

Oman crude price at \$100

Oman oil price for May delivery on Tuesday reached \$100, comprising a decline by \$9.91 from the price of Monday, which was \$109.91. The average price of Oman oil for March delivery has stabilised at \$83.62, thus \$10.48 per barrel higher than February delivery. Brent crude futures dropped as much as 8 per cent after concerns over supply were eased by ongoing Ukraine ceasefire talks and as rising Covid-19 cases in China suggested slower economic growth and less demand for oil.



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OMAN POST
THIRD WIN
IN AHF CUP



P13

PACT TO PROGRESS
\$1 BN WASTE-TO-
ENERGY PROJECT



P20

WAVES OF
CHANGE ON THE
QURUM BEACH



MUSCAT

MOU TO OPERATE AND DEVELOP KHASAB PORT

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Oman International Container Terminal Company (Hutchison Ports Sohar) to manage, develop and operate the Port of Khasab. The MoU was signed by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Anson Kim, CEO of Oman International Container Terminal.

DETAILS ON P13

RIYADH

YEMEN TALKS TO BE HELD IN SAUDI

Gulf Arab countries are seeking to host talks between Yemen's warring parties, including the Ansar Allah, in Riyadh at the end of the month, officials said on Tuesday. Yemen has been wracked by a devastating war since 2014, pitting the Ansar Allah against the internationally recognised government. Repeated diplomatic efforts to get the two sides to agree a peace deal have failed over the years.

DETAILS ON P6

BRUSSELS

NATO CALLS SUMMIT ON UKRAINE WAR

The Nato military alliance is to hold an extraordinary summit in Brussels on March 24 to coordinate its response to Russia's war in Ukraine, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said as US President Joe Biden will use the trip to the emergency Nato summit next week to assert Washington's "iron-clad" backing to its allies, the White House said on Tuesday. At the March 24th summit in Brussels, Biden will "reaffirm our iron-clad commitment to our Nato allies", Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters.

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RUSSIA GOT US GUARANTEES ON IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

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WHAT ABOUT THE CLIMATE DISPLACED?

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WINNERS OF BILARAB AWARD ANNOUNCED



HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said presided over the award ceremony of the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design at the Royal Opera House Muscat, on Tuesday. 'Muttrah Square' project designed by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Jahdhami, Umaima bint Mahmoud al Hinaiyah and Abdullah bin Saleh al Bahri, came in the first place. Nasser bin Salam al Haimli won the second place for his project 'Foundation Monument', while the third place went to Tahira al Busafi for her project 'Oman Future Pavilion'.

DETAILS ON P2

Decline in Covid cases augurs well for Ramadhan

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

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With the holy month of Ramadhan just round the corner, there are fears of new restrictions to limit the spread of the coronavirus like the past two years when shops were closed and working hours were shortened, which led to the absence of the spirit of the holy month.

But specialists expect that Ramadhan this year will be different and free of restrictions, as the country sees fall in Covid-19 cases and the rate of herd immunity (from immunisation and previous

infections) is high. Dr Zakaria al Balushi said: "We will have a normal Ramadhan this year without closures and in a holy atmosphere as we had in 2019 and before the pandemic."

He stressed that the effect of vaccinations on enhancing societal immunity is clear to everyone and it is possible for those who still question its effectiveness to compare countries with high vaccination rates with countries with low vaccination rates. He called upon everyone to avoid spreading rumours related to the efficiency of vaccination and instead encourage people to take it.

27 usufruct agreements signed for projects

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, MARCH 15

Dr Mohammed bin Ali al Muttawa, Under-Secretary for Urban Planning at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, on Tuesday signed 27 usufruct agreements for establishing filling stations as well as commercial and industrial projects in a number of governorates.

The agreements also involved construction of 30 housing units for citizens affected by cyclone Shaheen in North Al Batinah Governorate.

The signing of the agreements was part of the Oman Design and Build Week being held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

These included 12 land usufruct agreements for setting up filling stations in the governorates of Dhofar, Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta and South Al Sharqiyah.

Also signed were 15 usufruct agreements for use of commercial and industrial lands in the governorates of Muscat, South Al Batinah, Al Dakhiliyah and Al Wusta, with a space exceeding 71,000 sq metres and a total investment value of RO 3 million.

Within the context of social partnership between the public and the private sector to mitigate the impact of cyclone Shaheen, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning signed an agreement for the construction

of 30 residential units for citizens whose houses were damaged during the cyclone in the wilayats of Al Suwaiq and Al Khabourah in North Al Batinah Governorate, with a total cost of RO 2 million. This comes as part of an initiative undertaken by the ministry to construct 328 housing units in compensation for houses affected by the cyclone in North Al Batinah Governorate.

Within the framework of its participation in Oman Design and Build Week, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, on Tuesday launched the 'Urban Planning Hackathon' which aims at the redesigning of public parks in a sustainable and modern manner.



Ahmed, Umaina and Abdullah bag Bilarab Award

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His Highness Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said presented the Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design at the Royal Opera House Muscat on Tuesday.

Muttrah Square project designed by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Jahdhami, Umaina bint Mahmoud al Hinaiyah and Abdullah bin Saleh al Bahri, came in the first place. Nasser bin Salam al Haimli won the second award for his project 'Foundation Monument' while the third place went to Tahira al Busafi for her project Oman Future Pavilion.

10 projects were shortlisted for the final stage, which included innovative designs and concepts for architectural landmarks inspired by Omani culture, in addition to shrines and tourist facilities.

The winner of the award receives a cash prize of RO 20,000. Second and third place winners will get RO 15,000 and RO 10,000. Three top winners were honoured with the shields which will be presented in digital copies using non-fungible token technology for the first time in the Arab region.

Ten projects, submitted by 19 young men and women, were qualified for the final stage. Five



HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said presents second prize to Nasser bin Salam al Haimli for his project 'Foundation Monument'.

of these came from individual participants, while the other five came in the form of team submissions.

Initially, 356 entries, which met all the pre-requisites to participate in the event, were received from youth from across the Sultanate of Oman. The theme of participation for this year is development of a site

in the neighbourhood of Al Mina by the Corniche in the Wilayat of Muttrah.

The Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design has been set up to achieve five goals. They include achieving the aspirations of Oman's Vision 2040 to establish environmentally friendly tourism and entertainment areas that



HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said presents third prize to Tahira al Busafia for her project Oman Future Pavilion.

provide attractions to the public and contributes to raising the quality of life in the Sultanate of Oman.

Furthermore, the award aims at investing knowledge and skills of Omani youth specialised in the field of architecture and engineering design and empowering their practical and

technical capabilities so that they can positively impact and provide added value to society.

Through the nature of this award, more investment opportunities for owners of small and medium enterprises will be created by contributing to the operation of the award-winning projects and providing them with

appropriate services.

The award will also help in attracting investment in some unused plots in the Sultanate of Oman and transform them into integrated tourism and entertainment destinations.

Practical, innovative and modern projects under the award will act as ideas for the tourism and investment planning sectors, while providing opportunities for real estate development companies in Oman to partner with the creators of some of the submissions.

The jury comprised of Fuad bin Abdullah bin Moosa al Kindi, who serves as the chairman of the jury and is president of the Oman Society of Engineers; Dr Alya Abdulsattar al Hashim, associate professor at Sultan Qaboos University; Sultan bin Hamdoon al Harthy, the former head of Muscat Municipality; Hamed bin Nasser al Hinai, CEO of Arkan Business and Saif bin Ali bin Nasser al Hinai, chief development officer at Omran.

This year, participants were asked to propose a design for the seafront site of Muttrah. It is spread over an area of 7,500sqm, comprising Port Sultan Qaboos and boasting a wide captivating view of what has for ages been a tourist hotspot.



■ SULTAN'S SPECIAL FORCE MARKS ANNUAL DAY



MUSCAT: The Sultan's Special Force (SSF) on Tuesday celebrated its annual day in a ceremony held under the auspices of Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Head of the Office of the Supreme Commander. Upon the chief guest's arrival at the military exercise site, Gen Al Numani was received by Maj Gen Musallam bin Mohammed Jaaboub, SSF Commander. Gen Al Numani presented medals of excellent service and royal commendation to a number of SSF commissioned and non-commissioned officers. The chief guest was briefed on the stages of the practical demonstration. Then, the SSF units implemented a live-fire exercise (LFX). The exercise reflected the operational readiness and the level of combat efficiency of the SSF personnel. On the occasion, SSF Commander pinned special service, long service and good conduct medals on a number of SSF commissioned and non-commissioned officers. The ceremony was attended by SSF senior officers and retired senior officers. – ONA

Shura chairman receives message from Bahraini counterpart



MUSCAT: Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, received a written message from Fawzia bint Abdullah Zainal, Speaker of the Council of Representatives of the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain, on Tuesday.

The written message revolved around coordination in issues related to legislative work between Majlis Ash'shura and Bahrain's Council of Representatives with the aim of enhancing benefit and acquiring experiences through exchanged visits and joint coordination meetings. The message was delivered by Dr Juma bin Ahmed al Kaabi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the

Sultanate of Oman when he was received by the chairman of Majlis Ash'shura in his office.

The chairman of Majlis Ash'shura welcomed the ambassador, hailing the strong bilateral relations. He reviewed the existing cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The meeting touched on topics of concern to the two councils in various areas particularly the legislative field and ways of improving it to serve the interests of the brotherly countries.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura.



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Oman Sustainability Week highlights green economy

Muscat: Oman Sustainability Week (OSW), which was inaugurated by His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Monday emphasises the importance the Sultanate of Oman's places on sustainability amid monumental strides to shift towards a low carbon, green and circular economy.

Hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and organised by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and CONNECT, OSW is an innovative programme that advocates the importance of adopting sustainable practices for the long-term progress of the country.

The event is also supported and sponsored by ministries, government bodies and leading local and international companies.

Speaking about the event, Abdul Amir al Ajmi, PDO's External Affairs and Value Creation Director, said: "The scale of events at OSW emphasises the importance the Sultanate of Oman's places on sustainability and its commitment to integrate sustainable practices in every industry, leverage the rapidly evolving frontiers of knowledge and technology, and inculcate a sustainability mindset in the community. As we take



monumental strides to shift towards a low carbon, green and circular economy, the need to develop an inclusive, coherent strategy to achieve sustainability has become more essential. We are confident that the series of activities at OSW will result in a dynamic shift in mindset and encourage even more businesses and individuals to play an active role in contributing to the nation's sustainability goals."

With a keen focus on achieving sustainability in areas of energy and water demands in the Sultanate of Oman as well in an endeavour to catalyse initiatives geared at the protection of the environment, OSW is in clear alignment with the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and

Oman Vision 2040. By injecting international sustainability best practices into the local community, encouraging local businesses to spearhead innovation in the sector, and highlighting potential investment opportunities, the series of events at OSW aim to drive transformational change in the country.

While the Oman Sustainability Week Expo on 14, 15 and 16 March is a dedicated exhibition featuring the latest sustainability technologies, solutions and initiatives from across the world, the International Sustainability Resources and Technology Conference (ISRTC) on the same dates is another key event that is geared at connecting local

and global stakeholders to foster constructive debate and enhance cross-collaboration.

Meanwhile, the C-level thought leadership, Gaia Summit, on March 14 and 15, organised by the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE), sheds light on encouraging participants to engage in meaningful dialogue with experts in the industry as well as like-minded peers to develop new relationships and a community with whom to engage in shaping the future of energy.

In addition, the OSW site visits for PDO, be'ah, BP, OQ, and Nama Group, slated for March 17, will offer attendees an opportunity to visit projects that are at the forefront of building a sustainable environment across the country.

Earlier, an award ceremony, the OSW Awards, was held on Sunday to honour the vital contributions made by businesses towards sustainability. With the active participation of over 100 companies and the attendance of high-level professionals including industry stakeholders, policymakers, sustainability experts and leaders from the Sultanate of Oman, the GCC and other parts of the world, OSW envisions to present the Sultanate of Oman as a model for sustainable development. — ONA

Students virtually tour CERN in Geneva

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

About 3,700 students, teachers and specialists from the Ministry of Education got an opportunity to virtually tour the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva via a video call on Tuesday.

The initiative was organised by the Ministry of Education, represented by the Department of Innovation and the Scientific Olympiad, and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN).

The participants of the event were part of Peaceful Nuclear Science and Technology Education Project Team.

The visit began with a simple presentation about CERN and the quality of research carried out in it, followed by a tour of the organisation's laboratory with an explanation by specialists about the devices, components, mechanisms of work and experiments on them, experiments that occur underground. At the end of the presentation, the organisation's specialist answered all inquiries and questions raised by participants.

The visit aims to review some of the qualitative activities and various scientific fields carried out by CERN, especially about particle physics, and to introduce the nature of research and experiments carried out in CERN laboratories, which includes the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), the world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator. It consists of a 27-kilometre ring of superconducting magnets with a number of accelerating structures to boost the energy of



A video grab of scientist explaining CERN facilities.

the particles along the way.

It also aims to provide an opportunity for students, teachers and those interested to explore the site of the experiments and interaction with specialists and scientists from the organisation, who provided an explanation of the experiments from a physical and practical point of view.

Dr Maya al Azriyah, an educational expert in the office of the Minister of Education, in charge of the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiad, and head of the Peaceful Nuclear Science and Technology Education Project Team, said that "this visit aims to enhancing the scientific aspects of students, linking them to the latest developments in research fields and informing them about the various activities carried out by international institutions and organisations to inspire them to be future scientists. In addition to its large research aspects, it also enhances the research aspects of students and teachers through several specialised training programmes that it offers, which allow teachers and students to interact with their counterparts from different countries of the world on many research topics."

ROP TAKES PART IN WORLD POLICE SUMMIT 2022

DUBAI: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) is taking part in the World Police Summit 2022 in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

ROP delegation is headed by Brigadier Jamal bin Habib al Quraishi, Director-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations.

The summit reviews a set of topics that aim at honing expertise and knowledge security areas and crime control around the world.

An exhibition was held on the sidelines of the summit. It showcased a number of security innovations for more than 150 regional and international companies.

Al Aswad Castle awaits facelift

TEXT & PHOTO
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Historical monuments and tourist attractions abound in the town of Muqniyat in the Wilayat of Ibri (Al Dhahirah Governorate). The town is located to the north-east of the centre of the Wilayat of Ibri, about 362 km away from the Muscat Governorate. The name of the town is derived Muqniyat, which means water channels due to the large number of such streams.

Muqniyat is home to Al Aswad Castle, whose construction dates back to nearly 500 years. It was built by King Falah bin Mohsin al Nabhani, who made Muqniyat as the centre of his rule and named it after his son Al Aswad bin Muqniyat.

The fortress consists of four towers: Sulaiman Tower, Wind Tower, Morning Tower and Watchtower. All of these towers were used for security purposes, due to the lack of political stability at the time. The fort is located on a high rocky outcrop that can be seen from a distance, surrounded by palm, mango and Sidr plantations. The fort is a fine example of Omani architecture that evolved over several years.

Most of the castle's walls were built with



only stone and mud. Over time, many of the castle's facilities including its towers collapsed. Thus, roaming inside the fort is dangerous and risky. The locals advise visitors not to enter the fort to avoid any sudden collapses.

This town, which is located 50 km from the centre of the Wilayat of Ibri, enjoys a distinct geographical location in terms of different terrains.

Wadi Muqniyat still flows between the high mountains and farm terraces. Some sources indicate that the mango in Oman was first grown in Muqniyat.

In general, there are many castles and fortresses in Ibri that were set up for defending the town as well as administrative centres for the conduct of wilayat affairs, education and the study of legal sciences. Among the most important of these castles are Al Ghabi castle, Al Draiz castle, Al Salaif castle, Al Shahshah castle and Ibri castle.

Citizens are still proud of these sites, which bear witness to the history of the Sultanate of Oman over the ages. The residents said unless the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism take up restoration these slices of history will be lost forever.

شركة الخزائن للخدمات النفطية ش.م.ع.
AL KHAZAIN OILFIELD SERVICES

إعلان الدعوة لاجتماعي الجمعية العامة غير العادية والعامية السنوية للسنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١

يسر رئيس مجلس إدارة شركة الخزائن للخدمات النفطية (ش.م.ع.) دعوة المساهمين الكرام لعقد اجتماعي الجمعية العامة غير العادية والعامية السنوية للسنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١، للمقرر عقدهما في تمام الساعة العاشرة من (صباح) يوم الخميس الموافق: ٢٠٢٢/٣/٣١، عبر المنصة الإلكترونية لانعقاد الجمعيات العامة غير العادية والعامية والتي يمكنكم الدخول إليها عبر موقع شركة مسقط للمقاصة والادعاء (www.mcd.gov.om)، وإذا لم يكتمل النصاب القانوني لانعقاد اجتماع هذه الجمعية، سيتم عقد الاجتماع الثاني في تمام الساعة العاشرة من (صباح) يوم السبت الموافق: ٢٠٢٢/٣/٠٤، لمناقشة جدول الأعمال التالي:

أولاً، جدول أعمال الجمعية العامة غير العادية، -

الموافق: ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١، وتعديل مواد النظام الأساسي للشركة حسب الآتي:

- المعدل: (٤، ٥، ٦، ٧، ٨، ٩، ١٠، ١١، ١٢، ١٣، ١٤، ١٥، ١٦، ١٧، ١٨، ١٩، ٢٠، ٢١، ٢٢، ٢٣، ٢٤، ٢٥، ٢٦، ٢٧، ٢٨، ٢٩، ٣٠، ٣١، ٣٢، ٣٣، ٣٤، ٣٥، ٣٦، ٣٧، ٣٨، ٣٩، ٤٠، ٤١، ٤٢، ٤٣، ٤٤، ٤٥، ٤٦، ٤٧، ٤٨، ٤٩، ٥٠، ٥١، ٥٢، ٥٣، ٥٤، ٥٥، ٥٦، ٥٧، ٥٨، ٥٩، ٦٠، ٦١، ٦٢، ٦٣، ٦٤، ٦٥، ٦٦، ٦٧، ٦٨، ٦٩، ٧٠، ٧١، ٧٢، ٧٣، ٧٤، ٧٥، ٧٦، ٧٧، ٧٨، ٧٩، ٨٠، ٨١، ٨٢، ٨٣، ٨٤، ٨٥، ٨٦، ٨٧، ٨٨، ٨٩، ٩٠، ٩١، ٩٢، ٩٣، ٩٤، ٩٥، ٩٦، ٩٧، ٩٨، ٩٩، ١٠٠).
- المعدل: (١٠١، ١٠٢، ١٠٣، ١٠٤، ١٠٥، ١٠٦، ١٠٧، ١٠٨، ١٠٩، ١١٠، ١١١، ١١٢، ١١٣، ١١٤، ١١٥، ١١٦، ١١٧، ١١٨، ١١٩، ١٢٠، ١٢١، ١٢٢، ١٢٣، ١٢٤، ١٢٥، ١٢٦، ١٢٧، ١٢٨، ١٢٩، ١٣٠، ١٣١، ١٣٢، ١٣٣، ١٣٤، ١٣٥، ١٣٦، ١٣٧، ١٣٨، ١٣٩، ١٤٠، ١٤١، ١٤٢، ١٤٣، ١٤٤، ١٤٥، ١٤٦، ١٤٧، ١٤٨، ١٤٩، ١٥٠، ١٥١، ١٥٢، ١٥٣، ١٥٤، ١٥٥، ١٥٦، ١٥٧، ١٥٨، ١٥٩، ١٦٠، ١٦١، ١٦٢، ١٦٣، ١٦٤، ١٦٥، ١٦٦، ١٦٧، ١٦٨، ١٦٩، ١٧٠، ١٧١، ١٧٢، ١٧٣، ١٧٤، ١٧٥، ١٧٦، ١٧٧، ١٧٨، ١٧٩، ١٨٠، ١٨١، ١٨٢، ١٨٣، ١٨٤، ١٨٥، ١٨٦، ١٨٧، ١٨٨، ١٨٩، ١٩٠، ١٩١، ١٩٢، ١٩٣، ١٩٤، ١٩٥، ١٩٦، ١٩٧، ١٩٨، ١٩٩، ٢٠٠).

ثانياً، جدول أعمال الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية المنتهية في ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١، -

- دراسة تقرير مجلس الإدارة عن نشاط الشركة ومركزها المالي خلال السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١، والموافقة عليه. (حسب المرفق).
- دراسة تقرير مراقبي الحسابات عن البيانات المالية المدققة للشركة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١، والموافقة عليه. (وفق المرفق).
- دراسة مقترح توزيع أرباح نقدية على المساهمين بمعدل (١٨ ٪) من رأس مال الشركة بواقع (١٨٠) بيضة للسهم الواحد عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١، والموافقة عليه.
- دراسة مقترح توزيع مكافآت على أعضاء مجلس الإدارة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١، والموافقة عليه.
- التصديق على بدل حضور جلسات مجلس الإدارة الذي تقاضاه أعضاء مجلس الإدارة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١، وتحديد مقدار البدل للسنة المالية التي ستنتهي في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١، والموافقة عليه.
- إحاطة الجمعية بالتعاملات التي أجرتها الشركة مع الأطراف ذات العلاقة خلال السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢١/١٢/٣١، والموافقة عليه.
- الموافقة على تعيين مراقبي الحسابات للسنة المالية التي ستنتهي في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١، وتحديد أتعابه.

ووفقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة وضوابط انعقاد الجمعيات العامة باستخدام وسائل التقنية الحديثة، نود أن نلفت عنايتكم للانتباه:

- يحق للشخص الاعتباري دون غيره تفويض شخص طبيعي لحضور الاجتماع والتصويت نيابة عنه من خلال وسائل التقنية على أن يكون لهذا الشخص الطبيعي رقم مستمر لدى شركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع.
- يبدأ التصويت على البند المطروح بجدول الأعمال قبل تاريخ انعقاد الجمعية بمدة لا تزيد على ثلاثة أيام حتى نهاية عملية التصويت في يوم الاجتماع، وفي حالة تغيير رصيد المساهم بالزيادة أو النقصان فسيتم إلغاء عملية التصويت، ويتعين عليه إعادة التصويت مرة أخرى في يوم اجتماع الجمعية.

وفي حالة وجود أي استفسارات يرجى الاتصال بالفاضل / أحمد الرواحي هاتف: ٩٣٨٩٦١١

رئيس مجلس الإدارة

مراقب الحسابات

المستشار القانوني



TIME TO BOUNCE BACK, HAVE FUN

LAKSHMI
KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)

As the community slowly comes out of the pandemic mode, there have been events bringing out experts to ponder on the new directions, there has been one group that has been patiently waiting for everything to get back to normal and they are the children.

When most children continued online during the pandemic period, children with disabilities lost out more as this meant sacrificing precious time with therapists.

Each day matters to the young ones with challenges. In many cases parents took up training and learnt how to professionally support their children at home.

But now that most of the activities are making a comeback, they too want to bounce back and leading the trend is the Association for Children with Disability.

The Rainbow Carnival is back after the pandemic. The last time the carnival took place was February 2020 and within a month the nation was under the impact of Covid-19 forcing to take protective measures.

Children probably could not express what they were missing and the top priority for the last two years has been safety of all.

Another difficult aspect had been the adaptation to facial masks and ensuring to keep it there. And if tragedies had struck families, they too suffered silently.

Now the scenario has changed. They are seeing their families prepare to usher in the Holy month of Ramadhan and of course one of the ultimate celebrations - Eid. The adults in the family have begun to move freely and one of the best moments have been the outdoors.

But now

When most children continued online during the pandemic period,

children with disabilities lost out more as this meant sacrificing

precious time with therapists. Each day matters to the young ones with

challenges. In many cases parents took up training and learnt how to

professionally support their children at home. But now that most of the

activities are making a comeback, they too want to bounce back and

leading the trend is the Association for Children with Disability

it is time to have fun, says HH Sayyidah Hujaija al Said, Chairperson of Omani Association for Children with Disability.

“The carnival is held at our association and it is for all children - able and disabled. We wanted to start it again after the gap to make our kids at the association happy,” Sayyidah Hujaija said.

Held at Arabia Rehabilitation Centre located on 18 November Street, the carnival is open to all families with an entry fee of RO 1 proceeds of which will be contributed to the association’s further development in facilities and equipment.

The weekend event will be held from March 17 through March 19 from 4 to 10 pm.

The carnival will feature arts and crafts, jumping castles, games, magic show, Zumba live, pony and bike rides, birds and pet zones in addition to food trucks.

The Association has nine centers and 450 children who are regularly using the therapies and training. The age group varies from five year olds to 14 years of age.

“We need to help our children with their development,” pointed out Sayyidah Hujaija.

“So we do need the support. A special thanks to our sponsors because without their support this carnival would not have been possible.”

According to her, the objective of the carnival most importantly is for kids to have fun and secondly to support SMEs who have activities for children such as people who own air castles, horse riding facilities, coffee shops and ice cream joints. Generally whoever is into the entertainment business.

“The event is also to remind the community about the centres and about the work the association undertakes,” explained Sayyidah Hujaija.



Shura panel visits SEZAD

DUQM: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), in coordination with the Majlis Ashshura, organised a two-day visit for a number of officials, representatives of the Economic and Financial Committee of the Majlis Ashshura to the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The delegation, chaired by Abdullah bin Salim al Junaibi, met upon their arrival at the Special Economic Zone management building in Duqm, Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of OPAZ, and a

number of officials from SEZAD management.

During the visit, a number of presentations were delivered that highlighted the capabilities of SEZAD and the incentives, advantages and facilities offered to businesspersons and investors, in addition to the key facilities that characterise the zone, its location, ongoing strategic projects and the projects under construction, as well as the services and the lifestyle in the zone.

The delegation was also toured around several projects in SEZAD, including Asyad Dry Dock Company, Port of Duqm,

Karwa Motors Company, Duqm Refinery and Ras Markaz project.

After the visit, the delegation commended the experience of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, the progress observed in the recent years, the facilities provided to investors, and the incentives and benefits that can be used in the lands affiliated to the zone.

They also praised the service facilities, the infrastructure and the electronic services which facilitated the usufruct of the lands, applications processing applications and doing business easier.

Domestic tourism thrives as pandemic recedes

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Days after the country relaxed restrictions on Covid-19 protocols heralding the 'new normal', the Sultanate of Oman's domestic tourist spots reported a huge number of visitors over the weekend supporting the local tourism, SMEs and auxiliary start-ups.

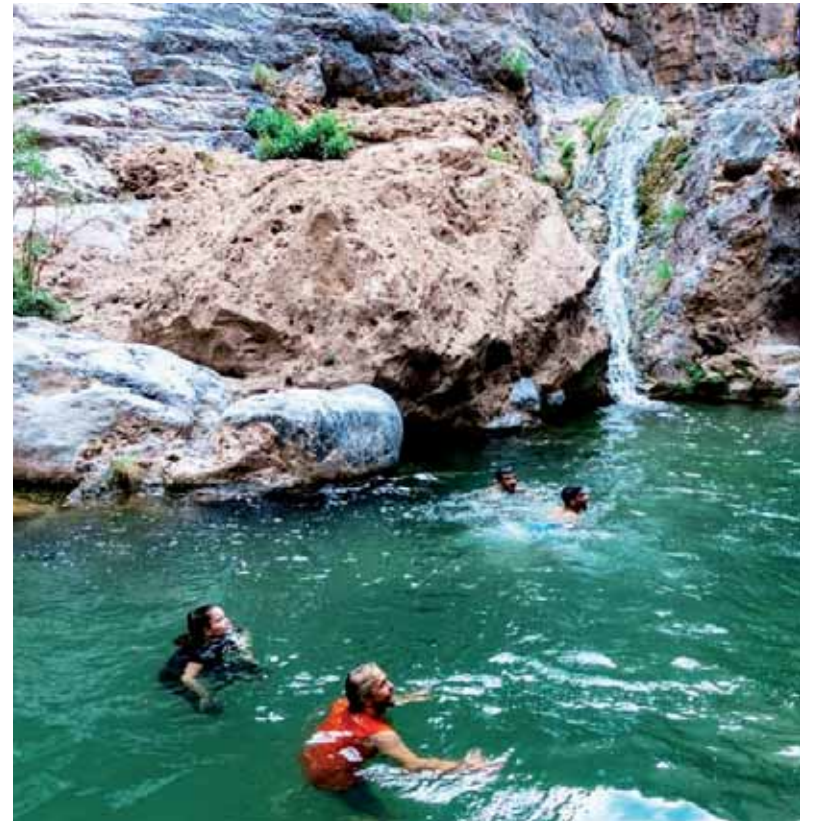
In the past two weekends, most of the local tourism destinations have been witnessing a heavy number of people comprising citizens and expatriates visiting the beaches, caves, forts, deserts and springs across the country.

"We visited the Wakan village last weekend and spent a few hours from 8 am to 11 am and we could see visitors in many groups climbing up and down the village underlining the fact that life is slowly getting back on track thanks to the incessant efforts of one and all, the MoH, the ROP and others under the able guidance of the Supreme Committee," said Mini Padikkal, clinical dietician at NMC Gobra, who visited the village with a group of friends.

The small scale vendors around most of the tourist sites, say, cab drivers, restaurateurs and supermarkets are in an upbeat mood as they started getting busier as pandemic restrictions have been eased.

"We are happy that life is getting normal and we are able to offer unmatched value-added services to the yearning visitors within the Covid protocols," Kareem Abdulla, a shopkeeper near Bilad al Sham, said.

"Since the restrictions were eased, we have been receiving



Visitors take a dip in the cool streams of Wakan village during the weekend.

many citizens as well as expatriates to the Wadi Hoqain in the evenings and more so during the weekends and we are happy that things are getting better post pandemic," Said al Numani, who runs a joint near the Nizwa Castle, said.

The domestic tourism in the Sultanate of Oman has been on the path of a major rebound as the Covid restrictions began to ease since January.

Travel experts say that the Sultanate of Oman's outdoor season is ideal just as the summer began to set in for those seeking comfort, outdoor entertainment and adventure. Weather is great during winter months that attract even foreign visitors to make the Sultanate of Oman as their ideal place for winter vacation.

"The Sultanate of Oman is a perfect destination to plan your holiday throughout the year especially from October to April to enjoy the beaches as well as the mountains. The Sultanate of Oman is a preferred destination among the couples who are looking for destination wedding options as well," says Sunil D'Souza, Chief Executive Officer, TravelPoint LLC, which receives tourists mainly from Europe, India, China and the Gulf region.

"We experience that the travel market is slowly and steadily gaining its ground as the country has relaxed a lot of the travel restrictions to ease travel procedures even favourable for both inbound and outbound travellers," said Venkat, a travel expert.

CAS Nizwa graduation ceremony today

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MARCH 15

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Nizwa (CAS-Nizwa) has completed the final preparations for the graduation ceremony of students, which will be held on March 16.

These graduates completed bachelor's degrees and diplomas

in business management, mass communication and design.

The central committee and the sub-committees of the ceremony held several meetings to prepare for this occasion.

The committee followed up the preparations, which consisted of preparing ceremony brochures, designs, financial appropriations, accommodation for graduates, preparing the

ceremony programme, selecting broadcasters, training students on media and organisational aspects and preparing the venue for the ceremony.

The central committee stressed the need to adhere and abide by the instructions related to the health protocol of the university and the Supreme Committee for Covid-19 disease.

ROP AT NARCOTIC COMMISSION MEET

VIENNA: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) is taking part in the 65th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at the HQs of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna. The session reviews international efforts in addressing the drug scourge and its challenges, as well as enhancing global cooperation in combating drugs.



"Mwasalat" invites professional firms for the following tenders:

Tender Number	T-08-2022
Tender Name	Call of Agreement Manufacture, Supply & Install of Bus of Stops Poles.
Project Summary	Within the framework of this tender, MWASALAT would like to have a qualified Contractor for the Manufacture, Supply and Installation of Bus Stop Poles based on Call-Off framework agreement to different locations as stipulated in the tender document based on Call-Off framework agreement.
Tender Fee	OMR 100/- Free for SME's with holding Riyada Card
Grade & Specialty	Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field
Start date for tender document distribution	WED, 16 MAR 2022

Tender Announcements

Tender Number	T-17-2022
Tender Name	Framework Agreement for Supplying of Lubricant to Asyad And Its Business Units.
Project Summary	Within the framework of this tender, MWASALAT would like to have a qualified Contractor for the Supplying of Lubricant to Asyad And Its Business Units.
Tender Fee	OMR 100/-
Grade & Specialty	Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field
Last date for tender document distribution	THU, 24 MAR 2022

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00AM - 2:00 PM.
Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email.
All Tenderers shall submit with their offers a Tender Bond as mentioned in tender document of the Tender Value, valid for (120) days from the date of Tender Submission obtained from a locally registered Bank, drawn in favor of The Chairman of Minor Tender Committee, Oman National Transport Company S.A.O.C "MWASALAT". Any bid without tender bond will be rejected.
The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.
Tender Bond NOT required for SME's holding Riyada Card issued by Public Authority for Development.
Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head-quarter Oman National Transport Company S.A.O.C "MWASALAT" at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor), Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.
For more information please send to tenders@mwasalat.om

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
14/2022	General maintenance works for the building of the Department of Social Development and the hospitality apartment in Rarkhuot	Companies specialized in building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Monday 4-4-2022 02:00 PM	Sunday 24-4-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Wednesday 16/3/2022.
- Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- For Inquiry , please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om

Indian Social Club Oman (SALALAH BRANCH) NOTICE

On behalf of President & The Managing Committee, ISC Salalah hereby notify all the members of ISC Salalah that the Annual General Body Meeting has been scheduled on Friday, 18th March 2022 at 10.00 am at the Club's premises.

Request members to join as agenda circulated by emails and displayed at notice board at ISC Salalah.

Dr. Sandeep Ojha
General Secretary
Phone: 23235600
Email: iscsalalah@gmail.com

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN BANKS & MONEY CHANGERS CONTROL DEPARTMENT

Implementation & Follow - up Section



ME/FORM NO.5

SUMMARY OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES MUSANDAM EXCHANGE LLC (MONEY CHANGING ESTABLISHMENT) AS OF 31.12.2021 (In RO 000' s)

ASSETS	31.12.2021	31.12.2020	LIABILITIES	31.12.2021	31.12.2020
1. Cash in hand	368	306	1. Capital & Reserves	1,103	1,053
2. Deposits with Central Bank of Oman	100	100	2. Borrowings from Banks	282	71
3. Precious Metals	-	-	3. Balances due to Branches	-	-
4. Balances due from Banks and Money Changers	777	583	4. Balances due to banks and Money changers	111	128
5. Balances due from Branches	-	-	5. Loans and Advances payable	-	-
6. Cheques and drafts purchased	-	-	6. Cheques and Drafts issued & outstanding	-	-
7. Loans and Advances	-	-	7. Other Liabilities	274	224
8. Investments	-	-			
9. Fixed Assets	76	57			
10. Other Assets	449	430			
TOTAL	1,770	1,476	TOTAL	1,770	1,476

Musandam Exchange, Managed by Canara Bank
P.O. Box 2155, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24834954/24831852, Fax: 24831154, E-mail: gm@musandamexchange.com



US guarantees received on Iran N-deal: Russia

MOSCOW: Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday that Moscow had received guarantees from Washington on its ability to trade with Tehran as part of ongoing talks to salvage the Iran nuclear deal.

"We received written guarantees. They are included in the text of the agreement itself on the resumption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme," Lavrov told reporters during a press conference with his Iranian counterpart in Moscow.

More than 10 months of talks in Vienna have brought major powers close to renewing the landmark 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on regulating Iran's nuclear programme.

The negotiations halted after Moscow earlier this month demanded guarantees that Western sanctions imposed

Moscow is in favour of the Iran nuclear deal resuming as soon as possible

SERGEI LAVROV
Russian Foreign Minister

following its military incursion into Ukraine would not damage its trade with Iran.

Lavrov told reporters in Moscow on Tuesday that guarantees it had received from Washington would protect Russian involvement in Iran's sole Bushehr nuclear energy plant.

Lavrov said Moscow and Tehran share the position that Western sanctions are imposed with the aim of overriding

international law and accused Washington and its partners of directing the penalties "primarily against ordinary citizens".

The 2015 deal gave Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme.

The agreement aimed to ensure Iran would not be able to develop a nuclear weapon, which it has always denied seeking.

Meanwhile, Moscow is in favour of the Iran nuclear deal resuming as soon as possible, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday, and is waiting for Washington to lift sanctions on Tehran.

European powers have warned that Russia's demands to have its trade guaranteed with Iran could wreck an attempt to restore the Iranian nuclear deal which lifted sanctions on Tehran in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.

— Reuters



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian during a joint press conference in Moscow. — AFP

Riyadh to host Yemen talks

RIYADH: Gulf Arab countries are seeking to host rare talks between Yemen's different parties, including Ansar Allah fighters, in Riyadh at the end of the month, officials said on Tuesday. Repeated diplomatic efforts to get the two sides to agree a peace deal have failed over the years. The Gulf Cooperation Council "is considering holding talks between Yemen's parties to put an end to the conflict", an official from the six-nation bloc, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said on Tuesday. An official from the Yemeni government, which has been embroiled in a seven-year conflict with Ansar Allah, said the conference would take place between March 29 and April 7. "We don't have a problem if the Ansar Allah attend the talks to try to find a solution to security,

military and political issues," the official said. But he added it was unlikely the insurgents would accept the invitation to go to Riyadh, which has been leading a military coalition to back the government against the fighters since 2015.

Another official in Riyadh confirmed efforts for talks were underway, saying: "Saudi Arabia will not be party to negotiations."

An Ansar Allah spokesman said the fighters had yet to receive an invitation. Riyadh has repeatedly called on the US administration to redesignate the Ansar Allah as a fighter organisation. The talks are scheduled to take place as the coalition marks seven years since its intervention in the Yemen war on March 26, 2015 -- shortly after the fighters seized the capital Sanaa. — AFP

Idlib marks 11th anniversary of uprising

IDLIB: Thousands of protesters in Syria's rebel enclave of Idlib on Tuesday marked 11 years since an anti-government uprising, buoyed by the global outcry over Russia's attack of Ukraine.

Gathered on the main square in the northwestern city of Idlib, more than 5,000 people took part in one of the largest rallies the beleaguered region has seen in months.

Many of the demonstrators hoped that the war launched by Russia in Ukraine would rekindle some interest in their cause.

"What is happening in Ukraine today is similar to the situation here, the enemy is the same and the goal is the same," protester Radwan Atrash said. Bashar al Assad's grip on power held by a



A Syrian boy attends a rally marking 11 years since an anti-regime uprising in Syria's rebel enclave of Idlib. — AFP

thread after a nationwide uprising that erupted on March 15, 2011 escalated into a fully-fledged civil war. Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to throw his military might behind the government changed the course of the conflict and saved Assad's hold on power.

The main killers in a war that has left half a million people dead is by some margin the government and its allies, who include Russian forces, as well as a myriad of fighter groups.

Around four million people, at least half of them displaced, now live in a region of northwestern Syria that is the last enclave fighting Assad's rule despite years of deadly Russian-backed offensives. — AFP



Sultan Qaboos University

RETENDER NOTICE

The Investment & Revenue Department at Sultan Qaboos University would like to invite companies to submit their quotations for:

S/N	Type of Business	Mobile Café Truck Location	Duration of Contract in Years	Date of Site Visit	Class	Tender #
1	Renting and operating a site	Nearby the Main Library	1	23/3/2022 09:00 am	All classes	SQU. IRD.6/22
2	Renting and operating a site	Nearby the University Hospital	1	23/3/2022 10:00 am	All classes	SQU. IRD.7/22
3	Renting and operating a site	At the Andalusia Garden	1	23/3/2022 11:00 am	All classes	SQU. IRD.8/22

- The priority will be for the Small and Medium Establishments (SME), which fulfils the quality requirements.
- Tenderers who wish to participate in this Tender may collect Tender Documents from The Section of Revenue And Expenditures at the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University, during the working hours for an amount of OR.25 for each tender document (non-refundable). The last date for collecting the Document is 04/04/2022.
- The Site Visit for the selected Location is necessary. It will be on the above mentioned date and time. The assembly point will be at the Investment & Revenue Department.
- The last date for submission of the quotations: 13/4/2022 The quotations should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Director of the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University and deposited in the Tender Box kept in the Department, before 10:00 a.m.
- The exterior of the envelope should be marked with the name and number of the Tender being presented and should bear no identification or mark of the Tenderer.
- The Tenderer should submit (enclose) with his tender a Bank Guarantee Document for sum of 1% of the total Duration of contract rental value quoted by the Tenderer and valid for 120 (One hundred and Twenty) days from the date specified for submission of Tender. Tender documents submitted after the deadline or without a Bank Guarantee will be excluded.
- The Tenderer should prepare the Mobile Café truck in accordance with the health requirements of Muscat Municipality and the requirements of civil defense in cooperation with the concerned authorities.
- Sultan Qaboos University reserves the right to reject any quotation not fulfilling the requirements and does not bid itself to accept the highest rent or any other quotations.

The Investment & Revenue Department
PO BOX 50, P.C. 123, ALKHOD, SULTANATE OF OMAN
Tel: 24142691 - 24142682 – 24142684
Email: investment@squ.edu.om

SHORT TAKES

SEOUL

US troops in S Korea step up defence drills

US forces stationed in South Korea said they have enhanced the intensity of exercises for their Patriot missile air defence system amid signs that North Korea might soon conduct another long-range missile test.

Tension on the Korean Peninsula has been growing amid speculation North Korea could test its largest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) as soon as this week at full range, after threatening to break a self-imposed 2017 moratorium on



long-range missile and nuclear testing.

US Forces Korea (USFK) said its air defence artillery brigade stationed in the Osan air base has recently increased the intensity of its certification

COLOMBO

Protests flare in crisis-hit Sri Lanka

Opposition leaders led a march of hundreds of protesters through Sri Lanka's main city of Colombo as anger grows over a worsening economic crisis that has brought fuel shortages and spiralling food prices.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's government said it will begin talks next month with the IMF for assistance, while Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa flew into New Delhi to sign a \$1-billion credit line to tackle the situation. "Even after working about 14 to 16



hours a day, we still can't make enough money to support our families," said rickshaw driver Nissanka Gunewardena, one of those who marched on a tree-lined boulevard in central Colombo.

HANOI

Vietnam fully reopens to tourists

Vietnam has fully reopened to international tourists, yet the health rules and visa regulations remain deeply confusing to potential visitors.

After two years of being almost entirely shut to international tourist visits, Vietnam officially began allowing foreign visitors to enter if they have a tourist visa. But the official rules for Covid-19 vaccine and testing requirements are yet to be finalised. State media confirmed that visitors from 13



countries such as Russia, Japan, South Korea and 10 European nations including Germany, will be permitted to enter the country visa-free for a period of 15 days, revising a policy in place before the pandemic.

BEIJING

Millions under lockdown in China

Tens of millions of people were under lockdown across China, as surging virus cases prompted the return of mass tests and hazmat-suited health officials to streets on a scale not seen since the start of the pandemic.

China reported 5,280 new Covid-19 cases on Tuesday, more than double the previous day's tally, as the highly transmissible Omicron variant spread across a country that has stuck tightly to a zero-Covid strategy. That approach,



which pivots on hard localised lockdowns and has left China virtually cut off from the outside world for two years, appears stretched to the limit as Omicron finds its way into communities.

Ukraine parliament extends martial law for another 30 days

LVIV: Ukraine’s parliament voted on Tuesday to extend martial law for another 30 days from March 26, approving a bill submitted by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The war in Ukraine began on February 24 when Russian President Vladimir Putin launched what he called a “special military operation,” the biggest attack on a European state since World War Two.

Three journalists killed, 30 injured since start of war

BERLIN: At least three journalists have been killed and more than 30 injured since the start of the Russian war on Ukraine, Ukrainian human rights ombudsperson Lyudmyla Denisova said. In addition to US journalist Brent Renaud, two Ukrainian reporters were killed by Russian troops, Denisova wrote on the messaging service Telegram. Victor Dudar was killed near the city of Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine and cameraman Yevhen Sakun died in a missile attack in Kiev. “The Russian occupiers are fighting against the objective coverage of their war crimes in Ukraine - they are killing and shooting at journalists,” wrote Denisova.

Russia halts grain exports to ex-Soviet republics

MOSCOW: Russia has introduced a temporary ban on exports of grain, of which it is a major supplier, to four former Soviet countries to secure domestic supplies and avoid a spike in prices. “Russia is introducing a temporary ban on the exportation of grains to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union,” the government’s press service said in a statement late on Monday.

The EEU is a Moscow-led trade club of ex-Soviet republics, which includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

The Russian government also said it would stop exports of both “white and raw cane sugar to third countries”.

3 million people have fled many more stranded by war

GENEVA: Some 3 million people have fled the war in Ukraine, a spokesperson for the United Nations’ International Organization for Migration said. Among the refugees are over 150,000 third-country nationals, IOM spokesperson Safa Msehli wrote on Twitter.

Millions more are said to be stuck within the country, either in their homes or as internally displaced people, with Russia’s invasion now in its 20th day. According to government data collated by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees fleeing their country have arrived in Poland. Poland’s border force reported on Tuesday that 1.83 million Ukrainian refugees had arrived since the war began. — **Agencies**

Syrian-Ukrainian faces bleak future

DAMASCUS: Born in Syria to a Palestinian father and a Ukrainian mother, Victoria Naji has spent her life in the shadow of conflict.

Aged 24 and resident in Damascus, Naji came of age during the Syrian war that marks its 11th anniversary on Tuesday having destroyed much of the country.

Recently graduated in fine arts from Damascus University, she had been planning to travel to Ukraine to seek out opportunities in her mother’s homeland - until war erupted there last month.

“I said to myself ‘I can move to Ukraine in the future’. Now the future is very confused,” said Naji, who is Palestinian, Ukrainian and Syrian. “I see war everywhere. There is no safe place for me.”

The war in Syria has killed hundreds of thousands of people and forced more than half the population from their homes since spiralling out of protests against President Bashar Al Assad in March, 2011. Russia joined the war in 2015, deploying its air force to Syria in support of Assad.

Russia’s attack on Ukraine, which began on February 24, has



Victoria Naji poses with her mother, Irina Naji at their home in Damascus. — **Reuters**

sent more than 2.8 million people fleeing across Ukraine’s borders and trapped hundreds of thousands in besieged cities. Russia calls its actions a “special military operation” to “denazify” the country.

Naji says her friends and family had been forced to flee Kyiv to safer areas. “God willing nothing more than this happens to Ukraine,” she said, as she reflected on happy memories of visits to the country.

Naji’s parents married in 1983 and travelled between Ukraine and Syria before settling in Damascus in 1995. — **AFP**

European leaders visit Kyiv

Z E L E N S K I Y H I N T S A T C O M P R O M I S E

LVIV: Three European prime ministers headed to Kyiv by train on Tuesday for the first visit of its kind since war began, even as buildings there were ablaze and rescue workers were trying to pull survivors from the rubble of fresh Russian bombardment.

That foreign leaders could attempt to visit the Ukrainian capital was a striking symbol of Ukraine’s success so far in fending off an assault that Western countries believe was aimed at seizing Kyiv weeks ago.

“It is our duty to be where history is forged. Because it’s not about us, but about the future of our children who deserve to live in a world free from tyranny,” said Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, who crossed the border with Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala and Janez Jansa of Slovenia. Fiala said the aim was “to confirm the unequivocal support of the entire European Union for the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine.”

The visit comes at a time when Ukrainian officials are playing up the hope the war could end sooner than expected, saying Moscow may be coming to terms with its failure to impose a new government on Kyiv by force.

In the latest hint at compromise, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday Kyiv was prepared to accept security guarantees that stop short of its long-term objective of the Nato alliance membership, which Moscow opposes.

Ukraine understands it does not have an open door to join



Ukraine soldiers inspect the rubble of a destroyed apartment building in Kyiv after strikes on residential areas killed at least two people. — **AFP**

Nato yet, Zelenskyy said in a video message: “If we cannot enter through open doors, then we must cooperate with the associations with which we can, which will help us, protect us ... and have separate guarantees.”

Peace talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations via a video link restarted on Tuesday after a pause on Monday, the first time a round of talks ran to a second day.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said it was too early to predict progress: “The work is difficult, and in the current situation the very fact that (the

talks) are continuing is probably positive.”

The European leaders will arrive in a city still under bombardment, where around half of the 3.4 million population has fled and residents spend nights sheltering in underground stations.

Two powerful explosions rocked Kyiv before dawn on Tuesday and tracer fire lit up the night sky.

A high-rise apartment building was in flames in the morning after being struck by artillery. Firefighters tried to douse the blaze and rescue workers helped evacuate residents trapped inside

using mobile ladders. Officials said four people had died in Russian shelling of the capital in the early hours.

Sitting on the ground outside, resident Igor Krupa said he survived because he had slept under a makeshift shelter of furniture and metal weights: “All the windows went out and all the debris went into the apartment.”

But despite reducing some cities to rubble, Europe’s biggest invasion force since World War Two has been halted at the gates of Kyiv and Russia has failed to capture any of Ukraine’s 10 biggest cities. — **Reuters**

Economy could collapse if war drags on

WASHINGTON: The government in Kyiv continues to function, the banking system is stable and debt payments are viable in the short-term, but the Russian war could plunge Ukraine into a devastating recession, the IMF said on Monday.

The Washington-based crisis lender also warned the war could have broader repercussions, including by threatening global food security by causing prices to rise and hampering the planting of crops, especially wheat.

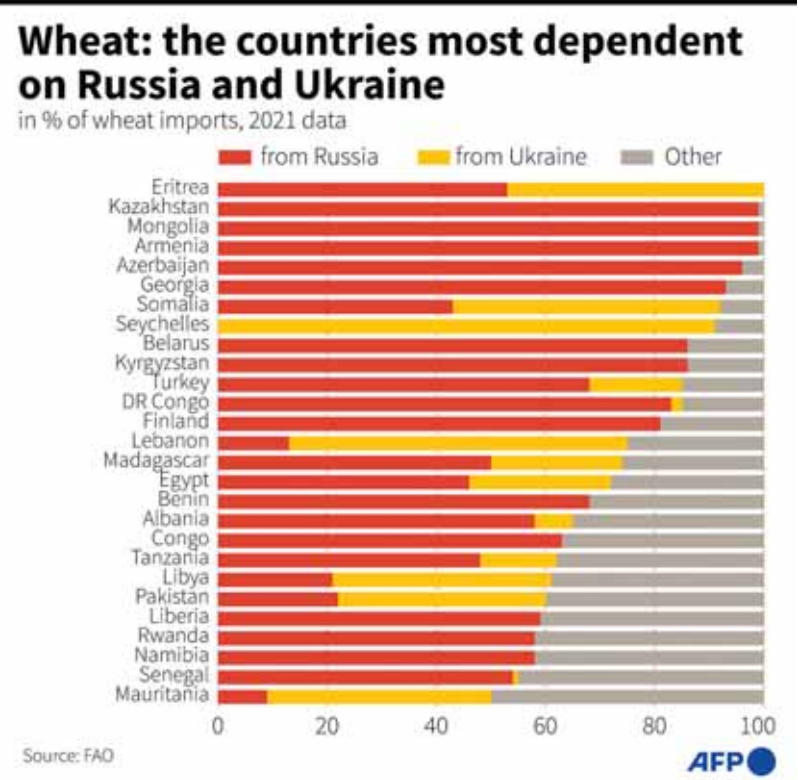
At a minimum, the country would see “output falling 10 per cent this year, assuming a prompt resolution of the war,” the IMF said in an analysis of the economy in the wake of the Russian attack.

Though the lender warned of “massive uncertainty” around the forecasts, it said if the conflict is prolonged, the situation will worsen.

Citing wartime data for conflicts in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, the IMF said the “annual output contraction could eventually be much higher, in the range of 25-35 per cent.”

The country’s economy grew 3.2 per cent in 2021 amid a record grain harvest and strong consumer spending.

But in the wake of the Russian war on February 24, “the economy in Ukraine dramatically changed,” said Vladyslav Rashkovan,



alternate executive director for Ukraine on the IMF board.

That includes the destruction of hospitals, schools and houses as well as “tens of kilometres of roads and countless objects of critical infrastructures,” the official said in a statement.

Oleg Ustenko, economic adviser to Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, last week estimated the damage at \$100 billion so far.

Despite the destruction, the government and banks in the country have continued to

function, Rashkovan said and as of March 1, the country held foreign reserves of \$27.5 billion, “which is sufficient for Ukraine to meet its commitments,” according to a statement dated March 9.

The IMF, which last week approved a \$1.4 billion emergency aid programme for Ukraine, said “debt sustainability does not appear to be at risk” in the short-term, although there are “very large” uncertainties.

Beyond the human and economic losses in the country,

the IMF cautions about the likely spillovers from the war to the global economy.

Since the conflict began, the prices of energy and agriculture have soared worldwide and the fund warned they could worsen, fuelling rising inflation.

“Disruptions to the spring agriculture season could also curtail exports and growth and imperil food security,” the report said.

The initial impact will be on prices, which would also push costs of other food like corn higher, according to the IMF.

Ukraine and Russia are considered agricultural breadbaskets because they are among the largest wheat exporters in the world and an extended conflict could hit global food supplies if farmers are unable to plant.

“War in Ukraine means hunger in Africa,” IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Sunday on CBS.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Monday that the world must act to prevent a “hurricane of hunger and a meltdown of the global food system.” “This war goes far beyond Ukraine. It is also an assault on the world’s most vulnerable people and countries,” Guterres told reporters in New York. — **AFP**

Challenging misconception of sustainability in business



Miriam Kugel
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‘Being sustainable’, ‘achieving sustainability’ and ‘committing to being sustainable’ are phrases that have become a seemingly ubiquitous part of business culture in the last decade, but what do they actually mean?

Many might automatically think of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects, which may range from litter picking, environmental education, recycling or planting trees or appointing a Sustainability Champion within the organisation. But true sustainability in business extends far beyond headline CSR activities and dedicating resources to a sustainability department.

Generally, there are two main categories to consider: The effect business has on the environment and the effect business has on society. A sustainable business strategy should address at least one of these areas but can touch on

both aspects.

A study showed that companies with high Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) ratings have a lower cost of debt and that equity and strong sustainability initiatives can improve financial performance while fostering public support.

Empowering employees through a dedicated Sustainability department is quite possibly the most important pillar of sustainability in business. By assessing the problem and defining objectives, the entire organisation is engaged in tackling the issues. With a lack of agency to drive organisational change any initiatives will appear superficial.

Sustainability has to touch all aspects of a business with targets, buy-in from all other departments, transparent communication and reporting and – crucially – the

EMPOWERING THE STAFF
THROUGH A DEDICATED
SUSTAINABILITY
DEPARTMENT IS POSSIBLY
THE MOST IMPORTANT
PILLAR OF SUSTAINABILITY
IN BUSINESS

ability to shape policy. This power enables a business to analyse every process to make improvements and energise the company’s triple bottom line – the impact a company’s actions have on profit, people and the planet.

Whether it is making ethically informed choices over supply chain partners, reducing waste and emissions, promoting recycling, or numerous other business-related decisions, stakeholder engagement in sustainability drives shared

value for all parties, including shareholders, employees, supply chains, society and the planet.

These small changes can be the starting point for a large-scale programme with far-reaching impact.

The United Nations’ “Race to Zero” campaign thrust the idea of sustainability to the forefront of global industry. At the summit, a coalition representing 1,049 cities, 67 regions, 5,235 businesses, 441 of the biggest investors and 1,039 Higher Education Institutions joined 120 countries in committing to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest. Collectively, the coalition covers nearly 25 per cent of global CO2 emissions and over 50 per cent of the world’s GDP.

With this in mind, taking steps to reducing waste, cutting reliance on plastic, increasing the use of

sustainable materials, investing in renewable sources of energy or raw materials and committing to a cause makes long-term sense both financially and environmentally and certainly reputationally.

Committing to a sustainable cause will not only demonstrate an understanding of the business around the issues we will be collectively facing as humans in view of safeguarding the planet, but will also create a whole new set of business opportunities:

Taking the strategic decision to adopt a full range of sustainable actions will enable market transformation, create new opportunities for innovation in filling the market gaps, offer a competitive advantage in bidding processes and engage new customers looking to make more ethical choices in their own lives by using their purchasing power.

Swiss neutrality under fire over Ukraine war

AGNES PEDRERO

Russia’s attack on Ukraine has pushed Switzerland to shed taboos, with calls for rearmament and unprecedented sanctions putting its deeply engrained neutrality to the test of a war in Europe.

Critics in Switzerland have warned that government moves could “torpedo” one of the wealthy Alpine nation’s key principles, dictating no involvement in conflicts between other states.

After Russian troops entered Ukraine on February 24, Bern cited that neutrality when it initially refrained from jumping onboard with biting sanctions imposed by the European Union.

But four days later, the government buckled to international pressure and imposed all the EU sanctions, prompting criticism it was throwing neutrality to the wind.

The move, which the government insisted was “compatible” with its neutrality, was widely welcomed on the international stage.

It even earned a mention in US President Joe Biden’s State of the Union address, when he hailed that “even Switzerland” was with those striving to hold Moscow accountable for its aggression.

But at home, it sparked outrage from the far right, which demands total neutrality, both on military and political.

The largest party, the populist right-wing Swiss People’s Party (SVP), has threatened to push the issue to a referendum, as part of the country’s direct democracy system.

The SVP has also lashed out at Bern’s efforts to gain a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council, warning this would “torpedo” the country’s neutrality. The government has argued that if it is granted the seat in June elections, it can simply abstain on issues that cast doubt on its neutrality.

The Swiss candidacy has meanwhile received backing from most lawmakers, and all other parties have voiced support for the sanctions.

“This marks a move towards a more active political neutrality,” Swiss-American political scientist Daniel Warner said.

Former president Micheline Calmy-Rey has chimed in, insisting that while militarily neutral, Switzerland is “free to defend its interests by adapting its foreign policy, and is free to impose sanctions”.

Switzerland distinguishes between the law of neutrality — which was codified in The Hague Conventions of 1907 and which imposes non-participation in international armed conflict — and the policy of neutrality. — AFP

Diplomacy quickens to halt Ukraine war

MARK LANDLER &
DAVID E SANGER

UN SECRETARY-
GENERAL
GUTERRES HAS
DECLARED
THAT UKRAINE
WAS ‘BEING
DECIMATED
BEFORE THE
EYES OF THE
WORLD’

Diplomatic activity quickened on multiple fronts as Russia’s war on Ukraine entered an uncertain new phase, with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s forces widening their bombardment of Kyiv and other cities, hundreds of civilians escaping the devastated port of Mariupol and the United States warning China over its deepening alignment with an isolated Russia.

There were no breakthroughs, either at the negotiating tables or on the battlefield. But as the human cost of the war continued to mount, the flurry of developments suggested that people were groping for a way out of the crisis — or, failing that, for ways to prevent it from mutating into a wider proxy war.

In Rome, US President Joe Biden’s top national security aide, Jake Sullivan, met with a top Chinese foreign affairs official, Yang Jiechi, to try to peel away one of Putin’s few potential allies, after reports — denied by Moscow and Beijing — that Russia had sought military aid from China and that Chinese leaders were open to such a request. Sullivan, a Biden administration official said, had expressed “deep concerns” about “China’s alignment at this time.”

Ukrainian and Russian officials held another round of direct negotiations,

adjourning without signs of progress, although they agreed to meet again on Tuesday. The negotiations unfolded against a backdrop of thunderous Russian artillery strikes that led United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to declare Ukraine was “being decimated before the eyes of the world.”

An uncharacteristically angry Guterres accused Russia of attacking 24 health facilities and leaving hundreds of thousands of people without water or electricity. Having once predicted there would be no war in Ukraine, he now warned there could be a calamitous cascade of world hunger and food inflation because Ukraine is one of the world’s foremost grain producers. The impact on civilians, Guterres said, was “reaching terrifying proportions.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy plans to address the US Congress on Wednesday in a virtual speech that could increase pressure on the Biden administration to send fighter jets to Kyiv.

In one of dozens of episodes of violence in Ukraine, a missile slammed into an apartment block in a once-tranquil Kyiv neighbourhood just after dawn, when many residents were asleep. They had become accustomed to the percussive noise of shelling after more than two weeks of Russian bombardment, but never thought their building would be hit. “We do not have

a military target near us,” said Yuriy Yurchik, 30. “We did not think we ourselves would be a target.” Yet amid the drumbeat of horror, there were also glimpses of resilience. Hundreds escaped Mariupol by car, according to the local government, even as a convoy of vehicles carrying food, water and medicine tried to find a safe path through the battle that has been raging around that southeast port city almost since the war began. Relatives of those still living in Mariupol said fleeing seemed to offer the best, perhaps only, chance for survival.

“I do not believe the humanitarian convoy will be a big help,” said Olexander Kryvoshapro, a humanitarian activist whose parents were in Mariupol. “Too many people are still there. And this once beautiful, big and constantly developing city is now completely destroyed. It is not possible to live there anymore.”

An estimated 400,000 people are trapped in Mariupol, which is entering its second week without heat, food or clean water. Attempts to reach the city and evacuate people have failed day after day amid heavy fighting. The convoy en route was carrying 100 tonnes of relief supplies, officials said.

Russia has been laying siege to the city, a major industrial hub on the Azov Sea, creating a humanitarian catastrophe that led the International Committee of the Red Cross to issue an urgent appeal for a cease-fire to assist the hundreds of thousands of people with no access to clean water, food or heat. “Dead bodies, of civilians and combatants, remain trapped under the rubble or lying in the open where they fell,” the ICRC said.

Casualty figures are difficult to confirm in the conflict. The United Nations has estimated that at least 596 civilians have been killed, but that figure is considered low because of the organisation’s inability to gain access to all areas of fighting. Ukrainian officials have said more than 2,500 people have died in Mariupol alone. Particularly striking was the death of a pregnant woman who had been photographed clutching her belly as she was carried on a stretcher from a blasted-out maternity hospital that had been attacked. — *The New York Times*



A Ukrainian soldier surveys destruction in the village of Horenka, near Kyiv.

In the midst of another period of uncertainty



Samuel Kutty @samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

A day that the world would never forget passed off, largely sidelined by the raging war between Russia and Ukraine. The day was no other than Friday, March 11, 2020, which marked the second anniversary of Covid-19 since its outbreak was labelled as a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

If the coronavirus pandemic caused widespread grief and sense of loss and continued hardships for all populations, the world is now grappling with another period

of uncertainty as a result of the new geopolitical threat which is adding fuel to the financial strain that we are in the midst of.

The war has dramatically changed all our expectations of recovery. Apart from taking a huge toll on human lives, it has driven energy and food prices higher and created macro uncertainty around the world.

It came at a time when the world's supply chains, which were already in disarray because of the pandemic, had just signalled that the bottlenecks were easing. But now those plans had been thrown into disarray by new supply challenges due to the conflict and sanctions on Russia.

THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR HAS RATTLED THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND MARKETS. DUE TO DISRUPTIONS IN THE AVAILABILITY OF COMMODITIES FROM UKRAINE AND RUSSIA, AS WELL AS RENEWED SUPPLY CHAIN BREAKDOWNS, THE WORLD IS NOW FACING BIG INFLATION IN COSTS REMINISCENT OF THE OIL SHOCK OF THE PAST

were up even more sharply in some cases. Agricultural commodities had also been affected, with the price of wheat in global markets rising by 40 per cent since the start of February.

The sanctions against Russia have immediately put further strains on them, prompting skyrocketing energy prices and even fears of famine. Russia and Ukraine together account for nearly one-third of all global wheat exports, and 20 per cent of corn sales.

Russia is the world's second largest producer of platinum, which is used in jewellery, is a key ingredient in electronics, and is essential to catalytic convertors found in automobiles. The car industry will certainly feel the price pressures from the shortage.

The war has also had a devastating impact on global trade movements, with hundreds of tankers and bulk carriers stranded at ports as a result of sanctions imposed on Russian-connected ships. Container lines had already ceased calls in Ukraine for safety reasons, and are now no longer calling at Russian ports.

Shipping majors like FedEx Express announced last week they were raising their surcharge for many international parcel and freight shipments due to the disruptions.

Higher energy and commodity prices triggered by the war and sanctions will add to the already high inflationary pressures faced by many economies since 2021. The United States is already confronting the highest ever inflation in 40 years at 7.5 per cent in January, and is expected to start raising interest rates next month.

Already struggling with rising living costs, the situation in Europe is also not different. They are facing an even deeper hit to their livelihoods as the conflict has pushed fuel and food prices higher and threaten to undermine a fragile economic recovery.



A POLITICAL HEADACHE

Migrants, picked up at sea attempting to cross the English Channel, are helped from an RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) lifeboat after being brought ashore at Dungeness on the southeast coast of England on Tuesday. The high number of migrants crossing to Britain from mainland Europe has become a political headache for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his Home Secretary Priti Patel. – AFP

What about the climate displaced?

MAY BOEVE, MITZI JONELLE TAN, NISHA AGARWAL, MITZI JONELLE TAN

“Going beyond the headline figures of rising temperatures and sea levels”, the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), captures the full scale of the threat to human life in a heating world. It explains how extreme weather, drought, habitat and species loss, urban heat islands, and the destruction of food sources and livelihoods are all intensifying. And the scientific community is now more certain that climate change is having a direct influence on migration.

Climate-related displacement disproportionately affects people who have contributed least to the problem. Thanks to the repeated failure of the world's major powers to address climate change, extreme weather in Central America, fires and storms in North America, flooding across Europe and Asia, and drought in Africa are forcing people to move. Last year, the Red Cross confirmed that it was already dealing with the consequences of climate change in all 192 countries where it operates.

The IPCC report recognises that migration is a form of climate adaptation – and that it is already occurring. This is an important correction to the widespread narrative of climate-linked displacement as a problem to be managed at some point in the future.

That view is often accompanied by fearmongering in wealthy countries about swarms of climate refugees. Across the Global North, ever more public money is being funneled into a growing border-security and surveillance industry that promises to tackle the “threat” with a “Global Climate Wall.” The industry’s lobbyists and political allies claim that advanced networks of weapons, walls, drones, surveillance technology and lawfare will be needed to protect powerful countries against future waves of climate displacement.

But climate walls provide no such protection, even as they threaten civil liberties (in wealthier countries as much as anywhere else) and divert resources from meaningful climate action to the hands of crisis profiteers. Worse, these operators are closely linked to the fossil-fuel sector, global finance and the arms industry, which profits from the conflicts that generate refugee flows (and that climate change will make more likely).

These false solutions are already costing lives and livelihoods. In 2020-21, 2,000 people were killed in the Mediterranean due to illegal “pushback” policies in the European Union. People being turned away at the US-Mexico border are also fleeing extreme weather conditions, as are many now languishing in indefinite detention in countries from

Britain to Australia.

The IPCC report is right to stress the urgency of decarbonisation to prevent further displacement. But we must not stop there. The governments of major emitters of greenhouse gases must be pressured to support countries that face irreversible loss and damage from climate change. The global climate movement will fail if it focuses only on renewable energy and not also on ameliorating the suffering caused by the climate emergency that is already here.

What more should be done? First, we must safeguard both the right to move and the right to stay. Climate finance to help at-risk communities build resilience and limit migration is essential, as are improvements to disaster warning and relief systems. But we also need financing to facilitate the safe movement of people when it is necessary. Most displacement happens within countries, not across borders, so we must ensure that poorer countries have the resources to manage both short- and long-term resettlement.

Second, in cases where climate-linked displacement does cross borders, we should respond with pragmatism and compassion, not paranoia and profiteering. The money being thrown at dystopian military and surveillance infrastructure should instead go towards supporting safe and legal routes and procedures for people who need to move. The dominant political impulse today is to try to divide people by the circumstances of their birth. But with more resources and a different political vision, we could ensure that both newcomers and host communities alike benefit from immigration.

Third, we need to broaden our

understanding of what counts as climate-linked displacement. Those who are directly fleeing storms, fires and floods obviously need policy support. But climate change is also a growing factor in resource shortages, income loss, political instability and violent conflicts. We must resist efforts to limit the definition of who counts as a climate-displaced person. We cannot wait for disaster to strike before acting. We should already be considering processes to achieve planned migration with dignity, allowing people in vulnerable locales to move before the worst effects materialise.

Despite its shortcomings, the IPCC report does acknowledge that human migration is an important part of the solution to the broader crisis of climate change. Displaced, indigenous and vulnerable communities in both the Global North and South have already had their lives changed for the worse by pollution, fossil-fuel extraction and climate change. They have much to teach us about preserving life in a heating world, if we seize the opportunity to bring people together, to foster cross-border problem-solving, and to push back against the petty nationalism that has hamstrung the world's pandemic response.

The solutions to displacement already exist, as do the legal and moral bases for establishing practical agreements between governments. What we need is international action to provide systems that can ensure a safe and dignified future for everyone. A climate movement that has learned to protect human life to the fullest must be at the forefront of that effort.

@Project Syndicate, 2021

WHILE PROVIDING DISTURBING DETAILS OF THE THREATS FACING HUMANITY ON A HEATING PLANET, THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE HAS FAILED ONCE AGAIN TO RECOGNISE THE CENTRALITY OF MIGRATION. YET THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE IS ALREADY A KEY CONSEQUENCE OF THE BROADER CLIMATE CRISIS, AND IT COULD BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION



Flood-affected woman is seen in a temporary shelter on a nearby dry land in Jamalpur, Bangladesh. – Reuters file photo

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OMAN POST THIRD WIN IN AHF CUP

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

Oman posted their third victory in the men's AHF Cup Jakarta 2022 tournament with a 6-1 triumph against Singapore to go top of Pool B on Tuesday.

Oman have nine points from three matches and are ahead of Bangladesh, who also have nine points, in goal-difference in Pool B standings.

Now, Oman have the crucial match against Bangladesh left on Thursday which will decide the group toppers.

The top two teams from the AHF Cup will join the top six Asian teams in the Men's Asia Cup 2022 to be hosted by Indonesia from May 23 to June 1, 2022 in Jakarta.

India, Pakistan, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia (as the hosts) have already qualified.

GBK Senayan Hockey Stadium Jakarta will host the Asia Cup 2022, the same venue where the 2018 Asian Games were held.

The Asian Hockey Federation allocated the hosting rights of the Hero Asia Cup 2022 to Indonesia Hockey Federation on Tuesday.

Against Singapore, Oman went in front in the fourth minute when Ammar al Shaaibi struck from a penalty corner. Rashad al Fazari put Oman 2-0 ahead from another penalty corner in the 24th minute and Fahad al Lawati made it 3-0 in the next minute after a nice move from Oman.

Rashad hit the target in the 28th minute as Oman led 4-0. Ammar converted another penalty corner in Oman's favour to make it 5-0.

Dineshraj Naidu struck a consolation goal for Singapore in the 47th minute but Aliyas al Noufali hit Oman's sixth goal from a penalty corner in the 56th minute.

On Monday, Oman had sunk hosts Indonesia 9-1.

Star striker Rashad al Fazari led the scoring with three goals (10th, 16th-PC, 51st minutes).

Ammar al Shaaibi found the target from two penalty corners (39, 53). Aulia al Ardh (17), Fahad al Lawati (22), Khalid al Shaaibi (30), Ahmed al Noufali (51-PC) and Mahmood Bait Shamaiaa (59) netted one goal each in the match dominated by Oman.

OMAN SINK IRAN

In their opening match in Pool B on March 11, Oman thumped Iran 10-2.

Rashad al Fazari netted four goals and Fahad al Lawati hit a brace, while Asama al Shibli, Ammar al Shaaibi, Ashraf al Nasser and Asaad Mubarak al Qasbi also found the target for Oman.

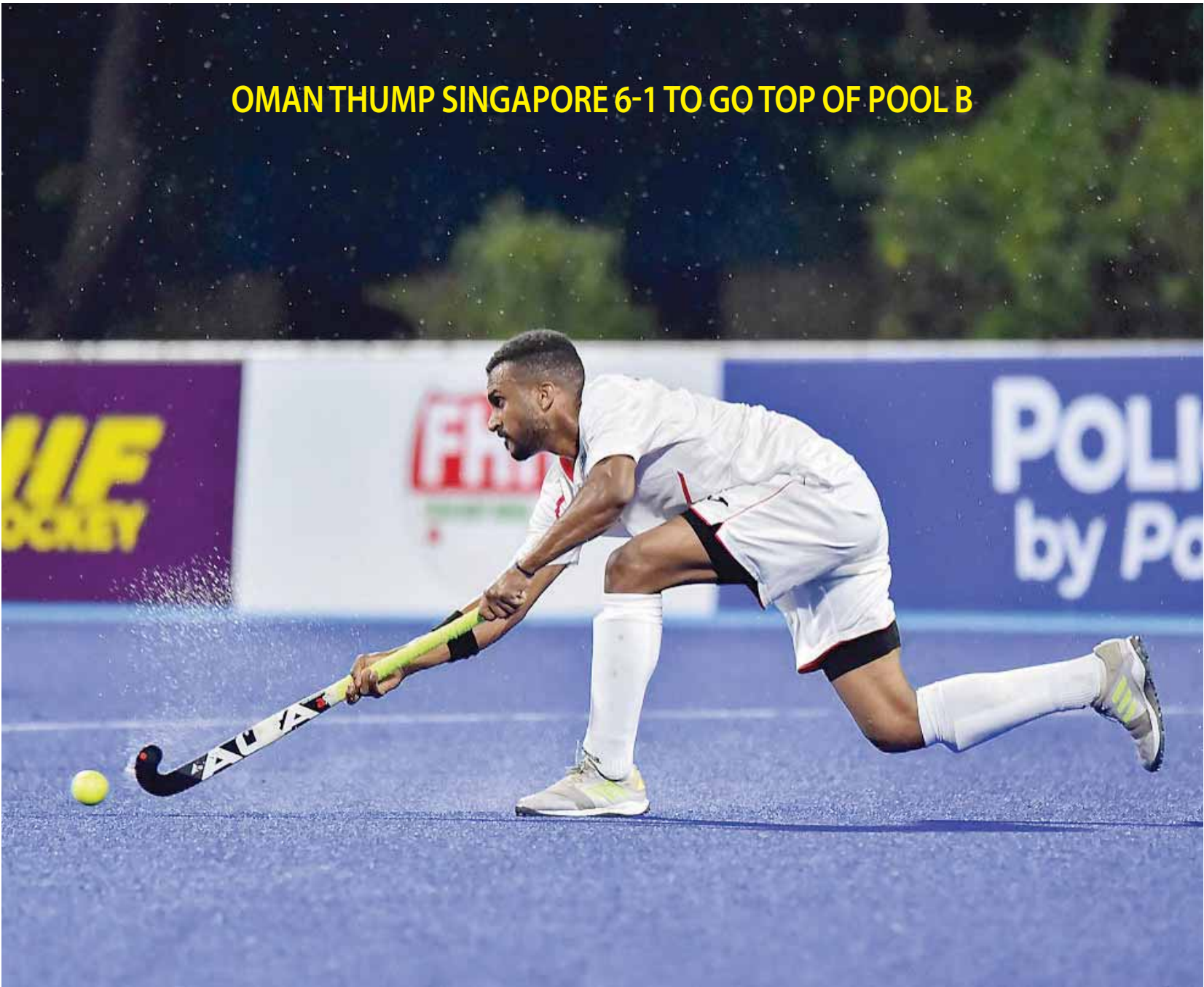
Oman struck early when Rashad converted a penalty in the fourth minute.

Iran came back strong in the next minute as they converted a penalty corner through Navid Taherirad to equalise 1-1.

Rashad put Oman in lead in the 12th minute through a field goal.

In the second quarter, Asama al Shibli found the target with a field goal as Oman went up 3-1.

In the same quarter, Oman struck two more goals to make it 5-1 at the half-time.



OMAN THUMP SINGAPORE 6-1 TO GO TOP OF POOL B



Fahad al Lawati opened his account from a penalty corner and Ammar al Shaaibi did the same three minutes later.

In the 36th minute, Iran reduced deficit when Navid hit the target again with a field goal.

Then on, it was Oman all the way as they pumped in five more goals in Iran net.

Rashad scored his third goal from a penalty corner in the 39th minute as Oman led 6-2.

Fahad netted Oman's seventh goal two minutes later with a field goal. Rashad al Fazari put Oman 8-2 ahead from another penalty corner in the 52nd minute.

Ashraf al Nasser made it 9-2 in the 55th minute from a penalty corner and Asad Mubarak made it 10-2 with a field goal to round-up the scoring spree.

OSA set for Oman Open Water Swimming in Dibba



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

The Oman Swimming Association (OSA) is gearing up to organise the 14th edition of Oman Open Water Swimming Championship in the Wilayat of Dibba in Musandam Governorate on Saturday. As many as 100 swimmers representing 15 clubs will take part in the top domestic swimming event.

All the swimmers and teams will compete to clinch the top awards and win the cash prizes of RO 5,000.

The championship will feature different categories including senior and youth. The Oman Open Water Swimming Championship is back after an absence of two years as the last edition was held in March in 2019 at Sur beach. Ahli Sidab were champions of the last edition while Bausher Club finished runners-up and Oman Club ended in third place. The last championship had registered



Taha al Kishry

participation of more than 125 swimmers representing 14 clubs.

The final ceremony of the championship will be held on the same day after conclusion of all the competitions. The chief guest will be Dr Saud bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in presence of top dignitaries and officials.

Taha bin Suleiman al Kishry,

Chairman of OSA, expressed his satisfaction in the number of the swimmers and clubs which will take part in the of Oman Open Water Swimming Championship. "We are glad with the registration of teams and swimmers who will compete in this top swimming event. We have been very keen to select the Wilayat of Dibba in Musandam Governorate as the host venue for this prestigious championship. This is inline to the government instructions to activate the local events and tournaments in Musandam area," he added.

The chief of OSA said that this championship is a good opportunity to promote more about Musandam Governorate in terms of tourism. "The resumption of Oman Open Water Swimming Championship is the actual start for OSA to host further events and tournaments. The championship was suspended for two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic " he ended.



Oman end UAE tour with a loss against Namibia

MUSCAT: Namibia beat Oman by 5 wickets in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Monday.

Electing to bat first after winning the toss, Oman posted a good first innings total of 265-5 at the end of their 50 overs. Openers Kashyap Prajapati and Jatinder Singh looked in good nick and erected a 57-run stand to start proceedings for the side in red.

Kashyap was dismissed for 25 but Jatinder carried on, playing himself back into form after a string of scores below 30. He finished on a brilliant 86-ball 74.

But once again, Oman's top scorer was Shoaib Khan. He followed up his century against the same opponents in the previous game with an outstanding 86, anchoring the 3 fifty-plus partnerships during the middle and death overs that put Oman in a commanding position at half-time.

Captain Zeeshan Maqsood chipped in with a well-made 29 and Khawar Ali remained unbeaten on 33.

Jan Frylinck was Namibia's star with the ball, ending the day with figures of 3-36 in his 10 overs. Ruben Trumpelmann picked up the other 2 wickets.

In response, Namibia were powered by double figure contributions from every single batsman and chased the target down with 15 balls to spare.

Oman's pace attack looked

dominant in the powerplay, with Kaleemullah sending both Stephen Baard and Lo-handre Louwrens back for identical scores of 14. Soon after, Fayyaz Butt trapped Craig Williams leg before to leave Namibia reeling at 58-3 after 13 overs.

But Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton and the ever-reliable Gerhard Erasmus stitched together a 109-run partnership to take their side out of the woods. Loftie-Eaton made a 71-ball 63, while the skipper finished 2 runs short of a half-century.

Bilal Khan came back into the attack for Oman and dismissed both the batters in successive overs. But Oman were unable to pick up any further wickets and a 91-run stand between JJ Smit and David Wiese took Namibia over the line. The two finished with individual scores of 39 and 48 respectively.

Despite this loss, with 3 wins out of 5 in the UAE, Oman extended their lead at the top of the League 2 table to 20 points, having played 16 games more than second-placed Scotland. They beat the hosts UAE on both occasions and remain a smart bet to qualify for the ICC Men's ODI World Cup in 2023.

BRIEF SCORES

Oman 265-5 in 50 overs (Shoaib Khan 86 (103b, 6x4, 2x6), Jatinder Singh 74 (86b, 12x4, 1x6); Jan Frylinck 36-3) lost to Namibia 266-5 in 47.3 overs (Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton 63 (71b, 5x4), Gerhard Erasmus 48 (64b, 2x4, 1x6), David Wiese 48 (41b, 2x4, 2x6); Bilal Khan 30-2, Kaleemullah 51-2) by 5 wickets.

BABAR

HUNDRED STALLS AUSTRALIA'S VICTORY MARCH

KARACHI: Babar Azam's glorious unbeaten 102 kept Pakistan alive but Australia remained on course for victory in the second test in Karachi on Tuesday.

Set a record victory target of 506, Pakistan lost two quick wickets but Babar would not go down without a fight.

The right-hander combined with opener Abdullah Shafique in a 171-run unbroken partnership for the third wicket in a spectacular rearguard spread over nearly 60 overs. Pakistan finished day four on 192-2, still 314 behind their target and needing something extraordinary on Wednesday to deny Australia a 1-0 lead in the three-test series.

Babar's sixth test century contained 12 fours. Abdullah was batting on 71, which included four fours and a six.

"This hundred means a lot to me, it came just when the team needed it," Babar said.

"We lost a couple of early wickets so the plan was to build a partnership with Abdullah and then extend it. "The match is not over yet. We'll try to continue this partnership tomorrow and the subsequent batsmen would have to show patience too."

Earlier, Australia batted for 25 minutes on Tuesday before declaring their second innings on 97-2, challenging Pakistan to pull off the greatest fourth innings chase in test cricket history.

Marnus Labuschagne fell for



Pakistan's captain Babar Azam (L) plays a shot during the fourth day of the second Test against Australia at the National Stadium in Karachi. — AFP

44, while his Islamabad-born team mate Usman Khawaja followed his first innings 160 with an unbeaten 44.

CUMMINS STRIKES

After four maiden overs of pace bowling against Pakistan, Australia captain Pat Cummins unleashed spin from both ends and was rewarded almost immediately.

Nathan Lyon caught opener Imam-ul-Haq (one) plumb in front of the wicket for one in his first over.

Cummins introduced Cameron Green after lunch and the all-rounder responded by ending Azhar Ali's 54-ball stay with his second delivery.

SCOREBOARD

Australia first innings: 556-9 dec
Pakistan first innings: 148
Australia second innings (0/n: 81/1):
U Khawaja (not out)44
D Warner c Alam b Hasan7
M Labuschagne b Shaheen44
Extras (LB-2)2
Total (for 2 wkts dec, 22.3 overs) 97
Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-97
Bowling: Shaheen 63-0-21-1, Hasan 7-0-23-1, Sajid 5-0-31-0, Ashraf 3-0-13-0, Nauman 1-0-7-0
Pakistan second innings:
A Shafique (not out)71
Imam lbw Lyon1
A Ali lbw Green6
B Azam (not out)102
Extras (B-4, LB-2, NB-4, W-2)12
Total (for 2 wkts, 82 overs) 192
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-21
Bowling: Starc 12-5-29-0, Cummins 13-5-35-0, Swepson 27-6-57-0, Lyon 22-4-50-1, Green 8-2-15-1

Azhar (six) ducked under a short delivery that never rose and was given lbw even though replays suggested the ball had brushed his glove before hitting him.

Azhar had a long chat with Abdullah before he accepted the decision, perhaps wary of burning a second review after Imam had wasted one.

Pakistan had to wait until the 26th over for their first boundary of the innings, when Babar drove Mitchell Swepson past point.

Steve Smith dropped Abdullah, then on 20, in the slip and it proved a costly mistake as the opener closed in on his second hundred of the series. — Reuters

Watson to help coach IPL's Delhi Capitals

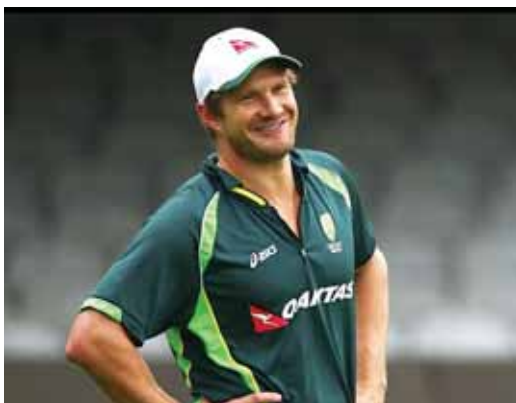
NEW DELHI: Former all-rounder Shane Watson will join the coaching staff of the Indian Premier League's Delhi Capitals under the leadership of fellow Australian Ricky Ponting, the franchise announced on Tuesday.

Watson, who played with two separate championship teams in the Twenty20 competition, joins Delhi as assistant coach ahead of the tournament's return next week.

"I've got incredible memories as a player, first of all with Rajasthan Royals winning it in 2008, led by the incredible man Shane Warne," Watson said.

"I've got incredible memories as a player, and now coaching opportunities," he added.

"To be able to work under the great Ricky



Ponting, he's an amazing leader as a captain... and one of the best coaches in the world now."

The 40-year-old Watson, an aggressive

batsman and fast bowler who was part of two ODI World Cup titles in 2007 and 2015, made 3,875 runs and 92 wickets across his IPL playing career.

Joining him and Ponting in the team's hunt for a maiden championship win are assistant coaches Pravin Amre and Ajit Agarkar, along with bowling coach James Hopes.

"I am super pumped to get over there, work with the boys, help them out as much as I can and hopefully, we can win the first title," said Watson. Delhi, led by Rishabh Pant, will kick off their campaign against five-time champions Mumbai Indians on March 27 in a tournament that expanded this season from eight to 10 teams. — AFP

Azaan al Rumhy sets records to win 48th Muscat Open

MUSCAT: Top Omani golfer Azaan al Rumhy claimed the 2022 Muscat Open Golf Championship at Ras Al Hamra Golf Club on March 11 and 12.

There was a full field of 92 golfers from Oman and the GCC who competed for the longest running amateur golf competition in Oman and the GCC. In his closing remarks, President of the Muscat Open Committee Jas Dhanju thanked HSBC, Hydro, Masirah Oil Ltd, CMS, Ramada Encore, Seven Seas Petroleum LLC and Milly O'Brien's for their sponsorship.

Azaan shot a new course record of 69 (-2 under par) on day 1 and then repeated this score on day 2,

giving him a total score of 138 (-4 under par) and a victory by 10 shots from second placed Nasser Yaqoob (Awali Golf Club). Another local favourite Badr al Amri sealed third place with a score of 150. The leading junior in the gross category was Darsh Pawani with a score of 157.

It was a very proud family moment as Azaan was presented with the trophy by his father, Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

This was the sixth time Azaan has won this tournament and he commented afterwards that, "this tournament is the most prestigious golf event in Oman, if I can pick one tournament to win in Oman



then it would be the Muscat Open. It was my first two back to back rounds in the 60s. I wish to thank the sponsors, the organising committee and my family for all of their support".

The nett prize this year went to Tore Solberg (134) who was closely followed by junior Ras Al Hamra golfer Juan Moreno (136) and Salim Al Harthy (138).

Ras Al Hamra Golf Club

captain Simon Walker said: "Congratulations to Azaan on winning this coveted championship for a sixth time. The course is in superb condition due to the tireless work from our team. We were

delighted to welcome such a high caliber of golfers to the club; golf is thriving in Oman and visitors are always welcome to our club which is the only floodlit course in the country".

PRIZE	WINNER
1st Gross & Muscat Open Champion:	Azaan al Rumhy -4 (138)
2nd Gross:	Nasser Yacoob +6
3rd Gross:	Badr al Amri +8
Junior Best Gross:	Darsh Pawani +1
1st Nett:	Tore Solberg -8
2nd Nett:	Juan Moreno -6
3rd Nett:	Salim al Harthy -4
Plate:	Dr Mohammed al Rumhy 70
Daily Prizes	
Best Gross Day 1:	Kieran Tumilty 76
Best Gross Day 2:	Fahad al Kitani 76
Best Nett Day 1:	Simon Walker 68
Best Nett Day 2:	Hussain Dad 70

‘Bilsan’, ‘Ariam’ and ‘Raad’ victorious at OCRF Sword Festival

WALEED AL JAHWARI
BARKA, MARCH 14

The second day of the OCRF Sword Festival, which is organised by the Omani Camel Racing Federation under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and with the support of Occidental Oman, held 17 rounds, including 15 rounds for the ‘Lagaya’ category, 3 years old, female ‘Al Abkar’ and male ‘Al Jadan’ for a distance of 5 km.

The prizes were dagger and SUV car for the first three rounds and the next three rounds with car, and nine rounds remaining with cash prizes.

Also, there were two runs for the human riders for a distance of 2 km, with prizes of dagger plus cash for the winner and cash for top ten places.

Hamid bin Ali al Zari, Director-General of the Royal Camel Corps, handed out the prizes to the first place holders.

The competitions started early in the morning with fun and excitement races (tradition races) with the human rider for 2 km, where the first round snatched the dagger and the cash prize by Amer bin Saeed al Owaisi by ‘Alshahinya’ when race distance covered in 3:13. In the second round, ‘Dndana’ for Amer Salim al Zari won the race with time of 3 minutes and 17 seconds.

In the first round, ‘Bilsan’ for the Royal Camel Corp, coached by Hamad bin Mohammad al Wahibi, won the dagger and SUV car and in the second place came ‘Tired’ for Al Bashayer camels, under

the coach Hamid bin Mohammed al Jahafi, and thirdly came the ‘Al Bashayer’ for Al Bashayer camels, led by Hamid bin Mohammed al Jahafi.

In the second round, ‘Ariam’, owned by Sultan bin Ghuthi al Ghufaili, snatched the dagger and SUV car. The dagger and SUV car for the third round was won by ‘Raad’, owned by Saud bin Hamad al Jadili.

And grabbed the first place and the car in the fourth round, ‘Hawajis’, owned by Al Hamdi bin Salem al Dari. In the fifth round, ‘Hawaii’ for Hamad bin Salem al Jadili won the first place and the car.

As for the sixth round, ‘Remas’ for Hilal bin Abdullah al Shaidi won the first place.

The seventh round witnessed the victory of ‘Al Dhab’ for Ali bin Salem al Wahibi, the first place in the eighth round was won by ‘Marmuqa’ for Mohammed bin Ahmed al Wahibi.

In the ninth round, ‘Reman’ won the first place, owned by Abdullah bin Said al Ghufaili. ‘Alsrya’, owned by Hilal bin Saud al Dari, was the hero of the tenth round.

In the eleventh round, ‘Shawahin’ won the first place for Salem bin Nasser al Badri. As for the twelfth round, ‘Moazen’, owned by Hamad bin Ali al Wahibi, won the first place.

In the 13th round, Badr bin Salem al Junaibi took the first place, by ‘Qootna’. The first place in the fourteenth round was won by ‘Nood’ for Al Abed bin Ali al Zari.

In the last round, ‘Shaheen’ won for Saud bin Ali al Jabri.

The Wednesday’s competitions



will include 13 runs distributed between female ‘Al Abkar’ and male ‘Al Jadan’, where nine rounds are allocated to the ‘Elydaa’ category 4 years old, for 6 km.

Also there are two rounds for ‘Al Thanaya’ category, 5 years old, for 8 km, and 2 rounds for ‘Al

Houl’ category, above 6 years old for 8 km.

MONDAY COMPETITION

The Monday’s competitions were allocated for old categories in 13 rounds, ‘Elydaa’ category, four years old, male ‘Al Jadan’ and

female ‘Al Abkar’, for 6 km in 9 rounds, the four main rounds with prizes of car and remaining five rounds with cash prizes for the winner. Also there were two rounds for ‘Thanaya’ category, 5 years old, male ‘Geadan’ and female ‘Al Abkar’ for 8 km with

prizes of dagger and cash for the winner. In addition, there were two rounds for ‘Al Houl’ category, above 6 years, male ‘Al Jadan’ and female ‘Al Abkar’ for 8 km, with prizes of dagger and cash for the first place. The top ten winners got cash prizes in all 13 rounds.

ISC holds tennis camp for children with special needs

MUSCAT: Indian Social Club Oman, in association with KTT Logistics, held the fourth tennis camp for Care and Special Education (CSE) children with special needs. As many as 37 students of the Centre for Special Education received lessons in tennis at the camp conducted at the tennis facility of Indian Social Club Oman.

Although other sports programmes for special needs students do exist, it was important for tennis to be offered because of the instant gratification associated with net sports.

This is the fourth consecutive year that the ISC organised the camp. While it was first time for some, the other students received their first-hand experience of tennis. ISC’s tennis coach Sivan Govind supervised the tennis camp. He was assisted by a team of dedicated volunteers and teachers from ISC and Centre for Special Education.

Dr Sathish Nambiar, Chairman Indian Social Club



Oman, appreciated the effort of the organising committee and commented that sport has been recognised as being able to make a positive impact in the lives of persons with disabilities. Dr Sathish during his speech mentioned that this programme is essential for these children in order to increase

their physical and mental activity which are not always possible with typical classroom activities.

The architect behind the tennis camp Babu Rajendran, ISC General Secretary, thanked all the teachers and parents for the support and participation and specified the importance of identifying the

abilities of the kids as they are enriched with multiple talents. Babu is a member of advisory board of CSE and also associated with a similar organisation back in India which currently have 200 plus students undergoing special classes in magic, sports in addition to their normal academic lessons.

Sports Secretary Saji Abraham mentioned that it is his vision to make the tennis a sports which is inclusive and accessible to all people including children with special needs. He also said that more sports opportunities will be provided for persons with disabilities and special needs. At the end of the two-hour

camp, guest of honour Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman, presented the participating children with certificates and medals. Sheeba, Principal, Care and Special Education, and Faigee, Joint Entertainment Secretary, were also present.

business

MUSCAT
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EXCHANGE
4,343.10



CRUDE
OIL PRICE
Oman Crude \$ 100.00
Brent Crude \$ 99.27
Light Crude \$ 95.15



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Hutchison Ports Sohar to operate Khasab Port



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology signed on Tuesday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman International Container Terminal Company (Hutchison Ports Sohar) to manage, develop and operate the Port of Khasab in Musandam Governorate.

The MoU was signed by Eng Said Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Anacin Kum, CEO of Oman International Container Terminal. Eng Al Maawali said that the MoU will pave the way for the upgrade of the port for the benefit of the local community, while safeguarding the distinctive identity of Khasab.

A workshop will be held in May to discuss ways of developing the port with the stakeholders concerned, he stated. Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Musandam, said that the MoU will strengthen logistics in the Governorate of Musandam, in turn contributing to growth in the region.

It will also open up the port to new investment opportunities for various players, he noted. Also present at the signing was Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamaki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry for Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport.

— ONA

be'ah, OPWP ink pact to progress \$1 billion waste-to-energy project

CIRCULAR ECONOMY: 4,500 tonnes/day of municipal waste to power 130-150 MW plant at Barka

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

Under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, a memorandum of cooperation was signed on Monday between Oman Environmental Service Holding Company SAOC (be'ah) and Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) to build a waste-to-energy (WTE) plant in Barka.

The signing took place during Oman Sustainability Week held at Oman Conventions and Exhibition Centre, Muscat. The capex cost of this first-ever WTE venture is estimated at \$1 billion. Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, be'ah undertook this venture with the aim of realising its targets on economic development and environmental sustainability. Building the first waste-to-energy (WTE) plant will act as a massive enabler to Oman's energy diversification plans and shift towards renewable sources.

Furthermore, the project will contribute to economic development by unlocking investment opportunities in the environmental sector and creating jobs through direct and indirect employment with SMEs and service providers.



“This vital project is part of be'ah's strategy and sustainable waste management plan that will promote the circular economy on a national scale”, commented Eng Ahmed bin Hamed al Subhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of be'ah.

“It falls within our continuous efforts to minimise the use of landfills across the Sultanate provide long-term waste management solutions and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

With an estimated daily capacity of 4,500 tonnes of municipal waste, the plant is expected to reduce landfills' carbon footprint by 50 million tonnes in 35 years (1.3m tonnes

a year), estimated at a whopping 30 per cent of total carbon dioxide equivalent currently emitted by landfill operations.

This substantial decrease will contribute to the Sultanate of Oman's push to meet its international undertakings under the Paris Agreement.

Commenting on the project's impact on energy, Eng Yaqoob bin Saif al Kiyumi, Chief Executive Officer of OPWP, said, “The initiative introduces an ecofriendly solution that will help us build a diversified energy sector by providing 130-150 MW from renewable sources. It also engages the private sector to build and operate the WTE plant and provide a sustainable platform of collaboration between two key sectors with a mutual aim of sustainability.”

Oman Shell to provide hydrogen car fleet to Oman Airports

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

Shell Development Oman LLC (Oman Shell) announced its 6th Gift to the Nation — a Green Hydrogen for Mobility project. The announcement came during the Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) events on Tuesday.

As part of the first phase of the project, Oman Shell has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman Airports that would see Oman Shell providing up to 15 hydrogen cars for the Oman Airports' corporate usage.

The project will include development of hydrogen production units that will be powered by photovoltaic solar plants and installed at different fuelling units related to the project.



These stations will be selected strategically to maximise benefits to the project and allow members of the public to have visibility of the technology.

Commenting on this exciting opportunity, Walid Hadi, Oman Shell's VP and Country Chairman said: “Working with Oman

Airports for the hydrogen for mobility project will help our efforts to support the Oman Vision 2040 energy objectives. It is also in line with Shell's Powering Progress Strategy and our target to become a net-zero-emission energy business by 2050, in step with society.”

Working with Oman Airports for the hydrogen for mobility project will help our efforts to support the Oman Vision 2040 energy objectives. It is also in line with Shell's Powering Progress Strategy and our target to become a net-zero-emission energy business by 2050, in step with society

WALID HADI
VP & Country Chairman,
Oman Shell

“The potential for the use of solar in electrolyzers to produce hydrogen builds on the success Shell has had with other renewables-based projects in Oman, like Solar into Schools and Sohar Solar Qabas. The recent royal directives by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to grow the green hydrogen sector in the Sultanate inspire our efforts. We look forward to taking the first tangible step in kickstarting this industry and we hope that this project will be a pace setter in renewables-based hydrogen”, he added.

Shaikh Aimen al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports, stated: “We are looking to capitalise on Oman Shell's renewable energy initiatives and are glad to be working together on the first phase of its

‘Green Hydrogen for Mobility’ project.

Environmental sustainability has been a top priority for Oman Airports and it's one of the main pillars of our strategic objectives.

Since 2017, we have incorporated a carbon management programme to measure and reduce our carbon footprint in a phased manner in Muscat, Salalah and Duqm Airports. Muscat International Airport has received a Green Airports Recognition in 2020 from Airports Council International (ACI) for our contribution towards a sustainable airport's environment in its category. We are committed with clear environmental policy to build a sustainable environment and become a green airport.”

SOHAR Port, Oman Sail wrap up SOHAR Works initiative



MUSCAT: SOHAR Port and Freezone in collaboration with Oman Sail and celebrated the success of SOHAR Works, a graduate development programme run in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, with a closing ceremony held under the auspices of Shaikh Saif bin Hamyar Al Malek al Shihi, Governor of Al Batinah North, at the Sohar Radisson Blu.

SOHAR Works aims to develop a strong Omani workforce and fill job vacancies with skilled graduates within the SOHAR Port and Freezone. In total, the course runs for one-year, delivered in three stages. The graduating class have now completed the programme delivered by Zimam, Oman Sail's learning and development programme and have been placed at the ASYAD Ports, VA Tech WABAG, Hutchison Ports Sohar and SOHAR Port and Freezone.

Omar al Mahrazi, CEO of SOHAR Freezone, said, "SOHAR is firmly committed to providing Omani graduates with employment and training opportunities so that they can develop skills, gain experience and take the first steps in a successful career. Sohar Works will continue to play an important role in meeting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 as we work together with tenants at SOHAR to enrich the Omani workforce, fill gaps in the employment market with local talent and offer value to the growing range of companies choosing to base

themselves at SOHAR." Al Mahrazi added, "Our aim to upskill young talent doesn't end with our own employees, but extends to our tenant companies. By opening SOHAR Works up in this way we ensure that the Port and Freezone have a competitive Omani workforce that is skilled, empowered and keen to contribute to industrial growth in the Sultanate of Oman."

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "Oman Sail is incredibly proud of the achievements of Sohar Works and through our national development programme, Zimam, we are confident of the long-term benefits to young Omanis entering the workforce and national industries.

The variety of opportunities available at SOHAR make it the ideal place to learn a diverse range of skills and make a significant contribution to the country's ongoing economic diversification plans."

The first stage comprises seven weeks of personal development with Zimam, five weeks of technical training with the International Maritime College Oman (IMCO) and 40 weeks of on-the-job training with companies based within the SOHAR complex.

Through this initiative, SOHAR aims to provide the local market with qualified and creative young Omani individuals, offer added value to companies and simultaneously contribute to the national economy.

OQ demonstrates commitment to sustainable practices

MUSCAT: As a global integrated energy company with its roots in Oman, OQ has integrated environmental conservation and sustainable development into its corporate strategy. Further attesting to this commitment, the company is currently participating in the ongoing Oman Sustainability Week (OSW).

A national-level event dedicated to sustainability, OSW is being hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and is held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said who inaugurated the event on March 14, 2022 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Asakeen advocate of sustainable development, through the event, OQ is focusing on achieving and delivering sustainability agenda based on three pillars which are environmental, social, economic and governance. Within 2022 focus on decarbonisation and in-country value (ICV).

Speaking about OQ's participation, Ashraf al Maamari



(pictured), OQ's Chief Executive of People, Technology and Culture at OQ stated, "OSW is a promising platform for industry leaders who have embraced sustainability to come together and share meaningful insights to influence, empower and drive others to follow suit.

Along with a number of ongoing sustainable initiatives which are being showcased at OSW, OQ is also highlighting its Alternative Energy (AE) business unit. AE is in strong alignment with Oman Vision 2040's objective of renewable energy, diversified sources of energy and rationalised consumption to achieve energy security."

Commenting further, he said,

"Sustainability is one of our main pillars that form the heart of our operations and we will continue to advocate this concept in the community to achieve prosperity and development in the country. At OQ, we also believe in setting new sustainability benchmarks in the industry to help realise Oman's sustainability targets.

Meanwhile, our focus on energy optimisation and efficiency will remain our top priority as we embark on the path of decarbonisation. OQ has started assessing its carbon footprint across all its assets and has been publishing this data since 2019 in its sustainability report. Committed to the energy transition, OQ has also established operations in upstream renewable energy, collaborated on electrical transmission, deployed downstream green molecule projects and leveraged existing trading strength."

Speaking about Alternative Energy, Najla al Jamali, OQ's CEO of Alternative Energy, who took part in the panel of speakers

at the Gaia Summit, offered her insights on the plenary session titled "Current Landscape of Sustainability in Oman - Opportunities & Challenges to Moving the Needle".

She will reflect on OQ's pioneering role in sustainability and the opportunities it offers in the bigger business world.

As part of OQ's participation in OSW and the accompanying ISRTC conference, Shaima al Lawati will share her thoughts in the panel discussion titled "Paving the Path to Sustainability - A Regional Action Plan", she will speak about OQ's sustainability strategy and reporting

Meanwhile, at the panel discussion titled "Behaviour Change and Social Innovation Through Communication - A Call for Collective Engagement", Nasser al Maamari, Head of Environment at OQ's Downstream will be speaking about how OQ prioritises the environment in all its projects and how this outlook is the cornerstone to achieving sustainable economic growth.

BankDhofar sponsors finance and investment forum in Duqm

MUSCAT: In a demonstration of its commitment to support SME sector, BankDhofar recently took part in supporting the "Finance and Investment Forum" in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. In addition to sponsoring the event BankDhofar's participated in the event exhibition and presented a paper on investment opportunities and banking services provided at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Elaborating on BankDhofar's participation, Ammar bin Mohsin al Balushi, Acting Head of Mid Corporate and Business Banking Department at BankDhofar, said: "At BankDhofar, we are always keen to support the Small and Medium Enterprises sector, stemming from our belief that it is a vital sector in driving the growth of the national economy.

We are glad to take part in such a significant forum which showcases investment opportunities and financial



solutions provided to the SME's in line with the Oman vision 2040."

In addition to sponsoring the event, BankDhofar shed light on the investment opportunities and the banking services provided by BankDhofar in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, through the paper, which was presented by Saleh Ahmed Sumeit Badawy Jamal Allil, from Mid Corporate Banking Department at BankDhofar. Additionally, the Bank took part

in the accompanying exhibition and displayed the products, services and financial solutions provided to the SMEs.

Catering to the needs of its SME customers, corporates and government entities, BankDhofar provides comprehensive products, services and financial solutions, through its full-fledged Corporate Centre all under one umbrella. The services include; SME credit cards, digital banking services, in addition to other financial solutions.

Awassr launches 7 new packages for subscribers



MUSCAT: As part of the continuous development and modernization plans carried out by Awassr to continue providing the best services to its subscribers, Awassr launched 7 new home packages, that will provide better speeds, great value-added services with competitive prices.

Engineer Adnan bin Mohammed al Alawi, Awassr CEO, stated, "Simple, Agile, Caring and Smart are the core values of the company, and they are the values that we are always keen to keep in mind when providing services to our customers. Awassr has updated the residential packages with great care after conducting extensive studies of the needs of its subscribers whether by evaluating their use of the Internet or through their opinions collected from time to time to measure their satisfaction. We always strive to provide convenient and exceptional services and products to our customers."

Eng Issam bin Munir al Ismaili, Head of Commercial at Awassr expressed that the company continues improving all services and products provided to its customers. He also stressed that the company's endeavour to improve speeds, quality of services and products to provide appropriate environment for all the subscribers, whether for home or government institutions, business sector. Awassr has launched 7 new home packages, while continuing providing the successful SafeNet and Jawwy TV services.

Bank Muscat's special offer extended to March 31

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision and commitment to financial inclusion, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, offers a large number of state-of-the-art services and facilities to its large family of customers across the Sultanate of Oman.

The bank recently announced that in line with its vision of better serving its customers, it would extend its highly competitive offers on Personal, Auto and Baituna home financing options for Omani nationals working in the government sector, government-related entities and select corporates till 31 March 2022. Takeover options on



personal and home financing are also included in this special offer.

Bank Muscat endeavours to provide the best banking and

financing products and services in Oman in line with the needs of different customer segments. It offers various financing options

aligned to customer needs and the bank's aim of facilitating a high standard of living for people in Oman.

Customers will be delighted by the fact that the bank is at present offering highly competitive rates, starting at just 3.5 per cent for Auto Finance, 3.75 per cent for Personal Finance and 4.95 per cent for Baituna Home Financing.

All interested customers may use the loan calculator at <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/Pages/Loan-Calculator.aspx> to view details of the financing options available to them.

For general information on financing options available, customers may go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/loans/Pages/default.aspx> or call 24795555.

default.aspx or call 24795555.

As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman for the last four decades, Bank Muscat has the largest banking network in Oman with 146 retail banking branches and over 800 ATMs, CDMs and FFMs. Its vast array of digital banking channels including Internet Banking and Mobile Banking are helping customers meet the vast majority of financial requirements and needs 27x7. The bank's technology-driven products and services are in tune with Oman's move towards an e-payments-based society and are playing an important role in realising the ambitious goals of Oman Vision 2040.



Oman sets up national task force to combat climate change

CONRAD PRABHU

@conradprabhu

A high-level national committee with representatives from 32 stakeholder entities has been constituted to oversee the nation's drive to combat and mitigate the effects of climate change that threaten the menace the Sultanate of Oman as a result of global warming.

The National Committee for Climate Change and Protection of the Ozone Layer, set up under the auspices of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), held its maiden meeting recently to coordinate multi-sectoral efforts prepare the nation for the perils of global warming, Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri (**pictured**), President – CAA (the designated authority for climate change issues) said.

Speaking at the ISRTC Conference on Monday, held as part of Oman Sustainability Week (OWS) events, Eng Al Abri said the national task force will support a “collaborative” response to climate change challenges in place of the current “scattered” efforts mounted by assorted agencies.

“Climate change poses a huge global threat, and Oman is not an exception. On the contrary, Oman has been very much impacted by



climate change. The most recent example was Tropical Cyclone Shaheen in October 2021, but prior to that, seven cyclones scored a direct hit on Oman.

Therefore, climate change is a reality, and we need to plan for and counter, this (phenomenon).”

According to the official, the Sultanate of Oman has made some headway in recent years in leveraging technology to offset impacts from greenhouse gases (GHG), alongside its planned large-scale pursuit of renewables to meet the country's energy requirements.

Examples of such progress include the rollout of smart energy metres, planned introduction of building codes, labelling of appliances based on their energy efficiency, mandates on use of

LED bulbs and other initiatives.

“Thus, sector-wise, there is evidence that huge progress is being done – whether in energy (renewables and green energy), waste management (circular economy) and power (energy efficiency). Now's the time to connect the dots – hence the intention behind the establishment of the National Committee for Climate Control. As a subset of that, we are creating a committee focused on finance, capacity building and tech transfer”, Eng Al Abri stated.

Part of the new high-level panel's mandate is to chalk out concrete initiatives and programmes to achieve the goals of the National Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change for the 2020-2040 period, said the

official.

That strategy, adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2019, is essentially a framework that needs to be underpinned by specific programmes to achieve climate mitigation commitments.

One such commitment, enshrined in the 2nd Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by the Omani government to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), pledges a 7 per cent reduction in GHG emissions (compared to the Business As Usual scenario).

This equates to a commitment to offsetting an estimated 9 million tonnes/year of CO2 annually by this date, he said.

Contributing to this target are a number of ongoing initiatives, notably the National Energy Strategy which seeks to secure at least 20 per cent of the nation's energy requirements from renewable sources by 2027.

The energy sector (encompassing Oil & Gas, power and water desalination) accounts for around 64 per cent of GHG output in the Sultanate of Oman, said Eng Al Abri, followed by industry, with the waste sector and agriculture in the third and fourth positions respectively.

641.5% growth in European guests in 3-5 star hotels in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MARCH 15

The monthly statistical bulletin of tourism indicators issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) reveal that the number of European visitors during January 2022 recorded the largest growth in the number of guests by 641.5 per cent to 26,571 from 3,584 in January of last year. The NCSI bulletin shows a significant increase in the total revenues of 3-5 star hotels by 91.6 per cent during January 2022 amounting to RO 12.264 million, compared to the same month in 2021.

The total number of hotel guests in 3-5 star hotels recorded an increase of 19.1 per cent during January 2022 compared to January 2021, bringing the number to 97,956 guests, while the occupancy rate reached 51.3 per cent during January 2022.

Meanwhile, Gulf visitors in the Sultanate of Oman in January 2022 grow by 270.6 per cent with a total of 5,548 visitors compared to 1,497 in January 2021. On the other



hand, the number of Omani guests decreased by 24.9 per cent from 60,759 in January 2021 to 45,628 in January 2022. Also, the number of Asian guests decreased by 3.2 per cent, from 9,531 guests in January 2021 to 9,223 guests in January 2022.

The number of visitors from Oceania for January 2022 reach 733 registering a slight growth of 3.4 per cent compared to the same month last year, and the number of guests from the African continent during the month of January 2022 reach 698 visitors, a growth rate of 69.6 per cent compared to January 2021.

Meanwhile, the number of guests of other nationalities reached 2,138, registering a growth rate of 36.4 per cent during January 2022 compared to the same month in 2021.

Huawei's latest smartphone hits Oman market

QASIM AL MAASHANI

MUSCAT, MARCH 15

Huawei Consumer Business Group launched on Monday the newest phone Huawei nova 9 SE at an exclusive event held at Huawei Experience Store in City Centre Muscat.



The Huawei nova 9 SE will be available for pre-order from March 22 for RO 124.9. The pre-order offer includes gifts worth RO 51.2. The launch event was witnessed by media and influencers in Muscat who received a first look to experience the newest phone.

Huawei's newest mid-range phone Huawei nova 9 SE is the latest addition to their mid-range offerings a mid-range phone priced under RO 130.

Some of the specifications are: Staggering 108MP high-res photography, powerful performance, striking design with sophisticated craftsmanship, creative Vlog experiences and super charge facility. The Huawei nova 9 SE can be charged by 60 per cent in just 15 minutes or be fully charged in 36 minutes.

CMA, Moroccan insurance regulator hold talks

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MARCH 15

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Tuesday reviewed an official delegation representing the Supervisory Authority of Insurance and Social Welfare (SAISW) of the Kingdom of Morocco (SAISW). The meeting was an opportunity for SAISW to share details of its mandate and responses.

The CMA, for its part, shared details of the Sultanate of Oman's experience in the regulation of the insurance market, including the preparations for enhancement of the regulatory and digital infrastructure for launching the compulsory health insurance scheme for the employees of the private sector, expatriates and visitors.



An overview of Oman's coverage against calamities, digital insurance and underlying regulations were outlined as well.

The meeting came in the framework of a three-day visit of the Moroccan delegation aimed of discussing ways of joint cooperation between the two countries in the insurance sector, exchange of expertise in the supervision of insurance

institutions and enhancing the regulatory systems to upgrade the insurance market in the two countries.

The Moroccan delegation was introduced to the CMA's experience in the calculation of the risk based solvency in additional to the national programme for qualification of national cadres in the insurance sector ‘Tamkeen’, beside the compulsory

health insurance scheme for the employees of the private sector, expatriates and visitors, reinsurance, insurance services and digital transformation in the insurance sector.

SAISW which was established in 2016 as the regulator of the insurance sector and social welfare in a numbers of issues related to the supervision of the risks, Takaful insurance, coverage for calamities and digitalisation of the insurance sector.

On the sidelines of the visit, a memorandum of understanding will be signed on Wednesday between CMA and SAISW in the insurance field on Wednesday.

Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of the CMA and Othman Khalil al Elmi, Acting President of SAISW, will ink the agreement.

High-level Omani business delegation ends Sri Lanka visit

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MARCH 15

The first-ever high level visit of a 17-member Omani business delegation from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) to Sri Lanka concluded successfully. The visit was organised by the Sri Lanka Embassy in the Sultanate of Oman from March 5-9.

Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, OCCI Chairman led the high level business delegation. Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman Ameer Ajwad received the delegation at the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) in Sri Lanka and accompanied the delegation during the visit.

Ambassador of the Sultanate of

Oman to Sri Lanka Shaikh Juma bin Hamdan al Shehhi also took part during the meetings.

The visit explored opportunities available in trade and investment between Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman and to establish business links between the private sectors of the two countries.

The delegation paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, briefed him on the progress made during their visit and expressed their keen interest in closer economic engagement with Sri Lanka.

Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka Ajith Nivard Gabral and Secretary to the Prime Minister Anura Dissanayake were also present during the meeting. The delegation also held productive



meetings with the Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa, Trade Minister Bandula Gunawardena, Labour Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva together with State Minister of Foreign Employment Promotion and Market Diversification Priyankara Jayaratne and State

Minister of Regional Cooperation Tharaka Balasuriya during the visit.

Areas of mutual interest including promotion of trade, investment, tourism, employment opportunities were discussed.

One of the highlights of the visit

was the Business Forum followed by B2B meetings held between the visiting Omani delegation and their Sri Lankan counterparts, organised by the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) at the Chamber Auditorium in Colombo.

A large number of Sri Lankan companies participated during the B2B meetings. Ambassador Ameer Ajwad, President of the NCCSL Nandika Bhuddipala, Chairman of the OCCI Eng Ridha al Saleh addressed the Business Forum. Presentations by the Sri Lanka Board of Investment (BOI) as well as the Colombo Port City were made during the Forum highlighting the opportunities available for investments in Sri Lanka.

The Omani business delegation held a fruitful meeting with the Sri Lanka State Trading Corporation (STC) and discussed ways and means for trading between Sri Lanka's state sector and Oman's private sector.

During the meeting with the Director-General of Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), Omani business delegation was briefed on different investment opportunities in the tourism sector in Sri Lanka and it was proposed to organise joint programmes for tourism promotion between the two countries. The delegation also visited Colombo Port City project, Sri Lanka's new special economic zone reclaimed from the sea.

War crowdfunding is weapon that cuts two ways

Crowdfunding has been supercharged as a weapon of war. Ukraine has raised more than \$100 million through cryptocurrencies and a central bank link, putting a new spin on an old trend of outside funding for conflicts. The catch is both sides can take advantage of technology that makes it easier and faster to support a fight.

There's nothing new about foreigners and diaspora populations contributing amid clashes. Polish immigrants volunteered to fight and donated money in the Russo-Polish conflict after World War One; Americans did the same in the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s.

Technology has made it more convenient. Cryptocurrency transfers take seconds where international bank payments take days. Apps like Apple Pay and PayPal-owned Venmo have also made it easier to send funds.

Ukraine has embraced those innovations with some success. A few days after Russian attacked the country last month, Ukraine's minister for digital transformation, Mykhailo Fedorov, tweeted crypto wallet addresses to which people could donate. About \$64 million has poured into various accounts as of Friday, according to crypto data firm Elliptic. A website run by the National Bank of Ukraine has received around \$40 million for the army and humanitarian needs.

Digital donations could benefit both sides, though. True, it will be harder for Russia to raise global funds given the raft of Western sanctions imposed on it. But there's nothing stopping Moscow from trying. Vladimir Putin's regime may have luck in countries that have been more aligned with it like China and India. While the US authorities have warned companies that sanctions cover cryptocurrencies too, that doesn't fully cover transactions in fiat currencies like the Chinese yuan.

In 2003, the Eritrean government raised \$25 million to support armed groups fighting against the Ethiopian government, a conflict that led to global sanctions against Eritrea, according to late economics professor Tekie Fessehazion. Twenty years later, Ukraine has used technological advances to make crowdfunding more effective. Digital finance is changing the nature of warfare, but it could cut both ways. — Reuters

Digital donations could benefit both sides, though. True, it will be harder for Russia to raise global funds given the raft of Western sanctions imposed on it



OIL PRICE HIKE RALLY

Protesters holding placards stage a rally in front of a petrol station in Manila, capital of the Philippines on Tuesday, after successive oil price increase in recent weeks. Oil companies set their largest price hikes yet as the war between Russia and Ukraine continues to escalate and triggers a global inflation wave. — AFP

Oil and gas price rise amid vicious war



ANDY JALIL andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

THE ELEVATED ENERGY PRICES COULD RESULT IN A 55 PER CENT HIKE TO THE ENERGY PRICE CAP IN OCTOBER, TAKING ANNUAL ENERGY BILLS ABOVE £3,000 FOR MOST HOUSEHOLDS IN UK

Russian attack on Ukraine has sent global energy prices spiralling as inflation fears continue to rise. The impact, of Russia escalating its assault on Ukraine, will send the cost of living in the UK and Europe to record level, reveal new forecasts by top analysts.

Fears over Moscow squeezing oil and gas flows in retaliation to Western sanctions and the inevitable price rise, has raised concern of inflation in Britain peaking at 9.5 per cent in October, according to Goldman Sachs. The elevated energy prices could result in a 55 per cent hike to the energy price cap in October, taking annual energy bills above £3,000 for most households in UK, Goldman warned.

The cap will already rise by a similar rate in April, underlining the severity of the cost of living crunch already biting the people. UK petrol prices hit another record high last week. The supply squeeze is intensified by a British ban on Russian cargoes or vessels docking in the UK. The additional cap rise will hoist inflation at a rate not seen in Britain since 1990.

Goldman said the Bank of England will look through the energy shock and send interest rates to 1.75 per cent by November. Consumers are certain to slash spending in

the face of intense pressure on their living standards, sparking concern over whether the UK's economic recovery from the Covid-19 crisis will run out of steam this year.

"We expect the high inflation to lead to cost-of-living pressures and weigh on growth over the course of this year", said analysts at Goldman. Under existing forecasts by the Bank of England projecting an inflation peak of 7.25 per cent this April, UK living standards were already expected to fall at the steepest rate since the 1940s.

If Goldman's projections materialise, the hit to households' spending power will be substantially worse. The warning came as fellow banking giant JP Morgan said rampant inflation will cause economic growth to "slow to a crawl".

Although Britain is much less reliant on Russia for energy supplies than Europe, the cost of securing oil and gas is set in energy markets on the continent, meaning the UK will almost certainly have to pay more for inventories. Such high levels of inflation would also put more pressure on Rishi Sunak the chancellor, with vast tranches of UK government debt repayments tied to the measure.

Prices among the countries that use the euro are accelerating at the fastest rate

on record, according to official figures, published this month. Inflation in the eurozone hit 5.8 per cent this month, the highest recorded since the introduction of the euro, according to Eurostat, the bloc's statistics agency. Rapidly accelerating prices is piling pressure on the European Central Bank, (ECB) to act to tame inflation. The bloc's central bank has left interest rates in negative territory for several years.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is widely expected to speed up the rate of price increases in Europe if future Western sanctions target energy flow from Moscow into the continent. Europe is heavily reliant on Russia for energy supplies, with the area's economic powerhouse, Germany, sourcing around 40 per cent of its natural gas inventories from Moscow.

Oil prices jumped around 5 per cent earlier this month, with Brent Crude at its highest for the first time in nearly a decade. European gas futures — contracts for gas supplies at a later date — soared 36 per cent on fears over the bloc's gas supplies being squeezed. Concerns about the negative impact on the global economy from the Russia-Ukraine conflict has prompted traders to pare back their bets on the pace of the world's top central banks tightening cycles.

China's hedge against geopolitical shock



ZHANG JUN

The author is Dean of the School of Economics at Fudan University and Director of the China Center for Economic Studies, a Shanghai-based think-tank

In terms of geopolitical impact, nothing could be more important than the United States' (US) shift from strategic cooperation to strategic competition with China. This change has darkened many observers' views of China's economic prospects, as indicated by a Bruegel report released late last year.

The assumption, it seems, is that China has no choice but to retreat from its successful development path and embark on a less prosperous path towards self-reliance, with the state exercising complete control over the economy to hedge against geopolitical shocks.

But China's efforts to bolster its self-sufficiency in some areas are a reasonable response to external pressures — and they hardly spell doom for its economic model or prospects. In recent years, the US has ramped up its effort to "contain" China's rise.

Beyond employing tariffs and non-tariff barriers on imports from China, it has been limiting Chinese investment, such as by blocking Chinese companies from acquiring firms in some high-tech sectors in the US.

It has also continued to add Chinese firms to its so-called Entity List, thereby restricting their access to US-controlled critical technologies like semiconductors, barred US capital from entering some of China's strategic industries, and forced Chinese companies off US stock exchanges.

These policies could only carry escalating strategic costs for the United States.

And, contrary to popular belief, their lasting impact on the Chinese economy could be very limited, let alone enough to stop China's economic rise in its tracks.

An even more important point is missing from this discussion. China has already crossed a crucial threshold in terms of technological

strength as measured by the stock value of physical- and human-capital accumulation. It is now only a matter of when, not if, China catches up with the US technologically.

Chinese leaders have been clear that the country must move faster towards global technological parity to better mitigate the risk from geopolitical impact.

In recent years, the government has boosted spending to strengthen China's capabilities in basic and strategic sectors, including education, science and technology, agriculture and renewable energy.

It has also implemented policies aimed at supporting the rapid development of cutting-edge high-tech industries, such as big data, cloud computing, 5G, and artificial intelligence.

Similarly, in accordance with its Five-Year Plans, China has been expanding its digital infrastructure system. According to China's Ministry of Industry and

Information Technology, China has already established 1.4 million 5G base stations — more than 60% of the world's total — with over 650,000 built last year alone.

Such efforts are largely a response to the endogenous need to shift to a more advanced stage of economic development, not simply to United States containment policies and geopolitical shocks.

Given this imperative, perhaps the greatest impact of the US effort to contain China has been to clarify China's weaknesses and spur more progress in addressing them.

Chinese authorities do not believe that US containment policies will force China out of the existing global economic system, let alone lead it to embrace an inward-looking, state-controlled development model.

Predictions that US policies will have such an effect underestimate the competitiveness gains that have driven China's economic rise over the past few decades and the

profound impact it has had on the global economy.

China has built the world's second-largest economy, and accumulated vast physical and human capital.

It is also deeply embedded in — and central to — global production, and has formed complementary relationships with advanced economies. China is thus highly unlikely to be pushed out of global supply chains in any comprehensive way.

In fact, even as China has sought to build resilience at home, it has continued to pursue economic liberalisation, such as by improving its business climate, creating a more open financial sector and establishing many more free-trade zones.

And the government remains committed to liberalising the domestic market in order to maintain its linkage with international markets.

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Observer

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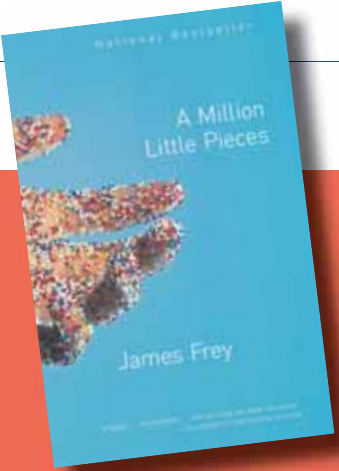
features

Waves of Change: Memories of the 40 years journey of Qurum Beach

Photographer Hassan Ali Jawad has been residing in Qurum over the past 40 years. He has witnessed countless of changes that swept one of Oman's favourite beach roads including the most horrific effect of Cylcone Gonu. He is allowing everyone to take a journey to the not so distant past through a photography exhibit currently ongoing at the Art & Soul Gallery in Waterfront, Qurum...**R20**



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ENTERTAINMENT

'The Power of the Dog' triumphant with best film, director at BAFTAs

JANE CAMPION'S dark Western "The Power of the Dog" won BAFTAs for best director and best film on Sunday, beating Denis Villeneuve to the top prize although his sci-fi epic "Dune" won five other awards at the star-studded London ceremony.

Will Smith scooped the best actor prize for his portrayal of the Williams sisters' father and tennis coach in "King

Richard", while Britain's Joanna Scanlan won best actress for her widow's role in drama "After Love".

The star of "The Power of the Dog", Benedict Cumberbatch, accepted the best director award on behalf of Campion, the day after she won the Directors Guild of America's top prize for her film about the toxic masculinity of sexually repressed cowboys.

New Zealander Campion appeared on a video call after the ceremony, telling journalists that she was "speechless" to win the UK's best film award.

Producer Tanya Seghatchian paid tribute to Campion, hailing "a visionary whose trail has blazed through the last 30 years of cinema".

The film is now a front runner for the best movie award at the Oscars to be held in Los Angeles on March 27. — AFP





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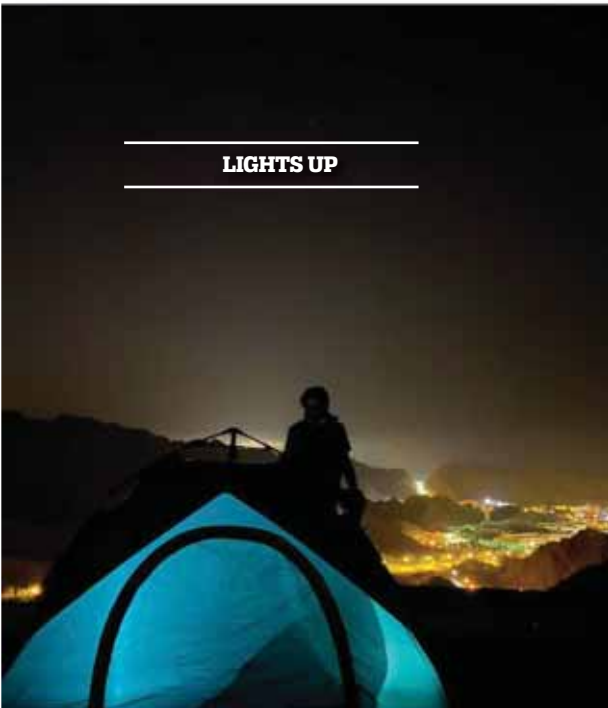


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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Digital art in spotlight as Dubai makes crypto hub bid



ART DUBAI, the Middle East's largest annual contemporary art fair, has featured for the first time digital works, as the wealthy Gulf emirate seeks to position itself as a crypto-assets hub.

This year, in its 15th edition, the four-day fair is hosting more than 100 local and foreign art dealers, with an entire wing of 17 galleries and platforms dedicated to showcasing and selling NFTs (non-fungible tokens).

NFT sales platforms use the blockchain technology behind cryptocurrencies, and transform anything from illustrations to memes into virtual collectors' items that cannot be duplicated.

Benedetta Ghione, Art Dubai's Executive Director, said NFTs, which burst into the mainstream last year and are now traded at major auction houses, have drawn a lot of attention in the United Arab Emirates, already a leisure and trading hub.

The increased interest, along with Dubai's "unique position" as "a growing crypto hub", prompted fair organisers to dedicate a new digital section, she said at the launch on Friday.

"We thought this was the perfect time, and the perfect place," she said.

After signing an agreement in December with Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange by trading volume, Dubai — one of the seven emirates that make up the UAE — introduced last week a new virtual assets law and a regulatory authority to oversee the sector.

Growing exponentially
Dubai's ruler Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum tweeted that such a step "establishes the UAE's position in this sector" and aims "to ensure maximum transparency and security for investors". Local NFT platforms have welcomed the move as good for business, with crypto holders increasingly interested in digital art as a form of investment.

"The crypto community is growing exponentially," said Jennifer Stelco of NFT curatorial platform Morrow Collective which exhibited about 20 digital artworks at the show, nearly all of them by UAE-based artists.

Among them is a piece by Vesa, a renowned Finnish mixed media artist based in Dubai, whose artwork combining painting and digitally-retouched images went on offer for 50 etherium (cryptocurrency), or about \$127,000 at Sunday's prices.

Stelco said that one piece, by Lebanese artist Magda Malkoun whose main work depicted her hometown Beirut as a strong female, was sold for three etherium.

The global NFT boom, with US artist Beeple selling an artwork at a record-breaking \$69 million last year, has encouraged the Middle East's first online platform, Emergeast, to turn to digital art.

Established in 2014 and dedicated to emerging artists from the region, Emergeast sees NFTs as an opportunity for artists to "really expand" their audiences, reaching both collectors and non-collectors, co-founder Nikki Meftah said.

"The benefit also is that all the artists get royalties for every sale," she added.

Faced with the NFT hype, Emirati sculptor and painter Aisha Juma started reworking some sketches on a tablet a few months ago, although she stresses the importance of the art's message over its medium.

"There is complexity because now people are interested in the medium... in the technology," she said.

"The technology is extremely valuable. It gives me a platform to express more and to use more tools, I am not denying that, but I would also love people to look at the art, at what I am saying." — **AFP**

FASHION

Shanghai tailors keep qipao dress tradition alive



ZHOU ZHUGUANG surveys his Shanghai workshop and rows of workers meticulously stitching high-collared Chinese dresses known as qipao, some of which sell for nearly \$5,000.

"It's a highly skilled craft," said Zhou, co-founder of Hanart, one of China's most well-known qipao makers.

"Some of our tailors spend a lifetime learning to make qipao."

The price tag also reflects enduring demand for the qipao, known as a cheongsam in Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities.

Drawing on traditional design elements, the dress was popularised in 1920s Shanghai, its form-fitting cut capturing the glamour of that free-wheeling pre-communist era and the desire of Chinese women to liberate themselves from traditionally subservient roles.

The qipao disappeared after the Communist Party — which considered it decadent and bourgeois — took power in 1949.

The dress's comeback is due in part to producers like Zhou.

A mass-produced qipao, sometimes seen at weddings or other formal occasions, can be bought today for as little as 100 yuan (\$16).

But Zhou, 59, has found a market for higher-end designs among well-heeled Chinese fashionistas.

Zhou previously dealt in lower-priced qipao before founding Hanart in 1998 in partnership with Chu Hongsheng, a legendary qipao designer who fitted Chinese film actresses and the wives and daughters of Shanghai mafia bosses. Chu died in 2017 at the age of 99.

Cultural value
"Low price isn't the true essence of the qipao," said Zhou, who feels that such an iconic Chinese fashion staple requires more luxurious mate-

rials, bolder designs and hand-crafted precision, which inevitably push prices up.

Zhou displayed these at a Shanghai show late last year which featured "modern, altered qipao" designs combining the classic Mandarin collar and body-hugging fit with less traditional elements such as

"If young people don't wear them, then by the time they grow old there won't be anyone wearing them," she said.

Yang admitted that youth acceptance suffers from a stereotype that qipao are for elderly women, or the belief that pop culture uses the dress to objectify Chinese women.



lace, fringes, velvet, sequins and rich embroidery.

"We want more young people to wear qipao," Zhou said of his design re-boot.

To Yang Zhenzhen, who owns a Shanghai qipao shop and is an online influencer of the dress style, cracking the youth market is essential to keeping the tradition alive.

Her shop targets buyers aged 25-45 with qipao starting at around \$600.

"Young people bring new life and energy" to the qipao, said Yang, 28, who has been smitten with the dress since childhood and began collecting them five years ago.

"These are deep misconceptions... so I want to popularise it as best I can and let people know the real meaning of qipao," she said.

That includes the dress's role in breaking down gender norms for women during the 1920s. The sense of freedom associated with that will never go out of style, she adds.

For Zhou, selling qipao is about perpetuating an element of China's intangible cultural heritage.

"We are small, but we are carrying on a piece of culture," he said.

"That's where our biggest value is." — **AFP**



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

An epidemic after an epidemic!

THE WORLD has been slow to realise that the long term (Covid-19), if it is true, is one of the most serious consequences of this virus. But despite everything we know now about the long coronavirus, it is still not enough. As following the research, I notice how researchers still do not know who is most at risk, or how long the condition may last and whether some of the variants have caused it frequently, or how often vaccines may overwhelm it.

It seems to me that its danger is amorphous and inevitable. Thus as human nature you can be so afraid of what you don't understand or just say, not so well defined, I wouldn't even think of it!

Perhaps now that everyone has slowly moved to a post-pandemic world, I am worried that we may leave behind all these patients (affected by long corona) under the rug! Aren't you with me that coronavirus has long struggled to gain a foothold in societies and now, it threatens to be (long-term) one of its first major influences, which is slipping back into being marginalised in some societies.

Of course, researchers believe that this category — if I can name it — has hundreds of possible symptoms. It can strike the brain, heart, lungs, intestines and all of the above, or none of the above. It can start as a silent infection, patient can be admitted at intensive care unit, or anything in between. It can even start days, weeks or months after a person is first infected with the virus and its severity can fluctuate over time. So is long

Covid-19 a collateral damage as a result of the war between the virus and the immune system... That is the question?

All of this means that even the diagnosis of long Covid-19 — it's still a battle. As for now, there is no clear and agreed upon clinical definition, or a single name for the condition, or a standardised set of tests for a definite diagnosis. Even the World Health Organization can not agree on how long a person must be sick before they meet the criteria for the condition!

Undoubtedly in the ideal world and to understand the risks of this category, the institute or the body responsible for following up on coronavirus will systematically survey large segments of people — for example — over long periods, observing who is infected, who continues to develop the condition, what form it takes and how it affects on people's health!

In the end, will the long coronavirus be the specter of the pandemic looming on the horizon? We all hear that there are risks, but not exactly the amount. Without a doubt, the global Corona crisis will end in some respects, when we decide to deal with it as we did. But this is not an option for a large part of the regions of this world, who cannot put the Corona pandemic completely behind them... Thus, perhaps we will witness epidemic post-epidemic!

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and a writer.



Waves of Change: Memories of the 40 years journey of Qurum Beach

By Mai al Abri
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Hassan Ali Jawad's lens has been capturing beauty from a very early age. At the age of 11, his first camera was gifted to him by his father when photography was just in its infancy. Hassan's photographic eye catches what others may pass — beautiful, distinctive or mystifying images. Residing in Qurum over the past 40 years, he witnessed countless changes on the Beach Road. Through this exhibition, Hassan decided to share his collection throughout the road's story reminiscing its beauty, changes and development with everyone else to demonstrate his love for preservation and environmental awareness.

"Waves of change", the current exhibition at Soul and Art Gallery was the production of spontaneous images captured by the photographer during the past 40 years. Having no previous intention at that time to hold this exhibition with this theme, Hassan said, "I enjoy going to the beach as a daily routine. Living close to Qurum Beach made me notice all the changes taking place over the course of time."

Qurum Beach Road, the heart of Qurum, a popular destination also known as the Love Road, is a tranquil escape to a golden band of a sandy beach. The stretch of clear waters of the Sea of Oman neighbours, the natural Mangrove Lagoons with its serene landscapes. Qurum Beach stretches for four kilometres along the Muscat coastline, and has become a busy destination for locals and tourists.

"It was overwhelming at that time when the government built the bridge connecting the two sides of the beach. A very simple detail that someone would go without noticing made a change to us. That was the first attempt of carrying people across to the beach via a man-made bridge lasted for several years. Yet, the first storm brought the entire structure down, leaving behind rubble and ruins", he shared.

The country was sticken by Gonu in 2007, a category 4 cyclone of strong winds and rainfall caused flash floods and severely collapsed the infrastructure travelling from the Arabian Sea into the Sea of Oman.

"As other parts of the country, the Qurum Beach was awfully impacted. It took sometime after this to bring back the life to the area", he noted.

The other sad incident that thwarted Hassan was the removal of Ghaf trees from the beach in 2015 — a miserable step replacing the Ghaf that stood there for 250 years with a car park.

"It was lamentable to shift the home of a multitude of birds and other creatures and use it for a commercial side as a car park. Today, the Mangrove Reserve that embraces small trees and shrubs grown beside the coastline area, gives some artistic view. It is an unruffled and protected site that encompasses birdlife, sea, life and lush greenery", he shared.

The exhibition lasts till March 25 at the Art and Soul Gallery in the waterfront Mall. It exhibits over 200 pictures featuring the changes in the Qurum Beach, underscoring the role of photography at highlighting some of the environmental issues and spreading awareness.

