



Chefs and owners pose for a picture on the stage during a ceremony revealing the 2022 selection of the Michelin Guide Dubai, the first-ever edition in the United Arab Emirates. — AFP photos



Chefs and owners pose for picture on the stage during a ceremony revealing the 2022 selection of the MICHELIN Guide Dubai.

Dubai restaurants earn Middle East's first Michelin stars

Eleven Dubai restaurants were awarded the first Michelin stars in the Middle East on Tuesday as dozens of the city's eateries made it into the prestigious gastronomic guide. Two restaurants were given two-star ratings, another nine gained one star and 14 received the Bib Gourmand for value-for-money gourmet fare.

Dubai, the United Arab Emirates' commercial hub, joins a growing number of cities worldwide covered by the coveted French listings. Inspectors spent months

visiting eateries "from the most elegant and luxurious restaurants run by globally renowned chefs, to the simple bistro operated by friendly locals", Michelin guide international director Gwendal Poullennec said at the announcement event at Dubai Opera.

"It's a historic moment for Dubai and the Michelin guide," he told AFP. Sixty-nine restaurants serving 21 types of cuisine were listed, including Italian, Japanese, Arabic, French and Indian. Il Ristorante-Niko Romito, and STAY by

Yannick Alleno, which is on Dubai's Palm development of man-made islands, were the two-star winners.

"This I believe should be a game-changer," Firas Fawaz, founder and managing partner of featured restaurant The Artisan, told AFP. "You have the international standard... that pushes us to go the extra mile to deliver something different from the norm."

Created in 1900 by the brothers Andre and Edouard Michelin of tyre company Michelin for motorists, the guide has

become a reference for food lovers and has been known to make or break careers. Poullennec said Dubai's 90 per cent expat population, of 200 nationalities, had created an "epicurean kaleidoscope" in the desert city.

Dubai's inclusion is a recognition of the different nationalities "bringing their experience, their background and culture into every single bite", Issam Kazem, CEO of Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce, told AFP. — AFP



A host holds a Michelin star during a ceremony revealing the 2022 selection of the Michelin Guide Dubai.



Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov (second left) reacts on stage to the bid of \$103.5 million to buy his 2021 Nobel Peace Prize medal in New York.

Russian Nobel laureate sells medal for \$103.5 million to benefit Ukraine kids

Dmitry Muratov, the Russian editor-in-chief of the independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, on Monday auctioned off his Nobel Peace Prize gold medal for a whopping \$103.5 million to benefit children displaced by the war in Ukraine. The medal was sold to an as yet unidentified phone bidder at the sale in New York organized by Heritage Auctions.

The sale was a spirited one, with lots of applause and bidders egging one another on to increase the total. Muratov was seen recording videos of the bidding screen and those in the room. When the final bid came in, at tens of millions of dollars more than the previous offer, many in the room expressed shock, including Muratov himself.

"I'm just like you in that regard," he told AFP, speaking through a translator after the sale. Muratov won the prize in 2021 alongside journalist Maria Ressa of the Philippines, with the committee honoring

the pair "for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression."

He was among a group of journalists who founded Novaya Gazeta in 1993 after the fall of the Soviet Union. This year, it became the only major newspaper left voicing criticism of President Vladimir Putin and his tactics inside and outside the country. In March, more than a month into Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Novaya Gazeta suspended operations in Russia, after Moscow adopted legislation providing for tough jail terms against anyone criticizing the Kremlin's bloody military campaign.

In April, Muratov was assaulted on a train when a person threw oil-based paint mixed with acetone on him, causing his eyes to burn. Muratov's medal was available to bidders both in person and online, with all proceeds going to UNICEF's Humanitarian Response for Ukrainian Children Displaced by War. When asked why he chose UNICEF as the recipient of

the funds, Muratov said: "It's critical to us that that organization does not belong to any government. It can work above government. There are no borders for it."



A woman holds Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov's 2021 Nobel Peace Prize medal in New York. — AFP photos

'We must stay in our jobs'

Since 2000, six of Novaya Gazeta's journalists and collaborators have been killed in connection with their work, including investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya. Muratov dedicated his Nobel prize to their memory. On Monday, he hailed the persistence of journalists as an important check on governments, and one way that war can be prevented.

"So no matter how many times each one of us wants to turn in our notice and quit, we must stay in our jobs," he told AFP. Speaking in a video released by Heritage in connection with the sale, the prominent journalist said that winning the Nobel "gives you an opportunity to be heard." "The most important message today is for people to understand that there's a war going on and we need to help people who are suffering the most," he said. — AFP



Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov, editor-in-chief of the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta, celebrates after a person made a final offer of \$103.5 million to buy his 2021 Nobel Peace Prize medal.

Geoffrey Rush to get top prize at Czech film festival

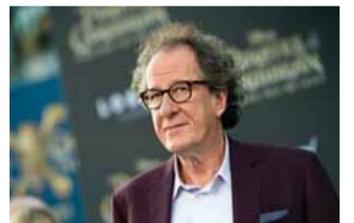
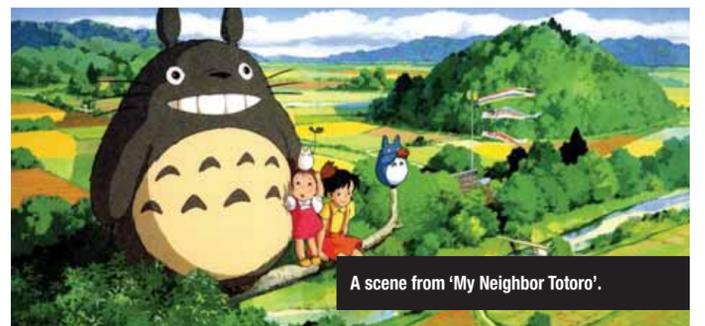


Photo shows Actor Geoffrey Rush. — AFP

Oscar-winning Australian actor Geoffrey Rush will receive the Crystal Globe award for his "outstanding contribution to world cinema" at the Karlovy Vary film festival next month, organizers said on Tuesday. The 70-year-old Rush won the Academy Award for Best Actor for "Shine" in 1996.

Known as Captain Barbossa from the "Pirates of the Caribbean" films, Rush was also nominated for an Oscar for

"Shakespeare in Love", "Quills" and "The King's Speech". Benicio del Toro, who won an Oscar for best supporting actor for his role in "Traffic", will receive the Festival President's Award. The 56th edition of the festival will be held in the western Czech spa city of Karlovy Vary on July 1-9. — AFP



A scene from 'My Neighbor Totoro'.

Totoro's home: Japan crowd funds for forest that inspired film

A Japanese city is launching a crowdfunding campaign to help preserve a special spot of woodland: the forest that inspired the animator of beloved movie "My Neighbor Totoro". The city of Tokorozawa outside Tokyo plans to buy the 3.5-hectare "Totoro Forest" for 2.6 billion yen (\$19 million), with crowdfunding covering just a small portion of that, a city official told AFP.

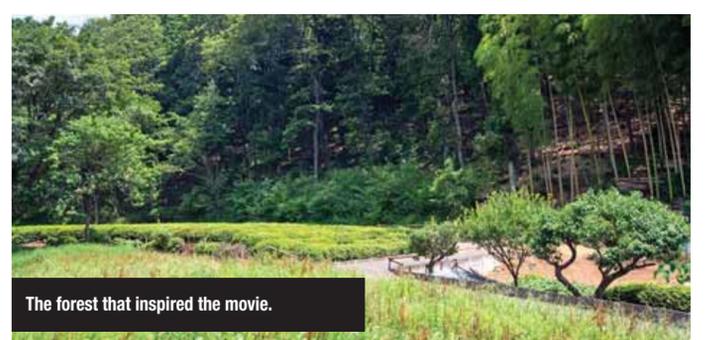
"The area is one of the places that director (Hayao) Miyazaki developed ideas for Totoro after walking there," the official said, adding that the plan aims to turn the forest into a nature reserve. The 1988 animation film from Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli features the cuddly but mysterious forest spirit character Totoro, who has become an instantly recognizable figure for fans around the world.

The forest that inspired his home is

about 30 kilometers northwest of Tokyo and has some 7,000 oak trees.

Tokorozawa will ask crowdfunding participants to contribute 25,000 yen (\$185) and in return, they will receive prints of background artwork offered by Studio Ghibli. An initial 1,000 sets will be available, targeting donors inside Japan, though additional rounds could be organized if there is interest, the official said.

While the campaign will only cover a small portion of the cost of buying the land, the city is hoping it will bring attention to the forest and build support for its preservation. Miyazaki, who co-founded Studio Ghibli with Isao Takahata, is known for a string of animated hits, including "Spirited Away", though Totoro is one of his studio's most beloved characters. — AFP



The forest that inspired the movie.