

Norway ship gets Sultan Qaboos award

The Ministry of Defence, represented by the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), held the award ceremony of Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award in Gran Canaria, on Sunday. The Norway's Christian Radich ship won the 10th edition of Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award for a history full of achievements in sail training. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the celebrations of the 52nd National Day. **DETAILS ON P3**



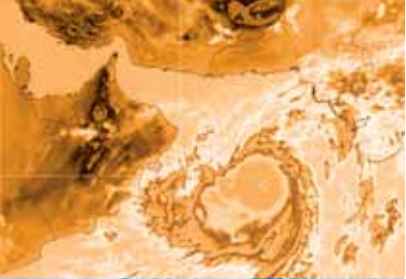
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AL HAWALIS:
A TRADITIONAL GAME
THAT SURVIVES TILL DATE



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OMAN JOINS
REGIONAL CLIMATE
CHANGE INITIATIVE



P17

IMPERIOUS
SURYAKUMAR
ROCKS NZ



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY AUSTRIA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Alexander Van der Bellen, of the Republic of Austria, in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable on his re-election as his country's President. In his cable, President Alexander expressed his sincere appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's heartfelt sentiments. He also affirmed the importance of enhancing relations between the two countries. — ONA

BYLAW ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT DEALS

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion issued Ministerial Decision No 574/2022 promulgating the "Bylaw on Regulating Offices for Endorsement of Foreign Investors' Applications. The bylaw seeks to establish an investment-attractive climate by facilitating procedures on obtaining approvals, permits and licenses for investment projects. It also aims to attract quality investments that contribute to the growth of the domestic product, besides creating employment opportunities. The bylaw will help boost the national economy, enhance economic diversification sectors in line with Oman Vision 2040, bearing in mind all security, legal, social and economic dimensions. **DETAILS ON P9**

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NANCY PELOSI LEAVES THE STAGE, FINALLY | P6

DIVERSITY BRINGS WORLD TOGETHER IN QATAR AS WORLD CUP BEGINS



A general view of performers during the opening ceremony of the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 at Al Bayt Stadium in Doha on Sunday.



Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, attended the opening ceremony of the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 in the State of Qatar. Prior to the opening ceremony, Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, received HH Sayyid Theyazin who delivered to him the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his wishes of success to Qatar in hosting the World Cup. Earlier, upon his arrival at Hamad International Airport in Doha, HH Sayyid Theyazin was received by Shaikh Joaan bin Hamad al Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee. — ONA

MORE DETAILS IN SPORT PAGES

Producer Price Index up by 36.6% for third quarter

MUSCAT: The producer price index for the third quarter of 2022, posted an increase of 36.6 per cent, compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

The quarterly survey, issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), shows that oil and gas prices took the lead by scoring a 44.1 per cent hike, while non-oil products increased by 2.9 per cent.

The rise in prices of oil and gas products was due to a 48 per cent growth in crude oil and natural gas, coupled with a 21.8 per cent surge in prices of refined oil products.

The rise in the prices of non-oil products was due to a 3.1 per cent growth in prices of the converting industries' group. Prices of mining, electricity and water

The rise in prices of oil and gas products was due to a 48 per cent growth in crude oil and natural gas, coupled with a 21.8 per cent surge in prices of refined oil products

increased by 2.3 per cent. In the converting industries group, the prices of most of the sub-groups grew in different degrees: 11.7 per cent in prices of foodstuff, beverages, and textile products, 1 per cent in products of metal, machinery and equipment, and 0.8 per cent in prices of other transportable

commodities products. In the foodstuff and textile products' group, the prices of fish products, fruits, vegetables and oils surged by 22.9 per cent, the prices of fabrics and textile products grew by 21.4 per cent, the prices of dairy products went up by 10.1 per cent, the prices of beverages by 7 per cent, the prices of bakery products and other foodstuff rose by 4.3 per cent and prices of shoes by 1.6 per cent. In the group of metal products, machinery and equipment, the prices of products made of iron, steel or aluminium increased by 22.2 per cent, the prices of empty compressed cylinders rose by 6.3 per cent and the products of power transformers, electricity distribution devices and cables increased by 4 per cent. — ONA

HM gets message from President of Tajikistan



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan, dealing with the bilateral relations between Oman and Tajikistan. The message was handed over to Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy when he received on Sunday Zubaydullo Zubaydov,

appointed-ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields. The meeting was attended by Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, and a number of officials at the Foreign Ministry. — ONA

Officials inspect projects in Shaleem, Al Hallaniyat Islands

SHALEEM AND HALLANIYAT ISLANDS: Based on the Royal directive of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the governor of Dhofar accompanied by ministers and specialists visited the Islands of Al Halaniyat and Al Soda in the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands. The visit comes within the framework of the continued follow-up of His Majesty to all the aspects related to development, improving the

quality of services rendered to citizens and boosting the utilisation of natural potential resources that are abundant in the wilayats and governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. During the visit, the officials inspected the new passenger terminal, the runway, the port and other public facilities in Al Hallaniyat Islands. They viewed the natural sites that are aplenty in the island and discussed ways of boosting tourist services. — ONA





New mosque in Bausher



MUSCAT: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, will preside over the opening of Al Salam Mosque in the Wilayat of Bausher on Monday.

The construction of the mosque was ordered by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. It was built in accordance with the approved engineering and technical standards and occupies a

total area of 13,139 sq metres.

The new mosque has a main prayer hall with a capacity to accommodate 1,740 male worshippers in addition to another prayer hall for women which can accommodate 882 worshippers. The other facilities of the mosque include a two-storey multi-purpose hall, an accommodation for Imam and stores. The mosque is equipped with modern sound, monitoring and IT systems. — ONA

FOREIGN MINISTER EXCHANGES VIEWS WITH AMBASSADORS



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held the 3rd annual meeting with ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the Sultanate of Oman on Sunday. Sayyid Badr highlighted Oman's pillars of foreign policy and touched on regional and international developments and Oman's efforts in enhancing the investment milieu and economic diversification. He also explored climate issues and underscored Oman's efforts in achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

■ OMAN, NORWAY REVIEW BILATERAL COOPERATION



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met here on Sunday with Anniken Huitfeldt, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway. The two sides reviewed areas of bilateral cooperation and means of enhancing them, especially in the fields of economy, renewable energy, climate and Green Economy transition. They also exchanged views on various regional and international matters of mutual interest. At the conclusion of the meeting, the two ministers signed the political consultation memorandum's renewal. The meeting was attended by Khalid bin Hashel al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department. It was also attended by Ambassador of Norway to the Sultanate of Oman and several officials from both sides. — ONA



دار الأوبرا السلطانية مسقط
ROYAL OPERA HOUSE MUSCAT

Homage to 'The Swan of Pesaro'

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Conducted by *Nikolas Nägele*



25th November | 7:00 PM

The concert features a selection of overtures, arias and duets from Rossini's great operas such as *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *La Cenerentola*.



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SEASON 2022-2023

GCC agri committee meet discusses food security

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, took part in the extraordinary meeting of members of the GCC Agricultural Cooperation Committee.

Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, headed the Omani delegation at the meeting, held via video conferencing with the prime aim of discussing food security.

The meeting concluded with a number of proposals, including the endorsement of a permanent committee for food security to stem from the GCC Agricultural Cooperation Committee, as well



as renaming the Agricultural Cooperation Committee as the "Agricultural Cooperation and Food Security Committee".

The meeting discussed the formation of a high-level GCC working team that will comprise personnel of the public and private sectors, under the leadership of Saudi Arabia. — ONA

Impact of winter trough begins

Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

Oman Metrology's aerial pictures indicated the continued cloud activity and flow of clouds over parts of the governorates of Musandam, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, Al Buraimi and Al Dhahirah with sporadic rain and thundershowers due to the southwestern winter trough approaching from Europe to the Arabian Peninsula. Although rains were expected on Monday, the showers reached Shinas by Sunday.

The Met Office has also alerted on low clouds and fog during late

night and early morning on Monday over parts of North and South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah and parts of the coast of the Sea of Oman.

The weather forecaster at Met office said, "The impact of the winter trough is expected over Al Hajar Mountains, Al Dakhiliyah and coastal areas of Muscat. There are chances for rain in Muscat on Tuesday."

He added that there is a slight chance for the trough to last till Wednesday, while the temperature could drop one to two degrees once the trough passes through.





Ministries, institutions celebrate National Day

MUSCAT: Ministries, government and private institutions, universities, sports and cultural clubs are celebrating the glorious 52nd National Day, organising different cultural, heritage and awareness festivities.

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH (MoH), represented by the Personnel Care Section, celebrated the 52nd National Day under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, at the MoH Headquarters in Al Khuwair.

The celebration started with the Royal Anthem, followed by a speech addressed by Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, MoH Under-Secretary for Health Affairs, in which he pointed out the outstanding achievements in the health field since the blessed Renaissance till today, praising



the efforts of all workers providing the health, administrative and technical services.

During the celebration, a number of national poems were recited.

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION celebrated the 52nd National Day on Sunday under

the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education.

The ceremony included display of several paragraphs embodying the love of the homeland and its sovereign His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The student Saba al Fazari, who won the first place in memorising a thousand

verses of poetry, presented a poem, followed by a performance by students of Al Amal School for the Deaf. The student Azza al Harthi from Umm Qais Al Asadiya School presented a recitation of a poem titled "Heroes banner" followed by poetic operetta presented by Saba al Fazari, Sarah al Fazari, and Shaima al Fazari from Al Oyoun School in

North Al Sharqiyah. At the end of the ceremony, the students of Al Sarooj School for Basic Education presented a performance. The celebration featured songs by the scout band, and a performance of Al Azi's art.

On the sidelines of the celebration, the Minister of Education, honoured outstanding

students in a number of international competitions.

MUSANDAM NAVAL BASE

The Musandam Naval Base, represented by one of the ships of the Royal Navy of Oman, participated in the celebration of the 52nd glorious National Day in the village of Kumzar.

Christian Radich ship wins Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award



MADRID: The Ministry of Defence, represented by the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), conducted the award ceremony of Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award in Gran Canaria, on Sunday.

The Norway's Christian Radich ship won the 10th edition of Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award for a history full of achievements in sail training. The award ceremony was held in conjunction with the celebrations of the 52nd National Day.

Omar bin Said bin Omar al Kathiri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Spain, presided over the award ceremony which was attended by Commodore Tariq bin Issa al Raisi, Senior RNO Staff officer, a number of RNO personnel, officials from the Gran Canaria and stakeholders

of sail training.

A number of public and private international maritime institutions were in contention for this year's award.

The winner of the 10th edition of Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award was chosen at the annual International Sail Training Conference. The conference discussed the developments in sail training on the global level and reviewed lessons learned from the competitions organised by the Sail Training International (STI).

The Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award is one of the world's most prestigious awards in the field of sailing which aims to promote sail training worldwide. It is awarded to the best institutions, ships or individuals for their services in the field of sail training. — ONA

Oman embassies mark 52nd National Day

AMMAN: The Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan hosted a reception on the occasion of the 52nd glorious National Day, in the presence of Faisal al Fayez, Speaker of the Jordanian Senate, a number of senior officials in the Kingdom and heads of Arab and foreign diplomatic missions accredited to the Kingdom.

TEHRAN: The Sultanate of Oman's Embassy in the Islamic Republic of Iran hosted a reception marking the 52nd glorious National Day.

The reception included visual presentations on the investment potentials and tourism landmarks in the Sultanate of Oman. A documentary was also screened highlighting Oman's history.

The Iranian government was represented during the reception by Mohammad Sadeq Mofatteh, Deputy Minister of Industries, Mining and Trade.

The reception was attended by a number of Iranian political figures, heads of Arab and foreign missions, academics and intellectuals.

ADDIS ABABA: The Sultanate of Oman's Embassy in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia hosted a reception to mark the 52nd glorious National Day.

The reception included visual presentations on Oman's economic capabilities and tourism landmarks.

The Ethiopian government was



represented during the reception by Ambassador Dr Gebeyehu Ganga, Director General of the Middle East, Asia and Pacific Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs. The reception was attended by a number of officials at the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ambassadors of Arab

and foreign states accredited to Ethiopia, representatives of the international organisations in Addis Ababa and some Ethiopian business peoples.

Oman newspaper marks 50 years



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

On November 18, 1972, the first issue of Oman newspaper hit the stands. This was a major step forward in the information field of the Sultanate of Oman. This year the newspaper celebrates the 50th anniversary of its publication.

The newspaper started with weekly editions, which continued till 1975. After that, there were twice-weekly editions from 1975 to 1980, and daily editions started in 1980. Until now, there have been 15,193 issues. The first Editor-in-chief was Abdullah bin Sakhar al Amiri.

“Today, whoever wants to go back to reading those transformations and look at them on the timeline must return to the pages of the newspaper where he can find everything, and he can read indicators of development



The newspaper’s golden jubilee celebration is a source of happiness and pride for all of us. This newspaper was able to be at the forefront of the journalistic scene in the Sultanate of Oman during half a century

and its philosophy, indicators of tensions on the political and economic line, and the rise and fall of scientific and literary production,” wrote Assem al Sheidi, Editor-in-Chief of Oman newspaper.

He pointed out the newspaper was an important project of the modern renaissance of the Sultanate of Oman. Oman newspaper was not a commercial project that expires when the market needs it or stops achieving meaningful gains and profits.

As the Oman newspaper celebrates this occasion, it recalls generations of journalists who passed by the Oman newspaper and put their mark on it since beginning until today. The newspaper has reached a professional level and a large presence in the Omani and Arab scene.

“We promise all readers that the Oman newspaper will remain brilliant, pioneering, ambitious and striving towards carrying out its cognitive and enlightening role. The newspaper’s golden jubilee celebration is a source of happiness and pride for all of us. This newspaper was able to be at the forefront of the journalistic scene in the Sultanate of Oman during half a century and to be among the most prominent newspapers in the Arab world. It is still growing and still giving a lot despite all the challenges being faced in the world of journalism. It promises readers a lot more in the time to come,” said Al Sheidi.

“By 1997, Internet services were launched. At that time, our main objective was to reach the news from Oman to the Omani embassies and students across the globe,” said Qais bin Abdulrahim bin Saleh al Saleh, who began his career at the establishment same year.

‘Energy demand for future population a challenge’

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The issue of the future challenge of producing more energy for the growing population came during an open discussion on green energy transition in the Sultanate of Oman organised by the Omani French Friendship Association & TotalEnergies under the auspices of Abdulaziz al Shidhani, DG Renewable Energy and Hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals at the Conference on Solar and Hydrogen on Tuesday.

As the size of a population increases, so does its energy consumption. Studies suggest that the population the planet can sustain depends on the amount of energy sources available.

It is reported that global energy demand will shoot as high as 47 per cent in the next 30 years, and by 2050, alternative energy sources will be highly relied upon than the traditional ones driven by population and economic growth. This will further burden increasing oil and natural gas production, and policy changes by various governments.

“Producing more energy for the increasing population will be a major challenge of the future,” said Sergio Giorgi, TotalEnergies Oman Country Chair who shared his global vision of this accelerating green sector with the audience of 120 people from the energy sector, diplomats, and students.

The Omani French Friendship Association organised the event on Renewable Energies, in collaboration with TotalEnergies

EP Oman Development BV Oman Branch in line with Oman’s ambition to position the Sultanate of Oman as a leading global green hydrogen hub.

The conference titled “To what extent can Solar & Hydrogen play in the energy transition?” showcased the ongoing projects and future in Oman in the solar and hydrogen sectors.

Mohammed al Riyami, Business Support Manager of TotalEnergies, coordinated an insightful panel discussion led by Abdulaziz al Shidhani, DG of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen, at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

Global energy is shifting rapidly to electricity and hydrogen, power generation depending on renewables, soaring oil demand and so makes the demand for gas, growing hydrogen demand, hydrogen in use in transport and industries, sustainable fuels, energy technologies highly in use, and tackling carbon emissions are the other major issues facing the future energy sector.

Georgio Akiki, Gas, Head of Solar Distribution Generation of TotalEnergies, presented the solar project ongoing with Sharqiyah Desalination Company (Veolia) in Sur. Yann Bourles, Solar Utility Scale Business Developer and Zakariya al Battashi, Renewables Business Developer of TotalEnergies explained the trends we expect to see over the short term and beyond. Stephan Gobert, SVP Hydrogen AMEA of ENGIE talked about how hydrogen will impact the energy transition journey of Oman.



Football Fans Festival kicks off at exhibition centre

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

Football Fans Festival has started at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre with the opening of the World Cup on Sunday. The festive mood is there due to the Gulf region being the first venue for the big event.

The festival will continue from November 20 to December 18 to mark the Sultanate of Oman’s support for the World Cup.

It will be a live event, where visitors to the festival will have a date with the excitement and festive atmosphere of the World Cup.

The festival allows enjoying watching all the championship matches live, in addition to many accompanying events and activities. It will offer a variety of programmes, including artistic performances, interactive games, exciting competitions, and various prizes and incentives for visitors.

Also, will include an area dedicated to local and international

restaurants and cafes that offer great meals that cater to all tastes.

Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism and Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Sultanate of Oman’s Programme Supporting the Qatar World Cup 2022, had said previously, “The World Cup is the most important sporting event ever hosted by the region, and therefore the Sultanate of Oman has launched a special programme to celebrate this exceptional occasion based on the fact that Muscat is one of the cities approved to host the World Cup fans, as the programme aims to provide an integrated experience for fans who choose Muscat to stay during the tournament. The Football Fan Festival is the programme’s main attraction, as it is planned to be an unforgettable memory that brings visitors and fans closer to the atmosphere of the World Cup while providing an ideal experience.”

Accommodation services have



been provided in the programme along with tourism experiences represented by accommodation offers, tourism products and experiences in the hospitality sector, tours and tourism products.

Various tourist attractions will

suit World Cup fans at competitive prices.

Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, commented: “The Football Fan Festival was designed to be a family event full of fun and enthusiasm and suitable

for all ages, whether football fans or others. Therefore, the garden of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center was chosen as the venue for this event. To provide all the ingredients that enable us to give visitors a unique experience.

We are confident that the Football Fan Festival will be an event that will remain in everyone’s memory.”

The Sultanate of Oman worked to make participation in this event in all terms like Muscat International Airport’s preparation plan for facilitating the movement of fans at Muscat Airport, including the special paths for each of the departure and arrival flights, by defining gates designated for planes carrying World Cup fans, and ports designated for checking the fans, and specifying devices for customs inspection, with an integrated staff of the customer service team.

The Football Fan Festival website has the programme’s economic impact, attracting lots of business opportunities available to SMEs.

The event involves construction operations, event management, marketing, etc. The festival will also provide many direct and indirect job opportunities for Omani competencies during the period.



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In brief

■ BEIJING



CHINA REPORTS FIRST COVID DEATH SINCE MAY

China reported the death of an 87-year-old man in Beijing on Sunday as its first fatality from Covid-19 in six months, with cases rising despite a stringent zero-Covid policy.

The last major economy still welded to a no-tolerance policy on the virus, China has enforced snap lockdowns, mass testing and quarantines even as the rest of the world adjusts to living with Covid. Municipal officials announced on Sunday the 87-year-old man had died in the capital. They also said 621 new local cases had been detected in Beijing. The National Health Commission also said it had recorded more than 24,000 local infections across the nation in the previous 24 hours.

■ BEIRUT



31 KILLED IN TURKISH STRIKES IN NORTH SYRIA

Turkish air strikes overnight killed at least 31 people in northern Syria, primarily in positions held by Syrian Kurdish forces, a Britain-based war monitoring group said on Sunday.

Nearly 25 strikes hit Raqa, Hassakeh and Aleppo provinces, killing 18 members of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, 12 members of Syria's military and one journalist, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The autonomous Kurdish administration in northeastern Syria meanwhile gave a toll of 29 dead — including 11 civilians, 15 fighters aligned with Syria's military, two silo guards and one Kurdish fighter.

■ TOKYO



JAPAN GOVT LOSES THIRD MINISTER IN A MONTH

Japan's internal affairs minister resigned on Sunday over a series of campaign finance scandals, becoming the third member of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's cabinet to step down in less than a month.

Minoru Terada quit over allegations of mismanagement of political funds. He had acknowledged to parliament that his local campaign group had even listed a dead person as its treasurer in annual financial statements.

Other accusations published by the weekly Shukan Bunshun magazine included illegal payments to staff during his reelection campaign last year.

Ukraine, Russia trade blame over nuclear plant shelling



A participant reacts during a tree planting ceremony in memory of fallen Russian service members, who were killed in the course of Russia-Ukraine military conflict, in Sevastopol, Crimea, on Sunday. — Reuters

MOSCOW: Kyiv and Moscow on Sunday traded accusations of shelling on the territory of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant that Russia controls in southern Ukraine.

The UN atomic watchdog that has a team of experts at the plant — the biggest nuclear facility in Europe — said “powerful explosions” had occurred on Saturday and Sunday.

Kyiv “does not stop its provocations aiming at creating the threat of a man-made catastrophe at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant”, the Russian army said in a statement on Sunday.

Despite the shelling, radiation levels “remain normal”, the army added.

It said missiles exploded around a power line that feeds the plant, the fourth and fifth power units

and “special building number 2”.

Renat Karchaa, an adviser to the Russian nuclear agency Rosatom, told state-run agency Tass that the “special building” contained nuclear fuel.

Ukrainian nuclear energy agency Energoatom said shortly after that Russia was behind the explosions.

“This morning on November 20, 2022, as a result of numerous Russian shelling, at least 12 hits were recorded on the territory of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant,” Energoatom said. It accused Russia of “once again... putting the whole world at risk”.

“The news... is extremely disturbing. Explosions occurred at the site of this major nuclear power plant, which is completely unacceptable,” UN atomic watchdog chief Rafael Grossi said

in a statement.

He added that the damage to buildings, systems and equipment recorded so far was not “critical”.

The explosions were “abruptly ending a period of relative calm at the facility and further underlining the urgent need for measures to help prevent a nuclear accident there”, the statement read.

Moscow and Kyiv have traded blame for months over shelling near the Russian-held facility, sparking fears of a nuclear disaster and spurring calls to de-militarise areas around atomic facilities in Ukraine.

An IAEA team on the ground said there had been damage to some buildings, systems and equipment at the plant, Europe's largest nuclear power station. The IAEA team could see some of the explosions from their windows.

“The news from our team yesterday and this morning is extremely disturbing,” Rafael Grossi said in a statement.

“Explosions occurred at the site of this major nuclear power plant, which is completely unacceptable. Whoever is behind this, it must stop immediately. As I have said many times before, you're playing with fire!”

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has six Soviet-designed VVER-1000 V-320 water-cooled and water-moderated reactors containing Uranium 235, which has a half-life of more than 700 million years.

The reactors are shut down but there is a risk that nuclear fuel could overheat if the power that drives the cooling systems was cut. Shelling has repeatedly cut power lines. — Agencies

2 death-row extremists escape Bangladesh court

DHAKA: Two extremists sentenced to death for their role in the murder of a publisher escaped from a Bangladesh court on Sunday after their guards were subdued with a chemical spray, police said.

The two men were among eight members of the outlawed group sentenced last year for the 2015 killing of Faisal Arefin Dipan, who was targeted for publishing the works of a prominent atheist writer.

“When the officers were bringing out the convicts, two motorbike riders came in and blinded officers by spraying their faces,” police detective branch chief Harunur Rashid told reporters.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan ordered a nationwide manhunt for the escapees and pledged a bounty of two million taka (\$19,500) for any information leading to their arrest.

“Police have launched a search for them. We believe we can catch them very soon, Khan told reporters.

“We have also sealed the border so they cannot leave the country.”

K N Roy Niyati, a spokesman for Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the men were aged 33 and 24 and used multiple aliases. Ansar al Islam, a local extremist group linked with the Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), grabbed headlines last decade when their members were accused of hacking to death several secular bloggers, atheist writers and activists.

Bangladesh has since launched a nationwide crackdown against extremists, outlawing half a dozen groups, killing more than a hundred militants in raids and arresting hundreds of suspected extremists. — AFP

Nepal votes in poll coloured by downturn and discontent

KATHMANDU: Nepali voters cast their ballots for a new parliament on Sunday in a contest dominated by public frustrations over the Himalayan republic's elderly political elite and anxiety over its teetering economy.

A revolving door of prime ministers — most serving less than a year — and a culture of horse-trading have fuelled perceptions the government is out of touch with Nepal's pressing problems.

Several younger faces are contesting for the first time, up against established parties whose leaders have strode the corridors of power for decades. Though analysts expect Nepal's entrenched political veterans to again dominate the next assembly, many voters have lost faith in the status quo and a mood for change is palpable.

“Every party took turns in government over the past five years and they did nothing,” Chiranjibi Dawadi, a driver by trade, said this week. “My family has decided to vote for a new party this time. It's OK even if they don't look after us. Old parties didn't either.”

Sunday's elections are the second since a new constitution was promulgated in 2015, ushering in a new political order after the conclusion of Nepal's traumatic Maoist insurgency.



A voter holds up her thumb marked with indelible ink by an election official after casting her vote in the general election at a polling station in Bhaktapur on the outskirts of Kathmandu on Sunday. — AFP

The civil war ended in 2006, having claimed more than 17,000 lives and prompting the abolition of the country's monarchy, while also bringing the former rebels into the government fold.

Since then the former guerrillas have alternated in power with another communist party and the established Congress in various coalitions.

But political instability has been a recurrent feature of Nepal's parliament, and no prime minister has served a full term since the war ended.

A constant balancing act has left governments of different stripes struggling to navigate between Nepal's two neighbours, China and India, at a time of rising Western concern with Chinese-funded mega-projects in the country. — AFP

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AUCTION

Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C) hereby announces auction as mentioned in the following table:

Auction No.	Material for Sale	Last Date of Buying	Preview Date	Last date of Submission
05/2022	Selling of Electrical Scrap Materials and other obsolete Spare Parts at Rural Areas Electricity Company Power Station at Wilayat Maqshan - Dhofar Governorate	29/11/2022	To Be Determined	12/12/2022

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Interested and Specialized Companies in scrap activities and have official registration with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain the auction documents from Procurement & Contracts Department, against non-refundable payment of RO. 100/- (Rial Omani One Hundred Only) for each set of documents. The fees of the auction shall be deposit on Tanweer account 0423010783090041 – Bank Muscat and for more information please contact via email address i.e. tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om, or call us on phone number: 24250824.
- Offers should be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to the Chairman of Minor Tender Committee, Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C), marked with the auction number and subject. Other marks or reference whatsoever should be printed on the envelope. The identity of the bidder should not be revealed and should be submitted before 1:00 P.M. on the assigned date for submission of the auction.
- The buyer must pay the complete amount of his offer within **Two Weeks** of such notification by deposit or certified cheque.
- The buyer must transfer all the material and clean the location within **One Month** from the date of client notification for taking the materials. If the buyer does not transfer the materials purchased within the specified period, the same will be confiscated by the company. Such confiscated materials will be released to the buyer upon payment of demurrage charges to be calculated by the Seller.
- Rural Areas Electricity Company has the right to accept or reject any offer without giving reasons.
- Preview of the material to be determined later during the formal working hours.

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Celebrating a day of honour and solidarity

The National Day (November 18) marks the day of loyalty and pride of all Omanis for being inhabitants of this great country. It is the day of expressing tribute and gratitude to late Sultan Qaboos, the architect of Oman's blessed Renaissance and our benevolent wise leader His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his great efforts and achievements to continue the nation-development march with further renewed renaissance.

Looking back over the past 52 years, we can realise how far the Sultanate of Oman has reached and developed in all walks of life. The great achievements of the past decades have been spread in every corner of Oman and flourished over all walks of our lives. All the fruitful outcomes of the country's rapid progress are a result of tireless and sincere dedication and sacrifice of both the Sultans to serve the nation and its people.

In a very inspiring speech, late Sultan Qaboos declared: "The land of Oman and its people are in my heart and in my thoughts and the job I have taken on is a duty, not a ceremonial honour". These words reflect the sincerity of late Sultan Qaboos to help his people to get a better life and a prosperous future, which he promised of since his first day of ascension to the throne.

If truth to be told, the National Day anniversary mirrors Oman's journey, which has been brought by our beloved late Sultan Qaboos. He was undoubtedly a gifted man who worked hard and devoted himself to make the dreams of the country a tangible reality. We all bend on knees praying for the late Sultan on this day for all the sacrifices he made over the past five decades of nation-building.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik went on the same path, renewing the blessed Renaissance of Oman. Along with His Majesty's personal commitment to the development of man and nation



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami aljahdhami22@gmail.com

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

alike, His Majesty called upon Omani citizens to shoulder the responsibility and play their significant role as well in serving the nation to achieve further progress and prosperity. His Majesty believed it is an essential approach that the people should work closely with the government like different organs of one body.

His Majesty in his first speech said: "People of Oman, the trust thrust on our shoulders and the resultant immense responsibilities require us all to work together for the sake of our country's magnificence, with a persistent resolve to promote it to the loftiest levels. This cannot be realised without your support and cooperation and combination of all efforts to achieve the desired supreme national goal. Your contribution to enrich all efforts of progress, development and prosperity will be highly appreciated."

Nothing can be said in response to the fabulous efforts and accomplishments made by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik over a record time of the blessed renewed Renaissance. Expressing words of thanks and appreciation is insufficient to value His Majesty's gestures to the citizens since his ascension day to the throne.

As Oman celebrates its 52nd National Day, all citizens express their thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his wise governance during the past years of the renewed Renaissance. This auspicious day is also time to renew our pledge to the caring leader as well as to safeguarding; consolidating and taking active part in the joint efforts towards the nation-building process.

We Omanis have many reasons to be grateful and proud of our country. Oman is the land that defines our identity; it is the land we belong to and will die for. Our homeland continues to be always a safe and picturesque haven for citizens and residents. As well, it provides a traditional, warm and hospitable welcome to its visitors.

Happy 52nd National Day!

SUN AND THE STADIUM



A fan outside Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor, Qatar, before the Group 'A' Fifa World Cup match between Qatar and Ecuador on Sunday. – Reuters

LOOKING BACK OVER THE PAST 52 YEARS, WE CAN REALISE HOW FAR THE SULTANATE OF OMAN HAS REACHED AND DEVELOPED IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE

Pelosi leaves the stage, finally

Now, the hour has come for a new generation to lead the Democratic Caucus that I so deeply respect. I am grateful that so many are ready to and willing to shoulder this awesome responsibility," tweeted Nancy Pelosi after seeing that Republicans have been able to finally win a razor thin majority in the House. So, she has eventually decided to vacate the chair of Speaker — not an easy moment for a person whose name had become synonymous with this position for almost two decades.

She will no longer be heading the Democratic caucus, and the new composition of the Democratic caucus has been announced, but she will continue to represent her California district in the lower chamber of Congress. She is perhaps one of the most well-known House Speaker in recent American political history. She is rightly compared with Sam Rayburn for her agility and influence in driving the momentum of Democrats in the working of the Congress.



Dr Imran Khalid

The writer is freelance columnist on international affairs

Unlike most of her predecessors, who preferred to keep a low profile during their tenures and afterwards, Pelosi is an entirely different entity. Even after leaving the speakership and the House leadership of Democrats, she is expected to remain very active in the internal proceedings of the House as well as remain busy in the international arena to help President Biden. However, some of her close friends are expecting that she may tone down her political activities for some time because her husband Paul Pelosi is still recovering from his surgery and injuries.

Last month, in an unfortunate incidence, Paul Pelosi was attacked at their San Francisco home with a hammer by a fanatic who actually wanted to kidnap Nancy Pelosi and break her kneecaps. This incidence at the twilight of her career has shocked everyone.

Some Republicans tried to play down it jokingly with their

sarcastic remarks, but the fact is that this small incidence has exposed the growing polarisation in American politics. A sense of alarm has grown after the attack on Paul Pelosi and analysts have started talking about looming dangers to democracy in America in the form of introduction of



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi rips up the speech of US President Donald Trump after his State of the Union address to a joint session of the US Congress in Washington on February 4, 2020. – Reuters

violence.

Some of her critics among Republicans allege that she tried to use the attack on her husband to win the sympathy votes for Democrats during the midterm polls — an allegation sternly denied by Pelosi. Indubitably, she has always been a very aggressive

Democrat and, though she never participated in the debates on important legislation, but a lot of aggressive legislation was done during her speakership.

Some of the landmark legislations were done during her tenure. The overtly aggressive manner in which she was active to launch impeachment proceedings against former President Donald Trump was enough to incite severe disliking for her among the Republican circles.

During her tenure, the House impeached Trump twice, but both times he was acquitted by the Senate. She is certainly a contentious political figure that has affected the internal culture of the House. Her legacy will keep influencing the domestic political fabric of America for a long time.

She also had weak moments and committed mistakes, but she has carved herself very effectively as a symbol of extreme commitment towards democratic values and philosophy.



Al Hawalis: A traditional game that survives till today

By Mohammed al Balushi

A group of men sitting on the sand captured my attention one day.

"I just snapped a picture of the game. Is it okay?" I wanted their permission.

"Okay, let's see the picture", one of them replied.

I showed them the picture and they liked it. This was when they really got into the game.

The game "Al Hawalis" is one of the national games in Oman. Understanding the history of the game and how it is played is something that has to be meticulously researched including where it began and where it got its influences.

Having the chance to sit with these players and get to know their game was a great opportunity. Al Hawalis is a traditional game that is widely played in Batina coastal

areas, such as Suhar, Shinas, Al Khabourah, and Barka. The game is also played in Muscat and Sur.

In this game, two players play simultaneously, facing each other. A total of twenty-eight "Khanas/ holes/ checks" are present on each side of the game. During the first round of the game, two "seashells" are placed in each "check".

"I started playing this game back in the 1960s when I was a young man", said an old man watching the game enthusiastically.

"I am Jumaa Mahmood from Muttrah, and now I can teach and coach people about this game", he said.

Historically, this game was played mostly in Muscat which was the hub of trade and business, where merchants exchanged commodities in the coastal areas. Merchants were found in Muscat who came from different parts of the world, like India, Zanzibar, Iran

and Makuran.

A man on the bench commented: "It's impossible to teach this game in one or two days without proper coaching". He responded as I made my intent to learn the game.

In the game, Mansoor, one of the players, seemed focused and serious. I asked him, "You look very serious, Mansoor?". "It is a very serious game; the player must be alert and use his brain to anticipate the opponent's steps", he said without looking at me.

In this game, I liked how the "seashells" were moved from one check to another. During the game, players have to use their brains elegantly. After over thirty minutes of watching the game, I was fascinated by this.

In this game, a player must be good at thinking and making decisions as one wrong move will lead to the player's loss", said the player.

OF BOOKS, LIFE, AND POP CULTURE



Rasha al Raisi

Bikram

YEARS BACK, WHILE exchanging e-mails with my dear American friend Deanna and while discussing yoga classes she asked if I'd ever

tried something called hot yoga. Never hearing of it before I asked what it was and she answered that it was yoga done in a room where the temperature is raised and you end up sweating buckets. Jokingly, I replied that I could simply practice outside during summer and get the same affect with bonus fresh air.

I remembered this conversation while watching the documentary Bikram: Yogi, Guru, Predator (2019) that talks about Bikram Choudhury the Indian-born American yoga instructor.

Bikram was born in Kolkata in 1944. He studied yoga at a young age and won the National India Yoga Championship as a teenager for three consecutive years. His lucky break came in 1971 when he emigrated to the US and opened his first yoga studio in LA.

Bikram founded Hot Yoga, where he performed 26 yoga postures along with 2 breathing techniques in a heated room of 40 centigrades. These postures were selected out of 500

poses created by his master Bishnu Charan Ghosh, who passed away in 1970. Later, he'll try to copyright these postures and fails. On TV interviews, he claimed that he had helped treat President Nixon and that's what got him the green card. Other celebrity clients included Elvis Presly, Sherly McLain, and Madonna.

In the 1990's Bikram started offering 9-weeks teaching training courses, where only a few selected teachers would manage to affiliate themselves with him and offer his Hot Yoga course. The course costed around \$10,000 and was very demanding physically, mentally, and emotionally. It was conducted in conference halls in hotels, where hundreds of students had to endure hunger, lack of sleep and no restroom breaks.

The footage of these trainings shows Bikram in his trademark black Speedos, walking around correcting postures, hurling abuses, cracking jokes, and singing. The vivid picture of Bikram the charming yoga

teacher starts changing slowly when many former students -who were interviewed for the documentary- start revealing other traits that they'd experienced first-hand: narcissism, megalomania, and sexual harassment. In 2013 two of his former students filed lawsuits accusing him of sexual assault and rape.

These were followed by another lawsuit by his head of legal and international affairs who sued him for being fired illegally in 2016. Unfortunately, Bikram denied all allegations and managed to use his Indian passport to flee to an unknown destination. Director Eva Orner succeeds in compiling footage and interviews that describes skilfully the rise and fall of Bikram.

While watching the documentary there were many questions running in my mind: Why did the students keep up with his abusive behaviour? Was the money charged for the course enough to silence them?

What's with the Americans always falling victims to cult-like

environments and their charismatic leaders? And most importantly, why tolerate an indecently dressed man in Speedos for the sake of yoga? The image that Bikram built slowly shatters as his lies are exposed and so is the multi-million industry he'd built. However, the distressing part is knowing that Bikram still trains and had conducted two teaching trainings in Mexico and Spain in 2019. Being an old yoga practitioner, I found the whole experience shocking and put-offish to anyone with no yoga experience. But it goes to show humans' capability of corrupting even the purest spiritual practices.

The movie was premiered at the 2019 Toronto Film Festival. It is worth watching, bearing in mind that Bikram is an anomaly in a world full of humble, dedicated, and trustworthy yoga instructors. Available on Netflix.

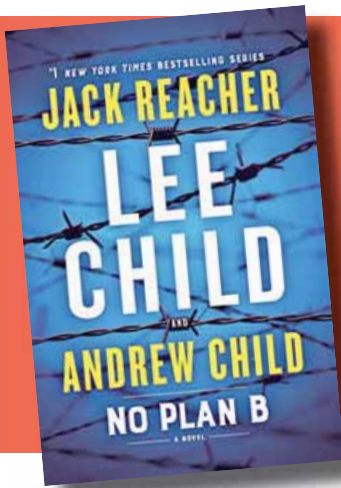
Rasha al Raisi is a certified skills trainer and the author of: The World According to Bahja. rashabooks@yahoo.com

READ

NO PLAN B

BY LEE CHILD AND
ANDREW CHILD

The 27th book in the Jack Reacher series. Reacher goes after a killer but is unaware of the bigger implications.



ENTERTAINMENT

Indonesian producer Yulia Evina carries with Indonesian film-maker and actor Makbul Mubarak his trophy for best actor for his role in the movie "Autobiography", during the closing ceremony of the 19th Marrakech International Film Festival in the Moroccan city of Marrakech. — AFP



FASHION

A model has her make up made with glitter backstage during the African Fashion International (AFI) fashion week in Sandton. — AFP





INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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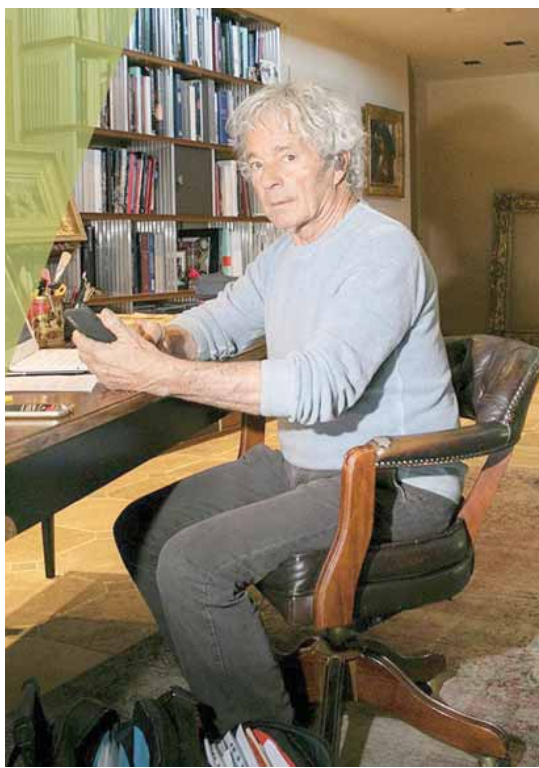
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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Accused forger of Old Master paintings arrested in Italy



A WELL-KNOWN ART collector sought by French authorities for allegedly operating a sophisticated forgery network for decades turned himself in to Italian police on Friday, his lawyers said.

Giuliano Ruffini, 77, is accused of cheating museums, auction houses and individuals for decades with dozens of forgeries of old masters. He turned himself in to police at Castelnovo ne' Monti, a town in the Reggio Emilia region of central Italy, his lawyer Paul Le Fevre said in a statement.



Italian news reports said Ruffini, who lived nearby, was subsequently arrested by police.

Ruffini's arrest comes after years of judicial efforts to extradite him back to France, following an investigation begun in 2014 and the issuance of a European arrest warrant five years later.

A Milan appeals court authorised Ruffini's extradition to France two years ago to face charges of fraud and counterfeiting, but it was put on hold until a parallel procedure for tax evasion in Italy was complete.

Ruffini was acquitted in May of those tax evasion charges. Well-known in the art world, Ruffini sold dozens of paintings since the 1990s by such masters as Parmigianino and El Greco to some of Europe's most prestigious museums, including the Louvre, often through intermediaries.

His fakes also attracted wealthy buyers, such as the Prince of Liechtenstein, who bought a forged Lucas Cranach the Elder painting of Venus for seven million euros (\$7.24 million). — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Mexico's 'Black Panther' star fights racism at home



IN HOLLYWOOD, HE'S the rising star of the sequel to "Black Panther," the first major Black superhero movie. In his homeland Mexico, Tenoch Huerta is leading a fight against racism on the screen.

The 41-year-old aims to use his growing fame to break the tradition of Mexican actors of Indigenous origin being cast in the roles of thieves and villains.

Playing the character of Namor in Marvel Studios' "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," Huerta joins a small club of international Mexican stars such as Salma Hayek, Gael García Bernal and Diego Luna.

The path to Hollywood was strewn with pitfalls for Huerta, who hails from a working-class suburb of Mexico City.

"Like thousands of dark-skinned people, I've been called names" such as "dirty Indian," he wrote in his new book "Orgullo Prieto" (Brown Pride).

"Mexico is a country that's racist and denies it," he added.

Huerta said it is a myth that Mexico today is a mixed-race country where skin colour is unimportant.

"This is how we deny the cultural and linguistic diversity of all Indigenous nations, Afro-descendant communities, Asians," he wrote.

Huerta, who also played infamous drug trafficker Rafael Caro Quintero in the Netflix hit "Narcos: Mexico," criticised the way of thinking "that places white, modern, Western, on a higher level."

'RACIST NARRATIVES'
Even before "Black Panther,"

Huerta was the figurehead of "Poder Prieto" (Brown Power), a collective of actresses and actors who feel discriminated against because of their origin and their skin colour.

"We're only given characters of delinquents, domestic work-

descent, in positions of power and influence, who are kings and great warriors," he said.

Huerta also wants to see changes in wider Mexican customs, such as the popular saying still heard in some homes that daughters should marry a white man to "improve the race."

While he is in favour of laws against racism, Huerta avoids commenting on the policies of Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's party, which has pledged to "restore the dignity" of Indigenous peoples.

"I believe that the demands of the Indigenous peoples have not been met. But this is a subject that does not concern me, because I am not Indigenous," he said on Friday at his book launch.

"As a simple external observer, I believe that we could do more and better," he added.

Mexico is home to 23.2 million people over the age of three who identify as Indigenous, representing 19.4 per cent of the population, according to national statistics agency INEGI.

Around one in five Mexican adults said they had experienced discrimination over the past year, mainly because of their skin colour, in the first national survey on the subject in 2017.

And three-quarters of Indigenous people felt undervalued by Mexican society.

"We are a new link in a chain that dates back 500 years. All the struggles have been the same for 500 years," Huerta concluded, referring to the Spanish conquest and fall of the Aztec empire in 1521. — AFP

DISCOVERY

Fossils of car-sized dinosaur-era sea turtle unearthed in Spain



PLYING THE SUBTROPICAL seas that washed the coasts of the archipelago that made up Europe 83 million years ago was one of the largest turtles on record, a reptile the size of a small car — a Mini Cooper to be precise — that braved dangerous waters.

Researchers on Thursday described remains discovered in northeastern Spain of a turtle named *Leviathanochelys aenigmatica* that was about 12 feet (3.7 metres) long, weighed a bit under two tonnes and lived during the Cretaceous Period — the final chapter in the age of dinosaurs. It is Europe's biggest-known turtle.

It dwarfed today's largest turtle — the leatherback, which can reach 7 feet (2 metres) long and is known for marathon marine migrations. *Leviathanochelys* nearly matched the largest turtle on record — *Archelon*, which lived roughly 70 million years ago and reached about 15 feet (4.6 metres) long.

"*Leviathanochelys* was as long as a Mini Cooper while *Archelon* was the same size as a Toyota Corolla," said paleontologist and study co-author Albert Sellés of the Institut Català de Paleontologia (ICP), a research centre affiliated with Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. It was good to be the size of a car, considering the hazardous traffic in the ancient Tethys Sea in which *Leviathanochelys* swam. Huge marine reptiles with powerful jaws called mosasaurs were the largest predators — some exceeding 50 feet (15 metres) in length. Various sharks and rays as well as long-necked fish-eating marine reptiles called plesiosaurs also lurked.

"Attacking an animal of the size of *Leviathanochelys* possibly only could have been done by large predators in the marine context. At that time, the large marine predators in the European zone were mainly sharks and mosasaurs," said Oscar Castillo, a student in a master's degree programme in paleontology at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and lead author of the study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

"During the Cretaceous, there was a tendency in marine turtles to increase

their body size. *Leviathanochelys* and *Archelon* might represent the apex of this process. The reason for this increase in body size has been hypothesised to be predatory pressures, but there might be other factors," Castillo added.

Other large turtles from Earth's past include *Protostega* and *Stupendemys*, both reaching about 13 feet (4 metres) long. *Protostega* was a Cretaceous sea turtle that lived about 85 million years ago and, like its later cousin *Archelon*, inhabited the large inland sea that at the time split North America in two. *Stupendemys* prowled the lakes and rivers of northern South America about 7-13 million years ago during the Miocene Epoch.

Scientists unearthed the *Leviathanochelys* remains near the village of Coll de Nargó in Catalonia's Alt Urgell county after fossils protruding from the ground were spotted by a hiker in the Southern Pyrenees mountains. To date, they have found parts of the posterior portion of its carapace, or shell, and most of the pelvic girdle, but no skull, tail or limbs. The fossils indicated that it possessed a smooth carapace similar to leatherback turtles, with the shell itself about 7.7 feet (2.35 metres) long and 7.2 feet (2.2 metres) wide. *Leviathanochelys* appears built for the open ocean, returning to land only rarely — for instance to lay eggs.

The presence of a couple of bony bulges on the front side of the pelvis differs from any other known sea turtle, indicating that *Leviathanochelys* represents a newly discovered lineage. It shows that gigantism in marine turtles developed independently in separate Cretaceous lineages in North America and Europe.

Leviathanochelys aenigmatica means "enigmatic leviathan turtle" owing to its large size and the curious shape of its pelvis that the researchers suspect was related to its respiratory system.

"Some pelagic (living in the open ocean) animals show a modification in their respiratory system to maximise their breathing capacity at great depths," Sellés said. — Reuters



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MoCIIP to licence accredited offices to process investment applications

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, NOV 20

Adding to Oman’s business and investment-friendly environment, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has issued a new Ministerial Decision that supports the establishment of accredited offices to process applications from local and international investors.

Ministerial Decision 574/2022 sets out guidelines for Omani entrepreneurs seeking a license to set up and operate such agencies. It also outlines the scope of services that such licensed agencies can provide, encompassing applications for approvals, permits and license for investment project. The overall goal is to enhance Oman’s investment appeal, support the country’s economic diversification and open up employment opportunities for Omanis.

To this end, the Ministry recently organised an introductory workshop to acquaint the private sector with the features of the new initiative. During the



workshop, the draft regulations and the conditions and procedures contained therein were discussed.

Companies seeking a licence to set up an accredited office must satisfy a number of criteria.

They should exist and operate under the provisions of the Commercial Companies Law, have the requisite professional competence and reputation to provide such services, have qualified personnel with at least

five years of relevant experience on their rolls, be well-versed with at least one international foreign language, and have the financial resources to provide such services.

Applications for an Accredited Office licence may be submitted to the Ministry’s Investment Services Centre, along with the supporting documentation.

Licences will be issued for a period of three years,

renewable for a similar period. The Investment Services Centre has been tasked with determining the fees that Accredited Offices may charge for the services rendered under this initiative.

The centre will also oversee the overall performance of the licenced offices. Since the launch of the Ministry’s Invest Easy portal a year ago, as many as 18,726 applications have been processed to date.

Sultanate of Oman’s oldest free zone attracts 248 projects to date

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Al Mazunah Free Zone, the Sultanate of Oman’s first free zone, has attracted 248 projects to date, cementing its importance as a hub for trade and investment, Engineer Ali bin Salem al Maashani (**pictured**), General Manager of Al Mazunah Free Zone, said. During the third quarter of 2022, Al Mazunah Free Zone received 13 investment applications in the industrial, commercial, and service sectors.

Al Maashani said that movement of goods and vehicles exported through the zone during the first half of this year recorded a remarkable growth. A total of 4,508 vehicles worth more than RO 16 million were exported during this period, while the volume of handled totalled 218,880 tonnes, with a value of more than RO 215 million.

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) currently implements infrastructure projects in the zone, including a security system project, which is now 90 per cent complete. The project consists of a security fence equipped with high-resolution surveillance cameras and lighting. A water desalination plant will also be built to supply clean water to the zone.

Furthermore, Al Maashani confirmed that the first three phases to develop the Al Mazunah Free Zone have been completed, which comprises of a sewage networks, water networks, asphalted internal roads, septic tank, an optical fibre



communications network and other development services.

To support investment inflows into the zone, Shumookh Investment and Services Company — an affiliate of Madayn — constructed a multi-use facility and service building project at a cost of RO 3 million, covering an area of over 11,000 square metres. It will house a variety of facilities, commercial and service offices in one building.

Among its many accomplishments, Al Mazunah Free Zone has attracted a strategic investor and is currently overseeing the development of a 3 million square metre site that is divided into investment-ready plots.

Besides offering import and export services, the free zone also features commercial premises, retail shops, warehouses business, automotive showrooms, customs clearing offices, haulage, hotels, grocery outlets, and manufacturing facilities specialising in the production of plastics, culinary utensils, decorations, and cosmetics, among other items.

Al Mazunah Free Zone, maintained and operated by Madayn, is an important gateway for transit commerce to Yemen and, from there, to East African countries.

Renaissance subsidiary wins RO 57 million Health Ministry contract

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, NOV 20

In a filing to the Muscat Stock Exchange, publicly listed Renaissance Services said its subsidiary, TISCO, has been awarded a contract from the Ministry of Health worth RO 57.28 million.

The contract is to provide catering, cleaning and pest



control services for 51 hospitals and 11 health centres in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman for a period of three years, starting from January 1, 2023.

Renaissance Services is a company specialising in integrated facilities management and services solutions in the Sultanate of Oman. It is also listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

Oman joins regional Climate Change Initiative

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 20

The Sultanate of Oman has joined hands with member countries of the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East (EMME) to launch a new initiative to address potential climate change impacts that could have devastating consequences for the region.

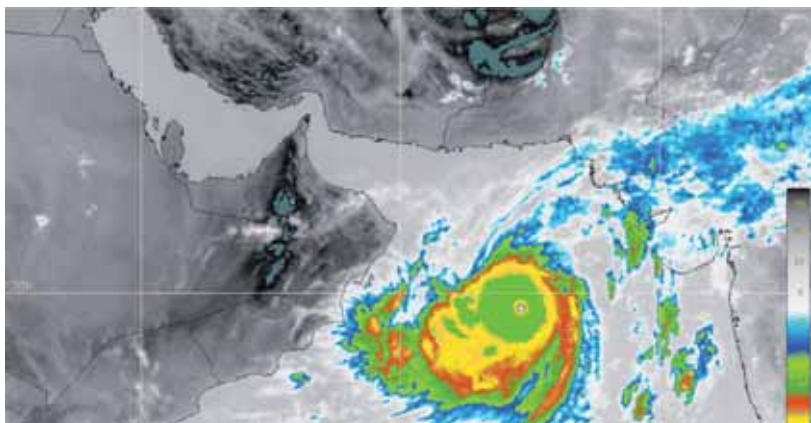
In all, 10 countries of the EMME region adopted a declaration to officially launch the EMME Climate Change Initiative (EMME-CCI) against the backdrop of the recently concluded COP27 Summit in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

At stake for the EMME region, which includes Oman and the wider Arabian Peninsula, is a

climate crisis that could have potentially far-reaching global consequences, the grouping has warned. The estimated 450 million inhabitants of the region, it has pointed out, are at risk of a 5 degree C increase in mean annual temperature by the end of the century under a ‘business as usual’ scenario.

In the upshot, the consequences will be catastrophic for the region, triggering “social collapse and mass migration, unless immediate action is taken on mitigation and adaptation through strong regional cooperation,” it has stressed.

Joining Oman in adopting the EMME-CCI Declaration were Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman,



and the State of Palestine, among other countries. Also attending as Observers were representatives of a number of international organisations focused on climate change mitigation.

“The adoption of the Political Declaration earmarks the official

launch of the Initiative which has been undertaken by Cyprus since 2019. It constitutes a historic milestone for the region’s resilience and prosperity, as it notes the willingness of the undersigned countries to act in a coordinated way to achieve concerted action

for the mitigation and adaptation of the climate crisis in the EMME,” the grouping said in a statement.

The primary objective of the EMME Initiative is to coordinate transboundary mitigation and adaptation activities in support of the goals of the Paris Agreement.

To this end, it aims to formulate region-specific policies in coordination with transnational and international organisations such as the World Meteorological Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Health Organisation, to address the overall impacts of climate change.

It will also support investigations of specific techno-economic scenarios to mitigate

climate change effects in the EMME countries. Marshalling the necessary resources to achieve this goal is also part of its remit.

Oman stands to benefit significantly from the activities and programmes of the EMME-CCI. Given its geographical location overlooking the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, the Sultanate of Oman has been repeatedly impacted by extreme weather events triggered by climate change.

Flash flooding, inundation and storm surges linked to tropical cyclones have caused hundreds of millions of Omani rials in infrastructure and property damage over the past two decades, in addition to significant loss of human life.

Nature as a friend



MATT MINSHALL

The human acceleration of global warming which brings climate change began when mankind took more than could be replaced. Man effectively declared war on nature, something infinitely more powerful than humanity. To survive mankind must first stop further damage and then seek to make repairs. When nature is treated once more as a friend and ally there will be a hastening of safe and enduring economic growth and possibly allow enough time to learn how man may survive alongside nature.

To achieve this the basic needs must be addressed. Air, water, and food are the key elements for survival. Clean air is vital for all creatures and plants and will be enhanced greatly with emission reductions.

But there is also the bill to pay for the build up of carbon in the atmosphere since the start of the industrial age. With emissions in check the focus must be to cleanse the air and the simplest way is through plants.

Forests are a natural environment and provide economic, environmental, and social benefits. They are a major source of biodiversity, and have a protective effect on soil, water, air, and the climate. They are also the source of wood, a renewable raw material, and foods.

A good example of harnessing nature is the Nimr Water Treatment Project in southern Oman. It is the largest industrial constructed wetland system in the world and recognised for its contribution to greening degraded desert lands, innovative water solutions and will represent a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Clean water is a challenge but there is enough water for all if managed in line with natural sourcing and recycling. Desalination is improving rapidly, and there are also options for water supplements such as atmospheric water generation and the wholesale increase of recycling and grey water usage.

Collaboration and synergy at all levels are key to success and there are lessons to be learnt from nature. Water is needed to nourish all flora and fauna and is provided initially via precipitation.

A single cumulonimbus cloud can hold the equivalent energy of ten Hiroshima atomic bombs and half a million tonnes of water; mass energy and water from a single natural source.

The world can feed itself naturally with better management. At present half the world gets half the food it needs, while the other half wastes half the food it gets. Food production and management must be managed globally and working closer with nature will prove most efficient if managed with intelligence. But without sustainable energy the future is unmanageable.

There is unprecedented momentum around the world to utilise clean energy solutions from hydrogen to wave energy in support of one of UN Sustainable Development Goals which is "Affordable and Clean Energy" and fully endorsed by the Oman Vision 2040 Pillar which seeks "An Environment with Sustainable Components".

Every natural and renewable energy resource and product must be harnessed collaboratively nationally, regionally and globally. Each drop of power available from air, land and sea must be managed and used to best effect by careful and synergistic planning and in a manner which is effective, economically viable and future proof.

[The author is the Owner and Founder of Mayamm, a project which aims to provide clean water sustainably and is currently engaged in this project for Oman. Email: matt305@translucidus.co.uk]

Bank Muscat wins Best Consumer Digital Bank in Oman award from Global Finance

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has won the award for the Best Consumer Digital Bank in Oman 2022 at the Global Finance's Best Digital Bank Awards held in Dubai.

The winners were selected based on a number of criteria, including their strategy for attracting and servicing digital customers, success in getting clients to use digital offerings, growth of digital customers, breadth of product offerings, evidence of tangible benefits gained from digital initiatives, and web/mobile site design and functionality. The award was received on behalf of the bank by Mohammed Sultan al Habsi, Chief Representative, UAE Representative Office, Bank Muscat.

Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager, Digital Banking, said: "Bank Muscat is delighted to win the Best Consumer Digital Bank in Oman award from Global Finance once again. The award is a testament to the bank's commitment to continue investing in state-of-the-art technology to further increase efficiency and improve customer service.

As the leading financial services provider in Oman, we are committed to offering the latest financial services and solutions in line with global financial trends. The consistent rise in active customers on our e-channels



reflects the rising popularity of Mobile and Internet Banking as well as other digital banking channels.

By emphasising on service delivery through multiple channels and new products that cater to different customer segments, the bank aims to maintain its leadership in hi-tech products and services, including electronic payment and digital services." Bank Muscat's continuously upgraded Internet and mobile banking services offer customers a fast, comfortable and secure banking experience.

Today, over 1.3 million retail banking customers are using various features like real-time bill payments for utilities in Oman,

such as electricity, water, telecom, mobile top ups, instant credit card bill payments, school fees payments etc. In addition, fund transfers within the bank and in Oman, fund transfers across the world via the SWIFT network; speed transfers to a number of countries including Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, Pakistan Sri Lanka and Egypt; Zakat calculator and charity payments.

Customers can set or reset PIN and disable or enable their debit card for international usage through Internet banking or mBanking, thereby adding an extra layer of security for the benefit of customers. Over the past two years, the bank has been witnessing a remarkable

rise in e-channels usage including a rapid uptake in contactless payment through its various debit, credit and prepaid cards as well as contactless wearables.

Customers are able to transact quickly, securely and 24/7 via mobile banking, Internet banking, contact centre and the bank's large network of over 800 ATMs/CDMs and other devices across the country, which is an affirmation of its customer-centric strategy.

Bank Muscat's many achievements have been well recognised with the bank winning several awards in the recent past including being recognised as one of the Top 30 banks as well as Top 100 Companies in the region by Forbes Middle East.

NBO celebrates Oman's 52nd National Day

MUSCAT: In commemoration of Oman's 52nd National Day and to pay tribute to Oman's visionary leader, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, National Bank of Oman (NBO) organised a special celebration at its headquarters in Al Athaiba.

The event, was attended by the bank's Chairperson, Amal Suhail Bahwan, board members and senior management, as well as the media, and other key stakeholders. The event included a department decorating competition themed around the Omani culture and traditions as well as an art exhibition showcasing Oman's famous, traditional clothes and handicrafts from different regions, and live



performances by the Royal Guard of Oman Drumline and Omani singer, Nora al Nudhairi who collaborated with the bank to produce 'Ser Al Ehsas' song on the occasion of the National

Day. NBO demonstrates its long-standing commitment to Oman's Vision 2040 for socio-economic development and continues to introduce many initiatives that foster progress and empower the community.

In the run-up to the event, NBO also invited local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to take part in its in-house marketplace initiative, where they were able to sell their products to the bank's employees and visitors. Established in 2021, its marketplace initiative has helped many SMEs to unlock opportunities and grow while it continues to fulfil its goal to serve its community beyond banking.

ahli islamic sponsors Oman Islamic banking conference

MUSCAT: Furthering its objective to be a key player in Oman's Islamic financing industry, ahli islamic sponsored the recently concluded first-of-its-kind Al Roya Islamic Banking Conference, as a key contributor to the success of the event.

As part of Al Roya newspaper's social responsibility initiatives, the conference strategically partnered with the Oman Banks Association to shed light on Sharia-compliant products and services, explore the growth of the Islamic banking sector in line with Oman Vision 2040, as well as highlight sustainability and economic contributions of the sector.

Representatives from ahli islamic participated and



highlighted the key trends in Islamic banking in Oman, as well as the region, and shared insights on the various facets of this industry.

Commenting on the participation, Noora Sultan, AGM — Head of Retail Banking ahli islamic stated, "ahli islamic has always operated with a clear

vision to future-proof the Islamic banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman. From a global perspective, Islamic banking and finance have been gaining popularity and

increased demand.

Locally, the Islamic banking sector is still young, and there's a lot of room for growth and service expansion. We are determined to capitalise on this market opportunity, offering customers a strong portfolio for Sharia compliant banking."

The Omani Islamic banking conference celebrated a decade of tremendous growth in the industry, service delivery and expansion, and economic contribution. It saw in attendance a diverse array of esteemed leaders and industry experts to discuss diversification, sustainability, and vision, paired with discussion panels on sector analysis, the role of Islamic banking, economic implications,

and other subjects relevant to the theme of the conference.

"It is initiatives like this conference that create a customer-centric space that explores how we, as institutions, are adaptable, innovative, and committed. Our endgame is to curate an exquisite banking experience that allows Islamic banking to be a solid choice for all banking customers", she added.

Since its inception, ahli islamic has made rapid strides in providing an extensive, innovative, and Sharia-compliant portfolio of services that meet and exceed the needs of the Islamic banking sector in Oman. Today, the bank affirms its alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

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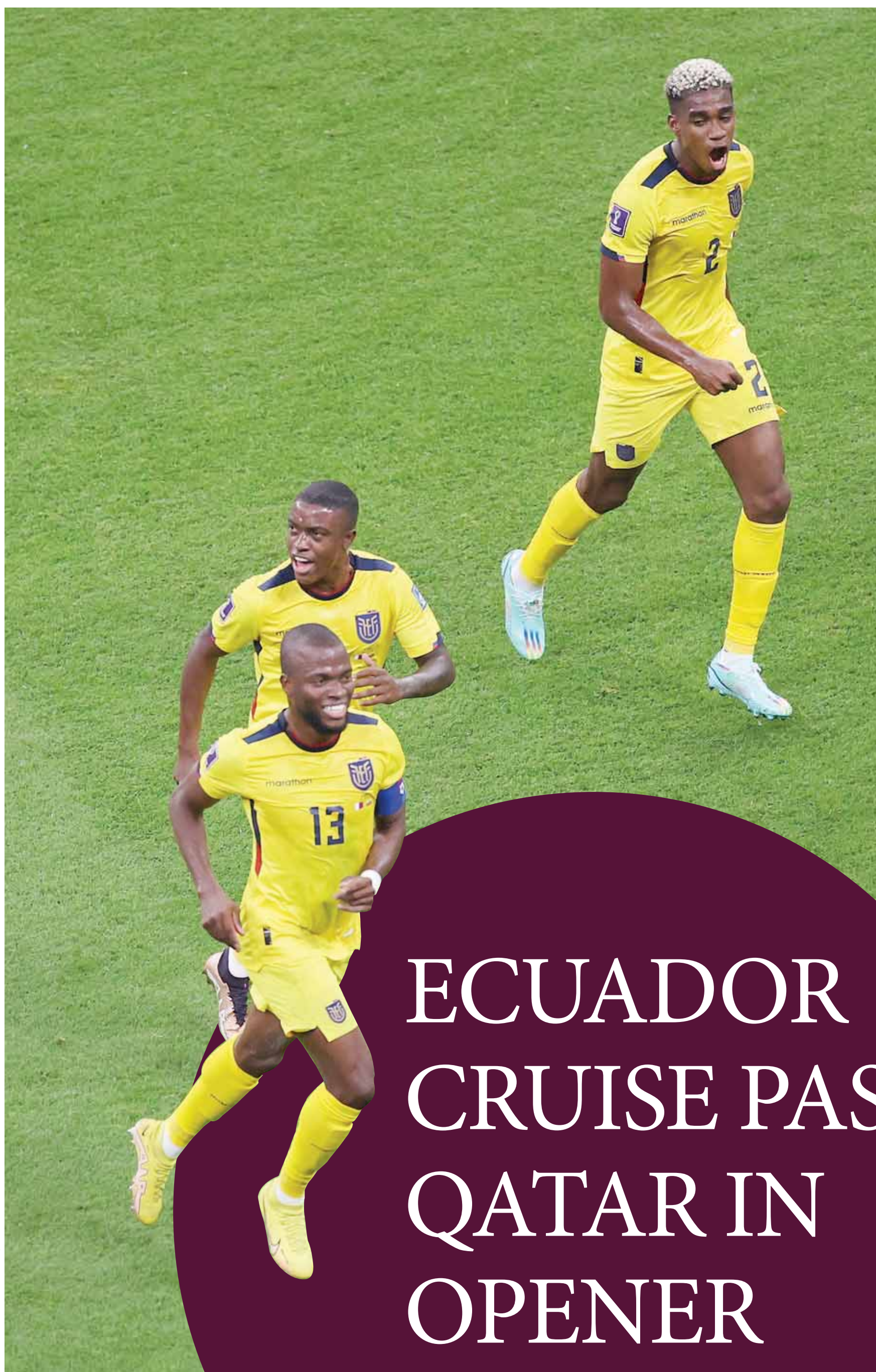
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ECUADOR CRUISE PAST QATAR IN OPENER

Ecuador's Enner Valencia celebrates scoring their second goal. — Reuters

► REPORT & PICTURES **P14, 15**

Qatar first WC hosts to lose opener



(L to R) Ecuador's midfielder Sebastian Mendez, forward Kevin Rodriguez, forward Enner Valencia, defender Felix Torres and midfielder Jeremy Sarmiento celebrate after winning the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group A match between Qatar and Ecuador at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha. — AFP

AL KHOR, Qatar: Qatar became the first home team to lose their opening World Cup match as Ecuador cruised to a 2-0 victory over the hosts, with Enner Valencia scoring twice in the tournament curtain-raiser on Sunday.

Asian champions Qatar enjoyed the backing of the majority of the crowd at the 60,000-capacity Al Bayt Stadium, but could not follow a glitzy opening ceremony with a statement performance.

Ecuador thought they had made a dream start when they silenced the home fans as Valencia headed in, only for the goal to be ruled out by VAR for an offside in the build-up.

Valencia did break the deadlock with a penalty in the 16th minute and doubled his tally just after the half-hour mark.

Qatar improved slightly in the second period, but by the end of the 90 minutes, the excitement which greeted the build-up — featuring Morgan Freeman and BTS star Jung Kook — was a distant memory as thousands of fans left early amid a deflated atmosphere.

Felix Sanchez's Qatar will likely need a positive result in their second Group A match against Senegal on Friday just to avoid the ignominy of becoming only the second hosts, after South Africa in 2010, to be dumped out in the first round.

Hopes were high among



Qatar's defender Boualem Khoukhi (L) fights for the ball with Ecuador's forward Michael Estrada during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group A match between Qatar and Ecuador at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha. — AFP

the crowd that Qatar could make a winning start, but the deficiencies of the World Cup debutants were ruthlessly exposed by an impressive Ecuador.

Qatar failed to even muster a shot on target in

the game, with spectators filing out of the stands long before the final whistle.

In the 92-year history of the tournament, home countries had previously won 16 and drawn six of their opening matches.

EARLY VAR INTERVENTION

The South Americans had the ball in the net inside three minutes when captain Valencia nodded home from Felix Torres' miscued overhead kick.

VAR officials spotted an offside against Michael Estrada in the build-up after Torres challenged for the ball with Qatar goalkeeper Saad al Sheeb.

Ecuador were completely dominant in the early

exchanges, though, and were awarded a penalty after Valencia was tripped by Al Sheeb when through on goal.

The former West Ham forward coolly sent Al Sheeb the wrong way from the spot and stroked the ball into the bottom corner to score his 36th international goal.

Ecuador did not have to wait long to double their advantage as, after a surging run from Moises Caicedo, right-back Angelo Preciado swung in a cross which Valencia met with a thumping header.

Even the small section of noticeably enthusiastic Qatari fans situated behind the goal, who arrived together after the majority of the crowd and wore matching t-shirts, briefly fell silent.

Almoez Ali, the hero of Qatar's 2019 Asian Cup success, should have pulled one back on the stroke of half-time but could only steer a free header wide from eight yards out.

Ecuador allowed Qatar more of the ball after the break but still looked the more dangerous side, with Romario Ibarra bringing a diving save from Al Sheeb.

Valencia hobbled off in the 77th minute after being on the wrong end of a series of heavy challenges, although that would only have taken some of the shine off a famous night for Ecuador.

By the time an official attendance of 67,372 was read out over the tannoy, the stadium was barely half full.

— AFP

QATAR
STUNNED BY
ECUADOR
ONSLAUGHT

Qatar's midfielder Hatim Abdelaziz fights for the ball with Ecuador's midfielder Moises Caicedo during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group A match at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha. – AFP



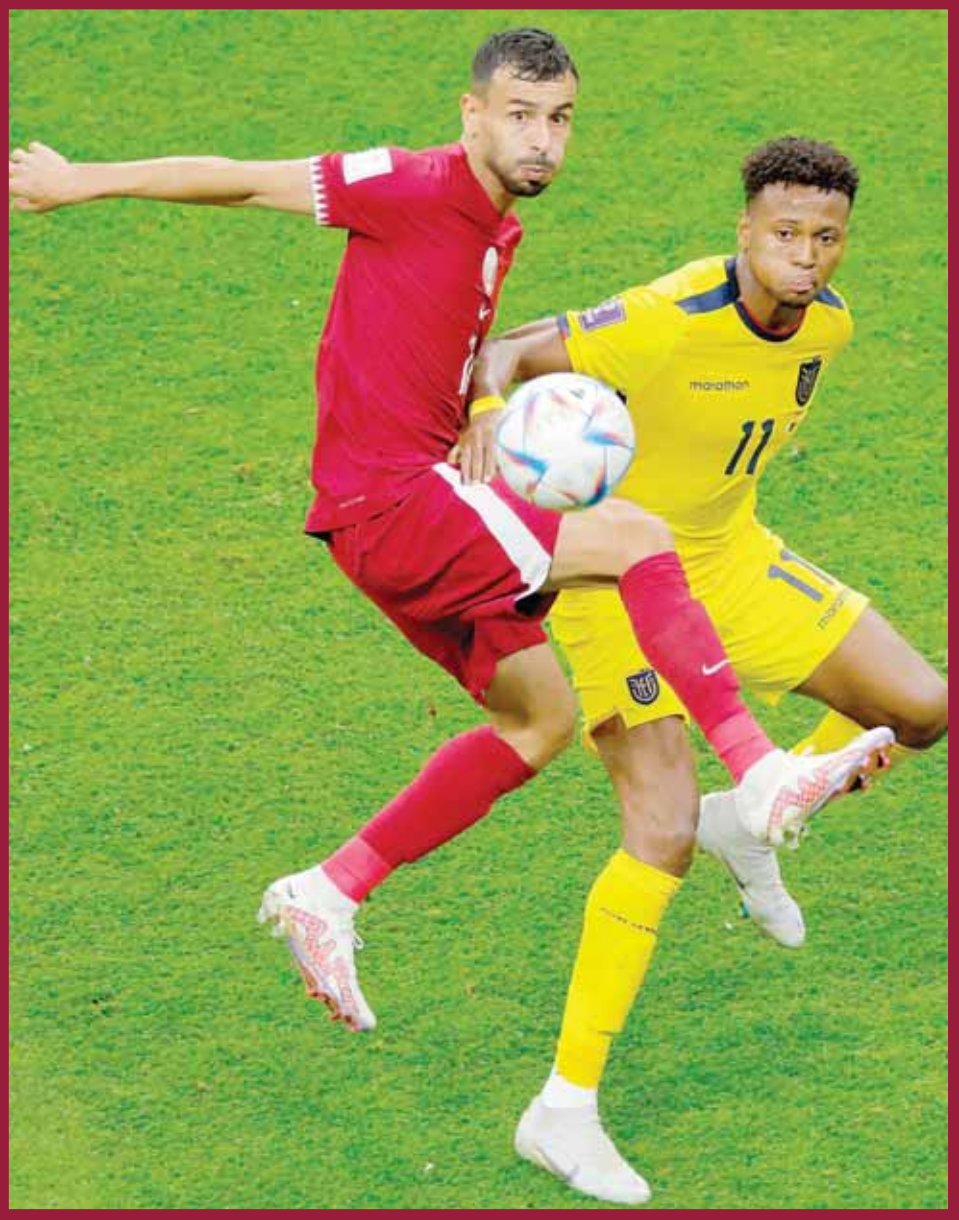
Ecuador's midfielder Romario Ibarra (L) fights for the ball with Qatar's defender Bassam al Rawi during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group A match at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha. – AFP

Ecuador's forward Enner Valencia (R) scores his team's second goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group A match between Qatar and Ecuador at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha. – AFP



Qatar's forward Mohammed Muntari (L) fights for the ball with Ecuador's defender Felix Torres during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group A match between Qatar and Ecuador at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha. – AFP

Qatar's defender Boualem Khoukhi (L) fights for the ball with Ecuador's forward Michael Estrada during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group A match between Qatar and Ecuador at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha. – AFP





General view during the opening ceremony. — Reuters

AL KHOR, Qatar: Qatar's ruler opened the World Cup on Sunday with a call for people of all races and orientations to put aside their differences, speaking as the host nation faced a barrage of criticism over its treatment of foreign workers and LGBT rights.

The Gulf nation is staking its reputation on delivering a smooth tournament and has denied accusations of abuse of workers and discrimination. Governing body Fifa hopes the spotlight will now turn to action on the pitch.

Organisers have also denied allegations of bribery for winning the rights to host soccer's biggest event.

"People of all races, nationalities, beliefs and orientations will gather here in Qatar and around screens across the continents to share in the exciting moments," Emir Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani said in a speech in a tent-shaped stadium.

"How lovely it is that people can put aside what divides them to celebrate their diversity and what brings them together at the same time."

Shaikh Tamim arrived at the stadium flanked by Fifa President Gianni Infantino, to a roaring crowd, and took

their seats alongside other Arab leaders.

A show then unfolded on the pitch, featuring three camels, American actor Morgan Freeman and a performance of a new tournament song called Dreamers featuring singer Jungkook of K-pop boy band BTS, alongside Qatari singer Fahad al Kubaisi.

Saudi Arabia's crown prince and the presidents of Egypt, Turkey and Algeria, as well as the United Nations Secretary-General, were among leaders at the stadium ahead of the first match between the hosts and Ecuador.

Inside Al Bayt Stadium many seats were still vacant with gridlock on the expressway leading to the arena. Cheers went up as Qatar's team appeared for their opening match.

SOFT POWER

The soccer tournament, the first held in the Middle East and the most expensive in its history, is a culmination of Qatar's soft power push, after a 3-1/2 year boycott by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain that ended in 2021.

The UAE, whose rapprochement with Doha has been slower than that of



Emir of Qatar Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani is seen ahead of the match.

WORLD CUP KICKS OFF WITH WELCOME FROM QATAR RULER

Riyadh and Cairo, sent its vice-president who is also ruler of Dubai, where many World Cup fans have opted to stay.

For the first time, a direct commercial flight from Tel Aviv to Doha landed in Qatar on Sunday despite the absence of formal bilateral ties, in a deal brokered by Fifa to carry both Palestinians and Israelis to the tournament.

The Gulf state's Deputy Prime Minister Khalid al Attiyah, in remarks on state media, said Qatar was reaping benefits of years of "hard work and sound planning".

Denmark's and Germany's team captains will wear One Love armbands during the tournament. Organisers say all are welcome, while warning against public affection.

FANS

Throngs of fans were already arriving in Qatar, but the main rush will be later this week.

Daniel Oordt from the Netherlands, clad in orange, said there was a feeling of "constant pressure around you not to say the wrong thing or make the wrong move", adding, "It's not a fun atmosphere to have at a

World Cup".

Argentina fan Julio Cesar though said he expected a great atmosphere.

Outside the city's edges, hundreds of workers gathered in a sports arena in an industrial zone. They can watch matches there, priced out of the stadiums many toiled to build along with other infrastructure for the event.

"Of course I didn't buy a ticket. They're expensive and I should use that money for other things — like sending it back home to my family," Ghanaian national Kasim, a security guard who has worked in Qatar for four years, said.

Crowd control will be key with some 1.2 million visitors expected — more than a third of Qatar's population.

Workers were putting final touches to Doha's landscape, including draping a purple tarpaulin over an unfinished building near the stadium where the final will be held.

At Lagoona Mall, residents were going about their business.

"I came now because I don't know how bad the traffic will be later this week," said Egyptian woman Esraa, out grocery shopping. — Reuters



A Fifa World Cup trophy replica is seen on the pitch before the match. — Reuters

Maqsood dazzles in Oman win, Canada stay top

MUSCAT: Oman skipper Zeeshan Maqsood's career-best T20I knock, an unbeaten 102, led his team to a massive 106-run win over Bahrain in the Desert Cup T20I Series at the Oman Cricket Academy (OCA) ground in Al Amerat on Saturday.

In the other match of the evening, Canada bounced back from their loss to Bahrain to rout Saudi Arabia and stay on top of the table with eight points.

A day after Al Amerat skyline was lit up with dazzling drone and laser shows to mark Oman's 52nd National Day, Maqsood lit up the skyline in Amerat again with his batting fireworks as he blasted his maiden T20I century – 102 not out in just 44 balls.

He achieved his personal milestone in style, hammering the last ball of Oman's innings to a six, to complete a stunning century and give his side a formidable total of 220/5.

Maqsood's late charge saw seven of his nine maximums come in the last three overs of the innings. His knock was also studded with seven boundaries as Oman put a step on the gas to race from 149/4 to 220 in the final 24 balls.

Maqsood was given good support by Mohammed Nadeem with a 19-ball 30 and Rafiullah with a 14-ball 25. Earlier, openers, Jatinder Singh (28) and Kashyap Prajapati (13) gave the hosts a quick start with Duleep Mendis' wards ensuring the scoring tempo at a good pace.

Bahrain's frontline bowlers, Imran Khan, Rizwan Butt, Sathiyah Veerapathiran and Imran Javed, went for plenty with Butt and Khan conceding 53 and 45 runs in their respective spell of four overs.

Chasing a target of 221, Bahrain needed a strong start but Bilal Khan got an early breakthrough with skipper Sarfraz Ali out for just 4. Imran Javed (22) and David Mathias put up a fightback to lead the team to 60 in 6.5 overs. However, Rafiullah's double strike off two successive balls put Bahrain on the back foot. Mathias' dismissal by Samay Shrivastava for 39 in the 12th over triggered a collapse.

Bahrain then spun into Shrivastava's web as the leg-



Zeeshan Maqsood

spinner picked up four more wickets to end with figures of 4-0-18-5. Except for Ahmed Bin Nasir (28 not out), Bahrain batters failed to put up a fight as their innings folded for just 114 in 16 overs.

Bilal Khan and Rafiullah bagged two wickets apiece while Sandeep Goud also took one.

The big victory for Oman helped them climb past Bahrain to second spot on better net run-rate (NRR) with both teams having six points each. Oman's NRR is +2.6061 while Bahrain's NRR is -0.4300.

With just one more round-robin match remaining on Sunday, Oman are in a must-win situation against Canada to eye a spot in the final on Monday. Bahrain take on minnows Saudi Arabia in their next match. A win for Oman and Bahrain will leave the three teams tied on eight points each with NRR to decide the finalists for Monday.

In the other game, Canada, put to bat, set a total of 171/6 with Matthew Spoors top-scoring with 44. Harsh Thaker made 37 while Saad Zafar's unbeaten 25 off 11 balls gave the team a late impetus. Usman Najeeb claimed three for 22 while Ishtiaq Ahmad took 2/23.

Saudi Arabia were then restricted to 126/8 with Saad Khan the main run-getter (29). Ammar Khalid was the pick of Canada bowlers with 4/17 while Kaleem Ur-Rehman, Dilon Heyliger and Nikhil Dutta took one wicket each as Canada registered a 45-run victory.

INDIA EASE TO 65-RUN WIN IN SECOND T20 Imperious Suryakumar rocks NZ

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, NEW ZEALAND: Batting dynamo Suryakumar Yadav says his "special" century against New Zealand was forged on enjoyment and hard work as he steered India to a 65-run in the second Twenty20 International on Sunday.

Suryakumar struck an imperious 111 not out off just 51 balls as the tourists posted 191-6 at Mount Maunganui's Bay Oval.

New Zealand were skittled for 126 in the 19th over, handing India a 1-0 lead in the three-match series after the opening fixture was washed out in Wellington on Friday.

To win the final game in Napier on Tuesday, the Black Caps will need to find an answer to Suryakumar, who illustrated why he is ranked the world's best T20 batter.

The 32-year-old struck 11 fours and cleared the ropes seven times as he compiled his second century in the format, having posted 117 against England at Nottingham four months ago.

He had already become the first Indian to score 1,000 T20 runs in a calendar year before Sunday's knock and has passed 50 in seven of his last 11 innings.

"Of course in T20 cricket, 100 is always special," Suryakumar told Spark Sport.

"Obviously I'm enjoying



India's Suryakumar Yadav bats during the second Twenty20 against New Zealand at the Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui. – AFP

batting this way. I'm doing the same things in the nets, in all practice sessions."

Opener Ishan Kishan provided the next-highest Indian score with 36 off 31.

Suryakumar ensured the run rate accelerated as the innings progressed and he raised three figures while taking 22 runs off the penultimate over bowled by Lockie Ferguson.

"It was really important for me to bat to the end, that's what Hardik (Pandya) was telling me from the other end," said Suryakumar, whose career

strike rate has climbed to an extraordinary 181.64.

"We really wanted to maximise the last four overs and I'm really happy with the way things went."

The final over provided the home side's best moment, when seamer Tim Southee claimed his second career hat-trick, dismissing Indian captain Pandya before removing Deepak Hooda and Washington Sundar for golden ducks.

New Zealand's run chase struggled from the moment opener Finn Allen holed out on the second delivery.

Captain Kane Williamson top-scored with 61 off 52 but his struggle for timing was mirrored by his teammates against an Indian attack boasting variety and discipline.

Spinner Hooda took 4-10 off 2.5 overs, claiming the last three scalps in the space of four balls.

— AFP

BRIEF SCORES

India 191-6, 20 overs (S Yadav 111 not out, I Kishan 36; T Southee 3-34, L Ferguson 2-49)
New Zealand 126 all out, 18.5 overs (K Williamson 61, D Conway 25; D Hooda 4-10, M Siraj 2-24, Y Chahal 2-26)

ESG Academy crowned Oman Youth League champions

MUSCAT: ESG Football Academy Under 12 and Under 14 Teams were crowned champions of the Oman Youth Football League on Saturday. The league which has been taking place over the last five weeks was held at the new first-class ABA Oman International School facilities.

Teams from all over Muscat competed every week in what was a great opportunity for young, talented players to showcase their football skills.

The ESG Football Academy



teams did well to fend off all challengers to lift their first Oman Youth Football League titles. ESG Technical Director Coach

Dom said: "It's been great that all the kids can come together and play competitive football in this amazing environment. There was

some exceptional talent on show and fantastic football played. I'm delighted with how our boys competed and its always nice to come away with the winning trophy. Participating in league games has been brilliant for our players' development and we'll continue providing these opportunities for them."

Next stop for the ESG teams will be the Manchester City Abu Dhabi Cup in February 2023, a tournament they have already won back in 2019!

Barcelo Musannah Resort to host Oman sailing team

MUSCAT: Oman Sail has partnered with Barcelo Musannah Resort as the official hotel supporter of the Oman Sail Olympic Programme, sailing through until December 31. Musannah's flagship beach resort will host the Oman Olympic squad as they train for the Sailing World Championships in 2023 and 2024, Asian Games 2023, and for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Oman currently has 10 Olympic athletes competing in ILCA, 49er, Windsurfing and Kite classes. Scheduled with an action-packed training period until the end of the year, the Oman Olympic squad will be able to train in the Sultanate of Oman's pristine blue waters. Barcelo Musannah Resort welcomes the national sailing team to the stunning property with complete access to the state-of-the-art facilities as the Olympic squad mentally and physically prepare themselves for the exciting championships ahead.



Dermot Birchall, General Manager of the Barcelo Musannah Resort

Taking part in the Oman Sail Olympic Programme will be: Waleed al Kindi — 49er, Musab al Hadi — 49er, Ahmed al Hasani — 49er, Abdulrahman al Mashari — 49er, Al Mutasim al Farsi — ILCA 6, Abdulmalik al Hinai — ILCA 7, Abdulmajeed al Hadhrami — Windsurfing and Ammar al Qartobi — Windsurfing

Dermot Birchall, General Manager of the Barcelo Musannah Resort, said, "We are humbled to be a part of the Oman Olympic



Hashim al Rashdi

Programme journey and support the Sultanate of Oman's endeavours to promote Oman as the destination of choice for global events. It is an honour to host Oman's national sailing team at our property and wish the sailors the very best of luck as they showcase the Sultanate of Oman's pride at the upcoming Sailing World Championships, Asian Games and the Olympic Games. Barcelo Musannah Resort has hosted several World and Asian championships and completely



equipped to facilitate their needs to train in the competition environment."

"We are delighted to partner with Barcelo Musannah Resort. It is a very impressive resort and one we know very well. Oman Sail is committed to providing the Oman Olympic team with the best conditions available to aid their preparations for four important campaigns through to the summer of 2024," added Hashim al Rashdi, Head of Performance at Oman Sail.

"Our ultimate ambition is to win a medal for Oman in sailing at the Olympics, and with Paris 2024 under two years away we need to offer our athletes a home base where they can train together and focus on qualification."

The Oman Sail Olympic Programme is part of Oman Sail's long-term strategy for developing sailing across the nation, culminating in the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

This period also includes key

milestones to measure progress and gauge success, including 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 and 21st Asian Games Doha 2030, as well as the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, should World Sailing's #BacktheBid campaign to see sailing reinstated be successful. Set against the majestic Hajar Mountains backdrop with uninterrupted views of the sea of Oman, Barcelo Musannah Resort is a unique destination resort equipped to not only host sailing teams but also accommodate an array of water enthusiasts. The resort features four swimming pools, as well as a children's pool, a private marina and the Zayna Spa and Health Fitness Club, a space completely dedicated to wellness and suitable for elite athletes with 10 treatment rooms and personalised services including a spa, sauna, steam baths, jacuzzi and fully-equipped gymnasium.

Oman football fans usher in World Cup opening

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Hundreds of football lovers gathered at the Football Fan Festival at Oman Convention and Exhibition Center (OCEC) cheering and ushering the world's biggest sports event as it opened in Doha on Sunday.

Three mammoth sized screens set in the artificial lawns of the OCEC brought the action live thanks to the arrangement with the beIN Sports.

"Football Fan Festival is Oman's most exciting football fan celebration, uniting local citizens, residents and overseas visitors through their shared love of the beautiful game while also showcasing Oman's history, heritage, hospitality and stunning beauty," a note from the organisers said.

Covering an area of more than 9,000 square metres, the fan festival offers something for everyone — from broadcasting all World Cup 2022 fixtures to



creative activation, interactive games, innovative technologies, football competitions, live performances and an array of food and drink options to eat, play and watch for all the family.

Omran, the facilitator of the whole event has coordinated with various government entities and private corporates in making the event possible.

"We aim to support the global event by promoting Muscat as the satellite city to the Fifa venue and we are glad to be part of the steering committee that organised the Fifa event in Oman," said Mohammed al Eisa from Omran.

World Cup matches to be screened at Rozna Fanzone

MUSCAT: The Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 matches will be screened at the Rozna World Cup Fan Zone for an entire month, within the premises of Oman Automobile Association (OAA).

The association launched the opening ceremony with first screening of the World Cup opener between Qatar and Eduardo on Sunday at 6 pm.

Fans will be granted seating on a number of platforms such as the stands, group seating on sofas, relaxing on bean bags, table seating and individual rooms for the VIP. Entry fee for the public will be 3 Omani rials and 10 Omani rials for the VIP section.

A food court area with a range of foods and beverages available for the fans.

Royal Cavalry clinch National Day showjumping title in Barka

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 20

Under the auspices of Sayyid Munther bin Saif al Busaidy, Chairman of Oman Equestrian Federation, the National Day Showjumping Championship 2022-23 concluded at the Olympic Field of Al Rahba Farm in Barka, within the participation of 100 horses from government units and private stables.

The championship was distributed in seven categories, a new category with a height of hurdles 70 cm, a beginner category 1 with hurdles of 90 cm high, a beginner category 2 with a height of 100 cm hurdles, a junior category with a height of 110 cm hurdles, and riders at a height of 120 cm. The big category was 130 cm high, in addition to a category within the Al Rayyan Stables League for the Future Knights at a height of 105 cm.

The Royal Cavalry was crowned with the championship title by Mohammad bin Salem al Hadrami in the major category at a height of 130 cm on the mare.

In the new category at the height of the hurdles 70 cm, 10 horses participated, 4 horses managed to get the round without errors. Heba bint Ali al Hinaiah on 'Sandababa' from Seeb Equestrian School took the top honours, Taha bin Zaid al Balushi on 'Jumper' from Seeb Equestrian



School came second, Mohammad bin Majed al Hadrami on 'Patch' from Al Arabiya Riding School finished third and Ahmed bin Fahmy al Harassi on 'Sarah' from Al Arabiya Riding School ended fourth.

The beginners category 1 (height of 90 cm) saw 15 participants in action. Musafir bin Khalil al Sinawi on 'Jibreen' from Al Falahi Equestrian School won the first place, Mohammed bin Darwish al Balushi on 'Faydel' from Seeb Equestrian School was second and Khaila bint Saud al Busaidy on 'Desi De Bullseye' from the Olympic Equestrian Centre finished third.

In the beginners category 2 (height of 100 cm hurdles) saw participation of 18 horses.

Sultan bin Rashid al Toqi won first place on 'Danny Dee'



from the Olympic Equestrian Centre, Mohammed bin Ayman al Saleh on 'Challenger' from the Arab Equestrian School claimed second and Vanida Chahaboun on 'Hestor' from the Olympic Equestrian Centre took third spot.

In junior category (height of 110 cm) witnessed participation of 13 horses. Olympic Equestrian Centre (OEC) rider Sultan bin Hamoud al Toqi on 'Abaq' claimed the top honours. Royal Cavalry's Mohammed bin Salem al Hadrami on 'Qaswarah' claimed the second spot and team-mate Khaled bin Darwish al Subhi on 'Ariel Jerry' finished third.

In the middle category (height of 120 cm) saw 4 horses in action. Olympic Equestrian Centre's Wareth bin Tamim al Mahrouqi came top on 'Extreme', while Erica Ingrid on 'Victus DXP'

from Al Said Stables took second and Royal Oman Police rider Bassam bin Nasser al Ghabshi on 'Desperados' finished third.

Six horses competed in Grand class (130cm height). Royal Cavalry's Mohammed bin Salem al Hadrami claimed the top honours on Thekryat, OEC's Sultan bin Hamoud al Toqi on 'Filo' was second while Al Rayyan Stables' Khaled bin Darwish al Subhi on 'Utania' finished third.

Thirteen horses took part in the grand category (height of 105 cm), the Al Rayyan Stables League.

OEC's Sheikha bint Rashid al Touqiah, on 'Jainta' came top while Al Rayyan Stables' Abdul Rahman bin Fahmy al Harrasi on 'Kokonet' claimed second and OEC's Sultan al Toqi on 'Gatucha' ended third.

LECLERC SECOND, PEREZ THIRD; VETTEL RETIRES WITH A POINT

SUBLIME VERSTAPPEN CLAIMS ABU DHABI GP



Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (L) and Red Bull's Mexican driver Sergio Perez raise their trophies on the podium after the Abu Dhabi Formula One Grand Prix at the Yas Marina Circuit in the Emirati city of Abu Dhabi. — AFP

I can imagine," added Vettel who heads into F1's sunset with four drivers' world titles, 53 race wins, 57 pole positions and a chorus of tributes ringing in his ears.

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, who ran in third despite struggling with his Mercedes for much of the race, retired in the closing laps with hydraulics problems.

Hamilton, who lost out on an eighth world title in last year's controversial climax on this track, has ended a season for the first time without a win.

Verstappen's win was a third in

succession in Abu Dhabi and the 35th of his career. His engineer came over the team radio telling the Dutch driver his twilight drive at the Yas Marina circuit had been "sublime".

But it was Leclerc who cried with relief as he crossed the line. "Yes, baby, we got it," he said. "Good job guys, really good race."

After another hot day, the contest began with temperatures falling from 28 degrees as Alpha Tauri gave the departing Pierre Gasly a guard of honour as Aston Martin offered Vettel a cake ahead of his final race.

'FREE TO RACE'

Verstappen made a clean start to lead from a thrusting Perez.

Hamilton struggled to shake off Sainz and, as the Spaniard forced his way by, took to a run-off area to avoid a collision, moving up to fourth. The stewards cleared Sainz of any misdemeanour, leaving the Briton to give the place back.

By lap five, Hamilton had found his way back and passed Sainz in the chicane, but again struggled to pull clear, complaining his car was damaged as he rode the kerbs on the opening lap. Russell was sixth behind Sainz. — AFP

Fatma, Carol emerge champions of padel tourney

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 20

HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik bin Fahr al Said presided over the closing ceremony of the first edition of International Paddle Tournament, at the stadiums of the Paddle Smash Club in Muscat on Saturday.

22 teams participated in the men's level, while 8 teams participated in the women's level.

Oman's star tennis player Fatma al Nabhani and team-mate Carol won the women's category title at the expense of the Spanish duo Elisa and Sarah in a tough match that ended in two games to one.

In the third set, the result was close, and mistakes abounded on both sides. However, Fatma showed her experience to win the third set 6-4 to claim the title.

Fatma is the top ranked Arab player in the padel tournament.

Other than Fatma, six Omani women's teams also took part in

the tournament.

Fatma said: "I am very happy to win the title of the International padel championship, which was held on National Days and on the homeland. We feel great pride in winning the title after a continuous effort. I felt great pressure, especially at the beginning of the final, because I had not played a championship on my land for nearly 13 years. However, I managed to get back to my level and win the title."

"I would like to thank all those who supported my brothers Muhammad and Khaled, and I thank Smash Club for the wonderful hosting and organisation, and thanks to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Oman Olympic Committee, and to the sponsoring companies Mohsen Haider Darwish, Vodafone, Khimji Ramdas and Oman International Hospital, and to all the supporting media," she ended.



England seek to lay down marker against Iran



Iran's Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz (C) speaks to his players during a training session at the Al Rayyan training facility in Doha, on the eve of the Qatar 2022 World Cup match between England and Iran. - AFP



England defenders Kyle Walker (C), Harry Maguire (L) and England's Kieran Trippier take part in a training session at the Al Wakrah SC Stadium in Al Wakrah, south of Doha. - AFP

DOHA: England could not have done a better job of lowering expectations than by going six competitive games without a win heading into the World Cup but when they kick off against Iran on Monday a nation will again start dreaming.

Under Gareth Southgate's watch England have been agonisingly close to winning major silverware for the first time since 1966 — first with a semifinal run at the 2018 World Cup in Russia and then losing to Italy on penalties in the Euro 2020 final.

There is a nagging sense that those near-misses might be as close as England come and that opportunity has passed them by. But, despite a woeful run of results, they arrived in Qatar as one of the teams more likely to be crowned world champions.

For that to happen, a fast start will be essential and a Group B opener against Iran offers that opportunity, even

if it would be dangerous to underestimate a team managed by Carlos Queiroz and 20th in Fifa's rankings.

In their six-game winless run in the Nations League, England lacked creativity and goals and were occasionally chaotic in defence — especially in a 4-0 home loss to Hungary.

A thrilling 3-3 draw with Germany in their final game before the World Cup renewed some optimism and Southgate's squad certainly looks equipped to control a group which will also pitch them against the United States and Wales.

"If England go into all three of these matches fully focused, playing to the best of their potential, they should win all three," former US goalkeeper Brad Friedel told Bookmakers.com as he looked ahead to the Group B games.

"Iran are a well-structured team, not easy to break down. And they also have some very



good technical players - and the conditions, they're going to be right up Iran's street.

"I think England will win but I think it'll be hard."

England fans, the majority of whom will be watching on sofas and in pubs back home, have rightly lauded Southgate but patience is beginning to run

out. His tactics are often seen as over-cautious, especially against quality opposition. But do not expect to see the England manager load his starting lineup against Iran with flair players such as James Maddison, Jack Grealish and Phil Foden.

One player guaranteed to start is captain and goalscorer Harry Kane who has 51 goals from 75 caps and at the last World Cup won the Golden Boot with six, while 19-year-old midfielder Jude Bellingham could be Southgate's trump card.

Iran's first ever meeting with England should be a moment of national pride but political events in the country have overshadowed what will be their third successive World Cup.

A wave of anti-government protests have swept the country and Iranian sportswomen and men have used international

competitions to show their support following the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in the custody of the morality police.

Bayer Leverkusen striker Sardar Azmoun has voiced his support for protesters, Iran's former great Ali Daei has refused to attend the tournament and there is talk of Iran's players not singing the anthem or celebrating goals.

Winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh, however, said this week that the players were focused only on trying to go past the group phase for the first time in their history.

"What I learned has always been to respect the jersey, to respect the Team Melli no matter what," he told reporters.

"At the end of the day, when football comes together, we can make joy, we can bring happiness to the people," Alireza Jahanbakhsh added.

— Reuters

Bale hopes to inspire next Wales generation

DOHA: Gareth Bale says he's ready for a rough ride from the United States as he prepares for the "incredible" challenge of leading Wales into their World Cup game since 1958 on Monday.

Bale will captain Wales against the USA in their opening match on Monday, the country's first at a World Cup since they lost to Pele's Brazil in the quarterfinals 64 years ago.

"As a kid you dream of seeing Wales in a World Cup, but to actually be in the team that achieves it is an incredible feeling and an honour to be able to do it for our country," Bale told reporters on Sunday.

"Everyone's dreamt of it for such a long time. We've had so many close calls. For us to be the team to get over the line was incredible.

"But more importantly the best thing to grow football in our country, to inspire another generation. By doing that hopefully we're going to have a stronger national team in the future."



Bale's Los Angeles FC team-mate Kellyn Acosta said last week that the US players would need to "kick" the Welsh skipper if necessary.

"I tried to avoid him kicking me the last two weeks before we came," joked Bale.

"It's nothing new I'm used to getting kicked on the field, nothing's changed. I'm sure it will be fair but difficult game and played in a great spirit."

'WHERE I WANT TO BE'
Wales made a shock run

to the semifinals at Euro 2016 and again reached the knockout phase at last year's European Championship.

Despite his struggles with injury and lack of match sharpness, the 33-year-old Bale was the driving force

of a successful World Cup qualification campaign.

The former Real Madrid star has started just twice since joining Los Angeles FC in June, but Bale has a habit of rising to the big occasion and insists he is ready to deliver

in Qatar. "I'm right where I want to be. I'm here the night before the first game and I'm ready to go," said Bale.

"We've all been training hard the last week, adapting to the heat, the time zones, and we have no excuses now."

Wales will be without experienced midfielder Joe Allen, who was ruled out of their Group B opener by coach Rob Page.

Allen, a mainstay in the Wales midfield at the past two Euros, has not played for Swansea since September because of a hamstring injury.

"He's probably not going to make it if I'm being completely honest with you. We could've pushed him maybe but then if he breaks down he's definitely out of the tournament," said Page.

Page also confirmed Bale would wear a rainbow armband as part of the "OneLove" campaign to promote diversity and inclusion, adding that Fifa had not tried to intervene.

— AFP

SENEGAL PLAY WITHOUT TALISMAN MANE
VAN GAAL PREDICTS HIS SIDE CAN GO ALL WAY TO FINAL

Confident Dutch face tough exam from African champions



Senegal's forward Famara Diedhiou (L) and defender Formose Mendy pose during a training session at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha, on the eve of the Qatar 2022 World Cup match against the Netherlands. – AFP



DOHA: Confident Dutch claims about being serious World Cup contenders face early examination on Monday as they open their Group A campaign against African champions Senegal, who are reeling from the shock of losing their talisman.

The absence of Sadio Mane, ruled out of the tournament by a knee injury, could prove a catastrophic blow to Senegal's hopes of breaking new ground for Africa at the tournament, but they are still expected to be testing opponents in Doha's Al Thumama Stadium.

Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal has been confidently predicting his side have the ability to go all the way in Qatar, finally winning the World Cup after losing three previous finals.

"We don't have the best players in the world in our team but I believe in team building and tactics and we have players who can execute the tactical plan of the coach," he said this week, "and we can get all the way to the final."

The wily 71-year-old took the Netherlands to third place at the World Cup in Brazil eight years ago and since returning to the job last year, has taken the team on a 15-match unbeaten run.

But whether they are able to deliver on their coach's belief — and make a positive start on Monday — remains to be seen given the key elements of the Dutch team have struggled with injury and form this season.

Captain Virgil van Dijk has been a shadow of the player previously proclaimed one of the world's top defenders, while Frenkie de Jong and Memphis Depay have struggled with niggling injuries at Barcelona.



The Netherlands' defender Virgil van Dijk (2-L) runs past coach Louis Van Gaal (R) and assistants during a training session at Qatar University in Doha on the eve of the Qatar 2022 World Cup match between Senegal and Netherlands. – AFP

PSYCHOLOGICAL BLOW

These woes, however, pale in comparison to the blow that Senegal suffered in losing Mane, who hurt his knee playing for Bayern Munich on November 8 and, after days of speculation, was finally ruled out on Thursday.

It will be a major psychological

blow to a side that Mane propelled to Africa Cup of Nations success at the start of the year and then kicked the winning penalty for, as they edged Egypt in a post-match shootout for a berth at the World Cup finals.

Senegal are considered the best hope for African success in Qatar

after a dire tournament for the continent in Russia four years ago, where all five representatives failed to get past the first round.

They are one of only three African countries who have previously reached the World Cup quarterfinals, which Senegal achieved 20 years ago. Coach Aliou

Cisse wants his players to believe they can go as far, or even further again, even if Mane is no longer around.

"That's the kind of confidence I want my players to have. I want them to tell themselves that if France can win, why not us?" he said. — Reuters