motivation for the blockade against Cuba.

Conflict was averted when Moscow agreed to remove Soviet missiles from Cuban soil.

The US blockade started out as a 'strategic and military instrument' in the context of war, said political scientist Rafael Hernandez.

And although the Cold War is over, it is still the United States' 'geopolitical interests' that determine its stance towards Cuba, he said.

US domestic politics also play a role, with the vote of a large and vocal anti-Havana Cuban expat community holding the potential to swing battleground states such as Florida.

Somewhat relaxed under a brief period of detente under Barack Obama, sanctions were strengthened by his successor Donald Trump, who added 243 new measures.

And despite campaign promises, current President Joe Biden has done nothing to relieve the blockade, instead announcing new measures against Cuban leaders in response to a clampdown on historic anti-government protests last July.

For the US administration, said James Buckwalter-Arias of the Cuban-American Association for Engagement, "electoral considerations weigh heavier than humanitarian duty."

AFP

Political crisis in Iraq deepens as presidential election postponed

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraq's parliament on Monday indefinitely postponed a scheduled vote for the republic's president after most major political blocs boycotted the session.

The sweeping no-show deepens a political crisis in the war-scarred country which, almost four months after a general election, still hasn't chosen a new prime minister.

The assembly vote had been set for noon for the head of state - a post with a four-year mandate held by convention by a member of Iraq's Kurdish minority, and currently occupied by Barham Saleh.

But a series of boycott calls had made it highly unlikely the 329-seat parliament in Baghdad's high-security Green Zone would be able to clinch the necessary two-thirds quorum.

Then, on Monday afternoon, with only a few dozen MPs in the

chamber, an official speaking on condition of anonymity confirmed to AFP that 'there will be no vote to elect the president'.

The turmoil comes after October polls were marred by record-low turnout, post-election threats and violence, and a delay of several months until final results were confirmed.

Intense negotiations among political groups since then have failed to form a majority parliamentary coalition to name a new prime minister to succeed Mustafa al-Kadhemi.

The largest parliamentary bloc to emerge from the vote, led by powerful Shiite Muslim cleric Moqtada Sadr and holding 73 seats, was first to announce a boycott, on Saturday.

It was followed on Sunday by the 51-member Sovereignty Coalition led by a Sadr ally, parliamentary Speaker Mohammed al-Halbussi.



Hoshiyar Zebari (left) and Barham Saleh (AFP)

The 31-seat Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) then announced it would also stay away, in order to 'continue consultations and dialogue between political blocs'.

Another key bloc, the Cooperation Framework grouping several Shiite parties, also said the session should not take place, citing the recent political turmoil.

Corruption claims

The process toward a presidential vote had been further thrown into disarray when Iraq's

A series of boycott calls had made it highly unlikely the 329-seat parliament would be able to clinch the necessary two-thirds quorum

Supreme Court on Sunday suspended the candidacy of Saleh's key challenger, Hoshiyar Zebari, 68. The court cited corruption charges against Zebari, a former foreign minister from the KDP - allegations he denies.

"I have not been convicted in any court," Zebari had said in a television interview on Friday as the charges resurfaced alongside forecasts he would unseat Saleh.

Incumbent Saleh, the other

frontrunner out of some 25 candidates, represents the KDP's main rival in Iraqi Kurdistan, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

The Supreme Court said it was suspending Zebari after receiving a complaint from lawmakers that his candidacy was 'unconstitutional' because of the graft claims.

The complainants cited his 2016 dismissal from the post of finance minister by parliament 'over charges linked to financial and administrative corruption'.

The complaint also cited at least two other judicial cases linked to him, including when he was Iraq's long-time foreign minister after the fall of dictator Saddam Hussein in the 2003 US-led invasion.

'Share the pie'

Monday's postponement exacerbates Iraq's political troubles

because it is the task of the president, within 15 days of being elected, to formally name a prime minister from the largest bloc in parliament.

The prime minister, a Shiite Muslim according to political tradition, then has a month to form his government.

Sadr's bloc claims it controls enough seats for a 'national majority government'.

However, the Coordination Framework has appealed to the Supreme Court to have their grouping recognised as the biggest. The country's apex court has rejected this demand, saying it could not decide now, as the size of parliamentary blocs could shift.

In Iraqi politics, said analyst Hamzeh Hadad, 'everyone knows how to share the pie' but 'no one knows how to be in the opposition'.

AFP

Macron heads to Moscow in bid to ease Ukraine tensions

Moscow, Russia - French President Emmanuel Macron headed to Moscow on Monday hoping to reach a deal with Vladimir Putin over Ukraine, at the start of a week of intense diplomacy over fears Russia is preparing an invasion of its pro-Western neighbour.

With tens of thousands of Russian troops camped on the border with Ukraine, Macron will be the first top Western leader to meet with Putin since the crisis kicked off in December.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will also meet on Monday with US President Joe Biden in Washington, as Western leaders look to maintain a united front in their biggest showdown with Russia since the end of the Cold War.

US officials say Russia has assembled 110,000 troops on the border with Ukraine and is on track to amass a large enough force - some 150,000 soldiers - for a full-scale invasion by mid-February. Russia insists it has no plans to attack and has instead put forward its own demands for security guarantees that it says would ease tensions.



An employee cleans the snow in front of the residence of French ambassador in Moscow on Monday, prior to the visit of Macron (AFP)

Macron, who will head to Kyiv on Tuesday for talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said before leaving Paris that he would be looking to find 'historic solutions' with Putin.

"We will discuss the terms of de-escalation," Macron told newspaper *Le Journal Du Dimanche*, saying Russia's objective was 'clearly not Ukraine' but new agreements on security with NATO and the European Union.

"The security and sovereignty of Ukraine or any other European state cannot be compromised,

just as it is legitimate for Russia to raise the question of its own security," Macron said.

'Important' talks

Moscow has accused the West, in particular Washington and NATO, of ignoring what it says are legitimate concerns for its security. It is demanding a permanent ban on Ukraine, a former Soviet republic, joining the US-led NATO military alliance and that the bloc roll back its military presence in eastern Europe.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry

Peskov said Monday's talks between Macron and Putin were 'very important' but suggested no one should expect a major step forward. "The situation is too complex to expect decisive breakthroughs in one meeting," Peskov told reporters.

Macron, whose country currently heads the European Union and who is facing a re-election challenge in April, has tried to position himself as the key European figure in negotiations with Russia.

He has spoken to Putin by phone several times over the past week and held a 40-minute call with Biden on Sunday.

Macron is expected to push forward a stalled peace plan for the festering conflict with Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, and could make offers to Russia for consultations on arms control and NATO expansion. The United States have taken the lead in warnings about an invasion, with officials in Washington citing intelligence assessments this weekend that Russia has stepped up preparations for an invasion.

AFP

NATO practices for winter combat on Russia's doorstep

Tapa, Estonia - In an icy landscape of birches and pines on NATO's eastern border, this year's regular military exercises by the alliance have come at a time of spiralling tensions between Russia and the West.

The 'Winter Camp' exercise in northeast Estonia, just 100km from the Russian border, included some 1,300 British, Estonian and French troops operating in extreme conditions.

It comes as Russia amasses troops around Ukraine and demands the withdrawal of foreign NATO forces from Poland and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, all EU and NATO members. While there is no perceived threat to Estonia's own border with Russia, many in the once Soviet-ruled country of 1.3mn people are worried - a concern shared across Central and Eastern Europe.

"We are well aware of what's going on in Ukraine but we are just acting normally. We don't see any need for now to increase our readiness," said Andrus Merilo, a winter camouflage-suited Estonian commander taking part in the exercise.

"We have been ready since



French soldiers take part in a major drill as part of the NATO operation at the Tapa Estonian army camp near Rakvere on Sunday (AFP)

1991," the colonel said, referring to the year when the Baltics regained their independence as the Soviet Union crumbled.

"We are not afraid of an incursion by Russia... But we also understand that our neighbour may act aggressively and we are ready to counter any aggression from them," Merilo said.

'Life insurance' for Estonia

Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO sent an 'enhanced forward presence' of multinational battalions to Poland and the Baltics.

"We are a life insurance for

the Estonians," said Eric Mauger, a colonel in charge of a contingent of some 300 French soldiers deployed to Estonia.

"We are not here to provoke the Russians. Our deployment is preventive, dissuasive and not aggressive," said Mauger, pointing out that Russia had been informed about the exercises ahead of time. "But we are ready and able to hold the line while awaiting reinforcements."

Amid the tensions over Ukraine, the Baltic states have called for an increased presence of other NATO troops as a deterrent against Russia.

AFP

Embattled rappers fight to speak out in troubled DR Congo

Goma, DR Congo - "I don't sing to avenge my family, but because other innocent people who know nothing about politics continue to die," says imprisoned Congolese rapper Idengo.

"I wanted to change the country with my music - it will help me to create a new Congo," he adds.

Idengo - real name Delphin Katembo - is the only surviving member of a family of five devastated by conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and exemplifies the challenges faced by dissenting artists as the bloodshed knows no end.

A military tribunal in December convicted Idengo and fellow rapper Muyisa Nzanzu Makasi over song lyrics deemed dangerous and detrimental to President Felix Tshisekedi and the DR Congo's army.

Tshisekedi placed the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri under a 'state of siege' last May, aiming to intensify a military offensive against rebels, with sol-

diers replacing civil servants in key positions.

But the measures have not stemmed the killings, stoking anger among the local population and driving the two rappers' emotionally and politically charged music.

The men, who hail from North Kivu, spoke with AFP from their prison in the provincial capital Goma where they are awaiting an appeal hearing.

'Tired of their promises'

Idengo, now 25, had a precocious passion for politically conscious rapping.

He says he was only around 10 years old when he produced his first song, 'Droits de l'Homme (Human Rights)', and gave his first concert at 14 in his hometown of Beni.

He was first imprisoned for his songs in 2019 and ended up behind bars again early last year for the track 'Politicien Escroc' (Cheating Politician).



The entrance to the recording studio of the Congolese rapper Idengo in Beni (AFP)

Another single, 'Effacer le Tableau' (Wipe the Slate Clean), prompted his latest arrest in October and led to his 10-year jail term on accusations of urging people to kill soldiers, police officers and UN peacekeepers.

A YouTube music video

shows Idengo dressed in torn fatigues, pretending to lop off heads with a bush cutter.

"They sacrifice us for money, we're tired of their promises," he sings, alternating between French and Swahili.

Idengo's lawyers argued in

court that psychological trauma explained the explosive lyrics.

His friend Bienvenu Sondu says Idengo's mother was killed in 2013 or 2014 and his father was killed 'sometime later'.

'Several other' relatives were 'massacred' by the Allied Demo-

cratic Forces (ADF) rebel group, he says, adding that Idengo's brothers are dead.

The ADF is the fiercest among dozens of armed groups operating in the mineral-rich east of the DRC.

'Awaken consciences'

Muyisa, for his part, never got to know his father following the massacres, living with his mother and failing to finish university studies in IT management.

Younger sister Wivine remembers how he started singing at their local Catholic church when still in primary school.

"He loves peace, so he began searching for peace," she says.

Muyisa, 29, recounts starting music - 'the revolution' - in 2020.

"If things change tomorrow, I'll move on to something else. But what's happening here pushes me to make my voice heard," he says.

"Bob Marley used to say music can change anything. I don't want to be a saviour, a

hero, but I'm trying to awaken consciences."

Muyisa received a two-year prison sentence for insulting the head of state.

Speaking at his trial with Idengo, Muyisa said 'nothing' had changed despite Tshisekedi's promises to put an end to the killings.

"That's why I say that the people in government are louts, idiots. But I didn't insult the president, I reminded him of his work," he insists.

Portraits of Patrice Lumumba, independent DR Congo's first prime minister who was assassinated in 1961, and of Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the president who met the same fate in 2001, adorn the walls outside Idengo's recording studio in Beni.

"His conviction is shameful. The Grand Nord population is behind him!" Cesar Mutukufu Mukombozi, a 30-year-old fan, told AFP from near the recording studio.

AFP

Ottawa mayor declares state of emergency over 'out of control' protest against curbs

Montreal, Canada - The ongoing truckers' protest in the Canadian capital is 'out of control', the Ottawa mayor said on Sunday, announcing a state of emergency as the city centre remained blocked by opponents of anti-COVID measures.

The protesters, who first reached the capital on January 29, have parked their big rigs on city streets and put up tents and temporary shacks - paralysing the capital to the consternation of officials and the mounting frustration of many residents.

Mayor Jim Watson announced a state of emergency that 'reflects the serious danger and threat to the safety and security of residents posed by the ongoing demonstrations and highlights the need for support from other jurisdictions and levels of government', a statement from the city said.

Earlier in the day, Watson had described the situation as 'completely out of control', adding that the protesters 'have far more people than we have police officers'. "Clearly, we are outnumbered and we are losing this battle," he told CFRA radio. "This has to be reversed; we have to get our city back."

Watson called the truckers 'insensitive', as they have continued 'blaring horns and sirens and fireworks, and turning



A counter protester holds a sign as truckers and supporters protest against COVID-19 mandates and restrictions in Ottawa on Saturday (AFP)

it into a party'.

The demonstrations began as protests by truckers angry with vaccine requirements when crossing the US-Canadian border, but have morphed into broader protests against COVID-19 health restrictions and the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Locals have complained of the ceaseless sound of air horns and

of being harassed, insulted or blocked by the protesters.

The truckers and their supporters have dug in, however, saying the protests will continue until the COVID-related restrictions are lifted.

Police on Sunday announced new measures to stop people from helping the protesters keep up their sit-in.

"Anyone attempting to bring

material supports (gas, etc.) to the demonstrators could be subject to arrest," the force tweeted, adding on Sunday night that several arrests had been made.

'Extremely disruptive'

Similar, if smaller, demonstrations hit the cities of Toronto, Quebec City and Winnipeg on Saturday.

Police in Quebec City said some 30 big trucks were blocking a major artery and had been warned they would face fines if they did not move soon.

Later on Sunday police said on Twitter that all the trucks had left but protest organisers promised to return in two weeks, once the ongoing Quebec Winter Carnival was over.

In an emergency meeting on

Saturday with Ottawa officials, police chief Peter Sloly complained that he lacked the resources to end what he called a 'siege', and asked for reinforcements. Ottawa police are due to soon be reinforced by some 250 Royal Canadian Mounted Police - a federal force.

"This group is a threat to our democracy," city council member Diane Deans said of the protesters on Saturday. "What we're seeing is bigger than just a city of Ottawa problem, this is a nationwide insurrection. This is madness."

The police said on Sunday that they had issued some 450 tickets since Saturday morning, for a variety of mostly minor infractions including excessive noise and use of fireworks, though one truck that turned out to be stolen was seized.

They said 'extremely disruptive' protesters had in some cases endangered public safety, causing 'unacceptable distress' to local residents.

Police have opened 97 investigations into possible criminal offences, the statement said.

In addition, it said, the police are 'actively working with Canadian, US and international security agencies/authorities to investigate email-based threats to public officials'.

AFP

Australia to reopen its borders for tourists

Sydney, Australia - Australia will reopen its borders to tourists from February 21, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced on Monday, ending some of the world's strictest and longest-running pandemic travel restrictions. "It's almost two years since we took the decision to close the borders to Australia," Morrison said, announcing borders will reopen to all visa holders 'on the 21st of February of this year'.

"If you're double vaccinated, we look forward to welcoming you back to Australia," he said.

Australia's ports and airports slammed shut to tourists in March 2020 with the aim of protecting the island continent against the pandemic. Since then, Australians have been barred from leaving and only a handful of visitors have been granted exemptions to enter.

The rules have stranded nationals overseas, split families, hammered the country's multi-billion-dollar tourist industry and prompted often bitter debates about Australia's openness to the rest of the world.

"Bout time," said Melbourne resident Marshall McDonald. "It's exciting. It almost feels like the end of a period of hermit kingdom-ness ending."

AFP

Protests over hijab ban grow in India

Udupi, India - A ban on Islamic headscarves at schools has prompted an outcry among Muslims in southern India, with large crowds taking to the streets on Monday to protest against the restrictions.

The stand-off in Karnataka state has galvanised fears among the minority community about what they say is increasing persecution under the Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Students at a government-run high school were told not to wear hijabs last month, an edict that soon spread to at least two other educational institutions in the state.

"It's discriminatory in nature and also it's against the rights that are provided under the constitution of India," Sumayya Roushan, president of the Girls Islamic Organisation Karnataka, said at a press conference on Monday.

Roushan said the ban violated 'a personal choice that the students are entitled to, which does-



Students wearing hijabs arrive at their college in Udupi district in India's Karnataka state on Monday (AFP)

n't... harm any other person'.

Social media footage showed hundreds of people gathered on roads and waving Indian flags in at least two towns in Karnataka, the latest in several days of demonstrations held to condemn the bans.

One of the schools has since partially yielded, allowing its female Muslim students to attend class with a hijab but instructing

them to sit in separate classrooms, according to local media.

Two other schools that had implemented a hijab ban declared a holiday and were closed on Monday.

Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party governs Karnataka state and several prominent members have thrown their support behind the ban, which has been criticised by other

political leaders.

"By letting students' hijab come in the way of their education, we are robbing the future of the daughters of India," Rahul Gandhi of the opposition Congress party tweeted last week.

The state's top court is expected to hear petitions on Tuesday and rule on whether to overturn the bans.

AFP

Indonesia bus crash leaves 13 dead

Solo, Indonesia - At least 13 people were killed and dozens more injured after a tour bus carrying factory workers to a beach holiday crashed on Indonesia's Java island, according to police.

The bus and its 47 passengers were headed from Sukoharjo in Central Java to a family gathering in neighbouring Yogyakarta province when the driver lost control going downhill, officers said late Sunday.

"Witnesses we questioned said they saw the driver panicking as he tried to manage the gear stick, so there's an indication the brake was not functioning or faulty," Bantul district police chief Ihsan, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, told a media briefing.

Deadly traffic accidents are common in the archipelago nation of 270mn, where vehicles are often old and poorly maintained and road rules are routinely ignored.

"Thirteen people died. Some died on the scene and others died while being treated in the hospital, while 34 others were in-



Residents check the bus after it crashed in Yogyakarta on Sunday (AFP)

jured," Ihsan said, adding the injured had been taken to three nearby hospitals.

The driver was among those who died when the bus tipped over and slammed into the side of the road, destroying the front of the vehicle and badly damaging its right side.

Multiple passengers sustained head injuries and three toddlers were also hurt, according to the police chief.

Shortly before the crash, pas-

sengers had been asked to temporarily disembark, as the bus was having difficulty going uphill, Ihsan said.

In March last year, a bus carrying dozens of pilgrims plunged into a deep ravine in Sumedang, West Java province, killing 29 people.

In late 2019, at least 35 people were killed when a bus plunged into a ravine on the island of Sumatra.

AFP

Humanitarian crisis feared as cyclone kills 20 in Madagascar

Antananarivo, Madagascar - Cyclone Batsirai swept out of Madagascar on Monday after killing 20 people, displacing 55,000 and devastating the drought-hit island's agricultural heartland, leading the UN to warn of a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Madagascar was already reeling from a tropical storm which killed 55 people weeks earlier, and the latest extreme weather event came as South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said the continent is 'bearing both the brunt and the cost' of global warming.

Batsirai made landfall on the Indian Ocean island's east on Saturday evening bringing heavy rain and winds of 165km per hour, after drenching the French island of La Reunion.

Jean Benoit Manhes, a representative of UN children's

agency UNICEF in the country, told AFP on Monday that 'Batsirai left Madagascar this morning at 7am (0400 GMT) heading out into the Mozambique Channel'.

Madagascar's disaster management agency said that Batsirai had left 20 people dead and forced 55,000 from their homes.

UNICEF warned that many of the victims were likely to be children, which make up more than 50 per cent of the country's population.

The cyclone first hit a sparsely populated agricultural area in the country's east on Saturday, before later weakening. The eastern city of Mananjary was 'completely destroyed', a resident named Faby said.

'Constant humanitarian crisis'
Batsirai then moved west inland,



Relatives sit next to bodies exhumated from graves destroyed by a cyclone at a cemetery in Mahanoro on Sunday (AFP)

causing flooding that ravaged rice fields in the country's central 'breadbasket', UNICEF said.

"The impact of the cyclone

does not end today, it will last for several months, particularly the impact on agriculture," Manhes said.

"The roofs of several schools and health centres were blown off" in the affected areas, UNICEF said.

Batsirai spared the capital Antananarivo and the island's main port Tamatave, which led to a lower death toll than had been initially feared by the authorities and aid organisations, who had warned that nearly 600,000 people could be affected and 140,000 displaced.

Some 77 per cent of Madagascar's population live below the poverty line and the latest blow comes during a severe drought in the south which has plunged more than a million people into acute malnutrition, some facing famine. The cyclone partly destroyed the main road linking the island's north and south, 'which will make it difficult to provide access and reinforcements to villages, including in drought-hit areas', Manhes said.

"Madagascar is in a constant humanitarian crisis," he added.

Some 10,000 people on La

Reunion were left without electricity on Sunday, three days after Batsirai passed through the island, injuring 12 people on its path. Tropical Storm Ana affected at least 131,000 people across Madagascar in late January, with most of the 55 deaths coming in Antananarivo. Ana also hit Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, causing dozens of deaths.

South Africa's President Ramaphosa told a summit of African leaders on Sunday that the continent was 'experiencing the worst impacts of phenomena associated with global warming such as droughts, floods and cyclones'.

"Despite not being responsible for causing climate change, it is Africans who are bearing both the brunt and the cost," he said.

AFP

LUXURY LABELS



SOLD OUT OR UNSOLD

French luxury houses give unsold goods a second chance with discounts, donations and upcycling

In the extravagant world of the French luxury industry, brands used to prefer destroying their unsold goods rather than offering their high-priced products at a discount. But gone are the days of binning the coats, handbags and shoes pooh-poohed by shoppers after a new anti-waste law came into force at the start of the year.

Now, luxury houses are managing their stocks more carefully, offering deals to staff, making donations, and recycling goods.

"It's a subject that has become important today," said Julie el Ghouzzi, a luxury goods expert at the Cultz consulting agency. She pointed to the scandal that engulfed Burberry in 2018 after the British luxury brand disclosed that it had destroyed 28mn pounds (US\$38mn) of unsold goods in 2017 - the equivalent of 20,000 of its trench coats.

Following the firestorm the revelation triggered, Burberry announced it would halt the practice from the following year.

Markdowns to move goods are not an option in the luxury business as lower prices can undermine the attractiveness of their labels, which thrive on their elite status. However, "In the luxury sector, if the price tag is lower, so is the desire to buy it," said Ghouzzi.

Management of stocks

Luxury houses are paying more attention to the subject now, said Arnaud Cadart, a portfolio manager at Paris-based asset manager Flornoy.

"Mentalities have changed, we're no longer in an economy that values unbridled creation above all else," he said. Also gone is the mentality that "if it doesn't work, we'll destroy it," said Cadart.

Now luxury houses strive to fine-tune their stocks. The Kering group, which owns the Gucci, Saint Laurent, and Balenciaga labels, among others, has invested in artificial

intelligence in order to better manage its stock.

At its competitor LVMH, the world's largest luxury group that includes Louis Vuitton, Dior, and Celine, among many others, environmental development director Helene Valade said, "The luxury business model is closely adjusted to demand" with low levels of stock being held by the firms.

Nevertheless, she acknowledged that the new law will push luxury houses to learn even more about their clients to better antic-



Mentalities have changed, we're no longer in an economy that values unbridled creation above all else

ARNAUD CADART

ipate their purchases and thus reduce stocks to a minimum.

Ghouzzi pointed out, that Louis Vuitton is already quite good at keeping track of its stock. "They know exactly what they have in stock and are capable of managing it down to the millimeter," she said, adding, "that's not the case in many other houses."

When there are unsold goods, selling them to staff at advantageous prices is one option. These large fashion groups have large staffs, with more than 150,000 employees at LVMH, 38,000 at Kering and 16,600 at Hermes. Gifts to associations is another option.

LVMH has a partnership with Cravate Solidaire, an association that collects donations of professional clothing and provides it

to people with disadvantaged backgrounds trying to land jobs.

Upcycling

Designers have also begun to make use of discarded or leftover materials, a practice often called upcycling.

"Previously, a designer with a brilliant idea would go search for materials to realise an idea," LVMH's Valade told AFP. "Today, the process is sometimes the reverse. There are certain designers who start with materials at hand - old collections, unused fabric hanging about, leftover bits of leather... and it inspires them," she said.

This was the case for late American designer Virgil Abloh, who was the artistic director of Louis Vuitton's menswear collection from 2018 until his death in 2021.

Marc Jacobs in New York works with Fabscrap, which recycles unused fabric to create insulation or products like furniture lining, or donates it to students and artists to use for their creations.

LVMH also has a partnership with We-Turn, which collects unsold clothing and material to recycle it into new thread and fabric. Hermes said, that in 2020, it sold 39,000 upcycled products.

"The activities which destroy the most are fashion, leather goods, and cosmetics," said Hermes portfolio manager Cadart, adding, "Since 2014, Hermes has thrown out almost nothing, everything flies off the shelves," Cadart added.

Given the efforts undertaken and the current economic conditions, items are more often out of stock than lying about unsold.

At LVMH, Valade said, "Leather goods are, at the moment, in more of a situation of being out of stock" than not being sold. She pointed to an upcycled Loewe bag made from scrap leather cuttings that sells for 1,700 euros and which is currently out of stock.

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Looking for a job of a general fitter, maintenance and machine operator with 22 years of experience. Contact: 79501725 WhatsApp: +919747720359 email: dcnhaadrin@gmail.com

Indian male: Btech Civil Eng looking for suitable job: Contact:77273318

Send your request for Birthday/Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCES

Parents of a South Indian Sunni Muslim family, seeking suitable alliance for their son, an ACCA professional, 27years, 171cm . Early marriage. Send profile.WhatsApp 78595254

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



VAT

VAT Registrations, Quarterly Returns, Taxation Consultancy & Audit
Gulf Center Consultancy&Audit Chartered Accountants

Contact: 92469602/93949235
Offices at Muscat, Salalah, Sohar & Sur

NATURAL FIBRES

Season's Best

Whether braving the heat or cold, the fabrics you choose to wear have a bearing on your appearance and wellness. Natural fibres are ideal in every season as they add comfort and help avoid body odour



Every season dictates the fabrics that go best with the outfits that are 'in'. Some are good for summer, others for winter, and some for when there's a downpour. But every choice should be such that it is conducive to the climate and helps avoid body odour.

When it comes to fashion, polyester is one of the most common materials you will find on the market today. However, it is not a natural material. If you are looking for choices that prevent or reduce body odor, your best bets are natural fibres or some blends, says an article by fashion blogger Stephanie LaReine on www.stephienlareine.com.

If you sweat and have a non-breathable material that does not absorb mois-

ture, bacteria start to multiply and create an unpleasant stink. Natural fibres, on the other hand, are breathable and help keep your skin dry. Consider these options for men's clothing this winter:

Merino wool socks

You may have heard that cotton is great for preventing body odour, but keep in mind that it can make your feet feel hotter and gets damp with sweat in a warm climate. One of the best materials for socks is Merino wool. It absorbs up to 30% of its weight in moisture and leaves your feet still feeling dry. Also, it has natural anti-microbial properties. You can find plenty of new brands online that are environmentally conscious as well.

Linen trousers

Ideal for summer, linen trousers go very well in winter, too. Linen is a natural material that is very breathable, which

makes it a good choice for trousers. Whether you are going to an indoor or outdoor in the sun, linen trousers come in several styles to match nearly any occasion. There are several good brands that sell linen trousers.

Modal T-shirts

Many new brands make blended shirts. T-shirts can be worn alone or under heavier clothing if you need to layer up on a cold day. The benefits of modal's softness and antimicrobial properties, when combined with the natural breathability and softness of cotton, make for an excellent and comfortable shirt. Another benefit of modal is that it makes shirts more resistant to wrinkles than all-cotton shirts. Additionally, the material is priced affordably.

Boxers and shorts

Boxers are designed to be loose and airy,

but the material they are made from is also important. One under-appreciated combination is cotton and modal. Cotton is natural, soft and breathable. However, modal is twice as soft as cotton and has antimicrobial properties. It also wicks moisture to help you stay dry.

For shorts, flax linen is a great choice since its fibres are hollow, which makes it easier for water or air to circulate. Although cotton and linen both absorb moisture, linen can absorb more.

Merino wool sweatshirts

Whether you want a pullover or zip-up sweatshirt, there are plenty of wool options today. Many new brands now offer men's clothing that is made from Merino wool for its antimicrobial and warmth benefits. It has a special texture that naturally resists odours, but it can still develop odour over time or if you store it

away during a season in a musty area. Some heavier wool garments can only be dry cleaned. However, some can be washed in a machine on the wool cycle setting.

Linen-wool blend coats

A warm coat that is not too heavy is hard to find but desired by many men. Wool and linen are both great at absorbing plenty of moisture. But, when it comes to buying a blended coat, you need to find one that is lighter in weight, will keep you warm, as well as prevent odours. If you have some washable clothes that are still holding on to an unpleasant odour, you can soak them in vinegar or baking soda for an hour or so before you put them in the washing machine.



WINTER BOOTS

These days, men, just as women, do put much thought into their boots. They carefully decide on either stylish ankle boots or high winter boots to match their trousers and overall attire. Winter is invariably that time of the year when boots take centre stage and become an important part of one's wardrobe.

One can wear a pair of tight pants or jeans and tuck the legs into casual leather boots. Whether you choose the Italian style boots, vintage boots or the cool lace-up types, you can create your own signature style for a smart look. However, if you do not have lean legs, wearing a pair of loose pants that cover black ankle boots is a nice idea, too.

High boots are not only for tall men, if you roll up your trouser legs, you can sport them with ease even if you are just five feet tall. For a cool, street smart style, choose the best men's ankle boots, in leather, suede, or even canvas.

When these simple men's ankle boots meet a pair of casual pants, you can present an elegant personality and move around with ease.



Feuz wins ‘dream’ downhill gold

Yanqing, China - Switzerland's Beat Feuz scorched to gold in the men's Olympic downhill on Monday in a dramatic race that pitted skiers against an unforgiving course that was untested before the Games.

The Swiss racer clocked 1min 42.69sec, finishing 0.10sec ahead of 41-year-old Frenchman Johan Clarey, while Austrian Matthias Mayer claimed a third Olympic medal in three Games with bronze.

Clarey became the oldest alpine skiing medallist in Olympic history.

Pre-race favourite Aleksander Aamodt Kilde of Norway finished fifth, completing a miserable day for skiing's golden couple after his American girlfriend Mikaela Shiffrin slid out of the women's giant slalom earlier.

An elated Feuz whooped in the finish area after he saw the green light signifying he had taken the lead. He sent a ski twirling skywards, to the delight of a few hundred spectators made up mainly of volunteers and team members.

"It was perfect weather, no wind, and I was just standing perfectly on the skis. A dream came true," the 34-year-old said after he was confirmed as gold medallist in skiing's most prestigious Olympic event.

"The Olympics are a big thing, and today it worked for me. Four years ago I was second and third, but today everything came together. It means the world to me.

"I can't think of anything more beautiful than flying home with a gold medal around my neck."

Feuz, who won downhill



Switzerland's Beat Feuz competes in the men's downhill final during the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games at the Yanqing National Alpine Skiing Centre in Yanqing on February 7 (AFP)

bronze at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games (as well as super-G silver), and 2014 champion Mayer became just the eighth and ninth skiers to win multiple Olympic medals in the downhill.

Wise heads

In a race postponed from Sunday because of high winds, skiers cascaded down the "Rock" piste with a vertical drop of 890 metres (2,920 feet), quickly reaching motorway-cruising speeds of 140 kilometres per hour (87 miles per hour).

The Olympics are a big thing, and today it worked for me. Four years ago I was second and third, but today everything came together. It means the world to me

BEAT FEUZ

They soared in excess of 40 metres off some of the five jumps that punctuate a rolling man-made course.

A rip-roaring, snaky upper section left racers in no doubt about what awaited them. Arms

and poles flailed as skiers tried desperately to maintain equilibrium.

There was early drama as Germany's Dominik Schwaiger lost a ski in a crash, collided with the safety netting and came to a

halt in the middle of the piste, writhing in pain with what appeared to be a nastily injured forearm.

He was evacuated by stretcher, while Austrian Daniel Hemetsberger screamed past the finish line with blood streaming from his nose and mouth.

Feuz made no such mistake, however. The sturdy Swiss racer who thrives on testing pistes like the Streif in Kitzbuehel was best at negotiating the 40 gates of the 3.1km-long course, fashioned from artificial snow in a barren mountainscape in Yanqing, north

of Beijing.

Two World Cup races on the hill, in 2020 and 2021, were cancelled because of COVID-19 restrictions in China, meaning racers had little time for reconnaissance.

And it was the old heads that shone through.

Clarey's historic silver smashed the record for oldest Olympic medallist in alpine skiing that previously belonged to American Bode Miller, who won a super-G bronze in 2014 aged 36 years and 127 days.

"When you are a medallist,

MEDALS TABLE				
	G	S	B	T
Sweden	3	0	0	3
Russian O C	2	3	2	7
Netherlands	2	2	1	5
China	2	2	0	4
Germany	2	1	0	3
Norway	2	0	2	4
Slovenia	2	0	1	3
Italy	1	3	1	5
Canada	1	1	4	6
Japan	1	1	2	4
Australia	1	0	1	2
Switzerland	1	0	1	2
New Zealand	1	0	0	1
France	0	3	0	3
United States	0	3	0	3
Austria	0	2	2	4
Hungary	0	0	2	2
Finland	0	0	1	1
Poland	0	0	1	1

G Gold S Silver B Bronze T Total

(whether) you are 20 or 41 it doesn't matter, it's just an Olympic medal," said Clarey.

"Today I was fast. Not enough for the gold but silver is just my happiness."

Defending champion Aksel Lund Svindal, who earned Norway's first ever men's downhill gold medal in 2018, retired from the sport in 2019.

Much weighed on the shoulders of Kilde in Svindal's absence, but he was even beaten by Canada's James Crawford.

"I had high expectations for sure. It's been a great season and in the Olympics, when you stand there as a favourite, you want to deliver," said Kilde, who will turn his attention to the super-G.

"The Olympics are not over yet so I just have to keep on going."

AFP

Launching

SUBLUE

Underwater Scooters



Whiteshark Mix

Navbow+ Phantom Grey

Navbow+ Flame Orange

Swii - Orange

Introducing a new lifestyle of exploring the underwater worlds with the innovative underwater scooters from Subblue. Go further to meet new experiences with the smart, durable and agile underwater scooters that redefine enjoyment and take adventure to the next level.

OHI ELECTRONICS

Visit our showroom at Qurum City Centre to check out the Subblue range of underwater scooters or call us at 2447 0497 to know more!



Gold medallist Sara Hector celebrates on the podium during the victory ceremony of the women's giant slalom at Beijing Games (AFP)

Hector strikes giant slalom gold after Shiffrin bombs

Yanqing, China - Sweden's Sara Hector won the women's Olympic giant slalom on Monday in a race stripped of a showdown with Mikaela Shiffrin after the American slid out in the first leg.

Hector, fastest down on the opening run of two, clocked a combined total of 1min 55.69sec to finish 0.28sec ahead of Italy's Federica Brignone, with current world champion Lara Gut-Behrami of Switzerland rounding out the podium.

"I really tried to push it and give it all I got. It's just amazing," Hector said. "It's been so much all day. I've been so nervous. It's so much feeling, it's crazy. It's for sure a lot of joy."

Defending champion Shiffrin's bid for a third Olympic gold medal lasted only a handful of gates before she slipped wide and was unable to regain her line.

Dutch speed skater Wust is first to win at five Olympics

Beijing, China - Dutch speed skater Ireen Wust has become the first person to win a gold medal in an individual event at five different Olympics after retaining her 1500 metres title in Beijing on Monday.

Wust, 35, smashed the Olympic record to beat Miho Takagi of Japan in 1min 53.28sec, with her Dutch teammate Antoinette de Jong taking the bronze.

She won her first gold medal at the 2006 Turin Olympics and has taken a title at every Winter Games since -- a unique achievement

in summer or winter Olympics.

It was also a record-extending 12th Olympic speed skating medal for Wust, who has six golds in total.

Her victory was all the more remarkable because she had come into the Games just seventh in the World Cup rankings, which are topped by Takagi.

"This is just amazing. There's a lot of different emotions going through my mind right now. I mean, it's just bizarre that I was able to pull it off once again," Wust said.

AFP



Netherlands' Ireen Wust competes in the women's speed skating 1500m event during the Beijing 2022 Winter Games (AFP)

Snub no deterrent for crafty Yuzvendra Chahal

After missing out on a T20 World Cup berth, he is again underlining his importance in an era of quick legspin

Ahmedabad, India - In the team meeting prior to Sunday's first ODI against West Indies, India's captain Rohit Sharma revealed to Yuzvendra Chahal that he had noticed something from afar that may have been missed. The googly seemed to have gone missing from Chahal's repertoire in South Africa; thus, the importance of bowling a delivery that he usually executes with great success was underlined again.

When Kieron Pollard walked out to the middle three balls into Chahal's first over, Virat Kohli quickly ran in from extra cover to say something to the bowler. There was a slip, leg slip, short midwicket, mid-on and mid-off stationed. Was Kohli reminding Chahal of a plan? Perhaps. But what followed next wasn't utterly unpredictable.

Chahal landed a perfect wrong 'un on fourth stump. Pollard attempted a biff into the leg side but was far from the pitch of the delivery. The ball dipped on him and beat his swing to crash into the stumps. It was ODI wicket No. 101 for Chahal. Only a ball earlier, he had Nicholas Pooran misjudging the length to be given lbw to a full delivery. He had bowled a straighter line - the legbreak coming out of the front of his hand - with more sidespin. "If I missed my length, there was an 80 per cent chance of



India's Yuzvendra Chahal delivers a ball during the first ODI between India and West Indies on Feb 6 (AFP)

Pollard hitting me for six with that one," Chahal told Rohit in a post-game chat on bcci.tv. "As you pointed out, I also realised [that] the more I mix it up, [and] the more googlies I bowl, the better my legspin is."

The ball that followed Pollard's dismissal was another wrong 'un. A short leg was specifically placed for the lob. When new man Jason Holder stabbed at it without any conviction, the ball took the thick inside

edge only to fall short of the fielder. Chahal was now in his element. Using the crease well, varying his trajectory and angles. The wrong 'un was coming out of the hand superbly.

Across 29 overs in South

Africa, Chahal had bowled just 22 wrong 'uns for one wicket. The South Africans had taken him for 6.27 to the over with the googlies, much higher than his overall economy of 4.42, variations included, since July 2018. It wasn't as if the higher economy was made up for with more wickets; he managed just two in three games. But on Sunday, inside one over, he had bowled two rippers and created two chances - one resulted in a wicket, the other missing narrowly.

Legspinners the world over speak of their craft as being a confidence game. Sure, it may be true of every other facet of the game too, but legspin bowlers in particular need that much more

I also realised [that] the more I mix it up, [and] the more googlies I bowl, the better my legspin is

YUZVENDRA CHAHAL

going their way because their margin of error is at the bare minimum on surfaces largely tailored for batters. This margin for error reduces further when dew kicks in. This confidence only comes from having executed repeatedly, and with success.

The one thing Rohit has stressed on repeatedly has been the need to give role clarity to players and give them a long rope to ensure they don't feel the axe hangs over them. This is perhaps why they went with Chahal's experience in Ahmedabad, considering they also had two spinners - Washington Sundar and Kuldeep Yadav - coming back from injuries.

Cricinfo



Paul Collingwood

England name Collingwood as interim coach for West Indies tour

London, United Kingdom - Former all-rounder Paul Collingwood will take charge of England's Test tour of the West Indies next month after being installed as interim head coach, cricket chiefs announced on Monday.

The departures of head coach Chris Silverwood and assistant coach Graham Thorpe following England's humiliating 4-0 Ashes defeat in Australia left Collingwood as the highest-ranked member of the backroom team.

Collingwood, who oversaw England's recent 3-2 Twenty20 series defeat in the West Indies, will take charge for Tests in Antigua, Barbados and Grenada. The series starts on March 8.

The squad, which is likely to contain some new faces alongside the majority of the side that flopped in Australia, is set to be named on Tuesday. "I am genuinely excited to be leading the Test team for the tour of the Caribbean," said the 45-year-old. "I can't wait to get started."

"Having a challenging Test series against the West Indies straight off the back of the Ashes disappointment gives us a chance from now to reset and rebuild.

"Playing Test matches for England is the highest accolade in the game. My objective is to give players clarity, direction and encouragement for them to start building something special."

England's red-ball side has struggled over the 12 months, winning just one of their past 14 Tests, and Collingwood must now begin the job of halting that sequence.

"I have spoken to Joe Root and Ben Stokes (captain and vice-captain), and both are excited and passionate to take the team forward in this new cycle," he said.

"Although they know it won't be easy, they have the desire and bravery to do things differently to ensure the team can prosper. We have an opportunity to get back on track."

AFP

Victories for Al Jadidi, Design Group, Ideal, Danmark

MUSCAT: Aneermon Abdulrahman's strokeful 54 off 31 and Wasim Ismail's four for 11 were the highlights of Al Jadidi Stars' 83-run victory against ABL Task in an A Division T20 League game at Oman Cricket Turf 2 ground in Amerat on Saturday.

Al Jadidi's 174 for five also included 48 from Pradeep Kumar and 30 from Nishanth Meethalveedu. Mohammed Abbas picked up three for 33 whereas Prathiesh Hema grabbed two for 35.

ABL Task was shot out for a disappointing 91 in 19.1 overs due to brilliant bowling by Wasim, Ali Muhammed (2 for 11) and Parameswaran Shankar (2 for 13).

BRIEF SCORES

(A Division T20): Al Jadidi Stars 174 for 5 in 20 overs (Aneermon Abdulrahman 54 - 2x4, 6x6, Pradeep Kumar 48 - 3x4, 1x6, Nishanth Meethalveedu 30 -

3x4, 1x6, Mohammed Abbas 3-33, Prathiesh Hema 2-35) beat ABL Task 91 all out in 19.1 overs (Ravi 29 - 4x4, 1x6, Wasim Ismail 4-11, Ali Muhammed 2-11, Parameswaran Shankar 2-13) by 83 runs.

Waseem ton lifts Design Group

Design Group rode on Sayeed Waseem's magnificent 57-ball 117 to thrash OCT Al Amerat by 155 runs in a C Division T20 League match at Muscat Municipality ground 2 on Friday.

Waseem's 117 included 20 fours and one six as Design Group posted 238 for 9 on the board. Rafeeq Mohammed and Nasser Haider claimed three wickets each.

After a forgettable day with the ball, OCT Amerat failed to impress with the bat too, scoring a lowly 83 for 8 in 20 overs due to superb spells by Satham Hus-

sain (3 for 5) and Muhammed Althaf (3 for 13). Rafeeq Mohammed topped scored with 26.

BRIEF SCORES

(C Division T20): Design Group Engineering Consultants 238 for 9 in 20 overs (Sayeed Waseem 117 - 20x4, 1x6, Parvez Beg 35 - 5x4, Rafeeq Mohammed 3-24, Nasser Haider 3-45) beat OCT Al Amerat 83 for 8 in 20 overs (Rafeeq Mohammed 26 - 4x4, Satham Hussain 3-5, Muhammed Althaf 3-13) by 155 runs.

Ideal thrashes Nibrass

In another C Division game at Muscat Municipality ground 1, Ideal International trounced Nibrass Tech by 9 wickets thanks to Ruban Durai's top knock of 57 and Salman Khan's three for 20.

Salman was instrumental in Nibrass getting bowled out for

115 in the 18th over with Shahrukh Varus and Deepak Bhandari taking two wickets each.

Riding on Ruban's fantastic fifty, Ideal raced to the target in only 11.5 overs, scoring 116 for 1. Wasim Jamadar chipped in with a fluent 30 off 17.

BRIEF SCORES

(C Division): Nibrass Tech 115 all out in 17.2 overs (Waqas Khalid 23 - 4x4, Salman Khan 3-20, Shahrukh Varus 2-19, Deepak Bhandari 2-30) lost to Ideal International 116 for 1 in 11.5 overs (Ruban Durai 57 - 10x4, Wasim Jamadar 30 - 5x4, 1x6) by 9 wickets.

Sankarlal helps Danmark to victory

Sankarlal Sasidharan's outstanding all-round display powered Danmark CT to an impressive 53-run win over Safara Interna-

tional in a D Division T20 match at Muscat Municipality ground 3 in Amerat on Friday.

Danmark did well to reach 180 for 8 in 20 overs thanks to Sankarlal's 42-ball 64 and Muhammed Basheer's 36 off 22. Aksaar Sardar took 3 for 22 whereas Nadeem Pewekar claimed 2 for 7.

Sankarlal was brilliant with the ball too, taking 3 for 21 as Safara International was restricted to 127 for 9 despite Hardik Toprani's unbeaten 45.

BRIEF SCORES

(D Division T20): Danmark CT 180 for 8 in 20 overs (Sankarlal Sasidharan 64 - 9x4, Muhammed Basheer 36 - 7x4, Aksaar Sardar 3-22, Nadeem Pewekar 2-7) beat Safara International 127 for 9 in 20 overs (Hardik Toprani 45 - 3x4, Sankarlal Sasidharan 3-21) by 53 runs.

SPECIAL DISCOUNT

RD 50 ONLY (31.50% discount)

RD 20 ONLY (28.57% discount)

- Hot & Cold Dispenser
- 2 Full Bottles
- 25 Refill Coupons

- White Tap Dispenser/ Tap Dispenser/ Manual Water Pump/ Cradle with Tap
- 2 Full Bottles
- 15 Refill Coupons

BUY & WIN 310 PRIZES

Get your raffle coupon on

- Purchase of RD 20 or RD 50 offer or
- Coupon book worth RD 20

- Gold Coins
- Gift Vouchers
- Oman Oasis Water Coupons

Register your raffle coupon number at www.omanoasis.com/discount2022 to win.

CALL TOLL-FREE 800 71 222 or GSM: 9275 5522

Special discount valid from 1st January 2022 to 31st March 2022. Conditions apply.

Scan QR Code to Register

C.R.No.: 1365452 HPR 06/04/2022

Sifra

SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER

The healthy choice

Call Toll-Free 800 71 222 or GSM 9275 5522

f OmanOasis @ OmanOasisOfficial OmanOasisWater www.omanoasis.com

C.R. No.: 1365452

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

Senegal's Cup of Nations triumph sees potential fulfilled at last

Yaoundé, Cameroon - After years of underachievement, Sadio Mane's Senegal finally lived up to their billing as Africa's outstanding team with victory in the Cup of Nations, even if they did it the hard way in the final against Egypt.

Mane could have been the fall guy in his showdown with Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah after his seventh-minute penalty was saved at the Olembe Stadium in Yaounde.

However, after a turgid final finished 0-0 in extra time, he redeemed himself by converting the decisive spot-kick in the shoot-out which the Lions of Teranga won 4-2 before Egypt captain Salah had the chance to take his team's last shot.

"You know what made the difference when I missed the first penalty? All my teammates came up to me and said 'Who cares, we are a team, we win together and we lose together'," Mane said.

He and his fellow Senegalese players had just burst into coach Aliou Cisse's press conference, singing and dancing as they celebrated finally ending decades of disappointment.

Africa's top-ranked national team and 20th in the world, Senegal lost the last Cup of Nations final in 1919, falling 1-0 to Algeria in Cairo, never recovering from a second-minute goal.

They also lost the 2002 final on penalties to Samuel Eto'o and Cameroon, a few months before becoming one of just three African teams to reach a World Cup quarter-final.



Senegal's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Africa Cup of Nations final football match against Egypt at Stade d'Olembe in Yaounde on February 6 (AFP)

Cisse was captain then and coach in 2019. It is third time lucky for him, while Mane was one of four survivors from the last final to start against Egypt.

Mane 'living a dream'
"It's the best day of my life, I

think it's the most important trophy of my life," Mane said.

"I'm living a dream. I can't believe it. The wait was long but finally we did it. We are all happy and proud to win this trophy."

Senegal gained independence in 1960 but rarely qualified

for the Cup of Nations over the next three decades and only emerged as a force with the 2002 side featuring Cisse and one-time Liverpool forward El Hadji Diouf.

"The Senegalese people have suffered a lot but I dedicate this

trophy to Aliou Cisse. You can't begin to understand what he has brought to Senegalese football. He deserves everything," said Mane. The 29-year-old former African footballer of the year, draws most of the attention but Senegal's strength in

depth is unique on the continent.

Mendy's memorable year
Their team in Sunday's final also contained nine starters based in Europe's big five leagues, includ-

ing skipper Kalidou Koulibaly of Napoli, right-back Bouna Sarr of Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain duo Abdou Diallo and Idrissa Gana Gueye.

For Chelsea's Edouard Mendy, the victory caps a remarkable nine months in which he also won the UEFA Champions League and the FIFA Best goalkeeper of the year award.

The giant 29-year-old missed

It's the best day of my life, I think it's the most important trophy of my life

SADIO MANE

the beginning of his team's adventure in Cameroon due to COVID-19 before reclaiming the gloves. His save from Egypt's Mohamad Lasheen in Sunday's shoot-out paved the way for Mane to win the title.

AFP

Topfruit

Every day, all day!

Topfruit PREMIUM NO ADDED SUGAR

RED BERRIES MIX

توبفروت

دروب انشابة سكر

Topfruit 100% JUICE

ORANGE NO ADDED SUGAR

Mane vs Salah again in WC play-off in March

Yaoundé, Cameroon - Sadio Mane trumped Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah in the Africa Cup of Nations final, but the Egyptian will soon have a chance to even the score in a World Cup play-off.

Egypt confront Mane-inspired Senegal home and away in March with a ticket to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar at stake.

Ghana meet Nigeria, Cameroon play Algeria, Mali face Tunisia and the Democratic Republic of Congo tackle Morocco in the other play-offs.

But it is the showdown between the Egyptian Pharaohs and the Senegalese Teranga Lions that will capture the imagination with Premier League sharpshooters Salah and Mane dominating the headlines.

Mane not only helped Senegal conquer Africa for the first time after a penalty shootout triumph in Cameroon on Sunday, he was also voted the player of the tournament.

The 29-year-old scored three of the nine Senegalese goals in seven matches and recovered



(From L) Senegal's Sadio Mane, Egypt's Mohamed Salah and Mohamed Abogabal during AFCON final (AFP)

swiftly from being injured in a last-16 win over Cape Verde to inspire his team.

After a slow start to the 29-day flagship African tournament, Salah led his team through a far harder knockout-phase path than Senegal to the title decider.

Effectively facing three finals before the final, Egypt pipped the

Ivory Coast on penalties, came from behind to beat Morocco in extra time, then overcame Cameroon in another shootout.

Abou Gabal, who surprisingly lost out to final rival Edouard Mendy for the goalkeeper of the tournament award, kept Senegal at bay in regular and extra time.

But he may not face Mane in

the World Cup if first choice keeper Mohamed Elshenawy recovers from an injury sustained against the Ivorians.

Queiroz conundrum
It is a conundrum for coach Carlos Queiroz, who must watch the first leg of the play-off from a stand unless an appeal against a

red card in the Cup of Nations clash with Cameroon succeeds.

His assistant, South African Roger de Sa, was banned for four matches after an undisclosed incident following the victory over Morocco, ruling him out of both legs.

Seeking a fourth straight World Cup appearance, after guiding Portugal in 2010 and Iran in 2014 and 2018, the former Real Madrid manager and twice Manchester United assistant manager has his work cut out.

But for Abou Gabal, Senegal would have won the final by several goals in 90 minutes, while Egypt created few scoring opportunities.

After suffering a first shootout loss at a Cup of Nations, Egypt have also lost the aura of invincibility when it comes to penalty taking.

Mali, alone among the 10 contenders in not having qualified for a World Cup, defeated Tunisia 1-0 through an Ibrahima Kone penalty in a controversial Cup of Nations group match.

AFP

AQUAFINA

bottled drinking water

500ml

pepita

ONLY

WHAT'S

ESSENTIAL

Jeep®



A LEGEND REDESIGNED

THE FIRST-EVER SEVEN-SEATER GRAND CHEROKEE L

Exceptional capability, stunning looks, the latest technology and complete comfort for all seven passengers. The all-new three-row Jeep Grand Cherokee L will turn every journey into a wildly civilized adventure.

**Visit our showrooms across Oman
to book a test-drive today.**

BOOK A TEST DRIVE