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OMAN, OUR
INSPIRATION
ATTRACTS
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SUPPORTING
GREEN HYDROGEN
REGULATION
IN Q1 2023



P18

AL FAISAL AND
TEAM-MATES SET
TO TACKLE GULF
12 HOURS



MUSCAT

CRUDE PRICE AT \$75 A BARREL

Oman oil price for February delivery on Wednesday reached \$75, comprising a drop by \$3 from the price of Tuesday, which stood at \$78. The average price of Oman oil for December delivery has stabilised at \$90.79 per barrel, thus 1 cent per barrel lower than November. In commodities, oil edged higher after Brent crude earlier fell close to its lowest in 2022, as hopes of higher Chinese demand offset concern about recession. Brent crude gained 0.7 per cent to 79.89 a barrel, after sliding below \$80 for the second time in 2022 during the previous trading session.

MOSCOW

UKRAINE ASSAULT ‘LENGTHY PROCESS’

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that the Kremlin’s military campaign in Ukraine might have become a “lengthy process” but praised Moscow’s territorial gains. “Of course, it might be a lengthy process,” Putin told a meeting of the Kremlin’s human rights council. He also said the risk of nuclear war was growing — the latest in a series of such warnings — but that Russia saw its arsenal as a means to retaliate, not to strike first. — AFP



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INSIDE



GERMANY DETAINS FAR-RIGHT GROUP

P5



WHAT THE COP15 CONFERENCE MUST DO

P6

Royal Decree fixes official holidays

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued two Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No 88/2022 fixes official holidays.

Article (1) states that official holidays for units of the State’s Administrative Apparatus, public legal entities and establishments of the private sector — with regard to Eids and other occasions listed below —

shall be fixed as follows:

Firstly: Hijri New Year’s Day to be on Muharram 1; The Prophet’s Birthday to be on Rabee Al Awwal 12; Al Isra’a Wal Miraj to be on Rajab 27; The National Day to be on November 18 and 19; His Majesty the Sultan’s Accession Day.

If any of the days of the weekly off coincides with the abovementioned holidays, it shall

be compensated by a single day. The dates of the abovementioned holidays may be amended if public interest so dictates.

Secondly, Eid al Fitr starts from Ramadhan 29 and continues until Shawwal 3; Eid al Adha starts on Dhul Hijjah 9 and continues until the 12th of the same month.

Friday shall be compensated if it coincides with the first day of

any of the abovementioned Eids.

Article (2) cancels Royal Decree No 56/2020 and all that contradicts this Decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (3) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the date of its issue.

Royal Decree No 89/ 2022 on the ratification of an agreement of cooperation between the

government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain in the security field signed in Manama on October 24, 2022.

Article (1) ratifies the aforesaid agreement as per the version attached to this Decree.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

ON BEHALF OF HIS MAJESTY

Sayyid Fahd to attend summits in Riyadh

MUSCAT: Acting on behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, will lead the Sultanate of Oman’s delegation on Thursday to the 43rd GCC Summit, the GCC-Chinese Summit and the Arab-Chinese Summit for Cooperation and Development.

Oman presses ahead with its cooperation, alongside GCC states, in consolidating the GCC ties with friendly countries. Its approach seeks to realise the common interests of all, besides seeking ways to address the latest developments in the regional and international arenas.

HH Sayyid Fahd will be accompanied by a number of ministers and other government officials.

Meanwhile, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, presided over the 154th session of the Ministerial Council in preparation to the 43rd GCC Summit. The session was held at the headquarters of the GCC Secretariat-General in Riyadh on Wednesday in the presence of the GCC foreign ministers and the GCC Secretary-General.

In his speech, Sayyid



HH SAYYID FAHD BIN MAHMOOD AL SAID

Badr affirmed that the Gulf Cooperation Council is pressing ahead at a steady pace as outlined by the wise visions and directives of the GCC leaders, in a manner that realises the aspirations of the GCC peoples in all fields of cooperation.

The preparatory ministerial session for the 43rd GCC Summit is full of many files of joint Gulf cooperation, which will be submitted at the meeting of the GCC Supreme Council in its 43rd session. The prime aim is to enhance the blessed march of the GCC Council in a manner that achieves further progress and development for its countries and consolidates the foundations of security and stability in the region. — ONA

Omani Equestrian Festival winners feted

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over the Omani Equestrian Festival held at Al Rahba Racecourse in the Wilayat of Barka on Wednesday. The event was



organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth with the participation of the Royal Cavalry and Omani Equestrian Federation. Diverse shows of equestrian sports were staged between the rounds of the race by male and

female jockeys of the Royal Cavalry in accompaniment of musical pieces. At the end of the event, HH Sayyid Theyazin honoured horse owners who achieved top places during the five rounds of the race. **DETAILS ON P2**



No need to arrive at airport 3 hours early in future: IATA

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

Arriving at the airport three hours early to complete the procedures will be a story of the past as the initiative called ‘Ready to Fly’ is closer to reality with new industry standards, according to the IATA (International Air Transport Association).

The association has developed

industry standards’ newly released Recommended Practice on Digitalisation of Admissibility which will enable travellers to digitally prove admissibility to an international destination, avoiding a stop at the check-in desk or boarding gate for document checks. This will be made possible under the One ID initiative, where airlines are working with IATA to digitalise the passenger experience



at airports with contactless biometric-enabled processes.

“Such a move will considerably save passengers’ time by having done with all the procedures in the comfort of their homes on a smartphone and travel formalities will be a walk through experience,” an aviation expert said.

Pilot programmes are already in use at various airports across the world enabling travellers to move

through airport processes such as boarding without producing paper documentation because their boarding passes are linked to a biometric identifier. An IATA study has revealed that passengers want technology to make travel simpler. Accordingly, IATA has taken a major step forward by enabling passengers to prove their admissibility to their airlines before they get to the airport.



■ SHIHAB RECEIVES SYRIAN ENVOY



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received Dr Idris Maya, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Sultanate of Oman, in Muscat on Wednesday. The meeting reviewed the existing bilateral relations between the two countries and ways of enhancing them. It also discussed a number of matters of common interest.

National campaign on 'vehicle recall' concludes

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The national campaign 'It is not possible to delay' organised by the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) concluded on Wednesday. Khaled al Rashdi, Director of Communications and Information Department, said the campaign aims to create awareness that vehicles inspections should not be delayed or postponed, and to protect the rights of consumers, in line with quality and safety standards, and to confirm integration and partnership with agencies and companies in the local markets. As part of the campaign, a virtual exhibition of the vehicle recall campaign was also conducted. Earlier, during the campaign, CPA conducted free inspections of vehicles from certain makers in the Sultanate of Oman. Several automobile brands in the country joined the free inspection

campaign at the National College of Automotive Technology (NCAT). The campaign will help reduce traffic accidents resulting from vehicle manufacturing defects. "Some of the serious defects found in vehicles are related to the sudden opening of the hood, safety locks, or automatic opening of the main lock." Mohammed bin Mubarak al Qasimi of CPA, said, "As per Article (27) of the Consumer Protection Law, it is obligatory for the supplier upon discovering the existence of a defect in the commodity or service that may harm the consumer." CPA said that the supplier must stop the circulation of this commodity or provide the service immediately and must notify the consumers who purchased the commodity or received the service and the concerned authorities. The punishment in cases of violations includes a fine of up to RO 50,000 and imprisonment of up to three years.

Theyazin presides over equestrian festival

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, patronised over the Omani Equestrian Festival held at Al Rahba Racecourse in the Wilayat of Barka on Wednesday.

The event was organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth with the participation of the Royal Cavalry and the Omani Equestrian Federation.

Organising the festival, which also included horse races, comes within the framework of HH Sayyid Theyazin's attention accorded to equestrian sport and upgrading its level in the Sultanate of Oman.

The festival's race included five rounds; three of which were dedicated for pure Arabian horses, one for thoroughbred horses and the main round was dedicated for pure Arabian horses (local breed). The main round carried the name of HH Sayyid Theyazin.

Diverse shows of equestrian sports were staged between the rounds of the race by male and female jockeys of the Royal Cavalry in accompaniment of musical pieces.

At the end of the event, HH Sayyid Theyazin honoured jockeys and horse owners who achieved top places during the five rounds of the race. — ONA



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Workshop discusses social media platforms

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
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The role of social media was discussed at a training workshop on 'Analysing social media platforms' on Wednesday.

The five-day workshop, organised by the Ministry of Information, concludes on Monday. The workshop saw broad participation of

media people from various government units.

Anas Mohammed, Head of the Analysis Department at the Bahrain National Contact Centre and founder of the Bahrain Gate, gave a presentation which familiarised the participants who are responsible for the communication platforms of the various entities.

The workshop provided the

participants with theoretical and practical aspects of social media.

The participants discussed the strengths and weaknesses of social media in achieving the desired goals. The workshop also analysed the negative, positive and neutral impact of the platforms and how to anticipate questions and answers before and after creating media campaigns.

It touched upon several points, including the concept of analysis, types and variables, analysing the platforms digitally using sites and skills, analysing expectations for the negative, positive and neutral impact on the platform of the entity, ways to anticipate questions and answers, as well as presenting practical experiences with risks and crises and how to overcome them.



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■ BADR PRESIDES OVER GCC MINISTERIAL SUMMIT



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, presides over the 154th session of the Ministerial Council in preparation to the 43rd GCC Summit. The session was held at the headquarters of the GCC Secretariat-General in Riyadh on Wednesday.

RAFO celebrates graduation of officers and pilots

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman celebrated the graduation of a new batch of officers and pilots on Wednesday at Rafo's Gala Air Base. His Highness Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad bin Tārik al Said, Chairman of the Central Bank of Oman presided over the function.

The ceremony began with a military salute to the chief guest. He inspected the front row of the graduates' column.

HH Sayyid Taimour presented wings to the graduate pilots. He also handed the sword of honour to Mohammed bin

Ali al Badwawi, who topped the course. Then, a ceremony of handing over and receiving an academic banner took place.

The graduates handed over banners to the new recruits, who are currently receiving training at the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy. This was followed by an air show.

The ceremony was attended by the Chairman of the Majlis Ashshura, members of State Council, commanders of military and security agencies, officials, foreign military attaches, retired Rafo officials and parents of graduates.



Pact to empower energy SMEs

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabalnasseri

The National Employment Programme (Tashgheel), Mazoon Electricity Company and the Industrial Innovation Academy signed on Wednesday a memorandum of cooperation to implement the initiative of 'Raising local content in the Sultanate of Oman in the energy sector'. The cooperation memo was signed under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Public Services Regulatory Authority and General Supervisor of the National Employment Programme.

The agreement aimed at strengthening cooperation between the three parties to develop and implement local content requirements in the energy sector by empowering Omani small and medium enterprises operating in the sector.

It has several services required by the energy sector and assigning them to these institutions with the support and follow-up of the PSRA.

Azhar bin Ahmed al Kindi, Technical Director of the National Employment Programme, Salem bin Saeed al Kamiani, CEO of Mazoon Electricity Company, and Dr Ayman bin Abdullah al Futhaili, CEO of the Industrial Innovation Academy, signed the agreement.

This memorandum will strengthen the private sector's participation in the national economy in the field of energy by providing training and job opportunities for Omanis.

It also will strengthen the system of freelancing, localise some specialised jobs, in addition, to support the private sector, especially SMEs and enhance innovation, in accordance with the objectives and priorities of

the Oman Vision 2040.

Azhar al Kindi gave a visual presentation on this initiative and its importance by presenting the value chain of the energy sector globally and comparing it with the energy sector in Oman, in addition to presenting the services provided at each stage of the supply chain of the sector.

Al Kindi added that this memorandum comes within the efforts made by the National Programme for Employment to strengthen the system of self-employment in the Sultanate of Oman, and the importance of qualifying Omani national cadres in various fields of work, especially the energy sector, which has become one of the most important economic sectors at the global level.

The programme also seeks to support small enterprises and enable them in line with modern technologies in the economic fields through capacity building and supply chains in various economic sectors in the Sultanate of Oman.

Awatef bint Abdullah al Zadjali, Director of In-Country Value at the PSRA and a member of the supervisory committee for this initiative, said that the pact allocates part of the capital expenditures by electricity distribution companies to SMEs licensed by the Distribution Rules Review Board.

"Supply chains in the energy sector were analysed and studied. This initiative was concluded by allocating fixed-price contracts in addition to other services in the energy sector. In-country value of the initiative aims to rehabilitate and build national capacities working in the energy sector, localise some services in the energy sector, create job opportunities for Omani youth, and improve the efficiency of SMEs in the energy sector," she said.



Azhar bin Ahmed al Kindi, Technical Director of the National Employment Programme, Salem bin Saeed al Kamiani, CEO of Mazoon Electricity Company, and Dr Ayman bin Abdullah al Futhaili, CEO of the Industrial Innovation Academy, after signing the agreement in Muscat on Wednesday.

Spanish food festival begins

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, DEC 7

The Embassy of Spain in Muscat launched the gastronomic event with the motto 'Tapas & Paella' on Wednesday.

'Tapas and Paella' has become a sign of Spanish identity and the best symbol of the country's gastronomic culture.

This culinary phenomenon has become an art and has been popularised across the world by Spanish chefs. Tapas restaurants can be found in

many countries around the world.

A tapa is an appetiser or snack in Spanish cuisine. Tapas can be combined to make a full meal, and can be cold or hot sharing tapas is synonymous with sharing time with friends and sometimes also cheering up those going through difficult moments. .

The event aims to introduce the meaning of diversity, both gastronomic and cultural, and for a better cultural exchange and understanding in a friendly and jovial ambiance.



Campaign to control invasive birds to begin next week

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Mynahs and house crows are categorised as invasive birds. The increase in their population is causing several problems. Accordingly, the Environment Authority of Oman has decided to take measures to tackle the issue. The campaign will begin next week in Salalah.

According to reports, the Mynahs were first spotted in the Sultanate of Oman in 1982. In a recent survey, the Authority recorded 2,500 mynahs and 3,000 house crows in Dhofar between 5 to 6 pm in just one day.

The current situation has been a concern not just in the economic aspect, but also in regard to the potential diseases the birds could transmit to other birds and eventually humans.

“Currently, studies are being conducted on the behavioural patterns of these birds,” said the EA’s Director- General of Nature Conservation, Suleiman al Akhzami.

“The impact of the birds on health is being studied. There are teams conducting studies and surveys,” he said.

The invasive birds are hostile and competitive to get food and space for nesting; they also damage local birds’ nests and have been known to be a source of nuisance around the whole year. They also pose a risk to the natural food



chain.

The invasive birds also have an economic and social impact, such as attacking chicks on the farm, damaging public property, farms and fields and production of dry fish.

The areas that are affected are the governorates of Dhofar, North and South Al Batinah and Muscat.

The environment in the aforementioned governorates encourages the birds to grow in population.

“We find them, especially in the coastal line, and these birds can reach the mountainous areas too, but comparatively they are fewer there,” pointed out Muneera al Balushi, Ecosystem Specialist, Environment Authority.

Could there be a link between the growing population of invasive birds and the increasing waste?

“It is true; we can say that the accumulation of waste comes from different sources. It can be from the houses or manufacturers in the area. Most of the waste we have come across is from commercial areas such as restaurants, and the urban areas are the main producers of waste. As well as ports where fishing brings a great amount of waste,” explained Muneera.

The Authority is using a variety of methods to control the population.

“We have been researching and learning from other countries’ experiences. They have been using certain methods successfully. We

have come up with four solutions - traps, gentle chemicals and methods to affect the nests as well as making small holes in the eggs,” explained Muneera.

Mynahs like to make their nests on trees, buildings, grooves and holes, as well as in agricultural areas, especially on the date palm trees and neem trees. House crows, meanwhile, prefer making their nests on the ‘ghaf’ trees.

The birds have been damaging crops, especially dates and fruits. They have been affecting the papayas and mangoes in Dhofar. Crows and mynahs are attracted to colours; because of this, in some of the traps, the Authority uses watermelons and papayas to attract them.

Oman Broadband signs agreements to expand fibre optic coverage



MUSCAT: Oman Broadband has announced the signing of long-term financing agreements with several banks in the Sultanate of Oman. The agreements’ value worth RO 171 million and spanning for a period of 15 years.

The agreements aim to refinance the loan of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) for infrastructure investment, and for the provision of additional financing to support the expansion of fibre optic network coverage across the Sultanate of Oman’s governorates. The agreements will also help to bridge the digital urban/rural divide, which is in line with Oman’s National Broadband Strategy.

The long-term financing project takes the form of a mix of traditional and Islamic financing provided by a number of local banks, including Bank Muscat, Ahli Bank, Sohar International Bank, Bank Dhofar, National Bank of Oman, Sohar Islamic

Bank, Ahli Islamic Bank, and Maisarah Islamic Bank.

Commenting on the agreement signing, Said bin Abdullah al Manthari, Head of the Board of Directors at Oman Broadband, said: “The signing of these agreements between the company and several local banks reflects the mutual trust, collaborative efforts and long-term strategic partnership between both parties. Through these agreements, we foresee future growth prospects in strengthening plans for digital transformation, and the acceleration of its implementation throughout all governorates in Oman.”

He also emphasised that the agreements reflect how confident the financial institutions are in terms of the company’s operational and financial performance – especially after the company managed to complete the first phase of the development plan very effectively and in record time.

— ONA

Japanese-style Okura Resort Muscat to open in 2027

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 7

Hotel Okura Company has announced that the Okura Resort Muscat will open in 2027, which will be the first Okura-branded property and the first Japanese-branded hotel in Oman.

Saud Bahwan Group will manage the new property. The new hotel will offer a total of 150 guest rooms, each with a standard area of approximately 50 square metres. The rooms will feature breathtaking views of the vast golf course of Al Mouj Golf and the sea of Oman. The lobby and other public spaces will be designed in a fusion of Omani and Japanese styles and traditions.

A variety of dining options will be available, including all-day dining, teppanyaki and another Japanese cuisine, and western-style fine dining.

The hotel will also offer banquet facilities for a variety of occasions, as well as indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a spa and a gymnasium.

“Oman has historical links to Asia and in particular to Japan. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Oman and Japan, and the two countries have developed particularly friendly links over the intervening years,” the statement said.

15,500 seedlings of mangroves planted

MUSCAT: With an aim to plant 10 million wild trees, the Environment Authority (EA) is conducting a campaign to plant 15,500 mangrove seedlings in Al Wusta Governorate.

The mangrove plantation campaign was conducted in Khor Ghawi in the Wilayat of Al Jazir, said an official from the Environment Department in Al Wusta.

“The campaign will run from December 5 to 8. The campaign was part of a project which started in 2001 and aims to cultivate 1 million seedlings of mangrove trees along the Sultanate of Oman’s coasts within 20 years,” the official said.

EA has planted 4.75 million seeds of wild trees in different parts of the Sultanate of Oman, in cooperation with relevant



authorities, as part of its ongoing efforts to plant 10 million wild trees.

According to official data, 4.75 million seeds of indigenous tree species have been planted by volunteers as well as by using drones in various regions. EA has also planted 480,000 wild trees,

so far, including 70,600 mangrove trees.

EA, in cooperation with PDO, had launched the initiative in 2020 to plant 10 million wild trees in the next ten years. The wild tree species include ghaf, sumr, sidr, shue, tiq, talh, mitan, sarh and alalan.

Govt employees can apply for job rotation

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 7

The Ministry of Labour has said that employees in government units can now start to apply for job rotation (or transfer from one department to another) through the Ejada platform.

Saqr bin Said al Rubaiee, Assistant Director of Training and Manpower Development at the Ministry of Labour, “All details are available on the Ejada platform, including the initiative of job rotation and the terms of application.”Al Rubaiee said that the website is accessible to all

government employees and that the platform is the starting point to apply for job rotation.

According to sources in various government units, the application for job rotation has to be completed by December 17, 2022. A step-by-step guide has been released on how government employees can apply for job rotation such as selecting job titles, the name of the ministry, and the geographical location.

The applicants are supposed to provide a summary of academic and professional experiences, and educational qualifications, among others.

Workshops on 3D printing, pottery, oud begin

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, DEC 7

The Culture Week organised by Nizwa Cultural Centre began on Tuesday.

The week included many cultural, artistic and theatrical events with the broad participation of governmental and private institutions, clubs, libraries and public cultural centres. The week comes as part of the Nizwa Cultural Centre’s initiative to organise activities and events that enrich culture.

The events started with four

training sessions. The first session was about 3D printing, presented by Hilal bin Hamad bin Nasser al Muadi. It aims to teach about the basics of 3D printing, and training in making 3D models that serve schools, colleges and universities. It was held at the Science and Technology Centre of the Directorate-General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The second training episode of the programme was about the basics of video production and montage. It was presented by the journalist Ali bin Mohammed al Busaidi, Director of the Ministry



of Information in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The aim was to

create a spirit of competition among young people in mobile

photography, promote tourism and encourage creativity by producing pictures for competition. The seminar will last three days and include practical learning in the visual sciences hall at the centre.

The third workshop on pottery was presented by Khalfan bin Marhoon al Rawahi. It targets artists and aims to transform ceramic pots in the Nizwa Cultural Centre to artistic works.

The fourth workshop on playing oud was hosted by Muhammad Sadiq. It also will last for three days.



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In brief

■ MAPUTO



COURT FINDS FORMER PRESIDENT'S SON GUILTY

A Mozambican court on Wednesday found a former president's son and 10 other people guilty on charges related to a \$2 billion "hidden debt" scandal that crashed the southern African nation's economy, sentencing them each to more than 10 years in prison.

Eight of 19 individuals, including state security officials, who had been on trial on charges such as money laundering, bribery and blackmail were acquitted by the court.

Armando Ndambi Guebuza, son of former president Armando Guebuza, was sentenced to 12 years in prison for his role in the scandal.

■ MADRID



150 INJURED IN BARCELONA COMMUTER TRAINS CRASH

Around 150 passengers were injured when two suburban trains crashed in Barcelona on Wednesday morning, with three people taken to hospital, according to civil defence authorities. Most passengers escaped with minor injuries.

"I was in the train that was stationary and was hit by another train," passenger Josep Jorge told La Vanguardia daily. "Moments of panic, screams and anguish. This lack of security is intolerable."

The suburban trains tend to be full during the morning rush hour, with many having to stand. A strong jolt can pull people over. Most passengers had suffered bruises.

■ JOHANNESBURG



SOUTH AFRICAN COURT FREES HANI ON PAROLE

Janusz Walus, a far-right extremist who assassinated South African anti-apartheid leader Chris Hani nearly thirty years ago, has been released on parole, authorities said on Wednesday.

A Polish citizen who emigrated to South Africa in 1981, Walus, 69, was granted parole by the Constitutional Court in late November after serving nearly 30 years of his life sentence for Hani's murder.

The decision has caused furore and sparked street protests in South Africa, where some say the prospect of Walus' release re-opened deep wounds of racial inequality.

MILITARY MEMBERS AMONG THOSE BEING INVESTIGATED

Germany detains far-right group over plot

BERLIN: Germany on Wednesday detained 25 members and supporters of a far-right group that the prosecutor's office said was preparing a violent overthrow of the state to install as national leader a prince who had sought support from Russia.

Prosecutors said the group was inspired by the deep state conspiracy theories of Germany's Reichsbuerger and QAnon, whose advocates were among those arrested after the storming of the US Capitol in January 2021.

Members of the Reichsbuerger (Citizens of the Reich) do not recognise modern-day Germany as a legitimate state. Some of them are devoted to the German empire under monarchy, while some are adherents of Nazi ideas and others believe Germany is still under military occupation.

The plot envisaged a former member of a German royal family, identified as Heinrich XIII P R under Germany's privacy law, as leader in a future state while another suspect, Ruediger vs P, was the head of the military arm, the prosecutors' office said.

It said Heinrich, who uses



Prince Heinrich XIII P R is seen inside a police car in this screen grab from Reuters TV, after 25 suspected members and supporters of a far-right group were detained during raids across Germany on Wednesday. – Reuters

the title prince and comes from the royal House of Reuss, which had ruled over parts of eastern Germany, had reached out to representatives of Russia, whom the group saw as its central contact for establishing its new order. It said there was no evidence the representatives had reacted positively to the request.

The Kremlin said there could

be no question of any Russian involvement in an alleged far-right plot to overthrow the German state, with spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying that it "appears to be a German internal problem".

The German government will respond with the full force of the law, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said.

"The investigations provide a

glimpse into the abyss of a terrorist threat from the Reichsbuerger milieu," said Faeser in a statement, adding that the constitutional state knew how to defend itself against "the enemies of democracy".

One active soldier and several reservists were also among those being investigated, a spokesperson for the military intelligence service said. The active soldier is a member of the Bundeswehr's KSK elite force, which has been overhauled in recent years due to a number of far-right incidents.

Investigators suspect individual members of the group had concrete plans to storm the Bundestag lower house of parliament in Berlin with a small armed group, the prosecutor's office said.

The vice president of the Bundestag, Wolfgang Kubicki, told the Rheinische Post newspaper that the parliamentary building was equipped for attacks from the outside and aware of potential threat situations, so "the group's plans were already doomed to fail when they were forged".

The revelations of the plot evoke memories of the storming

of the steps of Germany's Reichstag parliament building by protesters in August 2020 during mass marches against coronavirus curbs, as well as the attack on the US Capitol. Germany's domestic intelligence agency attributes some 21,000 people to the Reichsbuerger (Citizens of the Reich) movement, with around 5 per cent of them seen as far-right extremists.

The House of Reuss had previously distanced itself from Heinrich, calling him a confused man who pursued conspiracy theories, according to local media. Neither the House of Reuss nor Prince Reuss' Office responded to requests for comment.

Germany's monarchy was abolished a century ago. When the Weimar Constitution entered into force on August 14, 1919, the legal privileges and titles of German nobility were abolished. Officially, there are no princes and princesses in Germany.

Prosecutors said the raids were conducted by more than 3,000 police officials and security forces across 11 German federal states.

— Agencies

■ SPEED LIMIT ON HIGHWAYS



Activists of "Letzte Generation" (Last Generation) sit on the road with their hands glued together as they protest for a speed limit on highways as well as for affordable public transport, in Berlin, Germany, on Wednesday. – Reuters

Floating CNG fuel stations help clean river Ganga in Varanasi

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaush

An eco-friendly attempt in the form of floating CNG fuel stations to save the rivers from pollution has emerged as a boon for a large number of boatmen who survive on daily earnings by ferrying the visitors from one bank to another or by taking them for recreation in the river Ganga in the Indian city of Varanasi.

The solution has emerged as the world's first floating CNG filling station for eco-friendly boats. Scientists at the IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) Kanpur contributed to the project by providing a patented technology called Self Adjusting Fixed Type Jetty (SAFTJ).

The floating fuel stations have become major drivers of environmental safety in the river because the boatmen earlier depended on diesel, with which the boats were releasing lots of smoke,

and there were cases of oil spillage in the river water.

"The introduction of floating CNG fuel stations has apparently improved the environment in the river, which has thousands of visitors daily. The boats look clean, and there is no more smell of burnt diesel. It is really a good idea, which other state governments need to follow to keep the rivers clean. There are many other issues involved in keeping the rivers pollution free, but this is a major step," said Anup Kumar, resident of Varanasi in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

The Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) took the responsibility of converting the boats running on petrol/diesel to run on CNG under its corporate social responsibility in association with Varanasi Nagar Nigam (VNN).

The VNN appointed Varanasi Smart City as the coordinator of the project, while Mecon India provided

engineering and consultancy services for the conversion of the boats to run on CNG.

The boats are a popular mode of entertainment among all sorts of tourists when they visit the holy city of Varanasi. Due to the lack of proper maintenance by the boat owners, there are chances of leakage and exhaust from conventional fuels. This is a major concern that affects the water quality and marine life of the river Ganga.

After implementing floating CNG fuel stations in the river, environmentalists find improvements in marine life and water quality.

The conversion from diesel to CNG is also helping the boatmen financially, as they are able to save on fuel, which otherwise was expensive and time-consuming as they had to bring the diesel in containers from normal fuel stations. The savings, according to some boatmen, is 50 per cent.

Japan's ruling party says may boost defence budget

TOKYO: Japan's government will not rule out any measures to fund increases in defence spending, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's policy chief Koichi Hagiuda said on Wednesday, when asked about possible additional debt issuance.

Hagiuda however told reporters after a meeting with his coalition partner Yosuke Takagi of the Komeito party that the government would not raise taxes in the next fiscal year when the five-year defence spending plan kicks off.

"We are not considering funding all the spending with tax hikes," Hagiuda said. "We must curb spending (in other areas) and make every effort. If that's not enough, we must consider tax (hikes)."

Hagiuda added that the ruling coalition and government officials will meet on Thursday to further discuss details. A final decision will be made by year-end on the source of the funding, including any tax hike plans.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has announced plans to lift defence spending to an amount equivalent to 2 per cent of gross domestic product within five years, from 1 per cent now.

The boost in defence spending stems from an increasingly assertive neighbour and unpredictable North Korea in addition to growing geopolitical risks due to the Ukraine crisis.

Kishida ordered the government on Monday to earmark around 43 trillion



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida

We are not considering funding all the spending with tax hikes. We must curb spending (in other areas) and make every effort

KOICHI HAGIUDAD

Party's policy chief

yen (\$313.69 billion) for the upcoming five-year mid-term defence buildup plan, compared with the current five-year plan worth 27.5 trillion yen.

The ruling parties are assuming around 1 trillion yen of the defence spending rise will be paid for through tax hikes by fiscal 2027, Kyodo news agency cited an anonymous source as saying.

Any big spending plan in Japan stokes worry about worsening one of the industrial world's worst debt burdens, which amounts to twice the size of the country's annual economic output.

— Agencies

Media translation matters...

You enjoy watching international programmes, but you want subtitles in your native language. You want to read that best-selling book written in a language you don't grasp, so you look for alternative solutions. The use of automated instant translation, which is widely available via the Internet, is the easiest way to go.

Now that translation technology has become more user-friendly, do we still need skilled professionals in other languages rather than their (hopefully) excellent native speakers?

Converting a message from one language to another is a key component of mass communication. It has a close relationship with the media and the translation disciplines, ranging from a book to a film to television dramas to novels, news, commercials, video games, and audio-visu­als. The interaction of language, translation, and culture is an important aspect of communication.

These services are quick, and mostly free, and can publish an article in as many languages as the publication requires, or desires. Having news, audio-visu­als, and other forms of media production in various languages aims beyond the here and now, and can attract tourists and investors.

On the one side, free automated translation services can be highly profitable. However, conveying meaning when using machines from one language to another is not an easy task; machines lack cultural characteristics and communication peculiarities. We have seen some examples in the World Cup 2022, in which language barriers, culture, and interpretation triggered global social media reactions. Though a Translation Memory (TM) database can increase the overall efficiency of a translation process.

Translation plays an essential role in international reporting; for example, take into consideration the play on words, idiomatic expressions, and historical references used in texts and images. Once again, the World Cup 2022 is rich with samples of “memes” highlighting issues in communication with a multilingual audience! The image



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NOW THAT TRANSLATION TECHNOLOGY HAS BECOME MORE USER-FRIENDLY, DO WE STILL NEED SKILLED PROFESSIONALS IN OTHER LANGUAGES RATHER THAN THEIR (HOPEFULLY) EXCELLENT NATIVE SPEAKERS?

of a tourism destination can change in a short time. Social media platforms lead the discourse, and language evolves.

Translation is difficult; expressions are not always correctly interpreted, or sentences are not clear. We've seen it time and again when a piece of information can be distorted. The translator or the “media officer” displays his or her linguistic ability-or the lack of it-including, (un) knowledge of another culture. The cases of misinterpretation during the World Cup 2022 are a laboratory for media understanding and literacy; the tip of the iceberg!

In “Translation Goes to the Movies,” Michael Cronin highlights how translation is one of the concerns of film-makers in dealing with questions of culture, identity, conflict, and representation. The use of translation machines in movies does not provide cultural context and they can create confusion with idioms or even the use of insensitive words. The human element is essential.

In a multilingual global society, translators, inexperienced journalists, or “media officers” are unaware of “false friends” words or phrases. These are words in the original, as studies refer to them, and often the young journalist or news translator cannot think of a correct version or they lack cultural knowledge. Let us clarify that there are times when unclear messages are intended.

Changing the medium alters the meaning: chameleon convergence. News texts are being adapted to new modes as well as various cultural and linguistic contexts. The way ideas are organized, fragmented, and communicated changes.

There is also the issue of accountability. The best is not to keep some audiences at a disadvantage. There are no longer excuses. However, on top of a lack of responsibility to audiences, there are organisations, and media professionals, that disable the translation option.

Translation activity remains marginal despite its centrality in mass media. In journalism, accountability is fundamental, so those working within the media should bear the onus for accurate interpretation of information.

AN EYE IN THE SKY



Members of a rescue team install CCTV cameras to monitor the activity of mount Semeru at Curah Kobokan village in Lumajang, Indonesia, on Wednesday, following its volcanic eruption. – AFP

What the COP15 conference must do

The recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm el Sheikh offered encouraging but insufficient signs of an emerging political consensus on the need for global solidarity in the face of global warming. Now, world leaders need to attend to another existential risk to people and the planet: the alarming and growing loss of biodiversity.

In Montreal this month, governments will come together at the Convention on Biological Diversity's COP15 summit to agree on a global deal to put the world's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030. We cannot afford for this conference to be treated as a sideshow or afterthought to COP27. The biodiversity crisis is no less important than the climate crisis, and it is escalating quickly. It must be a top political priority for all countries. Given the current rates of biodiversity loss, some scientists estimate that we are on track to lose three-quarters of the world's species within only a few centuries. This mass extinction and the ongoing threat to ecosystems and habitats is inextricably linked to climate change. That is why world leaders



Juan Manuel Santos

The writer is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is a former president of Colombia (2010-18) and a member of The Elders

IN MONTREAL THIS MONTH, GOVERNMENTS WILL COME TOGETHER AT THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY'S COP15 SUMMIT TO NEGOTIATE A GLOBAL DEAL FOR NATURE

must come to COP15 with high ambitions and set a mandate for successful negotiations.

To succeed, COP15 must not only deliver an agreement on the overall mission. It also must set clearly defined goals and establish concrete plans to protect 30 per cent of all land and ocean areas by 2030. Leaders must come to Montreal with both the national plans and the financing needed to advance these objectives.

When I was first elected president of Colombia in 2010, I found myself running a country that was almost entirely flooded for 18 months. The climate pattern known as La Niña, aggravated by global warming, meant near-biblical rainfall. Lacking the tools or knowhow to handle the situation, we saw that we needed to make peace with nature. Experts advised focusing on the protection of biodiversity, so that is what

we did. Colombia, one of the world's most biodiverse countries, now has a combined protected area that is larger than Japan or the United Kingdom.

We understand both the value of nature and what we stand to lose when it is eroded. We also have come to appreciate what we can learn from those with the closest relationship to the land. Many indigenous communities had been warning of an ecological crisis for

decades, only to have their voices and rights dismissed.

Nature loss hurts people everywhere. It is already harming human health, reducing air quality, undermining our ability to grow food or obtain water, exacerbating extreme weather events, and weakening our ability to mitigate or adapt to climate change. These problems make biodiversity loss a security issue. Continued damage to our ecosystems is one of the biggest long-term risks to our societies.

As an economic matter, the collapse of certain essential ecosystems is all it would take to push countries like mine into bankruptcy. Consider, for example, that around 75 per cent of food crops rely on animal pollinators such as bees, birds and butterflies. The loss of all animal pollinators seems unthinkable, yet it is a real threat. And if food becomes scarcer, the poorest will suffer first. Moreover, the destruction of habitats is a serious health threat, not least because it is bringing humans and animals into closer and frequent contact.

@Project Syndicate, 2022



Colombia, one of the world's most biodiverse countries, now has a combined protected area that is larger than Japan or the UK.

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

Located in Muscat, Bait Al Muzna Gallery is hosting an art exhibition until December 15th marking the 52nd National Day of the Sultanate of Oman.

The exhibition, curated by Clive Gracey, represents Omani and international artists, various media and is titled – Oman, Our Inspiration.

As one enters the gallery, on the left the visitors are greeted by opening painting – a pastel portrait of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik by renowned Dutch painter and portrait artist, Tonny Holsbergen, who has been visiting Oman regularly since 2001. Her inspiration has been the hospitality of the people of Oman's desert regions and accordingly her other paintings depict the traditional Bedouin way of life.

Next it is the paintings by well established Russian artist, based in Oman since 1999, Anna Dudchenko, who is also an art consultant portraying scenes of Oman at the group show.

Rekindling memories of childhood in Oman are the watercolour paintings by Fahad bin Salim al Maamari, a Fine Art graduate from Sultan Qaboos University. The artist who is also a member of International Watercolour Association, captures the light and mood while depicting Oman's traditional and modern culture.

Showcased at the central space is the world's largest Omani Kummah by Amani al Raisi and Ojas Bhatia.

And this is where paintings by Omani artist Tahira Fida are displayed. Her mixed media works are inspired by Arabic poetry, English literature and memories as well as the architecture of Muttrah where she grew up. Her work is defined as rich in symbols, characters, letters and glyphs from different languages. She has exhibited extensively in Oman and internationally.

Indian artist Debjani Bhardwaj is multidisciplinary artist who expresses herself through sculpture, illustration, paper cuts and printmaking. The medium chosen for this exhibition is paper cuts and as the viewer spends time staring at her work the details emerge and soon you begin to see the natural features of Oman ranging from birds, butterflies, Oryx, fox etc and the message is they breathe the same air as we breathe.

On display is also the photorealistic portrait of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik by Victor Kim Seopyeong from South Korea. The artist who mainly works with acrylics also



OMAN AN INSPIRATION

has paintings on different sceneries.

One section of the exhibition is dedicated to doors ceilings of Omani houses. Clive, having being travelled widely across the Sultanate of Oman, has captured amazing shots of ceilings over the years. Paintings of floral and geometric patterns and at times even verses of poetry have been featured on the wooden cross beams. Clive calls them, "The original Omani art."

"The beams were originally painted to keep termites away and insect infestation. But from there the concept found artistic expressions too," said Clive adding that he hopes that these structures would be preserved.

"We see some work in forts but most of it (the art work on ceilings) were used in domestic architecture. The cross beams were not just painted in one colour. That is what intrigues me. They were made into works of art, with the use of many colours, motifs, and designs. And to me these are the original Omani paintings," noted the photographer.

The paint then was made from natural pigments.

"Sadly many of the ceilings have disappeared. I see it as part of my mission as an artist to record these beautiful works of art for posterity," said Clive.

How they were painted is also an interesting thought.

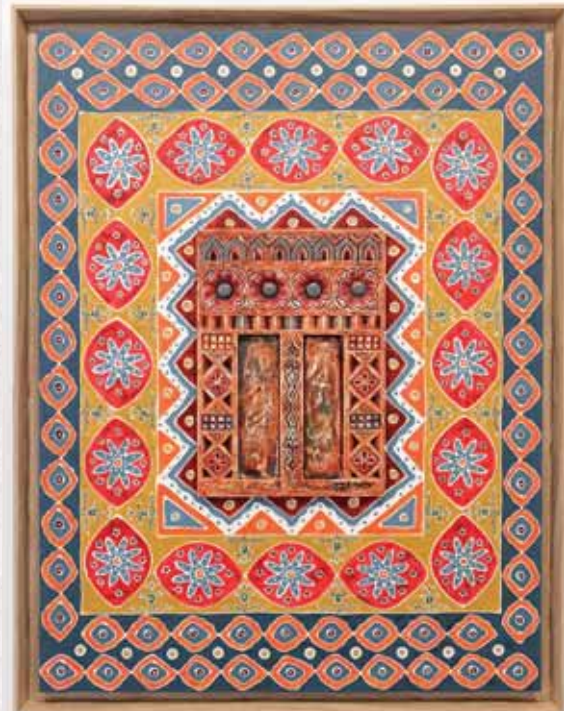
"One of the ceilings was with poetry. But apparently the lines are mixed up, which suggests they were written on the beams when it was on ground and then taken up to the ceiling where the workman accidentally got mixed up," explained Clive.

Complementing the photography is the work of Juma al Harthy inspired by Omani doors.

"Juma al Harthy has developed a distinctive Omani visual language in his artwork," described Clive.

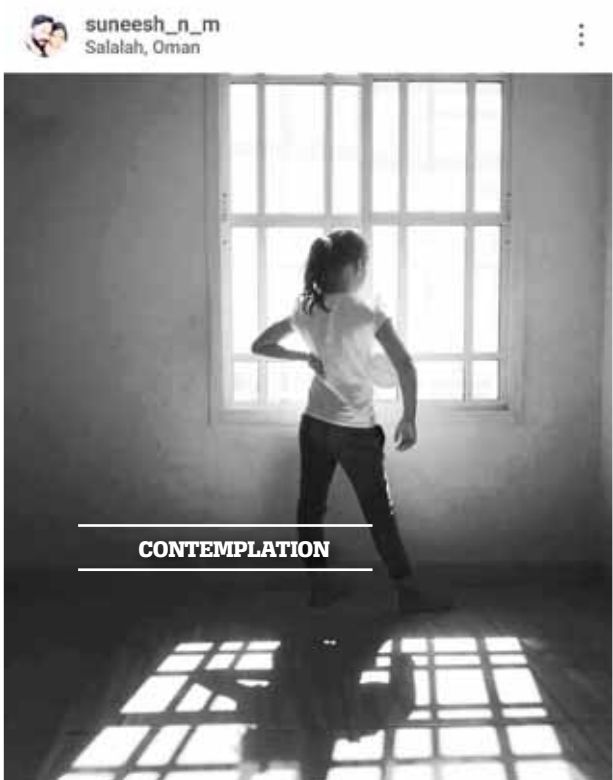
Al Harthy's mixed media often incorporate elements of carved wood and nails that are typical of traditional Omani doors. He also finds inspiration in details of painted ornamentation from Oman's historic monuments, in particular Jibreen Castle.

The doors are also part of Clive's photography collection. One particular photograph of a door with carving and Arabic inscription was made by Omani craftsman, Ahmed bin Malik al Maawali. This was interestingly revealed when Clive posted on the Instagram and the son of Ahmed responded saying, "This work was done by my father in 1940s or 1950s."





INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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

AROUND THE WORLD

CELEBRITIES

KULTHUMIYAT at ROHM



THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE Muscat is delighted to announce the return of the special Kulthumiyat concert, celebrating the legacy of Umm Kulthum. The concert for 2022 features two exceptional artists, Yosra Mahnouch and Mia Farouk, renowned singers of the Umm Kulthum repertoire. The concert will be accompanied by the Amir Abdul Majid Ensemble, conducted by Amir Abdul Majid.

Umm Kulthum was an exceptional artist with a unique voice who dedicated her life to art. She is not only the most famous superstar in the Arab world for over sixty years, but also possessed an incredible artistic presence that gripped audiences throughout the world.

Following a programme of Umm Kulthum's greatest songs, the artists will perform at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts on the Friday, and Saturday, December 9-10, at 7 pm.

For more information or to book tickets please use the ROHM app, website or visit the Box Office.

Mariah Carey's life and career detailed in a new comic book



THE LIFE AND career of Mariah Carey is being celebrated in a new comic book.

TidalWave Comics has added the singer to their "Female Force" series that highlights successful women in their respective fields.

In 22 pages, Carey's childhood and rise to fame is outlined in vivid colour with illustrations by Pablo Martinena.

Writer Michael Frizell said in a statement that he was proud to pen the glossy. "I hope that readers learn something new about her."

Three covers will be released with one recognising her as the "Queen of Christmas." Carey's 1994 hit "All I Want for Christmas Is You" is widely played during the holiday season even nearly 25 years later.

Hardback and paperback issues will be released on December 7. — Reuters

CLIMATE CHANGE

How film and TV can help the climate change battle



FICTIONAL FILMS AND TV have immense power to shift attitudes on political issues, yet they remain little-used in debates over climate change.

Analysing a database of 37,453 film and TV scripts from 2016 to 2020, researchers at the University of Southern California (USC) found that just 1,046 — 2.8 per cent — included any keywords related to climate, and only 0.6 per cent mentioned "climate change" specifically.

A similar British study by Albert, a sustainability NGO, found that "cake" was mentioned 10 times more than "climate change" in TV subtitles in 2020.

"The vast majority of films and shows we watch exist in a different reality, where climate change does not exist. This allows viewers to live in a fantasy," said Anna Jane Joyner, founder of Good Energy, a consultancy that helps scriptwriters address the issue.

Scriptwriters have been keen to address climate change, Joyner said, but felt others would not be interested, or that they would be branded as hypocrites.

"Many writers feel guilty about their own lifestyle — that unless you're a perfect climate citizen, you can't authentically write about it," said Joyner. "But we need less shaming."

It helps that public concern is rising.

The number of Americans

viewing climate change as a major threat jumped from 37 to 55 per cent between 2017 and 2021, despite right-wing denials.

In Britain, it jumped from 37 to 65 per cent.

PARA-SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

TV has helped shift political attitudes over the years, especially around race and sexuality, from the first inter-racial kiss on "Star Trek" in the 1960s to the stars of 1990s sitcoms "Ellen" and "Will and Grace".

The latter was even cited by then vice-president Joe Biden in his decision to support marriage equality in the United States in 2012.

"People tend to view entertainment as frivolous... and writers who care about climate change might think that audiences will not be receptive," said Erica Rosenthal of USC. "But that is false."

Her work has shown how viewers form "para-social relationships" with characters on-screen, exposing them to new ideas and people.

"Even if climate change only comes up in passing in a show that we love, it subconsciously validates that this concern is normal," said Joyner.

"You need that sense of connection before you get to a place of agency."

However, some mentions are more useful than others, she added.

Two common tropes are the apocalypse — which

is demoralising — and characters that badger others about their SUV or plastic straws. "Nobody likes a scold," said Joyner.

Simple gestures can help — characters expressing concern about the climate, using public transport or minimising food waste.

"We see plenty of stories on extreme weather but they are rarely, if ever, linked to climate change... That would be easy," added Rosenthal.

CONQUERING NATURE

Hollywood has long explored humanity's relationship with nature, dating back to the grand vistas of early Westerns.

"Initially, Westerns were about conquering the land, but very quickly we see that domesticating nature should not mean destroying it," said Veronique Le Bris, who compiled "100 Great Films for the Planet" in France.

Horror over nuclear weapons spurred change after World War II, she added.

As early as 1958, celebrated director Nicholas Ray made "Wind Across the Everglades" about animal conservation.

There have been many examples since, from "Erin Brokovich" to "Wall-E" to "Don't Look Up".

But the current focus on global climate change is tricky for filmmakers, Le Bris said, perhaps because we are all complicit at some level. — AFP

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

“Real” Gazelle and “Fancied” Grasshoppers (2)

THE FOLLOWING IS my English translation of excerpts from "A Soldier from Oman, Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid al Kalbani.

We then moved to a place named "Ajaaz" and the gazelle full Northern Ghobra. We hunted a number of them one day, skinned them, spiced their meat with salt, and put them out in the open on water and petrol barrels placed on our vehicles. When we woke up in the morning we found nothing. Someone or something had apparently taken them away during the night.

We noticed that the English expert wasn't satisfied with our hunting. In any case, we came back from our mission without finding any grasshoppers or even any traces of them, something that made us raise suspicions as to the main mission that the Englishman had come for.

Two weeks after we returned to Bibid, Maj Cooper told me that Sultan Said intended to improve the police force, and to that purpose, a number of army personnel were to be shifted. He asked if I liked to join the police and gave me some time to think it over.

I did think it over, and concluded that those injured before me either had ended up in a rations department or returned to their hometowns. (There was no pension during that time). Therefore, I agreed, saying to myself, "Let me try my luck in another place and rely on God".

It was an all important step in my life. It is, to be sure, difficult for a warrior engaged in a battlefield to surrender his weapon. But on my firm belief that life was itself a war, I felt I had only one choice: to remain a warrior, albeit in a different form, in a different shape.

I, then a sergeant, told Maj Cooper about my decision. Acting upon his guidance, I prepared myself and went to the Oman Jondramat in Wadi Arsh in Al Seeb. There I reported to Maj William Hockett upon my arrival.

From Wadi Arsh started an altogether different story.

**Oman Jondrama was a law enforcing body before the 1970s. It functioned in a way apparently similar to modern day police as well as to the navy, to a certain extent. The first syllable Jond of Jondrama is similar in sound to the Arabic word for "soldiers". The whole word may as well be a corruption of the French "gendarme" (the translator).

business

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SPOTLIGHT ON THE SULTANATE OF OMAN'S GREEN HYDROGEN ECONOMY

Supporting green hydrogen regulation in Oman to be issued in Q1 2023

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, DEC 7

Supporting regulations underpinning Oman's emerging green hydrogen industry are expected to be issued by the end of the first quarter of 2023, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals stated here on Tuesday.

Speaking at the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2022 forum underway in the city, Al Aufi nevertheless urged interested investors to go ahead and register their interest via a newly established platform set up by the Omani government to ensure the transparent and streamlined development of green hydrogen projects in the Sultanate of Oman.

The platform is being managed by Hydrom, the new orchestrator of the Sultanate of Oman's green



hydrogen sector. He vowed to open his office to any serious investor seeking clarifications or assurances about their investments pending the issuance of formal regulations.

"Please go through the Hydrom site, register your interest and then come and talk to us. And if there

(are still issues that are) a show stopper, my office is open to you," he stressed.

A framework for the development of the sector, first unveiled in October, will continue to serve as a guide to all parties interested in participating in Oman's new green hydrogen industry, the Minister noted. Policies and regulations due to be issued early next year are meant to only formalise this framework, he said.

He called on international developers to be "bold" in their investment plans for Oman, pledging to "dismantle all barriers" that may be holding back their decision. "Trust that this is the direction — We are here to support, and if we slow you down, come and knock on my office. We will break all the barriers for you," Al Aufi stated.

Mirbat facility to be Oman's first crypto-mining data centre



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 7

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, inaugurated the Sultanate of Oman's first crypto-mining data centre, set up by Green Data City in Mirbat recently. Al Maawali was joined by Dr Ali bin Amer al Shidhani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communication and Information Technology, Shaikh Suhail bin Mohammed al Khathiri, Deputy Wali of Mirbat, Talal al Aufi, CEO of OQ, and Eng Olivier Ohnneiser, CEO – Green Data City. Representatives of the crypto mining industry including Bitmain, Bitfield, BBGS and Enegix were present as well. Green Data City will develop in two phases; Phase one will immediately start with 200MW dedicated to crypto-mining, and Phase two will add renewable energy and patented deep-sea water cooling with minimum 400MW capacity that will optimise hyperscale data centres. Large scale mining companies and data centre owners can now register directly under the GDC license and operate in the development. The capacities will be allocated in the coming weeks. Al Maawali said: "The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology seeks to build cooperative partnerships with leading local and international private sector entities in the various types of digital technologies, as the Ministry works to attract foreign investments in this ever-developing industry."

Eng Olivier Ohnneiser, CEO of Green Data City, stated that "The south of Oman is strategically positioned on the network routes and has unique advantages to establish successful and sustainable hyperscale data centres, such as stable economy, large surplus electricity, cool weather in the Salalah region, unique access to cold deep ocean water next to the shore, and high renewable energy." **TURN TO PAGE 10**

Oman is lucrative captive market for green energy manufacturing industries: Aufi

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 7

With anticipated inflows of billions of dollars into Oman's nascent green hydrogen industry in the coming years, the potential for investment in new manufacturing industries linked to this emerging sector is immense, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, has stressed.

Participating in a panel discussion held as part of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO) 2022 forum on Tuesday, Al Aufi said the Sultanate of Oman represents a promising "captive market" for investors looking to meet the hardware needs of this mammoth new economic sector.

"We are talking about millions of solar panels that will be required from now until 2030," he pointed out. "If I calculate the numbers, we're talking about 25 to 30 million solar panels that need to be installed to meet the targeted production of one million tonnes per annum of hydrogen by 2030." Side by side with solar capacity, an estimated 5000 – 6000 wind turbines will be required as well, he noted."

Multiply that by three, that tells you how many blades we will need; Add to that the electrolyser



capacity that will be required only for the projects that we're currently talking about, not Round Two, which will come in April, and Round 3, which will come in December or January 2024 and so on.

And by the time we get to 2030, these numbers are going to be pretty much in the wash. And if any supply chain or manufacturing industry thinks that this is not a captive market that they would want to be very close to, I think they're going to be missing the boat."

At the unveiling of Oman's National Green Hydrogen Strategy in October, officials had stressed a new industry around green hydrogen has the potential to unlock vast investment opportunities across the value chain. It includes opportunities in the manufacture of solar panels, wind turbines, electrolyzers, hydrogen-derived products, storage and transportation, water desalination and other components.

Oman's investments alone will encompass about 3 million solar panels, approximately 10,000 wind turbines, 5,200 electrolysis units and about 180 GW of renewable energy production capacity, it was pointed out.

Al Aufi also stressed that developers eyeing lucrative acreage for green hydrogen investment must also spell out their strategies for local value creation over the 47-year concessions pledged by the Omani government.

"In the current auction process that we have launched for green hydrogen projects, the criteria we use for evaluating investment is based on what In-Country Value you'll be bringing locally; what industries that are already

established that will be using your green molecules; what new industries are you going to help us bring into Oman and connect us to the different requirements, whether it's solar panels, wind turbines, electrolyzers, and so on; how sustainable, meaningful jobs will you be creating; how much of your hydrogen production is going to be utilised in establishing new industries in Oman or decarbonising existing industries locally, and so on."

The auction of acreage for green hydrogen project development is centred on growing the local economy as opposed to generating a dollar value for the government, the Minister added.

Also taking part in the panel discussion were: Dr M G Michel Heijdra, Deputy Vice Minister for Climate and Energy at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, Netherlands; Ellen von Zitzewitz, Deputy Director Energy Cooperation with North Africa, the Near and Middle East, German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), and Steve Phimister, Managing Director – Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). The moderator was Nima Abu Wardeh, former BBC news anchor.

51 lucky winners of Bank Muscat prize draws fly to Doha to enjoy Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022

MUSCAT: The 51 lucky winners of Bank Muscat's special prize draws are at present flying to Doha in batches to enjoy matches at the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa.

With each winner being eligible to take a companion along, as many as 102 people will be visiting Qatar over a one-month period and more than 60 people have already enjoyed the opening matches of the mega sports event.

Speaking on the eve of their departure to Doha, the winners said that they were super excited to watch the Fifa World Cup in person.

They thanked Bank Muscat and Visa for giving them a 'once in a lifetime' chance to win exciting hospitality packages and enjoy matches in Doha.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "First of all, we would like to thank Visa for partnering with Bank Muscat for



this exciting campaign, which has brought great joy to many of our customers.

"We would also like to congratulate all the winners and hope that they have the experience of a lifetime visiting Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa.

This campaign was a complete success at all levels and we thank all our customers for their valuable contributions and for their trust and confidence in the bank. Our customers will also be pleased to know that many more exciting products, services, features and

prize draws will be launched by the bank in the future."

Manish Gautam, Visa's Country Manager for Oman, said: "We are delighted to partner with Bank Muscat in sharing Fifa World Cup excitement with football fans in Oman. This campaign was a

great way to reward the bank's customers with a chance to win an exclusive experience every time they shopped using their Visa cards.

"Congratulations to all the winners and I look forward to more of these exciting collaborations with Bank Muscat that also support the government's efforts to promote digital commerce for the benefit of consumers and businesses in Oman."

Earlier in September, Bank Muscat conducted an exciting live draw to choose the winners of hospitality packages, with each of the 51 winners receiving a Hospitality Package for two to the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa.

The packages include airline tickets, hotel accommodation and tickets for a number of matches during the month-long football carnival and as many as 10 packages (1 opening match, 1 final and 8 quarterfinal matches) were reserved for Bank Muscat Private

Banking Visa Infinite and Asalah Priority Banking Visa Signature credit cardholders.

Nine packages featuring quarterfinal matches were reserved for Al Jawhar Visa Platinum credit cardholders and the winners also included 8 Visa Prepaid cardholders who won packages to visit Group Stage matches.

As many as 24 winners were chosen from holders of Bank Muscat co-branded Visa Platinum credit cards, Visa Gold credit cards and Visa Classic credit cards.

In 2022, Bank Muscat also launched a special limited-edition Visa Prepaid Card to celebrate the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa.

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Alizz Islamic Bank transfers Al Maabela branch operations to new location in the industrial area

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank announced the transfer of all its banking operations in the Al Maabela branch, which is located next to the Bin Rashid Markets, to its new branch, which is located in Al Maabela in the industrial area and the new branch started providing its services to all customers.

It is possible to access the location of the new branch through the road network, whether via the highway or through Sultan Al Qaboos Street. It is also possible to enter the Alizz Islamic Bank website, which includes all details related to the branch such as the phone number and working times, or through the use of Google Maps that shows all the details surrounding the branch and the roads leading to it.

Commenting on the transfer operations in the Al Maabela branch to new location in the industrial area, Mohammed al Ghassani said: "We chose a prime location for the branch to provide convenient services to customers.

"The selection process focused on the



objective of bringing the bank's services closer to the largest number of customers. Several factors were taken into consideration when choosing the location of the branch, including proximity, ease of access, population density and availability of services."

The new branch of Alizz Islamic Bank is in industrial area that includes many commercial services in order to facilitate real estate and

car financing services and other financing products.

He added: "We are proceeding according to the strategy we have set to add more branches in different governorates. We will continue to remain committed to developing innovative ways to bring Islamic financing facilities even closer to each and every one of our loyal customers."

"Alizz Islamic Bank continues to extend its top-quality services and products to all customers, and the bank has been able to reformulate its banking services for institutions by reviewing its business strategy, which resulted in the growth of high quality banking facilities.

"During the past year, the bank introduced many new products including the Corporate Credit Card. It has also launched new wholesale banking services related to financial advisory, investment banking business services, corporate transaction banking and other initiative," Al Ghassani said.

Mirbat facility to be Oman first crypto-mining data centre

FROM PAGE 9

The official delegation has visited the new offices and seen the first bitcoin officially mined in Oman, while the technical team presented the immersion cooling technology, used to reduce electricity consumption, which will be coupled with patented water-cooling innovation and renewable energy in the next phase.

Ohnheiser expressed his appreciation of the government

leadership to support this long term development and make the country now open for crypto-mining.

The new data and crypto hub will bring strategic benefits for Oman with large investment, high profile careers for IT engineers, employment of the full development that will include, technology, water industries, aquaculture, cosmetics, real estate and supporting services.

NBO, Muscat Eat Festival support local business community



MUSCAT: Committed to empowering communities, National Bank of Oman (NBO) is the banking partner of this year's Muscat Eat Festival 2022, which recently kicked off at Madinat Al Irfan under the auspices of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. Through the support of the two-weekend culinary event, NBO seeks to encourage the local business community to reach their potential and generate some revenue by showcasing their culinary highlights.

Many participating entrepreneurs, home-based business owners, as well as visitors have been able to meet with team members from NBO at its stand to find out more about the bank's tailored products and

services, and open an account.

The annual Muscat Eats Festival hosts around 150 stalls made up of homegrown restaurants, coffee shops, local food trucks and home-based food businesses.

This year, the event has been split into two weekends in December, while it usually attracts thousands of visitors who are spoilt for choice with a range of local and international cuisines, entertainment and activities for all ages.

Meanwhile, NBO has long been an active participant in local, community-centred initiatives that aim to support local businesses and therefore contribute to Oman's economic growth and diversification.

Maisarah's Education Finance offers financial support to students

MUSCAT: Created to help students fulfil their educational goals, Maisarah Islamic Banking Services – BankDhofar's Islamic Banking window – Education Finance offers comprehensive financial support to students. Placing great emphasis on learning, Maisarah's Education Finance follows the Islamic concept of Ijarah Al Manfa'a.

Education Finance extends finance for school and college tuition/registration fees, accommodation, and any education related expenses.

Financing is provided for education in schools, colleges and universities. The product offers a flexible payment tenure of up to 10 years. It provides finance up to RO 50,000 and moratorium period of up to 36 months applies to higher education institutions.



Amor bin Said al Amri (pictured), DGM – Maisarah Retail Banking, said: "An education finance is an outstanding solution for students who have aspiration but cannot manage sufficient finances to achieve their education goals. Our Education Finance has been designed to help students achieve their future aspirations.

Students are able to concentrate on their studies while we take care of the financial needs through this product."

Maisarah's education facility is offered under Ijarah Al Manfa'a which is a lease contract between Maisarah (Lessor) and the customer (Lessee), wherein Maisarah will get the educational services leased from educational institutions and subsequently lease the same to the customer upon request.

The customer (Lessee) then pays rent to Maisarah, (as pre-agreed) for a set time.

Education Finance is among the many Shariah-compliant financial solutions, innovative products, and best-in-class services that Maisarah offers to its customers.

The wide-ranging mix of products includes Auto finance,

Home finance, Property finance, Goods finance, Commercial, Personal and Travel finance. Maisarah Islamic Banking Services is a full-service provider of a broad range of Shariah-compliant financial products and solutions.

Maisarah maintains a complete segregation of business activities in order to provide Shariah-compliant financial services to its valued customers. As a part of our strategy, the Islamic banking window has maintained high standards of corporate governance, research and development, corporate social responsibility and customer service that have helped in winning various awards in local and international markets.

It offers financial products and solutions in corporate banking, retail banking, investment banking and treasury.

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THURSDAY

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NOTICE FOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

The annual general meeting of Bangladesh Social Club, salalah branch, Oman will be held on Friday, 10th March 2023 at 9:00 PM in BSC, Salalah office.

Agenda:

1. Recitation of Verses from the Holy Quran.
2. Address by the Chairman.
3. Annual general report by the general secretary.
4. Presentation of accounts.
5. Election of the executive committee for the period of 2023-2025 (Board of Directors).

Schedule of elections: (during office time)

1. Renewal of membership	From 01 st Dec 2022 to 28 th Feb 2023
2. Collection of nomination paper	From Wednesday 1 st March to Friday 3 rd March 2023
3. Submission of nomination paper	From Saturday 4 th March to Sunday 5 th March 2023
4. Withdrawal of the candidature.	Monday 6 th March 2023
5. Display of final list of the candidates.	Wednesday 8 th March 2023
6. Polling vote.	Friday 10 th March 2023 at 9:00 AM in BSC Salalah Office
7. AGM proceedings	Friday 10 th March 2023 at 9:00 PM in BSC Salalah Office

NOTE: Members with six months older with valid memberships (who cleared club fees up to 28/02/2023) are eligible to attend the AGM & members exceeding ONE YEAR membership (who cleared club fees up to 28/02/2023) status can contest in election. All are requested to keep their membership & resident card with them to attend the voting & AGM.

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INDIAN female (M Tech Civil Structural Engineering) having 7 years experience as Quantity Surveyor cum Quality Control Engineer, looking for suitable position. Contact: 96154505.

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Eco-economic development



DAVID MALPASS

The writer is President of the World Bank Group

The Earth's biodiversity and the services provided by healthy ecosystems are under massive pressure from climate change and the challenge of supporting eight billion people in a sustainable way. Key ecosystem services – such as timber from forests, pollinators, and ocean fishing – must be conserved and cherished, yet they are being rapidly eroded. The 2022 United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal this month offers a chance to build on humanity's shared vision of living in harmony with nature.

Biodiversity is an important goal for World Bank Group programmes. But to reverse its loss, economic decisions must take nature into account. That is why we are working to help countries integrate nature into their economic growth models, development plans, and climate agendas. Doing so means establishing policies that consider nature's real economic value, building institutions that support nature, developing public-private partnerships to support that goal, and mobilising finance from all sources to transform economies and policies – going well beyond isolated interventions.

Fishing is a good example of why nature matters for growth and development. Globally, fish stocks are declining, owing to the triple threat of climate change, overfishing, and pollution. If business as usual continues, the world could lose up to 25 per cent of fish catches by the end of the century. That should concern everyone, for several reasons.

First, we are already facing one of the largest

food-security crises in modern history. Since fish are an important dietary component for 3.3 billion people, a reduced supply will exacerbate food crises now and in the future. Fish are rich in nutrients that are particularly important for child development, and they are an especially valued source of protein for the poor, because they are easier to obtain and cheaper to preserve than other sources. Hence, fish contribute 50 per cent or more of the total animal-protein intake in Ghana, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone. Moreover, a fish shortage will affect the entire food chain, because fish products are important components of other foods, including livestock feeds.

Second, as fish become scarcer or migrate to colder and deeper waters because of climate change, many fishermen will be forced to travel farther to catch them, to change the way they fish, or to find new jobs. Many will not be able to adapt. Among the 38 million people globally who are employed directly in fishing, the most vulnerable will be the hardest hit. This includes small-scale fishing communities, which are often located in remote areas that are already disproportionately affected by climate change.

Women, who make up 50 per cent of employees in the broader aquatic-food value chain, will also be significantly affected. For those with little formal education, alternative livelihoods will be hard to find.

Third, the impact of these threats will grow over time. Fish stocks do not respect international boundaries. Without the right regulations and incentives, fleets will continue to maximise their catches in the short term, with major economies overfishing far beyond their territorial waters. If all countries do this, a bad problem will become much worse.

Fifty years ago, about 10 per cent of global fish stocks were being fished at biologically unsustainable levels, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN. Today, that figure has risen to 35 per cent.

@Project Syndicate, 2022

OQ acquires Exolum's stake in OQ Logistics Company



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 7

The logistics sector in the Sultanate of Oman is one of the most promising sectors that contributes to diversifying the national economy.

In accordance with the strategy of OQ in integrating the logistics infrastructure that would support the growth and bankability of the logistics portfolio with a clearer and predictable commercial and regulatory framework, the OQ Group represented by OQ Refineries and petrochemical Industries LLC acquired Exolum Corporation SA's, a Spanish Company (formerly Logistica De Hidrocarburos Compania CLH) 40 per cent shareholding in OQ Logistics LLC.

Through this acquisition, OQ Refineries and petrochemical Industries LLC now holds 100 per cent shareholding in OQ Logistics LLC.

OQ Refineries and Petroleum industries LLC (formerly Orpic) signed an agreement to establish OQ Logistics LLC in 2014, in partnership with the

OQ LOGISTICS LLC OWNS AL JIFNAIN TERMINALS IN THE GOVERNORATE OF MUSCAT, WHICH IS THE LARGEST TERMINAL FOR STORING AND DISTRIBUTING REFINED PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN OMAN, WITH A STORAGE CAPACITY OF 170,000 CUBIC METRES OF OIL DERIVATIVES, ALONG WITH PIPELINES CONNECTING MUSCAT-SOHAR, MAF TO JIFNAIN AND JIFNAIN TO MUSCAT AIRPORT TO TRANSPORT REFINED PETROLEUM FUEL PRODUCTS.

Spanish Company Logistica De Hidrocarburos CLH holding a 40 per cent stake to build and operate a pipeline to transport multiple oil products in both directions linking the two OQ refineries in Muscat and Suhar other and linking them to a major storage facility in Al Jifnain area.

OQ Logistics LLC owns Al Jifnain terminals in the

Governorate of Muscat, which is the largest terminal for storing and distributing refined petroleum products in Oman, with a storage capacity of 170,000 cubic metres of oil derivatives, along with pipelines connecting Muscat-Sohar, MAF to Jifnain and Jifnain to Muscat Airport to transport refined petroleum fuel products.

Hilal al Kharusi (Chief Executive Commercial & Downstream) commented, "We would like to take this opportunity to thank our partner Exolum on their contribution in jointly developing OQ Logistics LLC and we are confident of Exolum's future growth and prospects."

OQ intends to integrate its portfolio of refined petroleum business while also developing a strategic fuel reserve on behalf of the Government to ensure continuous and sustainable delivery to the customers.

With this acquisition, OQ now works to meet its strategic objective to consolidate and integrate OQ Logistics LLC with other OQ logistics assets, creating a larger platform for logistics infrastructure business

in Oman followed by establishing a contractual and commercial framework to then monetise the consolidated entity through an initial public offering (IPO).

This would create an opportunity for a logistic infrastructure asset in Oman listing in Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX)."

Jorge Lanza (Chief Executive officer of Exolum) said, "It has been an honour for Exolum to participate in this project, which was also our first foray into international markets. This joint venture with OQ opened the door to new business opportunities outside Spain and, partly thanks to it, Exolum is now present in the UK, Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, Panama, Ecuador and Peru."

From the outset, we were confident that this project would be innovative, contributing significantly to the country's prosperity, and that it would bring significant improvements to the petroleum products industry thanks to the experience and extensive track record of our almost 100 year old company."

Oman sees rise in water and electricity generation

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 7

Oman's electricity and water production grew by .5 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively at the end of September 2022, according to the statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total electricity generation in the Sultanate of Oman reached 32,501.5 Gwh by the end of September 2022, the NCSI report said.

The Governorate of Dhofar recorded an increase in total electricity generation by 9.1 per cent, to reach 3,226.6 gigawatts per hour (Gwh) by the end of September 2022.

The governorates of North and South Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah



also recorded an increase in total electricity generation by 5 per cent, to reach 21,163.5 gigawatts per hour.

As for the Sultanate of Oman's net production of electricity until

the end of September 2022, which includes purchases by the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) and purchases by the Rural Areas Electricity Company, by region, it amounted

to 31,459.7 GWh, an increase of 0.4 per cent.

The largest amount of net electricity generation came in the Governorate of Dhofar, with an increase of 9.5 per cent.

The governorates of North and South Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah recorded an increase in net electricity generation by 4.9 per cent.

On the other hand, the total amount of water produced in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 5 per cent to reach 383.80 million cubic metres at the end of September 2022.

The governorates of Dhofar and Muscat recorded an increase in water production by 8.7 per cent and 6.9 per cent, respectively, compared to the same period in 2021.

Summit to showcase potential of Omani start-ups

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, DEC 7

An 'Investment and Emerging Companies Summit' will be held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre during December 12-13, 2022, under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Honorary President of the Promising Omani Startups Programme.

As many as 50 startups will be showcased during the two-day forum,

(Image for illustration only)



with more than 2,000 delegates due to attend. The summit will feature around 13 local and international experts sharing their expertise and experiences for the benefit of young entrepreneurs and start-ups. There will be presentations on the strategy of emerging companies and their systems, the importance of increasing business and innovations for this sector, and the potential for the growth of these companies in the future.

The summit's objective is to stimulate the growth of Omani startups community

to they can contribute activity to the local economy by rolling out local products and introducing innovative services.

Additionally, the forum will address some of the challenges faced by small and emerging start-ups and family businesses operating in the capital area.

A number of experts will also be on hand to talk about the role of crowdfunding platforms and their impact on accelerating the growth of startups, as well as international listing platforms and their importance.



THURSDAY | DECEMBER 8 | 2022 | JUMADA AL ULA 14 | 1444 AH

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HELPS POWER
PORTUGAL TO
6-1 WIN

PEPE, GUERREIRO
AND LEO
ALSO ON THE
SCORESHEET

RONALDO
STARTS ON THE
BENCH BUT
COMES ON LATE

PORTUGAL TO
FACE
MOROCCO IN
QUARTERFINAL

HAT - TRICK HERO RAMOS SINKS SWISS

LUSAIL: Portugal's Goncalo Ramos rose to the occasion on his first World Cup start to net a hat-trick in a 6-1 demolition of Switzerland on Tuesday, sending his side through to the quarterfinals for the first time in 16 years and setting up a clash with Morocco.

Portugal coach Fernando Santos had benched the country's all-time top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo, tasking Benfica forward Ramos with leading the line despite the 21-year-old making his debut just three days before the World Cup in a friendly.

Ramos had played only 10 minutes as a substitute in Qatar but the youngster looked like he belonged on the big stage with a memorable performance for Portugal, who did not miss Ronaldo — a late substitute who had a goal ruled out for offside.

"Cristiano Ronaldo talks to me and everyone in the team. He's our leader and always tries to help," Ramos said after netting the first hat-trick of the tournament in Qatar. "I don't know if I will start the next game, that's up to the coach, I have to work as hard as I can and then we'll see."



After a tepid start, the game came to life when Ramos opened the scoring in the 17th minute by picking up Joao Felix's incisive pass before blasting the ball into the top corner from a tight angle to put the Portuguese ahead.

They doubled their lead through skipper Pepe when the 39-year-old timed his leap to perfection to rise above the two Swiss centre backs and head home from a Bruno Fernandes corner in the 33rd minute, with Yann Sommer well beaten yet again.

At the other end, Switzerland striker Breel Embolo was frustrated by the Portugal defence despite the odd surging run into the final third, while their best chance of the half came when Xherdan Shaqiri's free kick was pushed out for a corner.

Sommer, returning from illness, did well to deny Ramos his second goal of the half with a fingertip save

from a counter-attack as the Portuguese went in with a 2-0 lead at the break.

However, the beleaguered keeper could do nothing when Diogo Dalot sent in a cross six minutes after the restart with Ramos in the right place again at the near post to slip the ball between Sommer's legs and give Portugal a three-goal cushion.

"We did not show the mentality that we usually bring onto the pitch," Sommer said.

"It is a very bitter evening. We gave the opponent far too much space. In a few situations I did not look too good either. This is not the way to survive against such opponents."

Portugal piled on the misery in the 55th minute when they carved open the Swiss defence with another flowing counter-attack in which Ramos found Raphael Guerreiro in acres of space and the full back fired the ball past Sommer to make it 4-0.

— Reuters



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo greets the crowd after the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 match against Switzerland at Lusail Stadium in Lusail, north of Doha on Tuesday. – AFP

DOHA: Cristiano Ronaldo first found himself unloved and unwanted by Manchester United. Now the unthinkable has happened — he has been dumped by Portugal.

The superstar forward was largely a spectator as the side he has captained for so long threw off the shackles and romped to a 6-1 victory over Switzerland in the World Cup last-16 on Tuesday.

Young striker Goncalo Ramos, brought in for Ronaldo, scored a stunning hat-trick and at least competed with his illustrious team-mate for the headlines.

Ronaldo came to the World Cup seeking respite after his troubled spell at Old Trafford this season, where he had become a peripheral figure under new manager Erik ten Hag.

Those frustrations boiled over last month in an explosive TV interview in which he lashed out at the club and the coach, leading to an inevitable parting of the ways. The 37-year-old landed in Qatar to the usual fanfare, once again the focus of fawning attention from the world's media.

Things even went to script in Portugal's first game, when he scored the opener from the

Ronaldo a bystander as Portugal find magic touch

penalty spot in a 3-2 win against Ghana, becoming the first man to score goals at five World Cups.

But things went downhill from there. He huffed and puffed through games against Uruguay and South Korea but failed to find the net and Portugal were less than the sum of their considerable parts.

Portugal coach Fernando Santos, who masterminded the side's triumph at Euro 2016, finally took the decision to leave his star man out against the Swiss and was vindicated in spectacular fashion. Portugal turned on the style, with Benfica's Ramos, 21,

netting three times in a free-flowing attacking performance.

RONALDO CHANTS

With the match long since won, chants of "Ronaldo" echoed around the cavernous Lusail Stadium in Doha and he was cheered as he warmed up on the sidelines.

Santos gave the crowd what they wanted with about 15 minutes of normal time to go.

Ronaldo smashed a free-kick into the wall moments after coming on and minutes later had the ball in the net after a fine finish, but was well offside.

He even had to cede the limelight to fellow substitute Rafael Leao, who scored a stunning goal in stoppage time to complete the rout — another glimpse of the enviable riches at Santos's disposal.

The coach, who has been in charge since 2014, insisted he had complete faith in all his forwards in the afterglow of the win, which sets up a quarterfinal against Morocco. "Andre (Silva) is a great player who plays further forward, Cristiano is more fixed — he stays in a more determined area towards the box," he said. "Goncalo (Ramos) has different characteristics.

"He is very dynamic and that is what he ended up showing us. It is nothing new — he already came on in two matches but Andre also played in the last match. "I have three players I fully trust. For each match I will use which player I see best for my strategy."

Santos even suggested five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo could still be a starter in Qatar.

But for all of his coach's placatory words, Ronaldo will surely once again be left out of the line-up for Saturday's quarterfinal. — AFP

World Cup 2022: last 16 results, quarter-finals matches



LAST 16		QUARTER-FINALS		SEMI-FINALS	
Sat, Dec 3 - Khalifa Stadium					
 Netherlands	3	 Netherlands	-	Tuesday, Dec 13 Lusail Stadium	
 United States	1	 Argentina	-		
Sat, Dec 3 - Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium					
 Argentina	2	Friday, Dec 9 Lusail Stadium		Tuesday, Dec 13 Lusail Stadium	
 Australia	1				
Mon, Dec 5 - Al Jassrah Stadium					
 Japan	(1)* 1	Friday, Dec 9 Education City Stadium		Tuesday, Dec 13 Lusail Stadium	
 Croatia	(3) 1				
Mon, Dec 5 - Stadium 974					
 Brazil	4	Friday, Dec 9 Education City Stadium		Tuesday, Dec 13 Lusail Stadium	
 South Korea	1				
Sun, Dec 4 - Al Bayt Stadium					
 England	3	Saturday, Dec 10 Al Bayt Stadium		Wednesday, Dec 14 Al Bayt Stadium	
 Senegal	0				
Sun, Dec 4 - Al Thumama Stadium					
 France	3	Saturday, Dec 10 Al Bayt Stadium		Wednesday, Dec 14 Al Bayt Stadium	
 Poland	1				
Tues, Dec 6 - Education City Stadium					
 Morocco	(3) 0	Saturday, Dec 10 Al Thumama Stadium		Wednesday, Dec 14 Al Bayt Stadium	
 Spain	(0) 0				
Tues, Dec 6 - Lusail Stadium					
 Portugal	6	Saturday, Dec 10 Al Thumama Stadium		Saturday, Dec 17 Khalifa Stadium	
 Switzerland	1				

Source: FIFA

*penalty shoot-out



Pass-masters Spain fail test, face identity crisis



Spain players look dejected after Carlos Soler has his penalty saved by Morocco's Yassine Bounou during the penalty shoot-out. – Reuters

DOHA: Spain arrived in Qatar with grand dreams of winning a second World Cup, fully convinced in their style of play, but departed early on Wednesday, ruminating on an identity crisis.

La Roja last lifted a major trophy a decade ago at Euro 2012, while they have not won a single knockout game at the World Cup since triumphing in South Africa in 2010.

Luis Enrique's side huffed and puffed but could not blow Morocco's sturdy house down in the last 16 on Tuesday, falling 3-0 on penalties after 120 goalless minutes. The north African side made history by reaching the quarterfinals for the first time, while Spain gazed forlornly back at theirs and must now wonder if it is time to move on.

They attempted over 1,000 passes against Morocco but ended up with nothing to show for it, forcing Yassine Bounou into only one save before the shoot-out.

There he made two more and Spain were eliminated in the last 16 again, just as they were in Russia four years ago. "We dominated the game but we lacked a goal," lamented Luis Enrique. "We could have been more effective in the final third, but I am more than satisfied with what my players did."

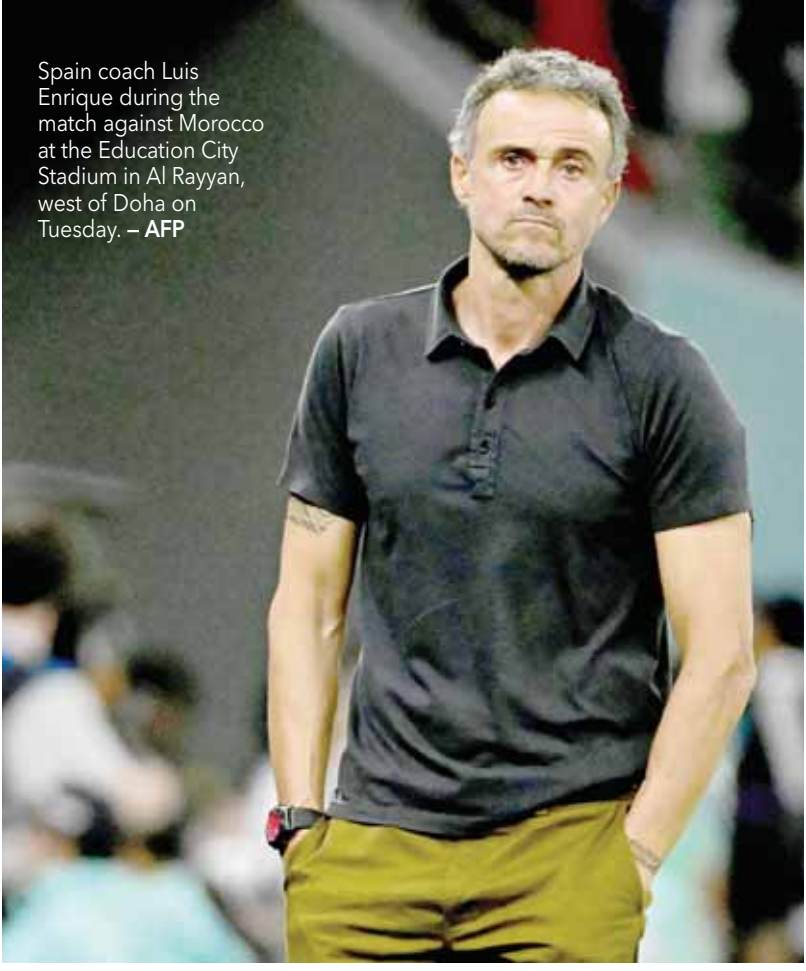
"They represented perfectly what my idea of football is."

When Xavi and Andres Iniesta ruled the world, opponents were largely still too naive to know to stop them, and they had too much quality to be fended off for long.

Now only truly elite club sides like Pep Guardiola's Manchester City can succeed by dominating the ball entirely — with perhaps the world's best striker, Erling Haaland, as the spearhead.

Against Morocco, Luis Enrique left his top-scorer Alvaro Morata on the bench, opting instead for Marco Asensio, whom he trusts more not to lose the ball.

The coach buys "the complete



Spain coach Luis Enrique during the match against Morocco at the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan, west of Doha on Tuesday. – AFP

pack" when it comes to possession football, for better or for worse.

That means there is no Plan B, with Nico Williams's pace and directness on the right flank as much of a nod as Luis Enrique will give to other ideas.

Players he left at home like strikers Iago Aspas and Borja Iglesias might have been able to offer more of a challenge to Morocco's excellent rearguard.

NO STARS

An element of Spain's plan may be borne of necessity.

As good as midfielders Pedri and Gavi are, they still lack a decisive, regular match-winner.

In the absence of a Kylian Mbappe, a Lionel Messi, a Neymar, or even a Harry Kane, the coach might believe ball domination and associative play is his team's best weapon, even if it misfired in the desert. Luis Enrique showed at Barcelona that when he had two of those forwards, plus Uruguay's Luis Suarez, he was willing to play in a different way, relinquishing control and allowing the forwards to wreak havoc as his side rolled with the punches.

"We had agreed not to take possession — not out of fear," said Morocco coach Walid Regragui, looking back at his side's victory.

Instead he made sure his midfield trio cut passing lines and left Spain with soft domination, which rarely resulted in danger for his side.

Spain's 7-0 thrashing of Costa Rica at the start of the World Cup was long forgotten by the end, one of the rare occasions where everything falls into place that perhaps keeps La Roja believing in their method.

The coach's contract expires in the coming weeks and he will discuss his future with Spanish FA president Luis Rubiales next week.

Whether the 52-year-old stays or leaves will be an indication of Spain's path ahead. — AFP

‘No small teams anymore,’ Fifa chief hails best group stage

DOHA: Fifa President Gianni Infantino has hailed the group stage of the Qatar World Cup as the "best ever" and said the number of upsets and geographic breadth of the teams progressing indicated that football was becoming ever more global.

Former champions Argentina, Spain, Germany and Brazil all suffered shock group-stage losses and Africa, Asia and North America were represented in the last 16 along with traditional powerhouses South America and Europe.

Infantino said the matches — "played in beautiful stadiums" —

— had already attracted a TV audience in excess of two billion viewers.

"Fantastic atmosphere, great goals, incredible excitement, surprises, small teams beating big teams," he said in comments released by Fifa on Wednesday.

"Well, there are no more small teams and no more big teams. The level is very, very equal."

"For the first time as well, national teams from all continents going to the knock-out phase, for the first time in history. This shows that football is really becoming truly global."

Infantino has pushed through



Fifa president Gianni Infantino looks on from the stands. – Reuters

the expansion of the World Cup from 32 teams to 48 for the next edition, which will be held across 16 cities in the United States, Canada and Mexico in 2026.

Fifa was heavily criticised in some quarters for awarding the hosting rights to Qatar because of allegations of corruption and human rights violations.

Infantino rounded on European critics of the host nation in his pre-tournament address, accusing them of hypocrisy and adding that engagement was the only way to improve human rights.

Infantino on Wednesday said he had been delighted with the number of fans crowding into the stadiums and fanzones in the country and thought the final TV viewership figures would exceed five billion.

"At the end [of the day, we simply want to give some joy and some smiles to people all over the world," he added.

"That's what football is about, that's what the World Cup is about, and that's what should also happen from now until the end."

"We have already seen some great action on the field, which, (ultimately), is the most important part of what you do."

— Reuters

FAN



Morocco fans celebrate outside the Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan. – Reuters



A Switzerland supporter looks on during the match against Portugal. – AFP



Morocco supporters celebrate after their team won the Qatar 2022 World Cup round 16 match against Spain, at the Fiaf fan zone in Doha. – AFP



Portugal fans hold up a sign asking for Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo shirt. – Reuters



Portugal fans inside the Lusail Stadium. – Reuters

Z O N E



Switzerland fans inside the Lusail Stadium. – Reuters



Morocco supporters cheer with the national flag as they celebrate their national team's victory over Spain. – AFP



Morocco fans wait for the team bus to arrive as they celebrate progressing to the quarterfinals after beating Spain. – Reuters



Portugal fans wearing masks of Cristiano Ronaldo. – Reuters



A fan poses for a selfie photograph with a statue of the Brazilian football legend Pele in Doha. With fans worldwide on edge over his health, ailing 82-year-old football legend Pele said on Monday he was cheering for the Brazilian national team from hospital as they stormed to a spot in the World Cup quarterfinals. – AFP



ABU DHABI: Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair teams up with German professional drivers, Luca Stolz and Fabian Schiller, to tackle the Gulf 12 Hours in a Mercedes-AMG GT3 run by Al-Manar Racing by GetSpeed.

Absent from the international racing scene since finishing fourth in the Silver Cup category of the 2022 Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Powered by AWS – Endurance Cup with Schiller and Zimbabwe's Axcil Jeffries, Al Zubair is relishing the prospect of challenging for overall honours in the race at the 5.281km Yas Marina circuit, which has attracted a full grid of 34 GT endurance cars and drivers from 25 nations.

Al Zubair said: "I am extremely excited to be racing at the Gulf 12



again. This will be a very difficult race, as it has joined the Intercontinental GT Challenge. Whereas, as usual, it is about 10 cars, this year there are over 30 cars confirmed. That will be tough

and the entry includes nine more Pro cars and factory cars from Mercedes, Ferrari and Audi.

"It will definitely not be easy to get a great result. But I believe we have a great package, a great engineer and top team-mates. Hopefully, we can get the results to prove that. I am looking forward to getting back in the car and having a good result at the end of the 12 hours."

Back in January, the Omani finished fifth at the Hankook 24Hr Dubai with Dutchman Indy Dontje, Stolz and Austrian Martin Konrad.

Competition in the GT3 Pro category is intense and comes from the likes of the AF Corse MDK Motorsport Ferrari 488GT3 of Formula 1 ace Kevin Magnussen, alongside his father Jan

and Mark Kvamme, as well as 24 Hours of Spa winners, Jules Gounon, Daniel Juncadella and Raffaele Marciello, in one of two Mercedes-AMG GT3s entered by AMG Team GruppeM Racing.

The Gulf 12 Hours event was first held at the iconic Abu Dhabi Formula One Grand Prix circuit back in January 2012, with 10 editions run to date, in addition to a special race in Bahrain in January 2021.

The weekend's action gets underway with open practice on Friday (December 9), followed by two free practice and four qualifying sessions on Saturday and the race on Sunday, starting at 10.00hrs. This will be the first continuous 12-hour race without a break after six hours.

Djokovic to begin AO campaign at Adelaide

ADELAIDE: Novak Djokovic will begin his bid for a 10th Australian Open title at the Adelaide International, organisers said on Wednesday, after the Serbian was granted a visa to enter the country.

Djokovic will face a strong field from January 1-8 that also features Felix Auger-Aliassime, Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev, ranked six, seven and eight, respectively, along with two-time Wimbledon champion Andy Murray.

His longtime-rival Rafael Nadal, the defending Australian Open champion, will instead use the United Cup, a new mixed teams event in Perth, Brisbane and Sydney, as his warm-up to the Grand Slam.

Four of the world's top 10 women will begin the year in Adelaide, with second-ranked Ons Jabeur, world number five Aryna Sabalenka, world number eight Daria Kasatkina and world number nine Veronika Kudermetova all entered. The field also includes two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka, 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina and Grand Slam winners Bianca Andreescu and Jelena Ostapenko.

"We are thrilled to confirm such a world-class line-up for week one of the Adelaide International," tournament director Alistair MacDonald said. — AFP



OOC participates in regional Olympic Solidarity Forum



MUSCAT: The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) participated in the regional forum for Olympic Solidarity organised by Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) in Riyadh during the period from December 4-7, with the participation of representatives of 45 NOCs.

OOC was represented in the forum by Counsellor Salim bin Mohammed al Busaidy, Chef de Mission for the 19th Asian Games (China 2023), and Hana bint Saeed al Battashiyah, Head of Coordination and Following-up department.

The forum included a review of reports on the latest developments related to the upcoming Asian Games, and an online presentation on the developments of the Summer Olympic Games (Paris 2024) by the Organising Committee. The Olympic Solidarity Committee of the International Olympic Committee also made a presentation regarding the



support that will be provided to the Asian Olympic Committees organising the sessions in the administrative, technical and logistic fields. The forum also witnessed a joint presentation by OCA and International Olympic Solidarity on the continental programme of the Olympic Solidarity for development, the list of available projects and the budget allocated for the programme.

The Organising Committee for the 19th Asian Games, which will be held in China from September 23 to October 8, 2023, revealed

the latest developments related to hosting the tournament to representatives of the Olympic committees, as 54 facilities were used for the tournament in 6 cities, and that 31 independent stadiums for training were put into service.

After the decision to postpone the tournament from 2022 to next year, the tournament will include 40 sports and 61 competitions.

The organising committee of the sixth Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games presented its latest preparations to host the event, which will be held in the Thai capital Bangkok and Chonburi, from November 17-26, 2023.

The committee revealed that the tournament will witness competitions in 35 sports, as well as two spectacle sports, with a total of 334 events, 123 of which are in Bangkok distributed over 13 facilities, and 211 events in 9 facilities in Chonburi district in Pattaya.

Shotokan international karate concludes

MUSCAT: The eighth Shotokan Karate Centre international competition concluded at Al Amal Sports Club Hall in Ghala, Muscat Governorate, on December 3. The tournament saw participation of 435 male and female players, representing 27 clubs, centres and private academies.

The Champ Club for Martial Arts won the first place, Al Qudra Karate Club claimed the second spot, while the Shotokan Karate Centre took the third place and Muscat International Karate Academy finished fourth.

The event was organised by the Shotokan Karate Centre Oman on December 2 and 3 under the auspices of Shaikh Salem bin Hamad al Mahrouqi, Chairman of the Oman Karate Committee, member of Majlis Ash'shura as representative of Adam, and in the presence of Jihad bin Abdullah al Shaikh, Vice-President of Oman Sports Club.

Karatekas from Sultanate of Oman, UAE (1 team), Kuwait (3 teams), Bahrain (1 team), Sudan (1 team), Syria (1 team) vied for top honours. The championship competitions were moderated by a team of international, continental and national referees.

The competitions were held on Friday and Saturday in two sections: kata (mock fighting) and kumite (free fighting) into several age groups and weights.

On the first day, competitions began for the age groups (6-7-8-9-10) years for males and females in individuals and the age groups (11-12-13) years for males in the



group teams. On the second day, the age groups (11-12-13-14-15) for females in the kata and kumite competitions, then followed by the age groups (14-15-16-17-18 years and above) for males in individual and group teams.

At the end of the ceremony, International Referee Nasma Wans and National Referee Azhar Fathy presented a performance in kata (mock fighting), which won the approval of the audience and all the attendees. Then the chief patron of the ceremony, the chairman of the Oman Karate Committee and Jihad al Shaikh honoured the arbitration staff who managed the championship

competitions and the members of the organising committees by handing them commemorative shields. It was followed by honouring the sponsoring companies for this championship, namely: Child Dental Centre - golden sponsor, and Coimbatore Centre for Traditional Indian Medicine - silver sponsor.

Black belt certificates (Dan 2) were handed over to the following elite players: Hilal al Kindi, Ashbin Peruli, Ahmed al Balushi, Walid al Mahmoudi, Al Hajjaj al Siyabi, Alawi Ba Omar, Al Yaqdhan al Abdali, Shaima Ba Amar, Omar al Siyabi, Bayan al Abdali, Majan al Siyabi and Rimas al Wahaibi. Then the chief guest presented medals to the first three places for each of the age groups for juniors, youth and adults.

Later, Sensei Navaz Mokeri, head of the Shotokan Karate Centre, and Yousef al Siyabi, Hilal al Abdali, Munther Bilal and Ahmed al Siyabi presented 'memorial' shields to Shaikh Salem al Mahrouqi and Jihad al Shaikh. Then the cups were handed over to the sports clubs that won the first four places.

Branko predicts Croatia toppling Brazil in quarters

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 7

Oman head coach Branko Ivankovic predicted that Croatia may overcome on Brazil as both teams will meet on Friday in the quarterfinals of the Fifa world Cup Qatar 2022 at Education City Stadium in Doha city, Qatar.

“It will be a tough game between both teams. As a Croatian, I hope that my team can defeat Brazil to move into semis of the World Cup. Brazil are always favourites in the World Cup. However, Croatia had managed to end the previous edition of the World Cup as a runners-up. Therefore, we have an absolute right to be optimistic for our team to end the game on a positive result and move further in the top global football event,” he said.

The 68 years old will travel on Thursday to Doha to attend Croatia and Brazil match on Friday. “I have attended the opening match of Croatia against Morocco which ended in a goalless draw. It will be my second time to attend the World Cup matches in Qatar,” he said.

The former assistant head coach of Croatia team appreciated all the efforts that have been taken by the organisers in Qatar to host the World Cup 2022 with top standards. “I am totally satisfied with all the facilities that are provided for all the fans and teams who are attending this edition of the World Cup. The stadiums, infrastructure transportation are well organised



beside the volunteers who are guiding all the fans friendly to reach their destinations smoothly. Congratulations to Qatar for this success and we hope all the best for them until the concluding match.”

Commenting on Morocco's win over Spain, the Croatian coach responded that the triumph was not a surprise.

“Morocco showed a top game and they deserve the win. The rivals Spain team comprised of many young players and most of them need some more years of experience. On the other hand, Portugal delivered a crucial match against Switzerland and scored six goals in the fixture. I am expecting the forthcoming match between Morocco and Portugal will be a

tight encounter but everything is possible in football and may Morocco reach to semifinals for the first time ever in history.”

The technical manager of Oman football team picked his teams capable of lifting the World Cup. “Croatia, Brazil, England and Netherlands are nominated to lift this edition of the Fifa World Cup,” he ended.

OAA to hold Rotax Max Challenge

MUSCAT: The Oman Automobile Association (OAA) will be carrying out the Oman-UAE Rotax Max Challenge at Muscat Speedway on December 9 and 10, featuring local and the UAE kart drivers.

The karting races are constructed as a practice for the drivers to see how they perform before they compete amongst international professional racers in the upcoming MENA Championship series.

The event is divided into the



following karting categories: Micro Max, Mini Max, Junior Max, Max, DD2, DD2 M, from which the 84 participating drivers will be categorised into.

The Oman-UAE Rotax Max Challenge series has been taking place at OAA's Muscat Speedway Circuit in the last eight years. This year, with an increase in registrations, the Association is excited to see how far the drivers will go to challenge themselves and be amongst the best in an international scale.

Bangladesh beat India in thriller to win ODI series

DHAKA: Bangladesh all-rounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz scored an unbeaten 100 from 83 balls and grabbed two wickets to help his side beat India by five runs in their second one-day international in Mirpur on Wednesday, sealing a 2-0 series victory with one game left to play.

Chasing 272 to win, India got off to a disappointing start losing openers Virat Kohli and Shikhar Dhawan early before half-centuries by Shreyas Iyer (82) and Axar Patel (56) got them back on track.

But India's middle order suffered a collapse and they fell just short in their run chase, ending on 266-9.

Indian captain Rohit Sharma (51 not out) came in to bat at number nine after undergoing a scan for a left thumb injury he sustained when he dropped Anamul Haque in the second over of Bangladesh's innings, and he rode his luck to take India close.

Playing through the pain - and twice dropped - he hit huge sixes off Ebadot Hossain and Mahmudullah in his 28-ball knock to leave India needing 20 off the final over and then 12 from the last two balls, but he was unable to haul his side over the line.

Earlier, Bangladesh, who also beat India by one wicket in the first ODI, were in trouble at 69-6 having elected to bat first as Washington Sundar (3-37) and Mohammed Siraj (2-73) ripped through the top order before the hosts hit back.

Mehidy combined with Mahmudullah (77) in a 148-run stand for the seventh wicket as India stepped off the gas, and the 25-year-old reached his century with the last ball of the innings as Bangladesh put on 271-7.

The teams meet in the final game in Chattogram on Saturday before playing two Tests. — Reuters



Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan Miraz reacts after the dismissal of India's Shikhar Dhawan during the first one-day international match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka. — AFP

Australia's Warner drops bid to overturn leadership ban

MELBOURNE: Australia opener David Warner has ended his bid to have his permanent leadership ban lifted, citing concern that a review process set up by Cricket Australia would involve a “public trial” of his part in the Newlands ball-tampering scandal.

The former Test vice-captain was banned from the elite game for a year and from leadership positions for life in 2018 after he was adjudged to have played the leading role in ‘Sandpaper-gate’.

Governing body Cricket Australia set up an independent process for players and staff seeking to review long-term bans, allowing Warner to request his life sanction be overturned by an independent three-person panel.

On the eve of Australia's second Test

against the West Indies, Warner said he had withdrawn his application to the review panel because he was not prepared to subject his family or team mates to “further trauma and disruption”.

“Some things are more important than cricket,” the 36-year-old said in a post on social media on Wednesday.

“They want to conduct a public spectacle to, in the panel's words, have a ‘cleansing’. I am not prepared for my family to be the washing machine for cricket's dirty laundry.”

Cricket Australia (CA) said it was disappointed with the outcome but respected Warner's decision.

“Our intention was to give David the opportunity to demonstrate why his lifetime leadership ban should be varied at

an independent hearing and we amended our Code of Conduct accordingly,” a CA spokesperson said.

“We supported David's wish for these discussions to be heard behind closed doors.”

Warner said counsel assisting the review panel had concocted an “irregular procedure” which would turn his case into a public spectacle.

He said he had requested the panel revisit their procedural decision last week but on Wednesday the panel responded with a “dismissive rejection of the substantive matters”.

“It appears that the panel ... is instead determined to conduct a public lynching,” added Warner.

Warner last month welcomed the



Australia's David Warner

chance to apply to the panel but also criticised CA for taking months to set up the process.

Warner was one of three Australia players sanctioned during ‘Sandpaper-gate’.

Warner's team-mate and former Test captain Steve Smith was also banned for a year and from leadership roles for three years.

Former Test batsman Cameron Bancroft was banned for nine months and from leadership roles for an additional year.

Both Smith and Bancroft have spoken publicly about ‘Sandpaper-gate’ but Warner has kept his counsel.

With regular Test captain Pat Cummins injured, Smith will lead Australia against West Indies at Adelaide Oval. — Reuters



Morocco's players throw their coach Walid Regragui in the air as they celebrate at the end of the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 match against Spain at the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan, west of Doha on Tuesday. – AFP

MR AVOCADO HEAD HAS MOROCCO DARING TO DREAM

DOHA: Thanks to Walid Regragui, the coach who has made Morocco the first Arab nation to reach the World Cup quarterfinals, avocados may just be the nation's favourite fruit.

When the appointment of Regragui following the departure of Bosnian Vahid Halilhodzic was announced in August, underwhelmed pundits branded him "avocado head" as a belittling term of derision.

But the shaved-headed coach, who teased those critics at the tournament in Qatar by holding an avocado with a soccer ball inside it and pointing his finger at his head, has more than proved his credentials.

The previously unheralded Regragui, who led Wydad to the Moroccan league and CAF Champions League double last season, masterminded a win for the ages against mighty Spain in the last 16 on Tuesday.

The Atlas Lions produced an amazing defensive performance, allowing Spain possession without threatening danger, before winning a penalty shoot-out to set up a last-eight clash with Portugal.

Morocco first grabbed attention at the World Cup with a goalless draw against Croatia, the runners-up four years ago.

The 47-year-old coach talked about how his team must develop a winning mentality, and that Morocco would see

how they fared against Belgium before their final group game against Canada.

The Moroccans, however, stunned the second-ranked Belgians 2-0 to ease their passage to the last 16 for the second time in their history.

Following another victory over Canada, Regragui became the first Arab coach to lead a team to the knockout rounds.

"I told (my players) we should be proud of ourselves," Regragui said. "It is an opportunity that may not be repeated. Unfortunately, I did not play in the World Cup. God has now given me an opportunity to make history as a coach. I am the happiest person in the world," he said.

"I think Africans can go far, why not dream of winning the cup? We want the next generation to dare to dream."

From the first minute against Spain, those familiar with Moroccan football felt that the 2010 world champions had a long night ahead of them.

USUAL MIXTURE

Regragui relied on the usual mixture of North African style, combining committed defence with counter-attacks led by Hakim Ziyech, who returned to the national team when Regragui took over from Halilhodzic.

But Regragui's importance

extends far beyond on-field tactics. He gives his team confidence and motivates them in his own unique way.

Regragui has managed to convince his players they are playing for all of Morocco and, as a result, the team camp has been different from before.

Regragui decided to invite the players' families to the camp in Qatar.

"I lived my life in Paris, but it was the first time that I attended a tournament with Walid participating, whether as a player or a coach," Regragui's mother told the Moroccan TV station Arryadia.

Although 14 of the 26 players in the Moroccan squad were born abroad, their love for their country is clear.

"We fought and made the Moroccan people happy. We made history and Morocco deserves it. The Moroccan people made us united on the field," Regragui told Bein Sports.

It is possible to feel the warmth between Regragui and his players during training as he treats them like friends.

"They like to hit me on the head," Regragui said. "Maybe it brings them good luck!"

At Al Thumama Stadium on Saturday, the Moroccan, Arab and African world will hope to continue the avocado-inspired fairytale against Portugal.

— Reuters



Morocco coach Walid Regragui. – Reuters