



MUSCAT DAILY

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INSPIRING THE NATION

As the sultanate celebrates three years of **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's** rule today, his leadership inspires every Omani - grateful for many measures undertaken for the nation and its loyal people. The achievements of His Majesty the Sultan's reign are amply evident and manifest in every sphere of life. In the past three years, he has instilled a sense of commitment among the people that will go a long way in making the sultanate a role model for progress and prosperity.

Oman LNG is honoured to congratulate

His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik

and the people of Oman on the occasion of the Accession Day



العمانية للغاز الطبيعي المسال
Oman LNG

Celebrating Progressive Leadership

Our warmest felicitations to

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

And the people of Oman on the
Anniversary of assuming leadership.

Oman has a bright and prosperous future under Him.
May Allah protect and take care of Him.



محسن حيدر درويش ش.م.م.

MOHSIN HAIDER DARWISH L.L.C.



We extend our warmest and heartfelt congratulations to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik**, may Allah protect him, on the occasion of the Accession Anniversary of **His Majesty**. We are inspired by the leadership to continue the growth and development of our beautiful country.



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His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and to the people of Oman on the occasion of
His Majesty's Accession Day.



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A new renaissance with a clear vision

A PROSPEROUS
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MARCH OF RENEWED RENAISSANCE CONTINUES

The sultanate has expedited the pace of implementing strategies and plans aimed at realising sustainable development and preserving the national gains

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

Since the very first day of his rule on January 11, 2020, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has endeavoured to set up the phase of Oman's Renewed Renaissance that meets with the requirements of the current period and fulfils the aspirations of the Omani people, while preserving the achievements that took place over the past five decades.

The achievements of His Majesty the Sultan's reign are amply evident and manifest in every sphere of life in Oman. In these three years, he has sowed and cultivated true faith in the people and is now considered the new father figure of the nation after the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who will forever be a torch to guide the nation.

On January 3 this year, during the meeting of the Council of Ministers, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his satisfaction over the nation's progress with the positive outcome of national action at all levels. He underlined the significance of maintaining the pace in implementing the strategies, plans and programmes aimed at realising sustainable development and preserving the national gains.

His Majesty the Sultan spoke about the efforts undertaken by the authorities concerned to attract more local and foreign investments, develop sources of economic diversification and augment the share of non-oil investments in the gross domestic product.

He gave directives to consolidate investment and diversify its sources, streamline related procedures and address challenges in a way that would reflect positively on investor confidence and enhance Oman's competitive indices.

His Majesty the Sultan commended the performance of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and its ability to realise good financial gains since its inception. He gave directives to channel the OIA's investments towards achieving added-value in the economy and consolidating production frameworks to augment local content and generate more jobs for citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan also reviewed the outcome of the assessment of performances by various government units in 2022, as prepared by the Government Performance Measurement Unit. This indicated tangible improvement in their performance. He stressed the need to continue upgrading government performances at all levels to achieve the desired goals, visions and aspirations - keeping pace with the global developments. He urged all institutions to study areas of strength and weakness and to find the best ways to address the challenges facing them.

While reviewing the progress made in conducting municipal council elections, His Majesty the Sultan hailed citizens' earnest quest to engage in the process, both from abroad and within Oman, as they competed to select the members who now represent them in the 3rd term of the Municipal Councils. His Majesty also commended the application of technology which empowered the citizens to remotely vote through smartphones.

While referring to the data on the spread of drugs and psychotropic substances, His Majesty the Sultan valued the efforts made by the departments concerned in combating the phenomenon. He pointed out that a five-year national strategy was endorsed to address drugs and psychotropic substances in Oman (2023-28).

Financial indicators

On November 17, 2022 on the eve of Oman's National Day, His Majesty the Sultan presided over the meeting of the Council of Ministers during which he took note of the Cabinet's keen-



ness to monitor and follow up financial indicators in light of positive results achieved by the National Fiscal Balance Programme, which contributed to maintaining the safe financial position of Oman.

In this context, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to launch the National Fiscal Sustainability and Financial Development Programme for a period of three years starting in January this year. The objective is to make the financial sector a basic enabler for the growth of investments, as well as the economy, in a manner that secures the continuation of all development programmes.

His Majesty the Sultan underscored the importance of completing development projects endorsed for the 10th Five Year Plan (2021-25) and finalisation of the projects as scheduled and within their approved budgets. He also gave directives for the execution of additional development projects alongside those endorsed for execution in the 10th Five Year Plan.

Following the Council of Ministers' keenness to continue offering necessary support and alleviate the impact of inflation on citizens' liveli-

His Majesty prioritised the importance of listening to the needs of citizens and to pay attention to all social sectors, especially for the social security groups and people with limited income

hoods, His Majesty the Sultan gave instructions to endorse a number of initiatives that included promotion of 2012 government employees of the civil service system and other systems who are eligible for promotion, effective 2023, and fixing of the motor vehicle fuel prices in accordance with October 2021 rates, as a maximum ceiling, until the end of 2023.

This is in addition to extending gratuity for citizens whose services were/may get terminated until the end of June 2023 and also waiving of outstanding housing loans of employees

and retirees of the Sultan's Armed Forces and the Royal Guard of Oman getting less than RO450 per month.

In pursuance of efforts made to revise the government service fees, the Council of Ministers reviewed the outcome of the second phase of the government services pricing guide project. It was agreed to cancel, reduce and merge government service fees to ensure support for the activities in the economic sector, enhance the competitiveness of the national economy and streamline the government procedures.

Net zero

As part of the Royal attention to improve environment performance and alleviate the impact of climate change, the year 2050 has been set as the target for net zero carbon emissions. A national plan has been drafted to achieve this goal, along with the setting up of Oman Sustainability Centre to undertake the supervision and follow up of zero carbon emission plans and programmes.

During the meeting of the Council of Ministers on October 11, 2022, His Majesty the Sultan

gave directives to all units of the State's Administrative Apparatus to cooperate to ensure the success of this national plan.

Decentralisation

In consolidation of the modern trend on local, decentralised administration aimed at achieving sustainable development, it has been stated that the new Governorates System would seek to boost the role of governors by defining specific specialisations that authorise them to draft budgets and frame development plans of their respective governorates through direct coordination with the departments concerned. The system also grants the governors direct executive powers pertaining to economic development and the reinforcement of sources of the governorates' own income, enhancing their competitiveness and encouraging investments so that it helps in realisation of the aspiration and needs of citizens.

In this regard, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to coordinate and secure full integration among units of the State's Administrative Apparatus and the governorates to help streamline procedures, facilitate transactions, develop government services and improve their quality and to address the existing challenges.

Social welfare

On May 31, 2022, His Majesty the Sultan hailed the efforts undertaken by the authorities concerned to contain the probable shortage of staple food supplies due to the political situation in the world. His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to sustain efforts and give priority to all matters of relevance to food security.

As per His Majesty the Sultan's Royal Directives to alleviate the direct impact on citizens of the financial policies undertaken to run the State's Fiscal Sustainability Scheme and in pursuance of support for small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurs to mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19, the Council of Ministers presented a number of initiatives and economic and social procedures to the tune of RO130mn to meet the different objectives.

During the Council of Ministers' Meeting on March 3, 2022, His Majesty ordered to pay an additional allowance to social security categories with the beginning of the blessed month of Ramadan and to work to mitigate the impact of the high prices of goods and services on them.

His Majesty also directed to expedite the review of social programmes and the basis for calculating social security allocations to provide an adequate standard of living for these groups.

His Majesty directed the Cabinet to stimulate the national economy, activate the investment environment, and follow up on commercial and industrial activities and the conditions of private sector companies, to reduce some fees related to the labour sector.

His Majesty prioritised the importance of listening to the needs of citizens and to pay attention to all social sectors, especially for the social security groups and people with limited income.

In light of results of the Assessment of Performance Indicators for the first quarter of 2022 (and streamlining of procedures), which covered all government establishments and governorates, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to government departments to continue the scheme in order to promote performance and achieve high levels of satisfaction among beneficiaries from public services.

His Majesty the Sultan also extolled the role of Omani media and Omani media personnel in raising awareness among segments of society, besides documenting elements of Omani culture. His Majesty the Sultan affirmed his support for the media and media personnel.



With the anniversary of His Majesty
assuming the reins of power in the Sultanate.
We are honoured to extend our warmest
congratulations to His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tariq
Praying for his good health, happiness, long
life, and success.



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Oman has distinguished itself as a nation that is able to maintain strong relationship with its neighbours as well as the rest of the world. The sultanate's focus on balanced foreign policy, conflict resolution, and skillful mediation makes it unique in the Arab world.

Taking a step further in the diplomatic outreach, His Majesty the Sultan accorded warm welcome to several state heads last year, while he travelled to the United Kingdom, Germany and Bahrain cementing the bilateral ties further.

In his first public remarks, His Majesty the Sultan reaffirmed the fundamentals of Oman's foreign policy based on peaceful co-existence with nations, good neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, respect for countries' sovereignty and international cooperation in various spheres.

"We will remain as the world had known us during the reign of the Forgiven one, God willing, the late Sultan Qaboos. We will call and contribute to resolving disputes by peaceful means, sparing no effort in finding satisfactory solutions in a spirit of harmony and understanding," His Majesty the Sultan had said.

"On the Arab front, we will continue to support the Arab League and cooperate with our brethren, the leaders of the Arab states, to achieve the goals of the Arab League, promote our citizens' lives, distance this region from conflicts and work for economic integration that will serve our Arab peoples," he added.

His Majesty the Sultan said Oman will maintain its role as an active member of the United Nations, a member that respects the UN Charter and works with other member states towards achieving international peace and security, as well as economic prosperity for all countries of the world.

Welcoming the first state guest of 2022, His Majesty the Sultan received the King of the Belgians in February, reviewing the good relations binding the sultanate and Belgium. The talks also touched on the fruitful cooperation between the two countries in various spheres which serve the interest of the Omani and Belgian peoples.

In May last year, His Majesty the Sultan received Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The

visit reflected the Royal keenness attached by His Majesty the Sultan and President Ebrahim Raisi to enhance bilateral relations in various spheres.

In June, Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan described her visit as 'overwhelming'. "The warm welcome I

received from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq was overwhelming. The hospitality I have received in Oman is memorable. I did not expect His Majesty the Sultan to receive me at the airport. This was the biggest honour for me. Also, I am humbled by the fact that

he met me all three days. The leader of no country in the world does that," she said.

She reaffirmed the keenness of the two countries to enhance economic ties based on historic and deep-rooted relations. "Social connections have con-

tributed to bolstering relations. While in Oman, I felt at home and the best thing is that I felt no need for security because Oman is the most peaceful country," President Samia said.

In June, the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah el Sisi

arrived in Muscat on a two-day visit. His Majesty the Sultan led the welcoming party for the Egyptian President.

The visit explored various areas that served the joint interests of the two friendly countries and meet the aspirations of their peoples.

In July, His Majesty the Sultan patronised over the graduation ceremony of Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said from the Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst in the United Kingdom. He visited the UK again in September to offer condolences on the death of Queen Elizabeth II and congratulate King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth, on the occasion of his accession to the throne.

A new phase in bilateral relations was set in motion in July by a landmark summit meeting between His Majesty the Sultan; Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany; and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Germany. The visit augured well for further partnership in various spheres, notably economic, investments, renewable energy, green power, and scientific and cultural fields.

In September, His Majesty the Sultan led the welcoming party for the UAE President. At the Royal Airport, His Majesty the Sultan received Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed at the foot of the aircraft ramp, welcoming him and wishing him and the accompanying delegation a pleasant stay in Oman.

The two leaders discussed opportunities for building upon the growing economic ties between the UAE and Oman and the areas where the two countries can increase collaboration, including the investment, financial, industrial and cultural sectors.

Their talks centred on the two leaders' shared vision for a secure and stable region that can promote sustainable development and support a thriving economy in which people can realise their full potential.

In October, King Abdullah II Ibn al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Queen Rania al Abdullah arrived in Muscat on an official visit lasting two days.

During the visit, His Majesty the Sultan and King Abdullah II reviewed the march of deep-rooted relations binding Oman and Jordan.

In the same month, His Majesty the Sultan visited Bahrain on an invitation by King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain. During the visit, the two sides discussed aspects of cooperation in various fields and means of enhancing them to serve the two peoples' interests.



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While several state heads visited the sultanate last year, His Majesty the Sultan travelled to the UK, Germany and Bahrain



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Warm greetings to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
on the 3rd Anniversary of Accession Day
May Oman's progressive
march continue forever!



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Warm felicitations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the third anniversary
of His Majesty's Accession.



Emphasis on job creation for youth

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

As the sultanate is pushing forward its Omanisation programme with the aim of creating employment opportunities for citizens, the attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to youth got reflected in the Royal support to employment initiatives.

During the meeting of the Council of Ministers on January 3 this year, His Majesty the Sultan touched on the executive position of employment initiatives and programme.

He underlined the importance of raising the awareness of youth about global standards of work culture and the need to encourage them to undertake self-employment. In this context, His Majesty the Sultan instructed the departments concerned to furnish appropriate environment for citizens to take all types of jobs and enterprises.

Giving preference to nationals when offering jobs is a key government policy for all countries, and Oman too has been working towards achieving a right mix of Omani and expatriate workforce in the private sector. The new policies issued by the Ministry of Labour (MoL) is gathering steam, more so to tackle the difficult economic conditions caused by the pandemic.

On October 11, 2022, His Majesty the Sultan pointed out that the draft of the new Labour Law, which was finalised by the government and will be issued shortly, will encourage invest-



ments, strike a balance between the interests of workers and employers, and provide guarantees for both parties so as to augment productivity and encourage job-seekers to join the private sector.

The visa ban on specific job roles for expatriate workers in the private sector and in-depth training programmes introduced to sharpen the skills of Omanis have definitely had a positive impact on Omanisation.

On May 31 last year, His Majesty the Sultan spoke about the role of education and vocational training in supplying the labour market with skilled national workers. In this context, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to devise an integrated executive plan to develop this sector in cooperation with international institutions. He also called for the development of the technical education sector to help provide the labour market with technical expertise.

Earlier this month, MoL launched the Maak or 'with you' app for jobseekers, the national workforce, and employers to boost job creation. It currently contains more than 11 electronic services for jobseekers, while additional services for the national workforce and employers will be added later.

H E Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, said that the ministry provided 35,000 jobs in 2022 in the public and private sectors, surpassing the target for the year. He added that the number of jobseekers who joined the labour market in the private sector for the first time exceeded 20,000 last year and the number of people benefiting from the job security fund in 2022 increased by about 3,000 compared to 2021.

According to MoL, there were more than 85,000 jobseekers in the country till the end of October 2022.

Wishing
**HIS MAJESTY
SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK**
and the people of Oman, on the occasion of Accession Day.

We salute the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik for the progressive policies His Majesty has implemented for the beloved country. May the nation and its people prosper under him.

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On the 3rd Anniversary
of the accession of
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
to the throne,
we extend our most sincere greetings.
May Allah bestow His blessings on him
and the people of Oman.



Al Ansari Group, management team and employees are wholeheartedly committed to the progress of the Sultanate and the prosperity of its people under the wise leadership of **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik**

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GREETINGS TO

**His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik**
and the citizens of Oman
on **Accession Day anniversary**
May the Sultanate grow
from strength to strength!



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Citizens hail His Majesty's reign

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman, under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's direction, has embarked on a development path achieving many new milestones in different spheres of social and economic life.

On the occasion of the third anniversary of his accession to the throne, *Muscat Daily* spoke with a few citizens who congratulated His Majesty the Sultan for his extraordinary transformational leadership that has taken Oman to a new high in a short time.

"We salute His Majesty's leadership for guiding the nation to its right path," said Dr Ahmed al Bulushi, dean, College of Engineering, National University of



Science and Technology. "Continuing on the current path will definitely enable the country to sail safely to the desired shore."

Dr Bulushi felt that January 11, 2020 was an important starting point for Oman as it heralded a new beginning towards modernisation and advancement. "The Renewed Renaissance started

with the Oman Vision 2040, which is founded on the big hopes of the nation for prosperity and well being."

Echoing similar sentiments, Dr Ahmed Said al Jahwari, a legal consultant, saluted His Majesty the Sultan on the occasion of the anniversary of his accession to power. "During the past three

years, the sultanate has witnessed remarkable development in the economic, social and legal systems."

Elaborating on the developments, he added that His Majesty the Sultan established the principle of decentralisation among the governorates, endorsed the principle of gover-

nance, restructured the state's administrative apparatus, and enacted legislations that attracted investments in many fields.

"Municipal council elections witnessed, for the first time, electronic voting, which facilitated the election of members with ease. This is an evidence of the

technical advancement that Oman has made."

"We congratulate ourselves as Omanis on His Majesty's Accession Day, and we promise him to work diligently and sincerely for the development of this beloved country," said Dr Jahwari.

Speaking of the measures taken by His Majesty the Sultan, Khalfan al Touqi, an economic analyst, said many important economic decisions of His Majesty the Sultan led to the reduction of public debt and the raising of the sultanate's credit ratings from negative to positive. "All these things led to an increase in foreign direct investment, which amounted to more than RO18bn."

According to Touqi, the sultanate has introduced many digital programmes that will support the national economy.

"For the first time in a decade, Oman recorded a financial surplus in the state budget amounting to more than RO1bn. Oil production also rose and is expected to continue to rise in 2023."

Dr Ahmed Saeed al

Ma'ashari, assistant professor at the College of Engineering, Sultan Qaboos University, congratulated His Majesty the Sultan, saying that Oman has witnessed many achievements in the field of scientific research, and that "in the coming years it will witness many more milestones for the kind of plans approved by the government".

Suleiman Said Zahran Mohammed al Abri, owner of the heritage house Bait al Safah in Al Hamra, said, "Despite the economic crunch experienced by the whole world, the sultanate - under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan and his wisdom - has overcome the difficult stage with a financial surplus that is expected to contribute to the stability and growth of the economy."

According to Hajar al Azri, an innovator, January 11 is a turning point in the development process of Oman.

"We congratulate and seek blessings on this occasion, praying to the Almighty for many many returns of the day and for the country's continuous progress and prosperity."



THE GLORIOUS LEGACY OF THE PAST WITH THE PROMISE OF A BRIGHT FUTURE.

Congratulations and warm wishes to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and the citizens of Oman on the occasion of the third Accession Day.

The values of peace and growth around which Oman has built its vision and development over the years continue to guide the nation marching towards a bright future.

Lulu Group is proud to be an integral part of this glorious march of progress and pledge our loyalty to the wise and visionary leadership of **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and the people of Oman.

His Majesty issues Royal Decree

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 4/2023 endorsing the Sultanate of Oman's joining the Protocol to Amend the Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, reading as follows:

Article 1 endorses the Sultanate of Oman's joining the Protocol to Amend the Convention on Offences and

Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article 2 instructs the departments concerned to deposit the official document for joining the aforementioned protocol in accordance with its provisions.

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

His Majesty the Sultan pardons 121 prisoners

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has issued a Royal pardon to 121 prisoners.

Of the total, 57 of them are foreigners, according to an official source at the Royal Oman

Police

The Royal pardon coincides with the anniversary of His Majesty the Sultan's Accession Day, and in consideration of families of the prisoners.

ONA

Sayyid Badr receives UN official

Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received Michael Lodge, Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority of the UN, on Tuesday.

The two reviewed opportunities of cooperation between Oman and the International Seabed Authority. They also touched on programmes of capacity building and skill honing in areas related to the law of the sea and blue economy.

The two sides also underscored the importance of international cooperation to protect and sustain biological diversity



for future generations.

The meeting was attended by Khalid Hashel al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department and several officials from both sides.

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Chairman, Management Committee, Members and the staff of the Indian Social Club Oman, congratulate **His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik** on the Accession Day



Indian Social Club Oman

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Towards enduring prosperity

Ajit Khimji Group is honoured to congratulate **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and the people of Oman on the momentous occasion of the 3rd Anniversary of His Majesty's Accession.
We reaffirm our steadfast commitment to the ambitious goals set by His Majesty and work tirelessly to achieve them for the enduring prosperity of the Sultanate of Oman.



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Committed to the timeless glory of Oman

Khimji Ramdas Group extends its congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman on the 3rd Anniversary of His Majesty's Accession.

We pray to the Almighty God to bless His Majesty with abundant health and to preserve the glory of Oman. We also reaffirm our commitment to follow in the footsteps of His Majesty to contribute to the sustainable development of Oman and achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.





عمان.. نحو مزيداً من التقدم والازدهار

أحر التهاني والتبريكات لصاحب **الجلالة السلطان هيثم بن طارق** وشعب عمان الأبي في الذكرى الثالثة لتولي جلالاته مقاليد الحكم. حفظه الله ورعاه ، وأعانه على تحقيق نهضة متجددة ، ونموا و ازدهاراً لعمان.

Leading Oman to Prosperity and Progress

Warm Felicitations to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik** and people of Oman on the third anniversary of the Accession Day. May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty, guide him to renewed Renaissance and bring Oman continued Growth and Prosperity.





*We renew the loyalty and raise the highest
congratulations and blessings to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the
occasion of assuming power*

*We pray to the Almighty God to bless
His Majesty and to preserve Oman
We promise him to continue working hard
to achieve prosperity for Oman*



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Towards continued Renaissance

We are honoured to extend our heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty Sultan

Haitham bin Tarik

- may the Almighty protect and preserve him -
and to the Omani people on the anniversary of His Majesty's accession to the throne.



Strong leadership leading us to progress

Warm felicitations to
**HIS MAJESTY
SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK**
May the Almighty protect and preserve him
on the occasion of the 3rd anniversary
of the Renewed Renaissance.



*We congratulate
His Majesty
Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik
on the occasion assuming
the reins of Oman*

*We Pray to Almighty Allah to bless
His Majesty with good health
and Oman and its people with
more and more prosperity*



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Greetings

to His Majesty Sultan
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and the citizens of Oman
on the Accession
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May the Sultanate grow
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Oman's economic growth on strong footing

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As Oman marks the anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's Accession Day, the sultanate's economy is witnessing a strong post-pandemic revival and growth, thanks to the government's supportive economic measures and higher oil prices.

In 2022, Oman's economy recorded its strongest recovery in nearly a decade as economic stimulus packages, elevated oil prices, increased hydrocarbon production and removal of the pandemic restrictions provided much needed boost to the economic activities.

The combination of pandemic lockdowns and weak oil prices had a major negative impact on the sultanate's economy and fiscal position in 2020, but the economic recovery – which actually began in 2021 – accelerated in 2022.

Moreover, Oman's strong and effective vaccination drive allowed for removal of almost all social distancing restrictions, supporting a rebound in economic activities. As a result, the sultanate's economy – which recorded a 3.2 per cent contraction in 2020 – rebounded with a 3.0 per cent growth in 2021.

The economic recovery

gained further traction in 2022. As per the forecasts prepared by the Ministry of Finance, the sultanate's real GDP likely grew by 5.0 per cent in 2022, mainly driven by an increase in hydrocarbon activities. Hydrocarbon GDP grew by 9.5 per cent and non-hydrocarbon GDP by 2.6 per cent last year.

The financial and economic indicators achieved by Oman in 2022 confirmed the improvement of GDP at current prices to RO44.9bn by the end of 2022, posting a growth of 32.4 per cent as against 2021 figures.

Official statistics also indicated a robust growth in the volume of foreign direct investments (FDI), which stood at RO18.14bn until the third quarter of 2022, posting an increase of 10.4 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

Oman's economy is expected to grow by 5.5 per cent in 2023 as compared to estimated 5.0 per cent growth in 2022, mainly due to increase in oil and gas production, according to the estimates released by the Ministry of Finance. Hydrocarbon GDP is projected to grow by 10.1 per cent and non-hydrocarbon GDP is expected to grow by 2.9 per cent.

As Oman's economic recovery picked up pace and fiscal position substantially improved in



2022, these positive developments have been noticed and recognised by the international organizations – such as the IMF and the World bank – and global credit rating agencies.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently said that Oman's economic recovery is gaining traction as higher oil prices, fiscal consolidation measures and progress on structural reforms are supporting a post-pandemic recovery. The IMF expects Oman's real GDP growth

at 4.4 per cent for 2023.

First surplus since 2014

Following high fiscal and external pressures since 2015 that culminated in 2020 with the double shock from the COVID-19 pandemic and sharp fall in oil prices, Oman's public finances in 2022 benefited from higher oil prices and government's fiscal reforms.

The sultanate reported a budget surplus of RO1.146bn for the full year 2022 against an es-

timated deficit of RO1.550bn in the beginning of last year year, mainly due to higher oil and gas revenues.

'The 2022 budget achieved additional financial revenues as a result of the rise in global oil prices. This contributed to accelerating economic recovery and improving financial and economic indicators, by directing these additional financial revenues towards managing the lending portfolio, reducing public debt, enhancing social spending,

and stimulating economic growth,' the Ministry of Finance said in its 2023 budget statement.

As the country reported its first surplus since 2014, the government in 2022 did not resort to borrowing and withdrawing from reserves to finance the deficit.

With major improvements in its fiscal performance, the sultanate's government was able to pay off part of its public debt and manage the loan portfolio by the end of 2022. This contributed to reducing the total volume of public debt from RO20.8bn by the end of 2021 to RO17.7bn in 2022.

As a result, Oman's public debt ratio decreased in 2022 to about 43 per cent of the GDP compared to 83 per cent of GDP estimated in the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan.

According to the IMF, high oil prices and fiscal consolidation under the authorities' Medium-Term Fiscal Plan have improved Oman's fiscal and external balances considerably.

'The authorities remain committed to fiscal consolidation. Significant fiscal adjustment was implemented in 2022, which has allowed for increased social spending while still generating a substantial surplus due to the oil windfall,' IMF added.

Rating upgrades

Helped by strong economic growth and improved fiscal position due to the government's fiscal reforms and higher oil prices, the sultanate's sovereign credit ratings were upgraded by various global rating agencies in 2022.

In April 2022, S&P raised its foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings on Oman to 'BB-' from 'B+', a first ratings upgrade by the agency in over a decade.

In November 2022, S&P again upgraded Oman's sovereign rating to 'BB' from 'BB-' on improving fiscal position due to government reforms and higher oil prices.

Moody's also in October 2022 upgraded its outlook on Oman's issuer rating to 'positive' from 'stable' and affirmed its long-term issuer and senior unsecured ratings at 'Ba3'.

Furthermore, Fitch Ratings in August 2022 upgraded Oman's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating to 'BB' from 'BB-' with a 'stable' outlook.

The Ministry of Finance attributed the improvement in Oman's credit ratings to the ongoing fiscal consolidation measures, higher oil prices, a decline in public debt risks and improvement in monetary indicators.



RECALL CAMPAIGN ANNOUNCEMENT



DATE OF CAMPAIGN:	11-01-2023
CAMPAIGN TYPE:	SAFETY
CAMPAIGN SECTION:	AIRBAG SYSTEM
PRODUCT DESCRIPTION:	MAZDA6

OUTLINE OF CONCERN:

Earlier affected vehicles have been repaired with interim remedy inflators to avoid an immediate safety risk posing airbag rupture. Currently these vehicles are being replaced with permanent remedy inflators.

MODEL	VIN	PRODUCTION DATE FROM	PRODUCTION DATE TO	NO. OF CARS
MAZDA6	JM7GG323031111171 - JM7GG343271539505, JM7GY39F961301634	12-DEC-2002	10-JAN-2007	140

DEFECT:

Interim remedy inflators may potentially rupture during air bag deployment due to propellant degradation occurring after prolonged exposure to high absolute humidity, high temperatures and high temperature cycling.

ACTIONS:

Replace the inflator with an improved part

CONTACT:

Towell Auto Centre LLC Tel:24229100 | CR No: 1/36465/0

NOTE:

Not all the vehicles are affected in the above list. Hence please contact Towell Auto Centre before visiting the workshop.

To check if your vehicle falls within the purview of this recall, please visit www.mazdaoman.com/en/recall

First shipment of crude oil received at Ras Markaz

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ, Oman's global integrated energy group, on Tuesday announced that it has successfully received the first shipment of crude oil at Ras Markaz Crude Oil Storage and Export Terminal, which is being carried out by its subsidiary Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO).

This comes as part of the efforts exerted by OQ to take advantage of Oman's strategic location by finding alternatives to storing crude oil outside the Strait of Hormuz and then exporting it to regional and international markets. This provides oil exporters with an opportunity for finding alternative clients. Additionally, this project will meet the demands of the projects that are being implemented in the Special

Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZD).

In a press statement, Hilal bin Ali al Kharusi, CEO of commercial and downstream sector at OQ and chairman of OTTCO, said, "Our success in receiving the first shipment of crude oil at Ras Markaz Crude Oil Storage and Export Terminal opens up wider horizons for moving forward towards executing other phases of this strategic project, which is considered the biggest of its kind in the Middle East region."

He indicated that basic construction works of the first phase have been completed and that the commissioning of the terminal would encourage investors from across the world to invest in other phases of the project. As a result, the terminal would reach its maximum storage capacity of

about 200mn barrels.

Kharusi pointed out that the project provides more security guarantees; particularly since it is located outside the Strait of Hormuz. As such, it is considered a successful alternative for countries in the region to store and export oil to regional and international markets. He explained that the first shipments will meet the crude oil demands of Duqm Refinery.

Salem Marhoon al Hashemi, general manager of Ras Markaz Terminal, said, "The commissioning of the terminal reflects our success in testing the efficiency of basic construction works at the first phase of the project. We have received the first crude oil shipment and we will send it to the Duqm Refinery, which will be completed in the first quarter of 2023."



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China suspends short-term visas for S Koreans over COVID travel curbs

Seoul, South Korea - China has suspended the issuing of short-term visas to South Koreans in response to Seoul's imposition of restrictions on Chinese travellers over COVID concerns, Beijing's embassy said on Tuesday.

Seoul introduced a host of measures for visitors from China last month, including visa restrictions and testing requirements - joining more than a dozen countries that have imposed new travel rules over worries of surging COVID-19 infections in China. "Chinese embassies and consulates in Korea will suspend the issuance of short-term visas for Korean citizens," Beijing's embassy in Seoul said.

It added that the measures would be 'adjusted again in line with South Korea's removal of the discriminatory entry restrictions on China'.

China currently issues no tourist visas and requires a negative COVID test for all arrivals.

Seoul is also capping flights from China, and travellers from the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau have to test negative before departure - measures



Pedestrians walk outside the Chinese embassy in Seoul on Tuesday (AFP)

Seoul's foreign minister has defended as being 'in accordance with scientific evidence'.

Mainland visitors are also being tested on arrival and are required to quarantine for a week if they test positive, authorities have said.

Manhunt

One Chinese national who tested positive on arriving in Seoul refused to quarantine and fled, sparking a two-day manhunt that dominated South Korean headlines. Police eventually found the Chinese national, who was not identified, but was described as a medical tourist. The visitor will be questioned this week over the infraction, local media reported.

According to official figures, 2,224 Chinese nationals on short-term visas have landed in South Korea since January 2, with 17.5 per cent testing positive on arrival. South Korea has limited its own issuance of short-term visas for Chinese nationals to public officials, diplomats, and those with crucial humanitarian and business purposes until the end of January.

All flights from the country are also now required to land at South Korea's main Incheon International Airport.

South Korea's southernmost Jeju Island, which has its own international airport and separate visa entry regime, had been a popular tourist destination for Chinese arrivals before the pandemic. Seoul is 'inevitably strengthening some anti-epidemic measures to prevent the spread of the virus in our country due to the worsening COVID-19 situation in China', Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said last month in announcing the measures.

South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin on Monday told his Chinese counterpart Qin Gang the restrictions were being imposed 'in accordance with scientific evidence', Seoul's foreign ministry said.

In a separate statement, the ministry said Seoul 'communicated with China in advance' about the measures, adding that the information was 'shared transparently with the international community'.

UK rocket mission ends in failure

London, UK - An attempt to launch the first rocket into orbit from UK soil ended in failure on Tuesday, with scientists reporting an 'anomaly' as it neared its goal.

A Virgin Orbit Boeing 747 carrying the 70-foot (21-metre) rocket took off from a spaceport in Cornwall, southwest England, at 2202 GMT. The rocket then detached from the aircraft and ignited as planned at a height of 35,000 feet over the Atlantic Ocean to the south of Ireland at around 2315 GMT.

But in a series of tweets as the rocket was due to enter orbit and discharge its nine satellites, Virgin Orbit said: "We appear to have an anomaly that has prevented us from reaching orbit. We are evaluating the information. As we find out more, we're removing our previous tweet about reaching orbit. We'll share more info when we can."

The aircraft returned as planned to a subduced Spaceport Cornwall, a consortium that includes Virgin Orbit and the UK Space Agency, at Cornwall Airport Newquay.

The launch was the first from UK soil. UK-produced satellites have previously had to be sent into orbit via foreign spaceports.

Hundreds of people watched the launch, named 'Start Me Up' after the Rolling Stones song.

The satellites were to have a variety of civil and defence functions, from sea monitoring to help countries detect people smugglers to space weather observation.

Mexico hosts Biden, Trudeau for 'Three Amigos' summit



L-R: US First Lady Jill Biden, US President Joe Biden, Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, and Mexico's First Lady Beatriz Gutierrez Muller attend a welcome ceremony in Mexico City on Monday (AFP)

Mexico City, Mexico - The leaders of the United States, Mexico and Canada are expected to set aside simmering trade tensions and pursue deeper economic integration at talks on Tuesday that will also cover security and migration.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador will host his US counterpart Joe Biden and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for three-way talks known as the 'Three Amigos' summit.

While efforts to tackle migration and drug smuggling dominated a bilateral meeting between Lopez Obrador and Biden on Monday, the focus is expected to shift to the economy when Trudeau joins them.

Reinforcing regional economic ties 'allows the United States to be the manufacturing powerhouse that President Biden has talked about but also is a win-win for Mexico and Canada', White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told reporters.

Furthermore, it 'reduces our dependencies on other countries

and other parts of the world who don't necessarily share the same values that we share with our partners here in North America', he added.

Mexico hopes to benefit from Washington's efforts to reduce its reliance on Asia-based manufacturers.

Last year, the Latin American nation was invited by the United States to join a multi-billion dollar push to boost semiconductor manufacturing to compete with China,

Greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the citizens of Oman on the Accession Day anniversary

May the Sultanate grow from strength to strength!

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Women, kids repatriated to Spain from Syria camps

Madrid, Spain - Madrid has repatriated two Spanish women who were married to Islamic State group fighters, flying them home from militant camps in Syria with 13 children, the government said on Tuesday.

They arrived at Torrejon de Ardoz military airport near Madrid late on Monday, nearly two months after the Spanish government agreed to bring them home. "The government has just repatriated two women and 13 Spanish minors from Syrian refugee camps," a foreign ministry statement said.

The two women were arrested on arrival and would be brought before a judge at the Audiencia Nacional, Spain's top criminal court, it said. A court spokesman confirmed the women would appear in court on Wednesday morning on 'terrorism-related charges'.

The 13 children were taken into the care of the Madrid region's social services, it said. The ministry said the extradition had taken 'several months' because of the 'complexity (of the operation) and due to the high-risk situation in the Syrian camps'.

The pair arrived with their nine children, aged between three and 15, the other four were orphans.

AFP

After hype and controversy, Prince Harry's memoir Spare goes on sale

London, UK - After months of anticipation and a blanket publicity blitz, Prince Harry's autobiography Spare went on sale on Tuesday as royal insiders hit back at his scorching revelations.

The royal family led by King Charles III and Harry's elder brother Prince William have maintained a studied silence as painful details from the book and a round of pre-publication TV interviews have piled up.

In Spare, Harry, 38, portrays his father, 74, as emotionally crippled, the victim of brutal childhood bullying.

But among the many contradictions in the book, Harry also characterises the king as a doting father, who favours strong French aftershave and conducts headstands in his underwear to alleviate polo-induced back pain.

"He never forgot that I didn't like the dark, so he'd gently tickle my face until I fell asleep," the 38-year-old Duke of Sussex recounts of his childhood.

But palace insiders quoted in the UK press said Harry had crossed a line in attacking Queen Consort Camilla, Charles's second wife following the death of Princess Diana, William and Harry's mother.

"He has been kidnapped by a cult of psychotherapy and (wife) Meghan," one royal source told The Independent newspaper.

"It is impossible for him to return (to Britain) in these circumstances," it said, as other sources accused Harry of betraying both his father and brother.



A bookseller prepares a display for Spare by Britain's Prince Harry at Daunt Books on Marylebone High Street in London on Tuesday (AFP)

I love the royal family, all of them, but I like Harry too. I don't like this war thing going on and I want to hear what he has to say

CAROLINE LENNON

The book opens with an epigraph drawn from US author William Faulkner - which Harry writes he found on the website BrainyQuote.com.

"The past is never dead. It's not even past," it says, setting the stage for 410 pages of ghost-

written prose dominated by Harry's trauma over Diana's death, score-settling with his family and hatred of the British media.

UK journalists are a 'pack of monsters' and on press tycoon Rupert Murdoch, Harry writes: "I

couldn't think of a single human being in the 300,000-year history of the species who'd done more damage to our collective sense of reality."

One-person queue

Some UK bookshops staged Harry Potter-style midnight openings for the biggest royal publication since the late princess of Wales collaborated with Andrew Morton for Diana: Her True Story in 1992.

But there was none of the initial clamour and crowds that

greeted the sales of J.K. Rowling's popular adventures of the boy wizard.

At the head of a small queue outside one shop at London's Victoria train station was Chris Imafidon, chair of an education charity, who said he wanted to hear about Harry's life 'from the horse's mouth'.

Staunch royalist Caroline Lennon, 59, was the only person in line outside another London bookshop before it opened on Tuesday - outnumbered by a scrum of reporters.

"I love the royal family, all of them, but I like Harry too," the Londoner said.

"I don't like this war thing going on between them and I want to hear what he has to say."

"I also bought the audiobook so I will be able to listen to his voice," she added, as both the print and audio versions topped Amazon UK's sales chart.

The publication has been accompanied by four television interviews in the UK and the United States, where Harry now lives with Meghan.

In one with US network CBS, Harry described Camilla as 'the villain' who waged a 'dangerous' campaign to win over the press herself after Diana's death in a Paris car crash - which he blames on the media.

Explosive claim

As well as giving insights into palace life, the book contains an explosive claim from Harry that William physically attacked him as they argued about Meghan.

It also gives an account of how he lost his virginity, an admission of teenage drug use and a claim he killed 25 Taliban fighters while serving in Afghanistan with the British military - which earned him a rebuke from both the Taliban and UK veterans.

The book comes on the back of the six-hour Netflix docuseries Harry & Meghan, in which the couple again aired their grievances with the royal family and the British media.

AFP



Bank Saderat Iran offers warm greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the Accession Day anniversary May Oman's progressive march continue forever!

Lula slams 'terrorism' as Brazil clears protest camps

Brasilia, Brazil - Brazilian security forces cleared protest camps on Monday and arrested 1,500 people as President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva condemned 'acts of terrorism' after a far-right mob stormed the seat of power, unleashing chaos on the capital.

Hundreds of soldiers and police mobilised to dismantle an improvised camp outside the army's headquarters in Brasilia.

There, some 3,000 supporters of ex-president Jair Bolsonaro had set up tents - used as a base for the sea of protesters who ran riot inside the presidential palace, Congress and Supreme Court for around four hours Sunday.

Lula, who took office on January 1 after a bitterly divisive election win over Bolsonaro, returned to work in the pillaged presidential palace, where AFP reporters saw the wreckage that remained of the previous day's havoc: trashed artwork and offices, shattered windows and doors, broken glass strewn across the floor, and furniture dragged into a reflecting pool.

Lula, the 77-year-old veteran leftist who previously led Brazil from 2003 to 2010, met with the leaders of both houses of Congress and the chief justice of the Supreme Court, and joined them in condemning what many called the South American country's version of the US Capitol riots in Washington two years ago.

"The three powers of the republic, the defenders of democracy and the constitution, reject the terrorist acts and criminal, coup-mongering vandalism that occurred," they said in a joint statement.

Lula accepted an invitation to meet with President Joe Biden next month in Washington, US officials said.

Bolsonaro, who narrowly lost



Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks during a meeting with Governors at Planalto Palace in Brasilia, on Monday (AFP)

the October elections, meanwhile said on Twitter that he had been hospitalised in Florida with abdominal pains stemming from a near-fatal knife attack when he was campaigning for the presidency in 2018.

Bolsonaro has alleged he is the victim of a conspiracy against him by Brazil's courts and electoral authorities.

The ex-president, dubbed the 'Tropical Trump,' traveled to Orlando on the second-to-last day of his term - snubbing Lula's inauguration, in a break with tradition. Bolsonaro, 67, took to Twitter on Sunday night to condemn the 'pillaging' in Brasilia, but rejected Lula's claim he incited the attacks, and defended the right to 'peaceful protests.'

As the nation continued to come to grips with Sunday's stunning violence, hundreds of people gathered along a major avenue in downtown Sao Paulo to defend Brazilian democracy and demand punishment for the people who stormed the halls of power a day earlier.

"I have not endured what I have in this life to see what I saw

yesterday - my people, my country, divided in such a way," said Edi Valladares, a 61 year old teacher. The demonstrators included young people, entire families, labor union activists, anti-racism advocates and others, with banners reading 'We are with Lula and for democracy' and 'Respect for the people's vote.'

Earlier in the day, large contingents of riot police deployed to lock down the capital's Three Powers Square, home to the iconic modernist buildings that serve as the headquarters of the three branches of government.

Condemnation continued to pour in from around the world, with Pope Francis criticising the unrest as a sign of 'weakening of democracy' in the Americas.

In a joint statement ahead of summit talks in Mexico City, Biden, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau condemned the attacks and said they 'stand with Brazil as it safeguards its democratic institutions.'

AFP



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Erdogan government aims to shut down opposition party

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey's chief prosecutor made his final case in court on Tuesday to shut down a Kurdish-backed opposition party before the country heads to the polls later this year.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government has been trying to dissolve the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) - parliament's third-largest - since March 2021 over its alleged ties to outlawed Kurdish militants.

The party says it is being singled out for standing up for Kurdish rights and resisting the government's expanding clamp-down on political freedoms and dissent.

The case is reaching its conclusion before the Constitutional Court in time to have major repercussions for Erdogan's re-election chances and the parliament's future makeup in elections expected before June.

The party won 12 per cent of the vote in a 2018 general election and holds 56 of parliament's 579 seats.

Its dissolution could limit the election options of millions of Kurdish voters and further complicate Turkey's uneasy ties with the West.

But Erdogan brands the HDP as the political wing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) - listed as a terrorist organisation by the United States and European Union as well as Ankara.

Chief prosecutor Bekir Sahin portrayed the HDP on Tuesday as the 'recruitment office' of the PKK.

"We have demonstrated that the defendant party has become



Turkey's President and leader of the Justice and Development (AK) Party, Recep Tayyip Erdogan attends a meeting to address the parliamentary group of his party at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara on January 4 (AFP)

It's ties to the PKK are a well-known fact. Our whole society knows about them

BEKIR SAHIN

the focus of actions contrary to the indivisible integrity of the state," Sahin told reporters after making his final argument in court.

"Its ties to the (PKK) are a well-known fact. Our whole society knows about them."

Funding freeze

The Turkish government has shut down other pro-Kurdish parties before the HDP.

Others have closed in the face of prosecution and then reformed under different names.

The HDP is already reeling from the arrest and imprisonment of thousands of its members and dozens of its local officials.

The government's current case began two weeks after Turkey lost 13 soldiers in a risky operation aimed at rescuing captives held by the PKK in the caves of northern Iraq in Febru-

ary 2021.

President Erdogan accused the PKK of executing the Turkish servicemen.

The HDP issued a carefully-worded statement that expressed condolences but did not explicitly condemn the PKK at the time.

The party's troubles expanded when the Constitutional Court froze its access to a bank account through which it receives state funding last week.

The decision deprives the party of its main source of income heading into the election campaign.

"It is obvious that the Constitutional Court's decision to block our party funds is political," the HDP said in a statement.

The party will have one month's time to prepare its defence before the court convenes for considerations.

The 15-member panel needs a two-thirds majority to approve a political ban.

The HDP said it expected the case to conclude 'in the coming months, before the elections'.

The chief prosecutor said the verdict's timing was 'at the Constitutional Court's discretion'.

AFP

US Navy 'seizes weapons from Iran to Yemen'

Dubai, UAE - The US Navy said on Tuesday it had seized more than 2,000 assault rifles smuggled on a fishing boat along a maritime route from Iran to Yemen.

The cargo was discovered on Friday off the coast of Oman 'on a route historically used to traffic illicit cargo to the Houthis in Yemen', the Bahrain-based US Fifth Fleet said in a statement, noting the vessel 'was crewed by six Yemeni nationals'.

"This shipment is part of a continued pattern of destabilising activity from Iran," Vice Admiral Brad Cooper was quoted as saying.

The Iran-backed Houthi rebels took control of the

Yemeni capital Sanaa in 2014, prompting a Saudi-led coalition to intervene the following year. Since then, a grinding war has killed hundreds of thousands and pushed the impoverished nation to the brink of famine.

A UN-brokered ceasefire that took effect in April brought a sharp reduction in hostilities. The truce expired in October, though fighting largely remains on hold.

The fishing vessel intercepted last week had been carrying 2,116 AK-47 assault rifles. "The transfer of the vessel and its crew for repatriation is in progress," the Fifth Fleet said.

AFP

Iran issues another death sentence over Amini protests

Tehran, Iran - Iran has sentenced another man to death in connection with the protests triggered by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, the judiciary said on Tuesday.

The Islamic republic has been gripped by civil unrest since the September 16 death of 22-year-old Amini following her arrest for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code.

Javad Rouhi was sentenced to death on charges of 'corruption on Earth', the judiciary's

Mizan Online news website reported on Tuesday.

The sentence, which can still be appealed, brings to 18 the total number of people the judiciary have announced have been condemned to death in connection with the protests.

Rouhi was found guilty of 'leading a group of rioters', 'inciting people to create insecurity', as well as of 'apostasy by desecration of the Qu'ran by burning it', Mizan Online reported.

AFP

NATO, EU vow more support for Ukraine to defend itself

Brussels, Belgium - NATO and the EU vowed on Tuesday to bolster their backing for Ukraine to fight off Russia's invasion and ramp up cooperation between Europe and the US-led alliance.

Longstanding designs by NATO and EU to forge greater cooperation have gained impetus from the West's support of Ukraine.

"We must continue to strengthen the partnership between NATO and the European Union. And we must further strengthen our support to Ukraine," NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said after signing a joint declaration with the EU's top officials.

Countries in NATO and the EU - which share 21 members - have funnelled billions of dollars of arms to Kyiv that have helped it push back Moscow's forces.

The United States, Germany and France have announced they will now also supply Ukraine with armoured fighting



NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (right) and the president of the European Council Charles Michel in Brussels on Tuesday (AFP)

vehicles - but Kyiv has pleaded for modern heavy tanks to be sent as well.

"I think that Ukraine should get all the necessary military equipment they need and they can handle to defend the homeland," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

"This means of course, advanced air defence systems, but also other types of advanced mil-

itary equipment, as long as it is necessary to defend Ukraine."

Stoltenberg said Kyiv's Western backers will meet next week with Ukraine's defence minister 'to discuss exactly what types of weapons are needed and how can allies provide those weapons'.

"This is not only about adding more systems, more platforms, more weapons, but also ensuring that the platforms, the weapons

we have already provided, are working as they should," he said.

Moscow's attack on Ukraine has upended the European security order and spurred calls for the EU and NATO to work more closely together to protect the continent.

'NATO remains the foundation'

The two organisations agreed that NATO, backed by the military might of the United States, remains the bedrock for Europe's security despite attempts by the EU to boost its role in defence.

"Our declaration makes clear that NATO remains the foundation of collective defence and remains essential for Euro-Atlantic security," Stoltenberg said.

"It also recognises the value of a more capable European defence that contributes positively to our security and is complementary to and interoperable with NATO."

AFP

جامعة التقنية والعلوم التطبيقية
University of Technology and Applied Sciences

University of Technology and Applied Sciences
International Electronic Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender Committee at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences announces the offering of the practices shown in the following table:

M	Tender number	Subject	Companies that are eligible to participate	Document's Price	Last date for electronic purchasing	Last date bid submission
1	04/2023	Buying plagiarism detection program licenses for the University of Technology and Applied Sciences	Companies and institutions specialized in this field and registered with the Tender Board excellent degree, first, second, third and fourth	RO 25.00 Twenty Five Riyal Omani	19/01/2023 14:30 pm	25/02/2023 at 10:00 am

● You can purchase the tender documents electronically from Wednesday 11/01/2023, starting from (7:30 am) through the link below:
<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

● All bidding companies must attach with their bids electronic temporary tender bond in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, not less than (1%) of the bid value, addressed to the name of the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee, and valid for a period of (90) days from the date of bid submission. The bid must be submitted sealed by the authorized person, and submitted with the electronic bidding system of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the name and number of the tender only.

● Preference in awarding will be given to small and medium enterprises registered with the Authority for SME development and whose bid includes the biggest percentage of Omanisation and a biggest purchase percentage of national products.

● The University shall not be bound to accept the highest or any other bid.

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MOH No: 559/2022

INDIA OFF TO FLIER

Virat Kohli century fires India to big victory against Sri Lanka in the first one-dayer

Guwahati, India - Virat Kohli smashed a brilliant attacking century to set up a convincing 67-run win for India in the opening one-day international against Sri Lanka on Tuesday.

Kohli hammered 113 off 87 balls to drive India to 373-7 after they were invited to bat first at the start of the three-match series in Guwahati.

Skipper Rohit Sharma (83) and fellow opener Shubman Gill (70) put on 143 runs to lay the foundations of the mammoth total.

The bowlers, led by Mohammed Siraj, then restricted Sri Lanka to 306-8 to give India a 1-0 lead in the series.

Skipper Dasun Shanaka top-scored with an unbeaten 108 after opening batsman Pathum Nissanka hit 72 but the knocks could only reduce the margin of loss for the tourists.

Kohli, who survived two dropped catches on 52 and 81,

stood out with his 45th ODI hundred and 73rd across all formats as he let out a roar and took off his helmet to bask in the stadium's applause.

He finally fell to third-lucky quick Kasun Rajitha, who was also bowling when wicket-keeper Kusal Mendis and Shanaka dropped the star batsman.

Gill hit three successive boundaries off debutant left-arm quick Dilshan Madushanka in the fourth over and Rohit smashed two sixes and a four off Rajitha to begin the chase on a batting-friendly pitch.

Rohit, who returned to captain the side after missing India's 2-1 T20I series win, reached his fifty with a four and Gill raised his half-century a short time later.

Gill took on Dunieth Wellalage with three successive fours in one over before he fell lbw in the next to Shanaka's medium-pace bowling.

Rohit attempted to keep up the attack with regular boundaries but Madushanka cut short his knock with a length ball that bowled the Indian skipper off an inside edge.

The rest of the innings belonged to Kohli, who has hit two successive ODI hundreds since coming out of an extended lean patch last year.

In reply, Sri Lanka were never in the chase after losing two early wickets including Mendis bowled for a duck off Siraj.

Nissanka attempted to give some life to the chase with his fighting knock and a 72-run fourth-wicket stand with Dhananjaya de Silva, who made 47.

Sri Lanka slipped to 206-8 in the 38th over but Shanaka stretched the match till the final ball with an unbeaten 100-run stand with Rajitha.

Umaran Malik took three wickets with his express pace.



India's Virat Kohli celebrates after scoring a century in the first against Sri Lanka in Guwahati on Tuesday (AFP)

Krejcikova, Kudermetova roll on

Adelaide, Australia - World number nine Veronika Kudermetova battled back to beat two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka and join Barbora Krejcikova in the Adelaide International II second round on Tuesday.

Kudermetova, who had a stunning 2022 in which she claimed almost 40 match wins, triumphed 2-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

"Of course I'm really happy about this win because it means a lot against Vika," said Russia's Kudermetova, 25, ahead of next week's Australian Open.

"She's a two-time Grand Slam champion so for me it's really important to play against that (level of) player and beat them. With every win I have a little bit more confidence."

A resurgent Krejcikova, who was ranked as high as second in



Veronika Kudermetova

the world last year, won two titles and 10 of her last 11 singles matches to end 2022 on a roll.

She brought that form to Adelaide, beating 2022 finalist Alison Riske-Amritraj of the United States 6-2, 7-6 (7/3).

The 2021 French Open champion, now ranked 21, won the last

four games of the opening set and secured the match in straight sets after seeing a match point slip by at 6-2, 5-4. The Czech player's reward is a clash with fifth seed Daria Kasatkina.

American Amanda Anisimova, semi-finalist at Roland Garros in 2019 and Wimbledon

quarter-finalist last season, won her first tour-level match since August, overcoming error-strewn Russian Liudmila Samsonova 7-5, 6-3.

Her progress was in stark contrast to last week's performance in Adelaide I, where she claimed only three games in a first-round defeat to Kudermetova.

China's Zheng Qinwen set up a second-round contest with two-time Wimbledon winner Petra Kvitova with a 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 victory over American Shelby Rogers.

In the men's draw, world number 35 Tommy Paul won his season-opening match 6-4, 7-5 against Australian Christopher O'Connell. Other winners included Australian John Millman, Dutch veteran Robin Haase and South Korea's Kwon Soon-woo.

AFP

Thiem optimistic for Australian Open after injury worries

Melbourne, Australia - Former finalist Dominic Thiem said Tuesday he was fit and ready to make an impact at the Australian Open, despite starting preparations with defeat at the Kooyong Classic.

The 2020 finalist at Melbourne Park, who is 99 in the world as he returns from a wrist injury, showed flashes of his best in a 6-4, 6-4 loss to Australian Alex de Minaur at Kooyong.

The 29-year-old Thiem won the US Open in 2020 but injured his right wrist in mid-2021 and was sidelined for eight months.

"The body is good, last year was a good step in the right direction," said the Austrian, who pushed Novak Djokovic to five sets in the 2020 Australian



Dominic Thiem

Open final.

"I hope I can continue in that direction this year, hopefully the Open is a good start."

The former world number three has shown encouraging signs on his return to the tour, rising from outside the top 350 to breach the top 100 this week

after semi-final runs last year at Gstaad, Gijon and Antwerp.

His rapid ranking rise meant he only narrowly missed directly qualifying for the main draw of the Australian Open, which starts in Melbourne on Monday.

But he was handed a wildcard entry and after twice fighting back from a break down against De Minaur, remains optimistic about his chances.

"I'm ready to go at the Grand Slam but I don't know how good I am at the moment," he said.

"It's very difficult to go deep in a Slam, all of the players are on a high level. But I had a good preparation so I should be ready - we'll see."

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'I PREFER TO GO OUT AT THE TOP'

France captain Hugo Lloris retires from international football

Paris, France - France captain Hugo Lloris has announced his retirement from international football at the age of 36, three weeks after his country lost the World Cup final on penalties to Argentina in Doha.

"I have decided to stop my international career, with the feeling that I have given everything," Tottenham Hotspur goalkeeper Lloris said in an interview with French sports daily L'Equipe published on Monday.

"I think it is important to announce this now, two and a half months before the start of Euro qualifying."

Lloris, who made his international debut as a 21-year-old in a friendly against Uruguay in November 2008, bows out after becoming France's most-capped player during the World Cup.

He overtook previous record-holder Lilian Thuram's mark of 142 appearances and finished with his 145th cap in the final, which France lost 4-2 on penalties after an epic 3-3 draw at the end of extra time.

"I have really been thinking about it since the end of the World Cup, but there has been



France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris holds the World Cup trophy during a ceremony at the Stade de France, in Saint-Denis, to celebrate their victory at the 2018 tournament

something deep inside of me for maybe six months now and which grew during the competition, leading me to make this decision," Lloris said.

Former Nice and Lyon goalkeeper Lloris captained France to

victory at the 2018 World Cup in Russia. He played at seven major tournaments in total, including Euro 2016, when France lost in the final to Portugal as hosts.

France's back-up goalkeepers at the World Cup were 37-year-

old Rennes veteran Steve Mandanda and Alphonse Areola of West Ham United.

However, the replacement for Lloris as France's starter is set to be the 27-year-old Mike Maignan of AC Milan, who missed the

World Cup due to injury.

'Go out at the top'

"There comes a time when you need to step aside. I have always said the French national team does not belong to any one person," Lloris said. "There is a goalkeeper who is ready (Maignan), and I need a bit more time for me, for my family and for my children.

"To have been the France goalkeeper for 14 and a half seasons is a big deal, but it is also mentally exhausting and I hope clearing some time for myself will allow me to keep playing at the highest level for a few more years."

He added: "I prefer to go out at the top, having helped France get to a World Cup final."

Lloris' decision comes after coach Didier Deschamps - in charge since 2012 - signed a new contract to remain in the position through to the 2026 World Cup in North America.

"I must, we must, respect his decision even if he still had his place in our team, as he demonstrated during the last World Cup," Deschamps said in a statement.

AFF



Arsenal's Eddie Nketiah scores past Oxford United goalkeeper Edward McGinty during their FA Cup third-round match on Monday (AFP)

Nketiah double sends Arsenal into FA Cup clash with Man City

Oxford, United Kingdom - Eddie Nketiah scored twice as Arsenal set up an FA Cup fourth-round clash away to Manchester City after seeing off third-tier Oxford United 3-0 on Monday.

Mohamed Elneny's header opened the floodgates at the Kassam Stadium after the Premier League leaders failed to make the breakthrough for over an hour.

Nketiah then sealed the win by taking his tally to four goals in as many games since the World Cup break.

"We had to up the level as it wasn't good enough from us in the first half and I think we did that in the second," said Nketiah.

"It's not the best draw but we're up for it."

Mikel Arteta named a strong side featuring his preferred front three in the absence of the injured Gabriel Jesus as Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli flanked Nketiah in attack.

Arsenal were dominant in possession before the break but struggled to create any clear-cut chances and were further frustrated by the decision not to award a penalty for handball when Elliott Moore blocked Albert Sambi Lokonga's effort.

Fabio Vieira was one of those not commonly in Arteta's starting line-up given a chance to shine and the Portuguese made his mark after the break with two as-

sists.

The former Porto midfielder's inviting free-kick was headed in powerfully by Elneny for the Egyptian's first goal since 2021.

Nketiah then continued to make the most of his prolonged run in the side following Jesus' injury. The all-time top goalscorer for England's under-21s coolly rounded Edward McGinty from

Arsenal were dominant in possession before the break but struggled to create any clear-cut chances

Vieira's through ball to roll into an empty net.

"Every player wants to play," added Nketiah. "I'm grateful for the opportunities and just want to keep helping the team."

Saka was then replaced after receiving treatment in concerning scenes for Arsenal, but there was some solace in the return of Emile Smith Rowe for the first time since September. Nketiah added his second of the night with another cheeky finish as he dinked the ball over McGinty.

AFF

Australian club gets record fine for pitch invasion

Melbourne, Australia - Australian club Melbourne Victory were hit Tuesday with an A-League record Aus\$550,000 (US\$380,000) fine and the threat of a 10-point deduction over a violent pitch invasion that left a goalkeeper injured.

The punishment stems from a derby match between Victory and Melbourne City last month that was abandoned after shocking scenes when football fans stormed the field. One Victory supporter grabbed a metal bucket full of sand and threw it into the face of City goalkeeper Tom Glover, who sustained a bad gash and concussion.



Melbourne City goalkeeper Tom Glover is helped off the pitch after sustaining a bad gash on his face

The referee and a television cameraman were also hurt.

Football Australia responded

ous supporter misconduct until the end of the 2025-26 season.

The governing body's chief executive James Johnson described the scenes as the worst ever witnessed in the sport in the country. "Football Australia has found that the Melbourne Victory Football Club, through the inexcusable conduct of many individuals... has committed a serious breach of our rules and regulations," he said.

"The sanctions we have issued against Melbourne Victory are the heaviest in the A-League era. These sanctions are reflective of our desire to remove this behaviour, and those that perpetuate it,

from our game.

"They also form part of a broader response to this incident which has seen 17 bans issued against individuals to date, including three lifetime bans," he added.

Other sanctions include some seating at AAMI Park in Melbourne being off-limits for the rest of this season while Victory fans will not be given allocated seating at away matches.

The club said in a statement it would comply with the FA order and was working to ensure "matches moving forward will be a safe environment for players, fans and everyone involved".

Wales boss wants Bale to stay involved in international set-up

London, United Kingdom - Wales manager Rob Page wants Gareth Bale to stay involved in the international set-up after the star forward announced he was hanging up his boots.

Bale, a five-time Champions League winner at Real Madrid, ended a glittering career on Monday after winning 111 caps and scoring 41 goals for his country - both national records for the men's team.

The 33-year-old's decision to quit came after Wales' disappointing performance at the World Cup in Qatar, when Page's team failed to get out of their group and Bale struggled due to a lack of match fitness. Page revealed Bale contacted him on Sunday to inform him of his decision to retire, and said he was in full agreement with his captain.

"I told him I think it's the right time to bow out," he told the BBC. "You've just scored in a World Cup and got everything on your CV, what you've done for this country is unbelievable."

Wales start their Euro 2024 qualifying campaign in March and Page confirmed that Bale, who was playing for Los Angeles FC in the MLS, would have been



Gareth Bale

selected for that double-header against Croatia and Latvia, perhaps with a role as an impact player off the bench.

"There's a mixture of emotions for me," he said. "I'm excited now because it's an opportunity to get some of the young ones through - players like Brennan Johnson to take the opportunity and step up to the plate - and get the next Gareth Bale.

"But there's also a hint of sadness because it's the last time we'll see Gareth Bale putting a pair of boots on for Wales."

Page said he had spoken with Bale about his staying within the Wales set-up.

"I would love him still to be involved in some capacity, what that role is I don't know yet," he said.

AFF



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Al Attiyah opts for cautious approach to stay on course for back-to-back Dakar triumphs

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Qatari driver Nasser al Attiyah's strategy of playing it safe saw him move a step closer to retaining his Dakar Rally title and his fifth in all following Tuesday's ninth stage.

The 52-year-old Toyota driver finished 11min 8sec adrift of the stage winner, nine-time world rally champion Sebastien Loeb.

However, the pressure further eased on Al Attiyah as his closest pursuer overnight, the South driver African Henk Lategan, suffered a mechanical problem and lost 40 minutes.

Al Attiyah holds a lead of 1hr 21min over another Toyota driver, Brazil's Lucas Moraes, with Loeb a further 19min in arrears. "Today we did a really good job without any mistakes, without any problems," said Al Attiyah, bidding to become the first back-to-back winner since 'Mr Dakar' Stephane Peterhansel in 2016/17.

"We need to take it day by day like this without any problems. We have a big gap now and I hope to finish and to win this Dakar."

Three-time Dakar Rally car champion Carlos Sainz showed gritty determination in ordering a helicopter ambulance to turn around and return him to his stricken car.

The 60-year-old's Audi came to grief just six kilometres into the stage and as a precaution he and his co-pilot Lucas Cruz were air-lifted to hospital.



Toyota's Qatari driver Nasser al Attiyah and French co-driver Mathieu Baumel compete during the ninth stage of the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday (AFP)

"The Spaniard wished to have a chance of resuming the race and demanded that the helicopter ambulance turn round and drop him back at his car," race organisers Amaury Sport Organisation said in a statement.

The two-time world rally champion had lost all hope of a fourth title last Friday when a

front wheel came off in an accident. Despite suffering from chest pain as a result of the mishap he insisted on carrying on and started Tuesday's stage languishing in 100th spot, over 29 hours in arrears of Al Attiyah.

Earlier Argentinian rider Luciano Benavides, younger brother of title contender Kevin,

won the stage in the motorcycling category.

The 27-year-old Husqvarna motorcyclist secured his second stage win of this year's race as he timed 1min 2sec faster over the 358-kilometre special than Australian Toby Price on a KTM.

Overall leader Skyler Howes of the United States was third,

2min 57sec off the pace set by the stage winner.

Howes retains the overall lead for a fifth successive day but he enjoys a razor-thin advantage over Price of three seconds as the ultimate test of endurance enters its decisive stages with the climax on Sunday.

"It was a demanding stage, for

sure, with lots of water," said Howes.

"It was super crazy. We were going through giant rivers in the middle of the desert.

"So now we head all the way down to the Empty Quarter and I assume it's going to be the same, with more and more challenges down there."

Verona end long winless run against Cremonese

Milan, Italy - Darko Lazovic brought Verona their first win since September on Monday with his first-half brace in a 2-0 home victory over fellow strugglers Cremonese.

Verona snapped a 10-match losing streak with last Wednesday's draw at Torino and finally secured three points against a Cremonese team who are still winless after 17 games of their first top-flight campaign since 1996.

Lazovic struck with two neat finishes in the ninth and 26th minutes at the Stadio Bentegodi to continue a post-Christmas revival under new coach Marco Zaffaroni.

Verona are unbeaten in his two games in charge but Serie A safety will be a battle as they sit in the relegation zone on nine points, six behind 17th-placed Spezia.

Cremonese are two points behind Verona and Sampdoria in last place following their 10th defeat of the campaign.

The away side did their pre-match warm-up wearing a T-shirt bearing an image of former Italy striker Gianluca Vialli, who died on Friday of pancreatic cancer at the age of 58.

He started his career at his hometown club Cremonese before going on to greater success at Sampdoria, Juventus and Chelsea.

While the match was being played, back in Cremona Vialli's family, friends and some famous faces from his playing days gathered for a mass in his honour.

Fans who didn't make the trip to Verona stood outside the Cristo Re church in Cremona to pay their respects.

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Abdullah al Zubair to compete in Oman Rally

Muscat: Oman's Abdullah al Zubair will be back behind the wheel of a Subaru Impreza once again at the Oman International Rally, the opening round of Middle East Rally Championship (MERC), to be held from January 26 to 28 around Muscat.

The Oman leg, hosted by the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), has been one of the most popular in the regional calendar since it burst on to the international scene way back in 1979 and then became a round of the inaugural MERC in 1984.

Al Zubair has not competed in a rally since finishing second in Jordan National Rally in March 2020 with Emad Juma as his navigator.

"I am delighted to be behind the steering wheel of a rally car and to return to my favourite sport. It has been more than three years since I attended the last rally in Jordan," said Al Zubair.

"I would like to thank and appreciate the support and the sponsorship of ARA Petroleum



Oman's Abdullah al Zubair in action

I would like to thank and appreciate the support and the sponsorship of ARA Petroleum that has helped me compete

ABDULLAH AL ZUBAIR

that has helped me compete in the Oman International Rally.

"I hope I can do well in the rally and I wish everyone safe driving and all success."

He added: "Oman International Rally always known as the most difficult rally in the Middle East, therefore it is not easy to compete especially with some of the top drivers in the field. But I will try my best."

Messi set for first PSG appearance since World Cup as contract talks go on

Paris, France - Lionel Messi is expected to make his first appearance for Paris Saint-Germain since his World Cup triumph in a Ligue 1 clash at home against Angers on Wednesday, as the Qatar-owned club look to tie the Argentine down to a new contract.

The 35-year-old took part in training with his teammates on Tuesday, a little over three weeks after inspiring Argentina to victory over France on penalties in an epic World Cup final in Qatar.

He was granted a two-week holiday back in his home country following the tournament, before returning to Paris and being given a guard of honour at PSG's training ground last Wednesday.

The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner, who scored 12 goals in 19 games this season for his club prior to the World Cup, did not

take part in PSG's win at third-tier side Chateauroux in the French Cup at the weekend.

But he could start as the Ligue 1 leaders play host to an Angers side who are bottom of the table and have lost their last nine league outings.

How Messi approaches the second half of the campaign in France after a career-defining World Cup will be closely observed, with his initial two-year deal in Paris coming to an end.

However, the Qatar-owned club are in talks to extend his contract with coach Christophe Galtier insisting the former Barcelona star is settled in the French capital.

"Leo seems to me to be happy in Paris and I think there is a real desire on behalf of the club to extend Leo's contract," Galtier told reporters on Tuesday.

AFP

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