

P7

TOUR GUIDES..
BROKERS IN
TOURISM
INDUSTRY





P9

ROYAL DECREE
RATIFIES MAHA
ENERGY'S STAKE SALE
IN BLOCK 70



■ MUSCAT

OMAN DAILY'S GOLDEN JUBILEE FETE

The Oman Daily newspaper, a leading Arabic-language broadsheet in the Sultanate of Oman, marks its golden jubilee today. In a celebration scheduled to be held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al Harrasi, Minister of Information, the newspaper celebrates its 50th anniversary at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, in the presence of elite media personnel, intellectuals and founders of the daily newspaper. **SEE P3**

HOTEL REVENUES SURGE 96.6% IN OCT

The revenues of 3-5 star hotel surged by 96.6 per cent as at the end of October 2022 compared to the corresponding period in 2021 to stand at RO 138,205,000, according to NCSI.

The number of 3-5 star hotels' guests increased by 32.5 per cent till the end of October 2022 compared to the same period in 2021, while occupancy rate grew by 19.1 per cent till the end of October 2022. The number of guests from the GCC during the same period registered a significant surge by 521.6 per cent, reaching 129,150 guests compared to 20,778 guests during the corresponding period in 2021. **SEE P4**



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ROADS IN OMAN
TO FUEL GROWTH

P3



KIDS DYING IN SOMALIA AS
FOOD CATASTROPHE WORSENS

P5

LIONEL MESSI

1
GOAL

ARGENTINA
CRUSH
CROATIA
TO ENTER
FINALS

JULIAN ALVAREZ

2
GOALS

■ **ASAAD RECEIVES TURKISH ENVOY**



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received Ayse Sozen Usluer, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the Sultanate of Oman, in Muscat on Tuesday to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty. **SEE ALSO P2**

Sharjah Musuem to display artefacts that trace civilisation of Oman

STAFF REPORTER
Muscat, Dec 13

For the first time, over 100 artefacts, which trace the history of Oman's civilisation from the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages until the rise of Islam, will go on display at the Sharjah Archaeology Museum on Wednesday.

The works include fishing gear, weapons, clay and stone pots, ornaments, stamps, farming equipment, as well as jewellery including a gold necklace from the period between 300 BC and 400 AD.

Omani Civilisation: Origin and Development is jointly organised jointly by the National Museum and the Sharjah Museums Authority on Wednesday.

The opening ceremony of the exhibition is held under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, Member of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Supreme Council and Ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah. **TURN TO P2**

Use this smartphone app to elect your municipal councillor

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Interior has launched Intakhib (Elect) app for voters to select candidates who will represent them at municipal councils in all wilayats of Oman. The new app provides ease of access and accuracy.

Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, who presided over the app's launch ceremony, stressed the ministry's constant strive to introduce the latest technologies in every electoral term, to keep pace with developments in the technical world. The step is considered a step forward, said the minister, who commended the departments that joined hands in implementing the system.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, and Chairman of the Technical Committee for Elections of Municipal Council Members, 3rd Term, said that the new app constitutes a digital transformation in the electoral



process and that it saves time and effort.

Intakhib app project manager Abdulrahman bin Ali al Hinai said that the application was designed on par with security standards, with all precautions in place to ensure secrecy. The app operates in NFC-enhanced smart phones connected to the Internet and associated with a valid identity card, indicating that the voter's name is listed in the electoral register. **TURN TO P2**

More govt services fees cut to attract investment

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
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To attract foreign investment, improve competitiveness and boost the private sector, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has reduced, merged or cancelled 288 service fees in the Supreme Judicial Council; the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; the Environment Authority; and Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance. These changes, which were announced by MoF officials in a press conference on Tuesday, will come into effect in the first quarter of 2023.

STRIKING BALANCE

This is part of the second phase of government services pricing guidelines to achieve a balance between fiscal policy and the directions of Oman Vision 2040. The government services pricing guide was approved on November 9, 2021, with the blessings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

MoF officials said as many as 739 fees were studied during the second phase of the guide's programme.

The Supreme Judicial Council

739 fees were studied during the second phase of the guide's programme.

The Supreme Judicial Council: 14 fees were reduced and merged, and one fee was abolished

The Environment Authority: 30 fees were reviewed, with 19 fees reduced and 11 fees abolished

Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance: 14 fees cut down and merged and 1 fee abolished

Municipalities: 104 fees (with 59 fees discounted and merged and 45 fees annulled altogether)

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion: 127 fees were reduced, cancelled and merged (with 107 reduced and 20 abolished)

said that a study on fees of the notary public led to the merging of 15 fees (14 fees were reduced and merged, and one fee was abolished), while the fees payable

by inheritance agents were unified into a single fee at RO 1 to be charged against the client.

At the Environment Authority, 30 fees were reviewed, with 19 fees reduced and 11 fees abolished.

The review in Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance led to the reduction, cancellation and merging of 15 fees (14 fees cut down and merged and 1 fee abolished).

The review of the municipality sector led to the reduction, cancellation and merging of 104 fees (with 59 fees discounted and merged and 45 fees annulled altogether).

At the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, as many as 127 fees were reduced, cancelled and merged (with 107 reduced and 20 abolished).

The Finance Ministry pointed out that a third phase of the Government Services Pricing Guide will be implemented, and it will cover the review of fees of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.



Sayyid Asaad receives Turkish Ambassador



MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received in his office on Tuesday Ayse Sozen Usluer, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of

duty. The ambassador expressed her thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to her in the Sultanate of Oman from His Majesty, the Government and the Omani people, which had enabled her to carry out her duties. The ambassador also wished His Majesty good health, happiness and a long life and the Sultanate of Oman further

development and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty. On his turn, HH Sayyid Asaad expressed his appreciation to the ambassador for the efforts she exerted in serving the relations between the two countries. He also wished her success and the Turkish people further progress and prosperity. The meeting was attended by the secretary-general and the adviser at the Office of HH Sayyid Asaad. — ONA

SQCCCRRC launches mobile-based health system to track patients

MUSCAT: In a major step forward to enhance the health sector of the Sultanate of Oman, the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCCRRC) has recently launched a mobile-based health system that enables medical staff and patients to get information easily and smoothly. In a statement, Dr Zahid al Mandhari, a senior consultant in radiation oncology, said, "The e-system will help the two

parties take the appropriate decisions at the right time." "It also enables the patient to follow up on his appointments, to change them if the necessity requires, and to request the medical prescriptions dispensed to him during the treatment period," he added. Aimed at serving the medical staff and the patients alike, the e-system gives the health cadre the ability to inform the patients about their check-ups' results or medical reports.

The mobile-based system enjoys the highest standards of confidentiality for medical cases, by storing patients' health information within the system only, and not on the mobile's SD card. Speaking about their plans, Dr Zahid said the SQCCCRRC seeks to reduce the information gap between the medical staff and the patient, keep up with technical developments, and utilise technological advancement in favour of promoting health services.

727 in fray for municipal polls

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

With less than a week for the third Municipal Council elections, the scene is warming up with the candidates going about meeting voters with billboards being displayed on some of the streets in Oman.

As many as 727 candidates, including 28 women, are in the fray contesting the elections which were postponed from June this year to December, through a special Royal Decision.

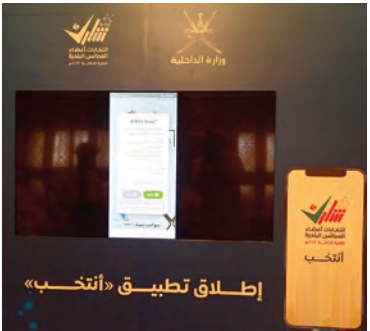
Voting for voters outside of the Sultanate of Oman for the Municipal Council will take place on Sunday December 18, while voting for voters within the Sultanate of Oman will take place on Sunday, December 25, according to Article 1 and 2 of the Municipal Council elections in the Municipal Councils Law, respectively.

Nearly 731,767 voters, including 347,965 women will be casting their ballots for the Municipal Council elections for the third term, via the website www.elections.om.

The Ministry of Interior has launched a mobile application 'Intakhib' for voters to vote for the elections of members of Municipal Council for the third term recently and voters will be able to cast their votes to choose who represents them in the membership of the Municipal Council at a click.

The ministry has also given sufficient days for registration in the electoral register for the elections and the shifting of registration from one wilayat to another.

"Candidates may carry out election campaigns to introduce themselves from its date till the penultimate day of voting based on the Article 41 of the Municipal Council elections regulation," a spokesperson from the Elections Committee said, adding, "they can



use billboards, print media and other means of communication as electoral advertising media."

The Municipal Council of Muscat Municipality is said to be the real beginning and the first nucleus for the establishment of the Municipal Councils in various governorates of the Sultanate.

The first Municipal Councils were elected under the Royal Decree No 116/2011 in October-November 2011, under which the Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court was commissioned to issue regulations for the implementation of its provisions.

Later, based on a Diwan Resolution No 115/2012 issued on March 25, 2012, the chairman, vice-chairman and secretary, as well as the employment system in the Council and committees, the members' rights and duties, administrative and financial affairs of the Council and the election of the Council members representing the wilayats of the governorate were established.

Aimed at representing the citizens at the Municipal level

Vote for your municipal councillor via app

FROM PAGE 1

Al Hinai pointed out that steps to vote via the app begin with the voter's downloading the application from app stores of IOS or Android smart phone. Then, the voter clicks a snap shot of his/her ID card, both from front and back, and saves it to the desired location.

He added that the application will read the data via the NFC feature, follow up other procedures until the voter accesses the list of candidates in each wilayat and selects the candidate who wishes to contest the elections.

The municipal council elections main committee held a meeting during which it reviewed its preparations for running the electoral process. The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Interior.

The Ministry of Interior and all committees tasked with the elections have completed their preparations and are ready for conducting the electoral process for those voting from abroad on December 18 and those voting from within Oman on December 25. — ONA

and bringing their voice to the government, the Council also represents the aspiring ambitions of citizens, through the significant terms of reference of the Council.

Artefacts to trace Oman's civilisation

FROM PAGE 1

It will also be attended by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism and Chairman of the National Museum. The exhibition, which will run till June, includes a collection of artefacts like fishing gear, weapons, clay and stone pots, ornaments, stamps, personal jewellery and farm equipment that tell the story of Omanis, from the dawn of time until the rise of Islam. The exhibition is arranged chronologically: stone age (125000 – 4000 BC) collection includes a number of stone tools like fishing gear which date back to 125,000 years; bronze age (3100 – 1300 BC) artefacts like fishing gear, axes, personal jewellery including rare golden beads, stamps, soft stone pots in additions to local and imported pottery; and iron age and last centuries just before Islam (1200 BC – 600 AD) collection brings out the evolution of soft stone industry in addition to a rare collection of short daggers, bronze arrowheads and axes.



MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) on Tuesday celebrated the Sultan's Armed Forces Day (SAF Day), which falls on December 11. The ceremony was held at Al Seeb Airbase under the auspices of

Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning. The ceremony began with a military salute to the minister. The RAFO band played the Royal Anthem, followed by an



infantry parade. Then, the band performed a musical presentation that comprised various pieces. The minister and guests watched a parachute show presented live in the sky of the celebration by RAFO free fall

team. After that, a number of combat aircraft performed an air show over the celebration grounds to celebrate the day of the Sultan's Armed Forces. The event was attended by the Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed

Forces, commanders of the SAF wings, military and security units, as well as retired commanders, government officials, senior officers, RAFO members, officers, non-commissioned officers and cadets. — ONA



Credentials received from Belgian envoy

MUSCAT: Sayingid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received a copy of credentials of Pascal Gregoire, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium appointed to the Sultanate of Oman. Sayingid Badr wished the ambassador success in carrying out his duties. He also wished the relations between the two countries further development and growth. — ONA

Oman’s Bangladesh ambassador presents credentials

DHAKA: President Mohammed Abdul Hamid of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh received at the Presidential Palace in Dhaka on Tuesday Ambassador Abdulghafar bin Abdulkarim al Balushi, who presented his credentials as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Bangladesh.

During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Abdul Hamid and the people of Bangladesh.

On his turn, President Abdul Hamid asked the ambassador to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan. He also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity.



The President of Bangladesh also expressed his delight at Oman’s decision to upgrade its diplomatic representation in Bangladesh to the rank of ambassador. He also expressed his appreciation for the relief aid provided by Oman to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, the ambassador pointed out that Oman is keen to boost bilateral relations, especially in the economic fields to include sectors of energy, oil derivatives, minerals and pharmaceuticals, in addition to the potential of investing in special economic zones. — ONA

Govt treasury bills worth RO 10.9 m issued

MUSCAT: A tender of Government Treasury Bills, issue number 572, worth RO 10.9 million was issued this week. Treasury Bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo). The results of the said issue are as follows:

The total value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to RO 10.9 million, for a maturity period of 91 days, from December 14 until March 15, 2023. The average accepted price reached RO 98.951 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 98.890 per RO 100.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.20841 per cent and 4.25311 per cent, respectively. It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 4.50 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 5.00 per cent.

Furthermore, Treasury Bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.

— ONA

Symposium to mark Oman daily’s golden jubilee today

MUSCAT: The Oman daily newspaper, a leading Arabic-language broadsheet in the Sultanate of Oman, marks its golden jubilee today.

The celebration is scheduled to be held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al Harrasi, Minister of Information, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, in the presence of elite media personnel, intellectuals and founders of the daily newspaper.

Known as one of the top media houses in the country, the newspaper’s first edition was published on Saturday, November 18, 1972, corresponding to Shawwal 12, 1392 AH.

Initially located in Bait Al Falaj, the newspaper was published on a weekly basis every Saturday by the Directorate-General for Media and Tourism.

In 1984, the newspaper was ultimately published on a daily basis.

For half a century of diligent work dedicated to media and journalism, the Arabic broadsheet evolved rapidly at various administrative, editorial and technical levels.

With its cultural, business, social and sports supplements, the Oman daily newspaper has been contributing to developing the Omani society, spreading awareness and reflecting the comprehensive development transformations that the Sultanate of Oman has enjoyed during a fifty-year



span in different spheres under the modern and renewed renaissance.

A symposium entitled “This is the Country, This is the Newspaper” will be held on the sidelines of the ceremony spotting light on the political, cultural and social contexts of the newspaper, in addition to analysing the contents of the newspaper and its journalistic discourse in various fields.

Moderated by Masoud al Hamadani, the first session of the symposium will host Dr Abdulmunim bin Mansour al Hasani, the former minister of information, Dr Mohammed Naji, Abdulrahman bin Said al Maskari and Asim al Sheidi, the newspaper’s Editor-in-Chief.

The symposium will have four-sessions covering interactive workshops that will shed light on the progressive development witnessed by the newspaper, its future amid various technological developments, sports and cultural journalism, administrative and journalistic angles of the newspaper.

Roads in Oman to fuel growth

KABEER YOUSUF
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Several new roads and other infrastructure projects, as well as existing ones, are currently gaining pace to ease traffic and give a fillip to the developmental initiatives. The Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology (MoTCIT) and the Muscat Municipality have taken initiatives in this regard.

The latest in the series of developmental projects is the tender invitation by the Muscat Municipality for An’Nuzha Dual Carriageway Project in Maabela area in Al Seeb, to construct a dual carriageway in the area, as part of the development projects implemented by Muscat Governorate.

The project extends to 11 km length, and 3.5 km of service streets besides the establishment of 6 large-capacity traffic intersections and side protections to serve the areas adjacent to the street. Additionally, there will be



drainage systems for surface water, the implementation of which will begin during the second quarter of 2023.

Upon implementation of the project in less than two years, the project will help enhance the development of commercial and residential areas, while distributing the traffic flow and thus avoiding traffic snarls at various points. This project will also serve urban development plans, facilities and neighbourhoods adjacent to the street.

Another ongoing project is the dualisation of the Sultan Qaboos University road in Al Khoudh area of Al Seeb, which will begin from the roundabout in District Six in Al Khoudh to the traffic lights

intersection in front of Gate No 2 of SQU.

The project includes converting the existing roundabout in the Al Khoudh Sixth District area into a four-way intersection with signal lights, in addition to constructing a new signal-controlled intersection in front of the entrance to the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

Upon completion in the last quarter of 2023, this project is aimed to accommodate the increasing traffic in this area and on the road near the SQUH, which is also home to several educational, health and commercial facilities and residential neighbourhoods.

“Roads are vital for the developmental initiatives of

a country and are significant infrastructure elements that can be addressed as a development parameter for countries regarding economic, industrial, and service aspects,” a spokesperson from the Muscat Municipality said.

The MoTCIT has recently announced that it completed 65 per cent of Wadi Al Qanoot Road project in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah in Al Batinah North Governorate, which is supervised by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. The dualised road starts from Wadi Al Sarami Road and ends in Al Qanoot village with a length of 7.5 km and the cross-section of the road consists of two traffic lanes with a width of 3.5 meters on each lane.

The project also includes a number of drainage culverts, equipped with traffic safety measures such as iron fences, informative signboards, and road painting and a great amount of attention is given to the road design in accordance with highways design manual in the Sultanate of Oman.

مدائن

madayn

Tender

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
7/2022/ PEIE/HQ-7	GREEN BUFFER PLANTATION AT SUR INDUSTRIAL CITY	22-12-2022	12-01-2023	AFFORESTATION, HORTICULTURE AND GARDEN SERVICES	ALL GRADES	70

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om and **+968 24402200**.

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening. Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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in twitter facebook youtube



Al Shabiba Radio wins YouTube Prize in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Al Shabiba Radio won the YouTube and social media programmes award in recognition for the radio service's report titled "What We Saw Was Something Overwhelming". The prize stems from the Kuwait Creativity Award.

The winning report was based on Al Shabiba's coverage of the Tropical Cyclone Shaheen, live as it unfolded, as well as the cyclone's direct impact on the Wilayat of Al Khabourah in the North Al Batinah Governorate. The report received more than half a million views on Al Shabiba's YouTube channel. — ONA



Aviation activities at 90 pc of Covid levels: CAA

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Aviation activities in the Sultanate of Oman, especially flight operations, have recovered to 90 per cent of the pre-pandemic levels due to effective measures implemented by the government, according to the latest official figures released as the Sultanate of Oman marked International Civil Aviation Day last week.

As per the latest stations, CAA said the movement of aircraft arriving and departing this year was 72,003 aircraft, an increase of seven per cent during the same period in 2021.

Passenger traffic saw an increase of 116.6 per cent to 7,824,103 compared to the previous year's statistics.

As for the freight traffic, it reached 120,788 tons, an increase of 32.5 per cent in the first ten months of this year compared to the period in 2021.

In his Statement, Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of CAA, said it has been supporting all new strategies and approaches in the field of aviation safety and ensuring sustainable development of air transport that will contribute to the national economic growth in the future and investment in various fields and sectors.

"It has been taking the effort to make Oman a key leader in the civil aviation industry by providing infrastructure in terms of advanced facilities, modern technologies, and qualified and good national cadres."

During the pandemic, the Sultanate of Oman was among the three Level 1 countries from the Middle East region, followed by the recommendations of the International Civil



Aviation Organization during the pandemic as it ensured uninterrupted transportation of medical supplies, goods, and people following health safety guidelines.

According to IATA, Passenger demand is expected to reach 85.5 per cent of 2019 levels over the course of 2023. Much of this expectation considers the uncertainties of China's Zero-Covid policies which are constraining both domestic and international markets.

Nonetheless, passenger numbers are expected to surpass the four billion mark for the first time since 2019, with 4.2 billion travellers expected to fly.

Passenger yields, however, are expected to soften as somewhat lower energy costs are passed through to the consumer, despite passenger demand growing more quickly by 21 per cent than passenger capacity by 18 per cent.

Middle East carriers are expected to post a loss of \$1.1 billion in 2022 and a profit of \$268 million in 2023.

In 2023, passenger demand growth of 23.4 per cent is expected to outpace capacity growth of 21.2 per cent.

Over the year, the region is expected to serve 97.8 per cent of pre-crisis demand levels with 94.5 per cent of pre-crisis capacity.

Star hotel revenues surge 96.6 per cent by Oct 2022

MUSCAT: The revenues of 3-5 star hotel surged by 96.6 per cent as at the end of October 2022 compared to the corresponding period in 2021 to stand at RO 138,205,000, according to the monthly statistical bulletin of tourism indicators issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of 3-5 star hotels' guests increased by 32.5 per cent till the end of October 2022 compared to the same period in 2021, while occupancy rate grew by 19.1 per cent till the end of October 2022.

The number of guests from the GCC during the same period registered a significant surge by 521.6 per cent, reaching 129,150 guests compared to 20,778 guests during the corresponding period in 2021. European guests followed by recording an increase by 446.8 per cent to reach 245,262 guests compared to 44,855 during the same period in 2021.

Meanwhile, the number of



Omani guests at those hotels declined by 15.1 per cent from 691,492 by the end of October 2021 to 586,851 till the end of October 2022.

The number of American guests at the end of October 2022 stood at 64,249 guests, constituting a rise by 201.5 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

The number of guests from the GCC has registered a significant surge by 521.6 per cent, reaching 129,150 guests compared to 20,778 during the corresponding period

The number of guests from the African continent stood at 6,733, comprising a growth of 95.8 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.

The number of Asian guests also increased by 47.7 per cent, reaching 166,245, as compared to 112,588 guests during the same period in 2021. — ONA

Earthshot prize winner urges youth to fight climate change

KABEER YOUSUF
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Talal Hasan, Founder and Carbon General of 44.01, and winner of coveted 'Earthshot Prize' has urged Omani youth to take the drive forward and help protect future generations from the impacts of climate change.

Speaking to Observer at a reception hosted by the British Embassy in Muscat at the Ambassador's residence, Talal said the youth can play a key role in helping our planet to heal. He also thanked the Earthshot Prize for raising awareness of the role innovation must play in countering climate change around the world.

44.01 eliminates CO2 permanently by mineralising it in peridotite, a rock found in abundance in Oman as well as in America, Europe, Asia and Australasia. Peridotite mineralisation is a natural process, but in nature it can take many years to mineralise even a small amount of CO2. 44.01 accelerates the process by injecting carbonated water



Talal Hasan

into seams of peridotite deep underground.

Speaking at the event, Lord Tariq Ahmad, Minister of State at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, urged people around the world to follow 44.01's example and take up the fight against climate change.

"We often talk rather too much about the weather in the UK, but the weather matters. Climate change will have disastrous effects internationally, so people all over the world need to take action to protect our planet earth," said Lord Tariq.

Named after the molecular

weight of carbon dioxide, 44.01 aims to mineralise 1 billion tonnes of CO2 by 2040. The company hopes to expand its operations internationally next year.

"We were inspired to set up 44.01 when we saw the very real impact of climate change here in Oman and around our region. If we are to halt, and ultimately reverse climate change, then we have to remove CO2 from the atmosphere," said Talal.

Unlike carbon 'storage', which involves burying CO2 underground in disused oil-wells or aquifers, mineralisation removes CO2 forever. This means there is no requirement for long-term monitoring or insurance, and ultimately makes the process more cost-effective, scalable and safer.

Employment to the youth:

Given Oman has the largest concentration of peridotite in the world, carbon mineralisation could also be a boon for workers in the region. By seeking to solve global problems, 44.01 will solve local ones too.

Forum for promoting dialogue norms on Dec 18

MUSCAT: The deliberations of the regional forum on promoting the principles of constructive dialogue and values of tolerance among young people will kick off here on December 18.

The two-day forum is organised by the Ministry of Education represented by Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science in cooperation with the Center for Civilisational Dialogue of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO).

The forum will see the participation of various national authorities and it targets youth, parents, researchers and interested academics. It seeks to propagate the global principles and values through social media platforms.

The forum aims to raise awareness among young people and encourage them to benefit from the efforts and experiences of ISESCO.

— ONA

AIA Middle East chapter holds year-end conference

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, DEC 13

The AIA Middle East Chapter members gathered in the Sultanate of Oman for the conference on the theme 'Sultanate of Oman: A Canvas Untouched'.

The conference explored Oman's path to accomplishing successful adaptive reuse of heritage sites and an architecture that is not only iconic but reactive to nature and/or inspired by

nature and fully conscious and respective of its context.

The official first day of the conference, on December 8th, was inaugurated by the honourable patron, Her Highness Sayyidah Meyyan bint Shihab bin Tarik al Said, who has an immense background in practising design and design management.

At the conference's opening, the chief guest, HH Sayyidah Meyyan bint Shihab al Said, said, "I would like to begin this

conference by highlighting the importance of built environments on our well-being, culture, and our infrastructure and our sense of place. We have a great responsibility as designers to withhold the dignity of the places we shape and mould."

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) was founded in 1857 by 13 architects. The national office is headquartered in Washington, DC, with more than 200 chapters worldwide.



AIA Middle East (AIA ME), a Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, was established in 2010 to serve the professional

interests of the growing number of AIA member architects practising in the Middle East and North African region (MENA). When it was formed, it was the fifth international chapter of the AIA, and in just this short period of time has grown to become the largest international chapter, with over 400 members. The American Institute of Architects members create a community to share knowledge and advocate a shared vision to positively impact

the direction of the profession, the shape of our neighbourhoods, and our world.

The domain of this chapter includes 16 countries in the MENA region comprising of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen. The administrative headquarters of the chapter is located at Abu Dhabi, with regional representatives in the member countries.



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Children dying of hunger as food catastrophe worsens in Somalia

MOGADISHU: More than 200,000 Somalis are suffering catastrophic food shortages and many are dying of hunger, with that number set to rise to over 700,000 next year, according to an analysis by an alliance of UN agencies and aid groups.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), which sets the global standard for determining the severity of food crises, said its most acute level, "IPC Phase 5 Famine", had been temporarily averted but things were getting worse.

"They have kept famine outside of the door but nobody knows for how much longer," said Jens Laerke, spokesperson of the UN humanitarian office (OCHA).

"That people are dying from hunger, there's no doubt about it, but I cannot put a number on it," he told a news briefing in Geneva after the latest IPC analysis on Somalia came out. A two-year drought has decimated crops and livestock across Horn of Africa



The IPC data showed 5.6 million Somalis were classified in Crisis or worse (Phase 3 or above) and that number would rise from April to 8.3 million – about half the country's population.

nations, while the price of food imports has soared because of the war in Ukraine. In Somalia, where 3 million people have been driven from their homes by conflict or drought, the crisis is compounded by a long-running insurgency that has hampered humanitarian

access to some areas.

The IPC had previously warned that areas of Somalia were at risk of reaching famine levels, but the response by humanitarian organisations and local communities had staved that off. "The underlying crisis

however has not improved and even more appalling outcomes are only temporarily averted. Prolonged extreme conditions have resulted in massive population displacement and excess cumulative deaths," it said. Somalia's last famine, in 2011, killed a quarter of a million people, half of them before famine was officially declared.

Fearful of a similar or even worse outcome this time, humanitarian chiefs were quick to say the situation was already catastrophic for many Somalis.

"I have sat with women and children who have shown me mounds next to their tent in a displaced camp where they buried their two- and three-year-olds," said James Elder, spokesperson of the UN children's charity UNICEF, at the Geneva briefing.

"Whilst a famine declaration remains important because the world should be past this, we also do know that children are dying now."

— Reuters

Pakistan expects multibillion-dollar support from Saudi

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will likely secure a multibillion-dollar financial support package from long-time ally Saudi Arabia this month, two sources said, as the country's ninth review of a \$7-billion IMF bailout ran into snags.

The two finance ministry officials said the Saudi package would include deposits boosting the country's foreign reserves and oil on deferred payments.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said earlier he hoped talks with Saudi Arabia would happen soon.

"We are expecting that we will, God willing, get financial support from Saudi Arabia, most likely this month," one of the senior officials said, adding it would be around a \$4-billion package.

"Some of that package will go to our reserves and the rest is oil and some other commodities on deferred payments," he said.

"Pakistan has brotherly

relations with Saudi Arabia. Both countries have helped each other in times of need," a finance ministry media official said, without elaborating or giving any further details.

Pakistan's economy is facing a balance of payment crisis. The central bank reserves have fallen to \$6.7 billion - barely enough for a month of imports.

The fiscal deficit has already touched 1 per cent of the GDP in first quarter of current financial year against 0.7 per cent of the GDP agreed with the IMF.

With the IMF's ninth review pending since September, Pakistan has desperately been scrambling to secure financing to meet external payment obligations for the current financial year.

Ahead of the review, Pakistan has been trying to approach allies to seek financial support, and Dar had said that he would expect to get \$3 billion from a friendly country. — Reuters

Zelensky seeks 800m euros for Ukraine winter help

PARIS: President Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday said Ukraine needed emergency aid for its energy sector totalling around 800 million euros to help his country survive Russia's bombing of its civilian infrastructure.

Failing to make an impact on the battlefield in its war, Moscow has switched tactics since October when it began air strikes targeting Ukraine's energy network, plunging millions into cold and darkness at the onset of winter.

The alarm over Ukraine's ability to cope comes nine months into the Russian assault against its neighbour, which has seen Moscow make only slight territorial gains in the face of fierce Ukrainian resistance.

Zelensky made the request for 800 million euros at international conference in Paris designed to raise material and money to repair Ukraine's damaged infrastructure.

It is hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron with whom he has sometimes had testy ties.

"Of course it is a very high amount, but the cost is less than



Local resident Viktoria stands amid debris of her apartment in a building heavily damaged in recent shelling in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict in Horlivka (Gorlovka) in the Donetsk region, Russian-controlled Ukraine, on Wednesday.

— Reuters

the cost of a potential blackout," Zelensky told the gathering in Paris via video link.

"I hope that decisions will be made accordingly," Zelensky said that Ukraine needed transformers, equipment to repair damaged high-voltage power lines, as well as generators and gas turbines.

"Because of the destruction of our power plants by terror attacks we will need to use more gas this winter than expected," added Zelensky, whose wife

Olena attended the conference in person. Zelensky urged G7 nations on Monday to provide "about two billion cubic metres" of additional gas to get through the winter as well as more tanks and missiles to fight the war.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmygal also appealed for help from the 70 states and international agencies gathered in Paris for the "Standing with the Ukrainian People" conference.

— AFP

Man jailed for selling beverages to N Korea

Singapore: A Singaporean man has been jailed for selling nearly \$1 million worth of strawberry milk and coffee to North Korea, following other sanctions-busting trades from the city-state that have included sending wine, whisky and perfume to Pyongyang.

North Korea has been hit with a barrage of sanctions, including from the United Nations, over its nuclear and ballistic missile tests, while Singapore suspended trade ties with the country in 2017. Phua Sze Hee, 59, a former manager at beverage company Pokka International, was sentenced to five weeks in jail on Monday after he pleaded guilty. From 2017 to 2018, he sold beverages including strawberry-flavoured milk and coffee drinks to several Singapore companies, knowing that they would be exported to North Korea for sale there. — AFP

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDERS



The Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C) (invites following tenders:

Tender No	Description	Tender Price (R.O)	Grade	Last Date of Buying	Last Date of Submission
Tanweer -19/2022	Replacement of dangerous LV overhead line service connection and damaged meters panels in wilayat Haima and surrounding area in Al Wusta Governorate-stage One.	50/=	"C" and Above	22/12/2022	16/01/2023
Tanweer - 20/2022	Replacement of dangerous LV overhead line service connection and damaged meters panels in wilayat Haima and surrounding area in Al Wusta Governorate-stage Two.				
Tanweer - 21/2022	Replacement of dangerous LV overhead line service connection and damaged meters panels in wilayat Al-Jazir in Al Wusta Governorate-(Stage two)				
Tanweer - 22/2022	Power supply for Camel Racing Field Wilayat Haima- Al Wusta Governorate				
Tanweer - 23/2022	Suppling & installing AMR meters in Tanweer power stations			22/12/2022	10/01/2023

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tender:** Interested and Specialized Companies and Establishments registered with Tender Board (valid certificate), Tanweer and Distribution Code Review Panel may obtain the Tender documents from Procurement & Contracts Department, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. The fees for the tenders shall be deposited on Tanweer account 0423010783090041 – Bank Muscat and for more information please contact via email address i.e. tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om, or call us on phone number: 24250824. SME's Ryida card holders are exempted form tender fee.
- Bank Guarantee:** The Tenderer should enclose original bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC (Tanweer). SME's Ryida card holders are exempted form tender bid bond.
- Offers Submission:**
 - Original bids along Cover letter shall be placed by bidders inside the red waxed Tender's envelopes as communicated to bidders by Tanweer. Such documents must be serialized according to the numbers of the tender items.
 - Tender bids shall be provided separately on a CD Rooms, along with original cover letters in each envelop. Bids and cover letters shall bear the bidder's official seal and must be signed in either blue or red ink, but not black. A true soft copy of the bids shall be provided on a CD in an inner envelope marked "Copy". Bids who do not comply with these requirements will be overlooked.
 - Bidders shall write the following details on the cover of CD:
 - Tender name and number.
 - Tenders to be Addressed to the **Chairman of Minor Tender Committee**, Tanweer.
 - Prequalification / Technical Proposal / Commercial Proposal / Bid Bond.
- Submission Location:** The Completed bids in CD should be deposited in the Tender Box at Tanweer Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 12:00 PM on the last date of submission.
- Tender Price (R.O):** 5% VAT is inclusive.
- Tanweer without mentioning the reason is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender and not bond to refund tender purchase fees if you are not qualified to participate the tender.

For more information please call: 80077787

SALE OF VEHICLE/EQUIPMENT

Leading Construction Co. in Oman intends to dispose of their used vehicles and equipment, in 'as is where is' condition. The items identified are presently located at their Al Khoud yard and will be offered for inspection to the public on 19/12/2022, 21/12/2022 and 17/05/2022 between 08:00 am to 12:00 pm and 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.

Last date for submission of closed tender is 21/12/2022 at 05:00 pm at our Al Khoud office.

Interested parties may contact at
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Of doomscrolling, coronials and the like

As we think about the months that have passed, for many of us the memories may be bittersweet. Many may even define the year, well, as a little feral mainly due to negative monumental impacts from extreme weather events, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and the like.

In fact, sometimes life get so weird that we literally need to invent new words to describe it.

Every so often great social changes do bring great linguistic changes as well, and we witness it now as we grapple, around the world, with rendering the crisis times into language.

We remember how Brexit led to a flowering of new words, including the inevitable 'Bremain' or 'Bregret'. Again the last two years have seen a variety of words, thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2021, we found new words and ideas associated with the crisis increasing at a very rapid pace. Some of them were prominent in the language, qualifying for entry in record time, while others had previously been scheduled for entry in the near future.

Leave alone terms such as 'self-isolating', 'pandemic', 'quarantine' or 'lockdown' that had increased use, epidemiological terms, like 'doomscrolling' referring to obsessively scanning social media and websites for bad news or Covidiot" for person failing to observe regulations or guidelines designed to prevent the spread of disease, or 'coronials' for babies born or conceived during the pandemic were widely used.

We cannot forget the debate over the Oxford Dictionary's 2021 word of the year – vaccine, and how the promising medical solution to the Covid-19 pandemic became a source of division because of its reported personal choice, political affiliation, professional



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IN FACT, SOMETIMES LIFE GET SO WEIRD THAT WE LITERALLY NEED TO INVENT NEW WORDS TO DESCRIBE IT

regulations, school safety, healthcare inequality, and so much more.

For 2022, the Oxford English Dictionary chose the term 'goblin mode' as the word after a public vote for the first time in its history. 'Goblin mode' is a slang term used to describe a type of behaviour, which is "unapologetically self-indulgent, lazy, slovenly, or greedy, typically in a way that rejects social norms or expectations."

At the same time, American dictionary publisher Merriam-Webster declared 'gaslighting' as the word of the year for 2022 with the meaning "psychological manipulation of a person usually over an extended period of time that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories".

While the scope of lexical innovation in relation to coronavirus is unprecedented, we only need to look to other periods of history to see how such linguistic creativity manifests itself in times of serious social crisis.

A Guardian article a few years back pointed out that English speakers are adding new words at the rate of around 1,000 a year despite the million or so words they already have at their disposal. The Global Language Monitor estimates that in the modern world a new word is created every 98 minutes. Each year, an estimated 800 to 1,000 new words are added to English language dictionaries.

According to it, more than 90,000 words have been added in the 20th century alone. It is believed that when many people use a word in the same way, over a long enough period of time, that word becomes eligible for inclusion!

Editors of the third edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, to be completed by 2037, estimate that the rate of inclusion of new words into it will be about 4,000 per year. In 2014, the Dictionary added more than 2,500 new words.

COLD DELIGHT



Skaters ride on natural ice at De Doornsche IJclub, one of the first rink in the Netherlands to open doors for skating in Doorn on Tuesday. – AFP

Food security is national security

Despite containing 60 per cent of the world's uncultivated arable land, Africa has been a net food importer for decades. According to the most recent estimates, food imports are the biggest budget item for many countries across the continent. Amid surging food prices and an appreciating US dollar, Africa's food bill has soared as well, undermining African countries' economic growth, debt sustainability, and political stability.

According to the Brookings Institution, Africa spent around \$43 billion on food imports in 2019. Due to the current inflationary environment, most recent estimates are probably higher, especially in a region where high import dependence exacerbates the pass-through from global to local food prices. The soaring dollar, driven by the Federal Reserve's interest-rate hikes, has depleted African countries' hard-earned foreign-exchange reserves and led to sharp increases in their debt-servicing costs, heightening the risk of a continent-wide insolvency crisis.

At the same time, the supply-chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and exacerbated by the war in Ukraine have highlighted the



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AMID THE WAR IN UKRAINE, SURGING INFLATION, AND AN APPRECIATING US DOLLAR, MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES ARE STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP WITH THE RISING COSTS OF FOOD IMPORTS

potential costs of Africa's reliance on food imports. Food security is, after all, national security. African countries have learned this the hard way over the past two and a half years, as supply-chain bottlenecks and protectionist policies have reduced access to key agricultural commodities and led to dramatic price increases.

Earlier this year, the price of wheat futures at the Chicago Board of Trade reached a record of \$14.25 per bushel, almost double the price in late December 2021. Fertiliser prices have also increased sharply, as the average prices for major variants (including diammonium phosphate, triple superphosphate, urea, and potassium chloride) more than doubled year on year. Overall, the World Trade Organization's fertiliser-price index rose by more than 100 per cent between the first quarter of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022.

Although Russia and Ukraine account for less than 3 per cent of global trade and around 1.7 per cent of total African trade, both have served as the world's – and Africa's – main source of wheat and fertiliser.

For example, the two countries

supplied 24 per cent of globally traded wheat in 2020. And according to WTO estimates, the two countries accounted for 30 per cent of the continent's total wheat imports in the lead-up to the outbreak of the war in 2022

Heightened geopolitical tensions have stoked fears that the current supply-chain disruptions will become a more prominent – and permanent – risk, leading countries to embrace industrial policies and accelerate the shift to sustainable, self-reliant food systems. The United States, for example, has introduced policies aimed at reshoring the production of automobiles, semiconductors, and other manufactured goods.

Similarly, many African governments have increased efforts to achieve self-sufficiency in food production. Policymakers are hoping that the African Continental Free Trade Area, established in 2018, can provide the economies of scale and productivity gains needed to boost domestic food production and reduce the region's vulnerability to external shocks.

Egypt, which in 2021 relied on both Russia and Ukraine for

almost 77 per cent of total wheat imports, is a case in point. Its government has provided fiscal incentives, including raising procurement prices, to increase domestic wheat production enough to meet at least 70 per cent of domestic consumption.

Preliminary estimates of the effectiveness of such policies seem promising, with some forecasts showing that Africa is set to produce 30.5 million metric tons of wheat this fiscal year, an increase of more than 18 per cent from 2021. The same goes for fertilisers. Before the war in Ukraine, countries such as Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Mauritania imported 20-50 per cent of their fertilisers from Russia.

This dependence on imports has stifled domestic agriculture; while global fertiliser use averaged 137 kilograms per hectare, the average across Africa was a dismal 20 kilograms per hectare in 2018.

But African businesses and governments have since taken steps to expand domestic production. The industrial conglomerate Dangote Group, for example, opened the world's second-largest fertiliser-

production facility earlier this year in Lagos, Nigeria. The new facility is expected to produce three million metric tons of low-cost, nitrogen-based urea.

The Dangote Group is also building another Nigerian plant near Port Harcourt. And in Morocco, the state-owned OCP Group is working with other African governments and financial institutions to build fertiliser plants across the continent. Next year, OCP plans to begin building a \$2.4 billion fertiliser facility that will employ Ethiopian natural gas.

The success of these import-substitution policies will have significant implications for the region. Several African countries have enough raw materials to produce the fertilisers needed to meet growing regional (and global) demand. Expanding production capacity will promote the commodity-based industrialisation model, which will also help diversify Africa's sources of growth, reducing the continent's unhealthy dependence on commodity-price cycles and strengthening its resilience to global shocks.

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Tour guides show you locations in new light

BY BAYAN AL HADHRAMI

WHEN tour guides love what they are doing, they can draw an imaginary picture in your mind about the place they are taking you to. A journey with a tour guide like Mohammed al Hadi is exceptional in all ways. Visitors to a place come with expectations, but it's the tour guide and his expertise that determine the size of knowledge and change that he can put in each experience.

This Omani tour guide, whose passion for adventure and travel has led him to garner an audience of 50,000 followers on Instagram, has recently gained much popularity as he avidly reveals to his audience some of the most magnificently fascinating, yet least known, tourist locations in the Sultanate of Oman. In his recent popular Instagram post, Al

Hadi immerses himself in Qabat Sulfur Spring in Dima Wattayeen, engaging his audience in an unusual experience as he covers himself in white sulfur then lays in a pond of azure hidden between the folds of Al Sharqiyah mountains.

Al Hadi not only recommends touristic locations, but also aims to educate his followers as he lists the benefits of swimming in sulfur spring. He speaks, in other videos, of the history, culture, heritage and wildlife in Oman. While in one post he introduces the Green Turtle Reservoir in Ras Al Jinz, in another post Al Hadi presents the oldest human settlement in Oman, Harat Al Yemen in Izki. Other locations which he promotes visiting include Wadi Bat, Snake Canyon, Jabal Shams, Majlis Al Jinn cave and Misfat Al Abriyeen.

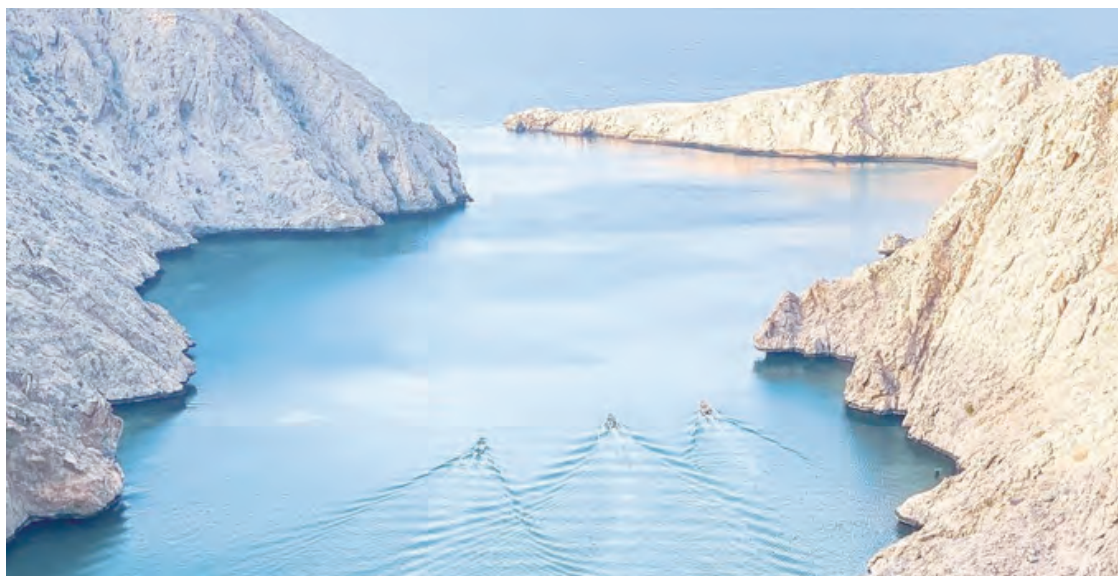
Al Hadi works as a tour guide in the National Museum of the Sultanate of Oman and organises

local trips for all age groups, introducing to tourists the history and natural landscapes of Oman.

Mohammed is known for his adventurous private trips which he plans in accordance with his client's physical ability and age. He creates detailed timelines for the trips and documents the journeys, as he also prepares for his clients all the necessary safety equipment, food and drink.

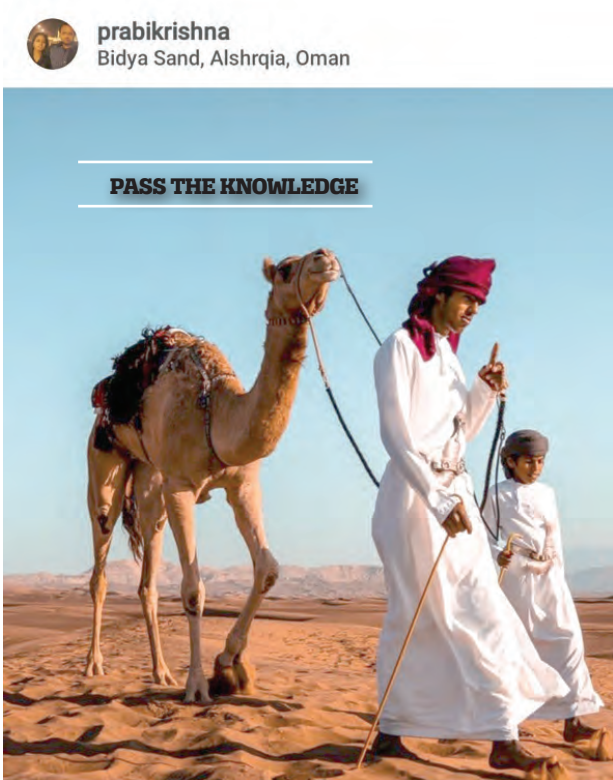
Al Hadi states that even though all the natural landscapes and places in Oman are beautiful, tourists must be cautious and not risk visiting unfamiliar locations without a tour guide.

He stresses that while fun and enjoyment are important, safety comes first. Each location comes with its own challenges which visitors have to be aware of and prepared for.





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AROUND THE WORLD

ANCIENT

1,300-year-old necklace among treasures found buried at housing site



A 1,300-YEAR-OLD necklace, discovered on the site of a new housing development in England, was buried in the grave of a woman who may have been royalty or a powerful Christian leader,archaeologists have said.

The centuries-old treasure was found during excavations in April ahead of construction starting on a new housing development in Northamptonshire.

Experts from the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) announced on Tuesday that the necklace dates back to 630-670 AD, during the Saxon period and is part of a high-status female burial within the kingdom of Mercia.

The museum said experts believe the grave, which also contained other treasures, is the most significant early medieval female burial ever discovered in Britain.

It also said the necklace is the richest of its type ever uncovered,with at least 30 pendants and beads made of Roman coins, gold,garnets, glass and semi-precious stones.

MOLA site supervisor Levente-Bence Balazs, who led a team that made the discovery, said: "When the first glints of gold started to emerge from the soil we knew this was something significant."However, we didn't quite realise how special this was going to be.

We are lucky to be able to use modern methods of analysis on the finds and surrounding burial to gain a much deeper insight into the life of this person and their final rites."

The collection of treasures in the burial, which has been dubbed the"Harpole Treasure" - based on the local parish's name, includes two decorated pots and a shallow copper dish. The team also found that a large and elaborately decorated cross,featuring highly unusual depictions of human faces cast in silver,was placed in the grave.

Experts say that while the skeleton itself has decomposed, the combination of objects suggest the grave belonged to that of a devout high status woman such as an abbess or royalty - or even both.

MOLA said its team are now working to examine and conserve the items,including identifying and recording traces of organic remains within the burial as well as on the surface of the artefacts.

Simon Mortimer, an archaeologist consultant for RPS which is working with the housing developer Vistry Group, said: "This find is truly a once-in-a-lifetime discovery - the sort of thing you read about in textbooks and not something you expect to see coming out of the ground in front of you."

Mortimer said the discovery shows "the fundamental value" of housing developers funding archaeology. — **dpa**

DINING

Black chefs carve out a place in Brazilian cuisine



FROM A TINY RESTAURANT on a dead-end street come the enticing aromas of chicken, pork and shrimp as an award-winning chef slowly steams dim sum — the finger food typical of Cantonese cuisine.

This is not Hong Kong but rather Rio de Janeiro. And the cook is a black Brazilian.

"Many people ask me, 'Where is the Chinese chef?'" Vladimir Reis, 38, says with a chuckle. He opened Dim Sum Rio almost two years ago in Laranjeiras, a wealthy neighbourhood of the city.

"They ask me why I make Asian food and not African or Brazilian food," said Reis. "But I am free to do what I like, without being restricted by what people think I should do because of the colour of my skin or the country I come from."

Things are going very well for this burly man with thin dreadlocks down to his shoulders. His dim sums are wildly popular and he has been named a winner in a new competition called the Black Gastronomy Prize.

This contest, whose first edition was held in November, honours the best black restaurant industry people in Rio in an array of categories such as waiter, sommelier, sous chef and pastry chef, all in a country where racism is deeply ingrained.

"There are many nice stories, and the time has come to acknowledge all of this talent," said Breno Cruz, a university professor who created the prizes.

White universe

Best restaurant honours went to Afro Gourmet, run by Dandara Batista, 37, who serves up African dishes in Grajau, a working-class neighbourhood of Rio.

In the small kitchen of the eatery she opened in 2018, she fixes a dish called hauca rice — originally from Nigeria and featuring shrimp, dried meat and a golden sauce that is a blend of coconut milk and palm oil.

The menu also boasts a dish from Senegal called mafe and a South African one called Chakalaka. Batista highlights where her creations come from by adorning them with little flags corresponding to the country.

Batista said she always felt a strong connection to the food of the northeastern city of Bahia, where her father's family comes from.

"But when I did some research I realised there is a strong African influence on Brazilian cuisine in general," said Batista, who wears her thick hair in braids.

Batista has been cooking since she was a girl but thought of it as a career option only after working for many years as a journalist.

"Gastronomy was always linked to a white universe, so I did not see myself there," said Batista.

She switched jobs four years ago after taking a class in gastronomy.

She lamented the fact that there were no courses on African cuisine, so she learned how to make dishes from countries far from Brazil such as Angola, Cape Verde, and Sao Tome and

Principe.

No reference point

Like Batista, Reis's life was also influenced by things not Brazilian, in his case a trip to Singapore. "When I saw dim sum the first time I thought it was marvellous, so delicate. Right away I said to myself, 'we don't have this in Rio.'"

Reis, born and raised in Rio, gives a personal touch to his dishes, using cassava and palm oil, which are basic ingredients in Brazilian and African cooking. At Dim Sum Rio, he decorates his dishes with edible flowers and green leaves of cabbage to cover them, like little roofs.

Reis had worked in several restaurants but never made it all the way to chef. Although he has a strong resume, he says that in job interviews white colleagues with less experience would always beat him out.

"They always wanted me to be a sous chef, or a basic cook," said Reis, who grew up in a favela, or slum, in central Rio called Santa Teresa.

In Brazil black or mixed-race people account for 54 per cent of the population but only 30 per cent of leadership positions in companies.

Reis says he would have started his own business earlier if he had seen more black chefs in the news media.

"I only saw black chefs on reality shows from other countries. Here in Brazil I had no reference point. The job market has opened up in the last few years but racism is still very much a part of society." — **AFP**

ART

Nobel awards to take place in Stockholm with full glitz and glamour



NOBEL LAUREATES congregated in the Swedish capital Stockholm on Saturday for the first fully in-person award ceremonies complete with a formal banquet since the Covid-19 pandemic that curtailed events in the past two years. The ceremony starts at 1500 GMT and features glamorous formal wear, with the men in white tie and tails and women in flowing gowns and elegant hairdos. Ceremonies in 2020 and 2021 were scaled back and there was no banquet.

Many laureates from 2020 and 2021 will be attending this year as well as the 2022 winners - last year for example there was a ceremony but no laureates attended as they received their medals in their home countries.

Throughout this week the laureates have taken part in activities ranging from panel discussions to news conferences, finding time to visit schools and give lectures and attend a lights show.

"Given the challenges the world faces, it feels especially important to highlight Alfred Nobel's idea of international community," said Vidar Helgesen, executive director of the Nobel Foundation.

Five of the six Nobel prizes are awarded in Stockholm every year after a nomination process that is kept secret for the next 50 years. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded in Oslo where separate festivities are held.

Dynamite inventor Alfred Nobel left around 31 million crowns — about 1.8 billion crowns (\$174.2 million) in today's money according to the Foundation — to fund prizes for achievements in science, literature and peace awarded annually since 1901.

Among the laureates for 2022 is a former chairman of US Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, who won the Nobel Economics Prize along with economists Douglas Diamond and Philip Dybvig for research on how propping up failing banks can stave off an even deeper economic crisis.

The economics prize is a later addition to the original line-up, instituted by the Swedish central bank.

After the ceremony, there is a banquet in City Hall, attended by Sweden's royal family, government officials and dignitaries and business leaders from different countries.

Swedish political party leaders are always invited to the banquet. However Jimmie Akesson, leader of the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats, which became the country's second biggest party in an election in September election, was left off the guest list, with his party not deemed to be in keeping with the prizes' tenets.

The Nobel Foundation has also snubbed the ambassadors of Russia and Belarus, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Jailed Belarusian activist Ales Byalyatski, Russian rights group Memorial and Ukraine's Center for Civil Liberties won the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize. (\$1 = 10.3329 Swedish crowns) —**Reuters**



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Asyad Shipping launches Singapore presence



JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Wholly Omani government-owned Asyad Shipping – part of Asyad Group – opened its first international office in Singapore on Monday as part of its ambitious plans to expand its business portfolio into the Asian market. “The new office will facilitate closer contact with shipping and logistics clients in China, Japan and South Korea with the benefit of working in the same time zone. It will also assist in developing its ship management and chartering activities whilst also enabling the expansion of its existing fleet with chartered-in vessels,” the company said in a statement.

In February this year, Asyad Shipping commissioned a new container line that connects Singapore and the wider Gulf region, and the first to directly connect the Sultanate of Oman with Singapore and Malaysia. It aims to reduce travel times and increase trade relations with East and Southeast Asian countries and provide Omani traders with a fast and cost-effective access to Singapore as an international distribution hub.

It also offers competitive transshipment rates through the port of Suhar which already provides direct services to China, South Korea, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and the wider Gulf region.

Commenting on the expansion of Asyad Shipping to the Asian market, Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi, CEO of Asyad Shipping & Asyad Drydock, said, “Establishing our presence in Asia will play a crucial role in driving future growth. We see plenty of expansion opportunities in this region and now is the right time to enter the market with greater force.”

Our Singapore office represents our commitment to bringing the very best of Asyad Shipping to our clients, Asian shipyards and other liner companies.”

Asyad Shipping operates a fleet of more than 70, including a mix of Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs), product and chemical tankers, LNG carriers, chemical carriers, LPG Tankers, Very Large Ore Carriers (VLOCs) and Dry Bulk carriers as well as various regional container line services.

“The placement of Asyad Shipping in Singapore will have a greater value-added service to its ship management and chartering activities. The move also facilitates the expansion of Asyad’s existing fleet through the chartering in of more vessels from anticipated increased interactions with major Asian clients,” the company added.

New decarbonisation roadmap sees PDO halving emissions by 2030

NET ZERO: 150 opportunities identified to help achieve national energy company's energy transition goals

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 13

A Decarbonisation Roadmap rolled out by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the nation's biggest producer of oil and gas, envisions plans for a ramped-up utilisation of renewables, switch to hydrogen-based alternatives, gas flaring reduction, and carbon capture and storage, among other objectives.

The roadmap is part of a refreshed energy transition strategy designed to enable majority state-owned PDO to meet the nation's “increasing demand for low-carbon energy while improving the resilience of its core oil and gas portfolio,” according to PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister.

Writing in ‘Energy Connects’, a UAE-based global digital news platform, Phimister said the revamped strategy will help the company deliver on its decarbonisation goals in line with Oman’s broader Net Zero target.

“In essence, this roadmap gives us line of sight to achieve our ambition of net-zero oil and gas operations by 2050 with an interim step to halve emissions by 2030. This entails investment in all forms of energy efficiency, flaring



In essence, this roadmap gives us line of sight to achieve our ambition of net-zero oil and gas operations by 2050 with an interim step to halve emissions by 2030.

STEVE PHIMISTER
Managing Director, PDO

reduction, methane emissions reduction and a shift to renewable power consumption,” he stated in an opinion piece published earlier this week.

Significantly, as many as 150 “opportunities” have been identified by PDO to help achieve its decarbonisation and energy transition goals. They include initiatives to boost the company’s investments in solar and wind power generation capacity, revamp energy-intensive compressors and pumps, and to roll out a methane leak detection and repair (LDAR) programme.

“We are actively incorporating renewable energy into our operations with an ambition to reach 50 per cent renewable power consumption by 2030 through additional solar and wind projects in Oman. This expands on our current 10 per cent renewable capacity from the landmark solar scheme at Amin, a 100-megawatt Independent Power Producer (IPP) project which provides energy for our interior activities,” the Managing Director said.

Also as part its revitalised energy transition strategy, PDO plans to explore opportunities to support

carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS), decommission some of its cogeneration units and enhance its energy conservation and efficiency measures, Phimister said.

“At the same time, gas production is proposed to be boosted to help meet strong demand growth, as well as serve as a “bridge to a cleaner energy future,” the Managing Director said.

He cited in this regard PDO’s mega projects at Rabab Harweel and Yibal Khuff, which have helped raise the company’s gas output by more than 10 million cubic metres a day. Further, in conjunction with a strategy to reduce gas consumption for power generation, all routine gas flaring will be brought to an end by 2027, he noted.

Additionally, PDO aims to support the use of hydrogen-based alternatives to meet its energy requirements. To this end, the company is seeking to partner in the development of hydrogen supply and distribution projects through the National Hydrogen Alliance (Hy-Fly), a strategic public-private collaboration.

“Key opportunities include hydrogen blending into natural gas pipelines to reduce emissions, or as a substitute for natural gas boilers, heaters and furnaces with hydrogen fuel cells. We are investigating the use of produced water from our oil fields as feedstock to hydrogen electrolyzers, thus also removing the energy consumption for deep water disposal,” Phimister added.

OQ launches RO 3 million social investment projects

MUSCAT: Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, presided over the launch of OQ’s Social Investment Projects in Musandam Governorate.

The ceremony was attended by walis, members of the State Council and Majlis Ash’shura and some officials of OQ Group.

The chief guest was briefed about the social investment projects carried out by OQ, a global integrated energy group, in the wilayats of the governorate.

OQ has delivered a number of projects with a



value amounting to about RO 3 million as part of its social investment commitments.

Commenting on OQ’s social investment projects, Ashraf bin Hamad al Mamari, CEO of Human Resources, Technology and Culture at OQ, said: “These projects embody the social responsibility of OQ and its commitment towards the local communities it operates in. The projects enhance the efforts made to provide services as part of the development projects carried out by the government of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.”

Royal Decree ratifies Maha Energy’s stake sale in Block 70

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, DEC 13

Swedish upstream energy firm Maha Energy has announced that its sale of a 35-per cent participating interest in Oman’s Block 70 to Mafraq Energy LLC has been approved following the issuance of Royal Decree 74/2022.

Block 70, located in central Oman, is a 639 km2 onshore block that includes the shallow undeveloped Mafraq heavy oil field.

The Block is located in the middle of the oil producing Ghaba Salt Basin.

Following the completion of the transaction, Maha will retain 65 per cent participating interest



and will remain the operator of Block 70.

The Mafraq field – estimated to hold around 35 million barrels of recoverable oil – is the main hydrocarbon prize in Block 70, which Maha Energy acquired as part of the 2019-20 licensing round of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

Last month, Maha Energy

revealed that pair of wells targeting the Mafraq heavy oilfield yielded positive results in the form of “strong oil shows”. In a statement, Maha Energy CEO Jonas Lindvall said production testing of the wells will commence as soon as transportation and processing agreements are finalised and approved by the Omani government.

Tasees SMEs eligible for ASMED Jahiziah scheme



MUSCAT: Reaching yet another milestone in its endeavour to enhance entrepreneurship and innovation in the Sultanate of Oman, Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa’s ‘Tasees’ pre-incubation programme has been granted ‘approved’ status for the Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development’s (ASMED) popular Jahiziah scheme.

This breakthrough makes every small medium enterprise (SME) owner undergoing the programme eligible to apply for a loan with Oman Development Bank (ODB) under the Jahiziah scheme, at just two per cent for 10 years. ASMED’s conditions for being eligible to apply for the scheme include nationality (must be Omanis), having a project idea ready for implementation, and attending the entire length of a training programme, such as that conducted by ‘Tasees’. Participants must also prepare a file on the project idea and pass an evaluation to be eligible for the ODB loan under the Jahiziah scheme.

‘Tasees’ Pre-incubation Training Programmes introduce budding as well as existing SME owners having creative and feasible ideas, to business essentials that help them transform their preliminary idea or concepts into viable product or service offerings. Eventually leading them to form real-time businesses, within specific phases. Discussing the role played by ‘Tasees’

in SME development and empowerment, Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group said, “‘Tasees’ has helped nurture the dreams of aspiring Omani entrepreneurs and paved the way for several innovative businesses.

With small businesses fast becoming the backbone of local communities and an engine for the national economy under Oman’s Vision 2040, it is important to ensure that SMEs have access to the right financial resources, insights and training. Eshraqa’s ‘Tasees’ programmes have been designed in line with this; and we are extremely pleased that the participants of the pre-incubation programme now have the opportunity to avail of ASMED’s renowned Jahiziah scheme.” Haitham bin Khalid al Qarni, Assistant Manager for Development and Empowerment, ASMED stated, “Our approval of Eshraqa’s ‘Tasees’ Pre-incubation programme comes as a continuation and translation of the efforts made by ASMED to enhance the growth of the national economy.

Eshraqa ‘Tasees’ Pre-Incubation have been developed keeping up with the needs of the SME sector, and aim to enable the sector to enhance their capabilities. Like Eshraqa’s ‘Tasees’, we encourage other private sector companies to come forward and do their bit in working with SMEs as a part of their social responsibility initiatives.”

NBO signs MoU with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning

MUSCAT: Building partnerships to connect its customers to new opportunities, National Bank of Oman (NBO) and its Islamic banking window, Muzn, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

The MoU aims to facilitate the financing of property on lands made available by the Government to Omani citizens through Sorouh Initiative for Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods launched by the Ministry in 2019.

The memorandum was signed by Engineer Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing and Abdullah bin Zahran al Hinai, NBO’s Chief Executive Officer.



Through this collaboration, NBO and Muzn Islamic Banking will offer competitive deals of housing finance to eligible individual as well as a range of products that meet their different needs.

The packages will consist of

home loans and Shariah law-compliant home financing plans at competitive interest and financing rates to purchase lands or properties that are completed or under construction.

Tariq Atiq, Chief Retail

and Digital Banking Officer at National Bank of Oman, said, “This public-private partnership is aligned with one of our main aims which is to serve our customers. By making affordable housing financing solutions available, we contribute to the overall well-being of our communities and ensure sustainable development and economic growth.”

NBO has long been an active participant in initiatives that add value to the development of communities and sustainable growth and diversification of the national economy. The bank will continue to seize opportunities and work together with key partners to unlock opportunities that drive progress and create value for Oman and its people.

MHD-ITICS Chairperson receives Change Maker of the Year and TAS Icon awards

MUSCAT: Aimed at advancing achieving growth, progress and innovation in Oman, the Infrastructure, Technology, Industrial and Consumer Solutions cluster of Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC (MHD-ITICS), supported the TAS Conclave as the Presenting Partner.

The event was held under the auspices of the Guest of Honour, HH Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, the Secretary-General of Oman’s General Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers on December 5, at Intercity Hotel, Muscat.

As representatives of MHD-ITICS, Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, the Chairperson, Jayaprakash Menon, Chief Executive Officer, Mohammed bin Abdallah al Kharousi, Chief Information Officer, Mohsin bin Talal al Bahrani, Director and Talal al



Bahrani, Senior General Manager, Office Products Division attended the conclave.

In recognition of her extensive contributions and the critical role she continues to play in empowering the women of Oman, Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Darwish received the ‘TAS Icon’ award and the ‘Change Maker of the Year’ title during the event.

Moreover, Honourable

Lujaina was ranked first on TAS Icons Magazine’s list of the 10 most influential and inspiring people in Oman. As a further accomplishment, MHD-ITICS was named the ‘Most Valuable Company of the Year’, a highly coveted award at the TAS Business Awards. “It is an honour for me to have won these two prestigious awards. As a woman, I strongly believe in empowering women.

Consequently, I have always been passionate about supporting and curating initiatives aimed at addressing women’s education and economic empowerment. My work aims to ensure that women feel valued, supported and respected.

Even at MHD-ITICS, we have ensured the creation of gender-balanced leadership by increasing the number of women in managerial roles, including in our most senior executive roles. I am dedicated to maintaining the pace of change,” said Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Darwish.

“Recognition of our diligent work as an organisation is also very encouraging. As the ‘Most Valuable Company of the Year’, receiving this award affirms our direction and encourages MHD-ITICS to keep striving despite the challenges we face every day,” added Honourable Lujaina.

Bank Muscat Money Market Fund crosses RO 75 million AUM

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat Money Market Fund, Oman’s first and only money market fund, has crossed a significant milestone with its Assets Under Management (AUM) crossing RO 75 million, and recording asset growth of almost 70 per cent during 2022.

The fund, thus became the largest open-ended fund in Oman and one of the largest funds in the GCC. This growth in the fund’s assets demonstrates the growing popularity of the fund among investors, supported by its return profile and excellent service standards.

The fund offers an opportunity for investors to invest their short-term cash surpluses at attractive rates of return. For reference, the rates of return offered by the fund has been in the range of 3.5 per cent per annum to 4 per cent per annum over the last two years (net of expenses). Thus the investors could benefit from an additional tool of liquidity management



and earn attractive rates of return by investing in Bank Muscat Money Market Fund. The fund offers daily liquidity with no minimum or maximum holding period. Investors can subscribe to the fund with a minimum subscription amount as low as RO 500 per investor including individuals and institutions. Further, the fund does not charge any entry or exit load to investors and has a proven track record of performance for more than 10 years as shown in the chart below.

The fund predominately invests in short to medium term deposits and fixed-income instruments of leading banks in Oman and GCC region and its investments are primarily denominated in Omani Rials and US Dollars.

The fund is regulated by the Capital Market Authority, Oman and is an open-ended fund with its Net Asset Value (NAV) being published on a daily basis on the Bank Muscat website as well as the Muscat Stock Exchange website so that investors can track

the value of their investments on a regular basis.

Interested investors may contact the fund’s Investor Servicing Desk at 24768064 or through email at assetmanagement@bankmuscat.com to understand the process to subscribe into the fund.

Please refer to the prospectus of Bank Muscat Money Market Fund to understand the risks involved and other details related to the investment in this fund. The prospectus of the fund is available on www.bankmuscat.com.

Bank Muscat’s Asset Management business has a proven track record of successful operations for almost 29 years and is today the largest asset manager in Oman and one of the leading asset managers in the GCC region, with approximately \$2.5 billion of AUM. It offers tailored investment solutions across asset classes including equity, fixed income, real estate and private equity investments.

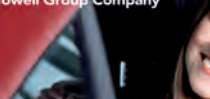
Alizz Islamic Bank wins award for women’s empowerment

MUSCAT: In appreciation of the bank’s leading role in the empowerment of Omani women, Alizz Islamic Bank recently won the Award for Women’s Empowerment in the Islamic Banking Sector at the *Al Mara Magazine Women Excellence Awards* that was held at the Sheraton Hotel Muscat under the auspices of the Honourable Lujaina bint Mohsin Darwish, State Council Member. The award was received by Janaab Sayyida Nadira al Said, Head of Digital Banking on behalf of Alizz Islamic Bank.

Alizz Islamic Bank was given the award in recognition of its continued provision of exclusive, exceptional sharia-complaint services and products to its female customers. Alizz Islamic Bank provides exclusive banking female banking services for women under the name ‘Hiyya’, which provides women with the best offers that meet all their investment, health and financial needs and provide them with bank cards with exclusive benefits and a diversified world of discounts and specials offers like spas, resorts, beauty centres, cosmetics retailers, health clubs, gyms, exclusive perfume stores, clothes and accessories shops, home décor stores, restaurants, florists and quick service at all branches of Alizz Islamic Bank.

On the other hand, Hiyya female customers receive free takaful insurance services specially designed for women to cover some of the most important cancers from which women suffer and other associated diseases and provide insurance cover for alternative medical opinion.





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A close-up of a hand on a black steering wheel. In the background, a small white toy car with red and white striped accents is visible.

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An advertisement for property rental services. It features a 3D orange humanoid figure on the left, holding a blue and white megaphone. The background is white with a red border. A grey banner at the top left contains the text 'HAVE A PROPERTY'. A red banner with a white border, tilted upwards, contains the text 'FOR RENT?' in large, bold, yellow letters. Below this, the text 'Advertise with us.' is written in black. At the bottom right, a red banner contains the text 'Contact us on:' in white, followed by the large yellow number '99639264'.

The image is a business card for SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING CO. It features a logo on the left consisting of a stylized 'S' and 'K' intertwined. To the right of the logo, the company name is written in Arabic 'سماء الخضراء للتجارة' and English 'SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING'. Below the name, the word 'SERVICES:' is followed by four blue rectangular boxes with white text: 'PIPING SYSTEMS', 'VALVES', 'DRAINS', and 'INTERCEPTORS'. At the bottom, contact information is provided: 'Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax: 24503566', 'Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com', and 'Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com'.

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Observer

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER



MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saud bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al Habsi (pictured), Chairman of the Administrative Judiciary Court Shabib Al Mukhtar

Said bin Khalifa al Busaidi, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court Shabib Al Mukhtar

bin Abdullah bin Issa al Harthy took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Thursday. **SEE ALSO P5**

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH



MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Renaissance and in commemoration of the memory of its founder late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a sixth series of new RO 50 banknote, which will begin circulation this month.

CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. **TURN TO P4**

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SAMUEL RUTY

MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are falling on deaf ears.

A drive around the downtown Muscat and its adjoining areas reveals how recklessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder.

While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many are not.

In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves.

are not. In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves.

scare away a people at a sad hour. The Supreme Committee and Ministry of Health said it more than enough times that social distancing is the best way to aid spread of COVID-19.

While everyone here, Hamed said, attitude of some is not acceptable. They paved the way for the spread of infection. Even not have the time to lay charges against offenders, as he can assure that he told the Observer.

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

and in some cases, it is necessary to police the behaviour of other people as well," said Hamed al Wabaili, who stopped his car to

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FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2020

DHUL QAADA 18,

MARAFIQ HOSTS GATHERING OF STAKEHOLDERS IN DUQM

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 13

The Centralised Utilities Company (Marafiq), a joint venture between OQ and Gulf Energy Development Corporation of Thailand, organised the first annual gathering with its government and private partners in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The event was presided over by Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

In a press statement, Al Dheeb stressed that Marafiq stands as one of the companies supporting OPAZ's plan to attract investments to SEZ at Duqm through its package of services provided for industrial, commercial and tourist projects in the Zone.

"OPAZ is joining hands with its partners in SEZAD to create an attractive investment environment for local and foreign companies to start investing in the Zone, which is witnessing continuous growth in the value of investments," Al Dheeb explained.

Hilal bin Ali al Kharousi, Chairman of Marafiq Company, pointed out, "Marafiq is one of the companies formed by OQ Group within the integrated system that has boosted the readiness of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm to attract giant industrial and strategic projects such as Duqm Refinery (OQ8) and the Crude Oil Storage Park project in Ras Markaz."

He further stated, "Marafiq will support achieving SEZAD's objectives to attract local and foreign investments. This is



reflected in playing its significant role by providing services for industrial projects such as electricity, industrial water, cooling water, industrial gas and other facilities under one umbrella."

Eng Abdullah bin Mohammed al Hashimi, Managing Director of Marafiq, stated the company's great support from OPAZ, the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) and OQ Group. This has undoubtedly

contributed to achieving the company's objective, he said.

During his presentation, Eng Al Hashimi touched on the company's achievements over the past years and the projects developed by Marafiq in the Duqm SEZ in the power and water sectors.

Among the key projects is the Integrated Power and Water Plant, which supplies Duqm Refinery with power and industrial cooling water and supplies power to

Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO), which operates the Crude Oil Storage Park in Ras Markaz, located 80 km from the centre of Duqm.

Moreover, with the support of the Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer), Marafiq has set up a mobile power plant operating with gas turbines to provide power for commercial, industrial, tourist and residential projects in the SEZ. Progress is also being made in the establishment of a water distribution network, as well as connecting industrial, commercial and residential properties to the network.

During the event, Al Dheeb launched the company's newly revamped website, which brings key insights about the company and marks a link with other partners and customers.

On the sidelines, Marafiq also

signed an agreement with the Directorate-General of Education in Al Wusta Governorate, and Tawasul Foundation to support the preparation classes in Dhahr School in Duqm and Al Lakbi School in Al Jazir for the academic year 2022/2023 and 2023/2024. This agreement reflects the company's corporate social responsibility towards supporting the local community in Duqm, in particular, and Al Wusta Governorate, in general.

In addition, Marafiq was presented with the (ISO 45001) Occupational Health and Safety Management System Certificate, and the (ISO 14001) Environmental Management System Certificate. The awards affirm Marafiq's commitment to HSE practices and its compliance with the international HSE standards.

FTX founder faces US fraud charges

NEW YORK: Sam Bankman-Fried, the founder and former CEO of crypto currency exchange FTX, was charged by US regulators on Tuesday with defrauding investors in what regulators called "a house of cards," with more charges expected later on Tuesday.

Both the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) alleged Bankman-Fried committed fraud in lawsuits filed on Tuesday. Criminal charges from the US Department of Justice are also expected.

The 30-year-old Bankman-Fried was arrested on Monday at his home in the Bahamas, where FTX was based, ahead of a possible legal fight over whether he would be extradited to the United States.

"While he spent lavishly on office space and condominiums in The Bahamas, and sank billions of dollars of customer funds into speculative venture investments, Bankman-Fried's house of cards began to crumble," the filing said.

The CFTC sued Bankman-Fried, his hedge fund Alameda Research LLC and FTX on Tuesday, alleging fraud involving digital commodity assets.

A spokesperson for FTX Debtors declined to comment.

Separate charges are expected

to be announced by the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District for New York later on Tuesday.

Since at least May 2019, FTX raised more than \$1.8 billion from equity investors in a years-long "brazen, multi-year scheme" in which Bankman-Fried concealed that FTX was diverting customer funds to its affiliated crypto hedge fund, Alameda Research LLC, the SEC alleged.

While the public believed Bankman-Fried's "lies" and sent billions of dollars to FTX, he improperly diverted customer funds to his hedge fund, the SEC said in a court filing. He continued to divert FTX customer funds even as it was increasingly clear that Alameda and FTX could not make customers whole, the SEC said. Representatives for Bankman-Fried declined comment. Bankman-Fried has apologised to customers and acknowledged oversight failings at FTX, but said he doesn't personally think he has any criminal liability.

Bankman-Fried founded FTX in 2019 and rode a cryptocurrency boom to build it into one of the world's largest exchanges of the digital tokens. Forbes pegged his net worth a year ago at \$26.5 billion, and he became a substantial donor to US political



FTX Group CEO John J. Ray III waits to begin his testimony before a US House Financial Services Committee hearing investigating the collapse of the now-bankrupt crypto exchange FTX after the arrest of FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried (inset), on Capitol Hill in Washington on Tuesday. – Reuters

campaigns, media outlets and other causes.

A crypto exchange is a platform on which investors can trade digital tokens such as bitcoin.

FTX filed for bankruptcy on November 11, leaving an estimated 1 million customers and other investors facing losses in the billions of dollars. The collapse reverberated across the crypto world and sent bitcoin and other digital assets plummeting.

The SEC alleged Bankman-Fried exempted hedge fund Alameda from the risk mitigation measures he publicly touted, giving the firm special treatment

and a "virtually unlimited 'line of credit' funded by the platform's customers."

The SEC said it was charging Bankman-Fried with violating anti-fraud provisions of US securities laws and would seek a director and officer bar and a penalty against Bankman-Fried. It would also seek to prevent Bankman-Fried from participating in future securities purchases, offers and sales except for his personal account.

"We allege that Sam Bankman-Fried built a house of cards on a foundation of deception while telling investors that it was one of

the safest buildings in crypto," said SEC Chair Gary Gensler.

Bankman-Fried was arrested on Monday evening in the Bahamas and was expected to appear before a magistrate on Tuesday, marking his first in-person public appearance since the stunning collapse of FTX, which filed for bankruptcy in November.

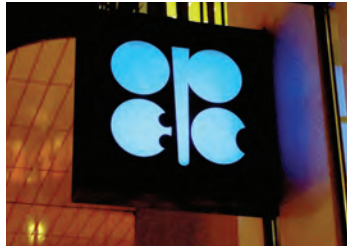
Police in the Bahamas, where FTX was based, said he was arrested on Monday evening at his luxury gated community called the Albany in the capital, Nassau.

Damian Williams, the US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, said in a statement on Monday evening the arrest came at the request of the US government, and an indictment against Bankman-Fried would be unsealed on Tuesday.

The Bahamas' attorney general's office said it expected him to be extradited to the United States. Bahamas Police said he was arrested due to "various financial offences against laws of the United States, which are also offences" in the Bahamas.

It was not immediately clear what would take place at the hearing or whether Bankman-Fried would decide to fight extradition, potentially setting up a high-stakes battle. — Reuters

OPEC sticks to oil demand growth forecasts



LONDON: OPEC on Tuesday stuck to its forecasts for global oil demand growth in 2022 and 2023 after several downgrades, saying that while economic slowdown was "quite evident" there was potential upside such as from a relaxation of China's zero-Covid policy.

Oil demand in 2023 will rise by 2.25 million barrels per day (bpd), or about 2.3 per cent, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) said in a monthly report, after growth of 2.55 million bpd in 2022. Both forecasts were unchanged from last month.

"Although global economic uncertainties are high and growth risks in key economies remain tilted to the downside, upside factors that may counterbalance current and upcoming challenges have emerged as well," it said.

FCA hiring crypto experts as new rules set in



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

The Financial Conduct Authority has been recruiting people with crypto expertise across both junior and senior pay brackets. According to the regulator's website, jobs range from policy specialists, as part of a newly

established wholesale crypto policy unit, through to junior data analysts in digital assets.

Global regulators have been getting closer to drawing up a complete set of rules for the crypto sector.

In October, European Union lawmakers overwhelmingly voted for the start of formal bloc-wide laws to regulate markets in crypto-assets.

Following that, global watchdog the Financial Stability Board made a set of sweeping recommendations to the G20, Barron's reported. These included breaking up big crypto companies that offer a wide range of functions, such as lending, custody and brokerage, as part of one entity.

In the UK, the FCA is still in its recruitment and learning

stage and it had invited crypto firms to attend a "crypto spirit" – a day-long event designed to better educate staff on how the sector works as they decide how to police it. The new job postings have all come in the past two months and were set for workers based in London, Edinburgh and Leeds.

Earlier this year, Rishi Sunak, who was then the chancellor, positioned the UK as a "global hub" for the industry, saying the UK was "open for crypto businesses". Richard Fuller, the economic secretary to the Treasury, appointed last July, has reiterated the government's commitment to that goal.

But companies are still worried about the slow pace of the FCA's registration process for crypto firms wishing to carry

out regulated activities in Britain and the subsequent effects on the "crypto hub" ambition.

One chief executive recently said that it took his company eight months to be assigned a case officer after initially submitting an application in 2021, and a whole year to be fully registered.

Another CEO, Serhil Zhdanov, of crypto exchange Exmo, said the company submitted its application on September 1, but had not been assigned a case officer until six weeks later. He described the process as "a bit slow", and added that the regulator had not told him the assessment would take six months – despite the applications online dashboard saying it would take only three months.

"Sometimes it feels like there is

a huge gap between what is being announced by the government and what is actually being done by regulators," he said.

His comments echoed those of Binance (a cryptocurrency exchange which is the largest in the world in terms of daily trading volume of cryptocurrencies) co-founder He Yi, who said that the UK was the "most stressful" country from the perspective of crypto regulation.

Yi, who now leads Binance's venture capital arm Binance Labs, puts the firm's regulatory woes down to it being a young company with "just a few hundred people globally" at the time of application – one without enough UK-based staff with backgrounds in compliance. It was also "not professional" in the language it needed when applying

for a licence, she said, adding that the UK has "high standards" for regulatory approval.

A spokesperson for the FCA said: "Crypto remains a growth (area) for us and this is why we are recruiting at pace."

Regarding the lag when it comes to onboarding new crypto firms, they said: "We have seen multiple issues with the applications from firms seeking registration, including poor applications and inadequate systems and controls, which has led to increases in registration times." They added: "We will work with firms to help them as much as possible through the process. The FCA supports innovation. That is built on ensuring firms meet our standards, providing consumer and investor confidence."



WEDNESDAY | DECEMBER 14 | 2022 | JUMADA AL ULA 20 | 1444 AH



Sublime Messi and Alvarez put Argentina in final

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 14

MESSI produced another masterclass to inspire Argentina as they demolished Croatia 3-0 in the first semifinal of the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 at the Lusail Stadium on Tuesday.

It was a perfect treat for the majority of Argentine supporters in the official capacity crowd of 88,966 at the Lusail Stadium.

Argentina moved up by two goals in the first-half through a Lionel Messi penalty and a Julian Alvarez strike against an off-colour Croatia.

In the second-half, it was Messi again who stormed through the left flank to dribble past

Croatian defenders and delivered a sharp cross to Alvarez. The striker slotted home his second goal of the night in the 69th minute to give Argentina an unassailable lead of 3-0.

During the first half, Argentina broke through Alvarez into the penalty box with only goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic to beat in the 31st minute. The Croatian keeper prevented the effort with a foul on Alvarez and Italian referee Daniele Orsato pointed to the penalty spot. Livakovic got a yellow in the process.

Captain Messi stepped on to take the penalty and made no mistake in putting Argentina in the lead.

The superstar's left-footed shot gave no chance for Livakovic with the strong shot landing in the top right corner of the net as Argentina went 1-0 up in the 34th minute.

ARGENTINA
MOVED UP BY
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THROUGH A
LIONEL MESSI
PENALTY AND A
JULIAN ALVAREZ
STRIKE AGAINST
AN OFF-COLOUR
CROATIA

In the 37th minute, Croatia won a corner after a move by Borna Sosa. Luka Modric played it short and Brozovic's weak cross was cleared by the Argentine defence and broke into a counter attack.

After winning the ball near their box, Argentina powered ahead on the heels of Messi. The captain found Alvarez who barged and bundled with the ball before slotting it home past a helpless Livakovic to make it 2-0.

In the 42nd minute, Argentina came close to score a third goal.

A good attack from Argentina earned them a corner. The curling corner was met with a slicing header by Brighton player Mac Allister but Livakovic pulled off a stunning save.

In the 25th minute, Enzo Fernandez had a crack at the Croatian goal only to miss the target by a short margin.

Earlier, Ivan Perisic's effort failed to make an impact for Croatia.

Argentine defenders Cristian Romero and Nicolas Otamendi picked up yellow cards in an effort to block some Croatian attacks.

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni substituted Leandro Paredes (69th minute) and Rodrigo De Paul (74th minute) and double goal-scorer Alvarez in the 74th minute.

Lisandro Martinez, Paulo Dybala and Exequiel Palacios were brought in to reinforce the Argentine defence.

Croatian midfield great Modric, who had a quiet game, was substituted in the 80th minute.

Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic made some substitutions and they tried with some efforts at the Argentine penalty box but the defenders stood strong to deny Croatia.



YOUSEFF EN-NESYRI

KYLIAN MBAPPE

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 13

Defending champions France will bank on their experienced squad against an energetic and spirited Moroccan squad who are relishing their first ever appearance in the semifinals of the Fifa World Cup.

France head coach Didier Deschamps will be looking to his star-studded squad to deliver the ticket to the final. Kylian Mbappe, Oliver Giroud, captain and goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, Antoine Griezmann, Ousmane Dembele among others are expected to start the match.

Morocco coach Walid Regragui can also bank on some experienced players like Achref Hakimi, Hakim Ziyech, goalkeeper Yassine Gaunou, striker Youseff En-Nesyri and Romain Saiss in the key encounter. While Les Bleus are bidding to become the first side to retain football's most prized trophy since Brazil 60 years ago, the Atlas Lions could make further history by becoming the first team from outside Europe and South America to reach the final.

The defending champions are unbeaten in their five previous matches against Morocco (three wins, two draws) – all in friendlies or mini-tournaments. The most recent encounter was a 2-2 draw at the

Stade de France in November 2007.

France have competed in six previous FIFA World Cup semifinals, losing the first three – to Brazil in 1958 (2-5) and West Germany in both 1982 (3-3, 4-5 penalties) and 1986 (0-2) – but winning the three most recent – against Croatia in 1998 (2-1), Portugal in 2006 (1-0) and Belgium in 2018 (1-0).

KEY FACTS

This is France's sixth appearance in the Fifa World Cup semifinals in their last nine participations in the finals.

France are the first World Cup holders to reach the semifinals since Brazil in 1998. France have been successful in 15

of their last 17 World Cup knockout ties (including one penalty shoot-out win).

France have won each of their last six World Cup knockout matches.

Morocco are only the third nation outside of Europe or South America to reach the semifinals of the Fifa World Cup, following the USA (1930) and Korea Republic (2002).

Morocco are the 25th nation to compete in the semifinals of the World Cup. They are the only nation in this year's semifinals who have yet to feature in the semifinals.

Morocco are unbeaten in their last six Fifa World Cup matches (W3, D3). This is their best unbeaten streak at the finals.



France face tough exam from African GIANT KILLERS

Morocco in World Cup semi-final

THE ATLAS LIONS WILL AGAIN BE ROARED ON BY THOUSANDS OF PASSIONATE SUPPORTERS IN THE STADIUM ON THE DESERT OUTSKIRTS OF DOHA AND CAN COUNT ON LOCAL QATARI SUPPORT TOO AS THE FIRST ARAB TEAM EVER TO MAKE IT TO THE LAST FOUR

DOHA: Defending world champions and title favourites France face African history-makers Morocco on Wednesday in what is sure to be a high-octane World Cup semifinal at the Al Bayt stadium.

France, who defeated England on Saturday, are looking to become the first team in 60 years to retain the trophy but they can expect fierce resistance from the surprise package of the tournament.

Morocco's giant-killing run to the last four, the first time an African nation has made it this far, has electrified fans at home and delighted the Moroccan diaspora in Europe and beyond.

The Atlas Lions will again be roared on by thousands of passionate supporters in the stadium on the desert outskirts of Doha and can count on local Qatari support too as the first

Arab team ever to make it to the last four.

"It's not over yet, our ambition is to go to the final," former Morocco international Aziz Bouderbala, part of the 1986 World Cup team that reached the last 16, said.

"We are living a historic moment. We are among the four best teams in the world but it's fabulous, it's delirium."

The game will have added spice given France was Morocco's colonial power and hundreds of thousands of people with Moroccan roots live and work in the country.

Morocco coach Walid Regragui, who was born near Paris and spent most of his playing career in the French league, believes his team have become the neutral's favourite.

"We've become the team people feel positive towards at

this World Cup," said Regragui.

"We're showing the world what's possible with less talent, less quality, less money, and what you can achieve with desire, hard work and belief."

France will have fewer fans in the stadium but will be supported in person by President Emmanuel Macron.

Didier Deschamps' team, packed with talent and experience, should progress with some comfort.

But if the France coach, a World Cup winner as a player in 1998, is worried about complacency undoing his team, he need only remind his players how Morocco got to this stage.

In the round of 16, playing aggressive, hard-running football, Regragui's team knocked out 2010 winners Spain on penalties before eliminating highly rated Portugal, leaving

Cristiano Ronaldo in tears.

Morocco had earlier served notice of their intent by topping Group F, beating Belgium and Canada and drawing with 2018 runners-up Croatia.

The have only conceded one goal in the entire competition but it will require another night of heroic defending if they are to keep out a potent France attack.

MBAPPE THREAT

Kylian Mbappe, the tournament's top scorer with five goals, attacks from the left while Olivier Giroud, level with Lionel Messi on four goals, occupies the traditional centre-forward role.

Antoine Griezmann has been outstanding in a deeper, creative role.

France defeated Poland and England in their two knockout games and pre-tournament concerns about their injury

losses — Paul Pogba, N'Golo Kante and Karim Benzema - have dissipated.

But the French will also have to be alert themselves to Morocco's swift counter-attacks, with Chelsea winger Hakim Ziyech on the right flank and Sevilla forward Youssef En-Nesyri looking to exploit weaknesses in Deschamps' back line.

Morocco's willingness to run with the ball and then harry to retrieve should make for a high-energy game.

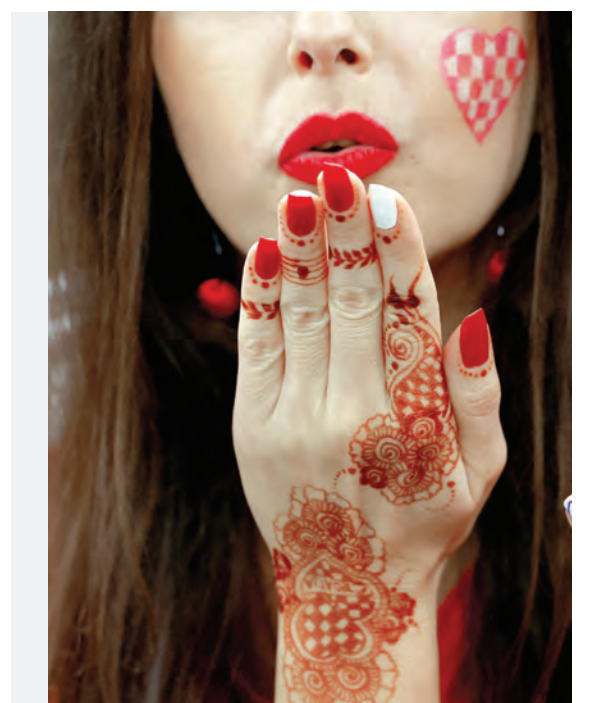
"Obviously we know they are having an exceptional World Cup and have beaten some big nations, so it is a match we will be taking seriously," said France right-back Jules Kounde.

"They are no longer a surprise package, they deserve to be here. We hope to make things difficult for them and qualify." — AFP

F A N



Z O N E



Al Nahdha defeat Sur; Al Bashaer stun Al Musannah

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 13

Al Nahdha remained in the top of the league order as they defeated Sur 2-0 in the 13th week of 2022/23 Omantel league on Tuesday.

At Al Buraimi Sports Complex, Hamed al Azani's men raised their tally to 29 points. The triumph meant, Al Buraimi representative registered their 13th victory in the top domestic league and ended in the top place by winter season.

Abubaker Demba Kamara was the star of the match as he netted both of the goals and delivered three crucial points for his team to secure the top place in the league. On the other hand, Sur suffered their seventh defeat in the league and freed to their existing credit at 16 points.

Oman club was held to a

goalless draw by Al Oruba at Sur sports Complex on Tuesday. The draw did not serve both teams as they were looking for a win to jump in the league order specially Al Oruba who are positioned in the relegation zone. With the draw, Oman club added one point to their kitty to reach 18 points while Al Oruba's credit is in the 14th place with six points.

Al Bashaer edged Al Musannah 2-0 at Nizwa Sports Complex. The win helped Al Bashaer to leave the last place in the league to Al Oruba as they moved to 12th position temporarily. Hosni Mubarak and Ammar al Habsi scored the goals of Al Bashaer.

In today's matches, Suhar will take on Al Suwaiq at their home in Sohar Sports Complex. The win for the visitors will mean 26 points and getting much closer to the top



teams. Al Suwaiq managed to beat Bahla in the previous round 2-0 and the win will encourage them to eye for the third consecutive win. Suhar will get the support from fans to compensate from their last defeat in the previous week as they suffered a 1-0 loss against Oman club in Seeb Stadium.

Al Rustaq will aim to register their eighth triumph in the league as they will meet defending champion Seeb. The venue Seeb Stadium will host the tight encounter and Al Rustaq players will look to clinch the winning points as they performed against Al Basaher in the 12th week. Coach Rasheed Jaber's men will chase for three points and prevent dropping of points as they were held to a goalless draw against Al Nasr in the previous round at Al Saada Stadium.

OCT Ruwi thump Strenserv , OCA's U19 beat MCCC U19

MUSCAT, Oman: OCT Ruwi thump Strenserv by 4 wickets in the A Division League Season 2022-23 powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC and Oman Cricket Academy U19's beat Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre by 144 runs in the U19 Junior League Season 2022-23 powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC.



Mohammed Al Balushi - OCT Ruwi

In the A Division match, OCT Ruwi put Strenserv to bat first. Strenserv's openers started with a steady partnership until Rahul Rajeev lost his wicket to Faraz al Balushi in the 8th over. Looking to post a formidable total, opener Vijesh Velunni gave Strenserv a good start followed by a partnership from Mustaqeem Asif and Abdul Malik to steady the ship. Strenserv kept losing wickets at regular intervals crumbling down to 116 in total courtesy 2 wickets a piece from Faraz al Balushi , Nawed al Balushi and Younis Murad. In response, OCT Ruwi had a cold blow start courtesy fiery spells from Abdul Rauf and Jaleel K to wrap 2 of their batsmen in the powerplay. However, Mohammed al Balushi's sublime half century with Nawed al Balushi for a 60 runs partnership ensured they were near the shore. Shreyash Kankal's crisp spell picking 2 wickets in 2 overs and a runout caused a little bit of sturdiness before OCT Ruwi were through. OCT Ruwi registered their 3rd win of the season. Brief Scores : Strenserv 116/10 in 38.2 overs (Vijesh Velunni 26(38) 4x4 ; Younis Murad 9/2 , Faraz al Balushi 17/2) lost to OCT Ruwi 117/6 in 23.2 overs (Mohammed al Balushi 58(63) 6x4,1x6 ; Shreyash Kankal 18/2) by 4 wickets.

In the U19 match, Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre U19's elected to bowl first. Opener Varshieth Sai held one



Prathiesh HR and Arafat Islam - OCA U19

end of the batting while OCA kept losing wickets at regular intervals being 4 down at the end of 15 overs. Crucial runs by Rahil Habibullah helped OCA steady their ship with Prathiesh Hema Ramesh and Mohd Arafat Islam taking the OCA U19 score to a respectable 207 runs with MCCC U19's Hamza Muhammed bagging 4 wickets , Mustaqeem Asif claiming 3 wickets and Jayesh Mai taking 2 wickets. In response, MCCC U19 batsmen couldn't withstand the bowling attack of OCA U19 crumbling down to 63 in total courtesy of 4 wickets bagged by Mohd Arafat Islam and 2 wickets each claimed by leggie's Prathiesh HR and Narayana Satish. Brief Scores : OCA U19 207/10 in 43.2 overs (Prathiesh HR 48(71) ; Hamza Muhammed 43/4 , Mustaqeem Asif 28/3 , Jayesh Mal 41/2) won against MCCC U19 63/10 in 28.5 overs (Mohd Arafat Islam 10/4 , Prathiesh HR 17/2 , Narayana Satish 1/2) by 144 runs.

Lloris texted Kane after penalty heartache

DOHA: France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris sent a text to England striker Harry Kane after his Tottenham Hotspur team mate blazed a late penalty over the crossbar in his side's 2-1 World Cup quarter-final loss on Saturday.

Lloris, France's captain, shared the joy of the French team as Kane's late miss proved decisive in an intense game.

But having been a team mate of Kane in north London for the best part of a decade, the 35-year-old was quick to reach out to the striker who was crestfallen at the final whistle.

"It's a difficult time for the England national team and Harry," Lloris told reporters on Tuesday as he prepared for



Wednesday's semi-final against outsiders Morocco.

"I don't need to go too much further. We had a text (exchange) after the game. It was not easy to find the words. He needed some

time to rest.

"But I think he can be proud of what he has done for the national team."

Lloris and Kane will be back in action for Tottenham against

Brentford on December 26 when the Premier League swings back into action after its winter shutdown for the World Cup.

Lloris believes Kane, England's joint-record goalscorer and who is closing in on Jimmy Greaves' all-time record for Tottenham, will shrug off the miss and get back to hitting the back of the net for club and country.

"In football history, many top players have missed penalties in their career -- Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo -- but I have no doubt Harry will keep his chin up and help Tottenham and the national team to shine," Lloris said. (Reporting by Martyn Herman, editing by Ed Osmond)

Clippers rout Celtics, Nets cruise past Wizards

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Clippers dealt the Boston Celtics another setback on Monday, beating the top team in the NBA in decisive style, 113-93.

Paul George scored 26 points and Kawhi Leonard scored a season high of 25 points with nine rebounds and six assists as the injury-plagued Clippers showed how good they can be at full strength.

Jalyen Brown scored 21 points and Jayson Tatum added 20 with 11 rebounds for the Celtics, who were coming off a 123-107 loss to the NBA champion Golden State Warriors in an NBA Finals rematch on Saturday.

It's the first time since October that the Celtics have dropped two games in a row, their league-best record falling to 21-7.

The Clippers dialled in defensively on the Celtics' dangerous scorers, limiting Tatum to four-of-12 shooting in the first half as Los Angeles took a 56-47 lead at the break.

Tatum and Brown combined for just three three-pointers in 14 attempts as the Celtics made just nine of 39 from beyond the arc.

Leonard said the strong defensive display was "a group effort by everybody."

"Being locked in to their plays, making sure that Tatum is getting double-teamed and Brown is seeing a lot of hands when he shoots the basketball, that's what it took."

Boston coach Joe Mazzulla said he thought the Celtics "lost our



poise" in the third quarter, which Leonard and George started on a scoring tear.

"But the margin for error is small," Mazzulla said. "When you get great looks and you don't make them you have to find other ways to win."

Elsewhere, the Brooklyn Nets cruised to their fourth straight victory as Kevin Durant's 30 points fuelled a 112-100 win over the Wizards in Washington.

The Nets, who battled through early season struggles that saw coach Steve Nash sacked then dealt with the suspension of Kyrie Irving in an anti-Semitism row, have now won eight of their last nine games.

"We're building something," Durant said. "We've got to keep

fine-tuning."

On Monday, the Nets led by double digits for much of the second half, holding the Wizards to 45 points after the interval.

Durant added nine rebounds and six assists and Irving added 24 points as the Nets dealt the Wizards a seventh straight defeat.

Will Barton scored 22 points off the bench to lead the Wizards, who had 20 points apiece from Kristaps Porzingis and Kyle Kuzma.

The Nets trail Cleveland by just half a game for third place in the East after the Cavaliers were up-ended by Western Conference stragglers San Antonio 112-111.

Josh Richardson scored 24 points to lead the Spurs, who were up by 10 with 4:35 to play and

held on despite a Cavs rally that cut the deficit to two on Donovan Mitchell's putback basket with 53 seconds remaining.

Evan Mobley added a free throw that pulled Cleveland within one with 37.9 seconds left.

But Keldon Johnson blocked a shot by Mitchell, Cleveland's Darius Garland missed a three-pointer and Spurs reserve Devin Vassell came up with a steal to seal the victory.

GRIZZLIES DOWN HAWKS

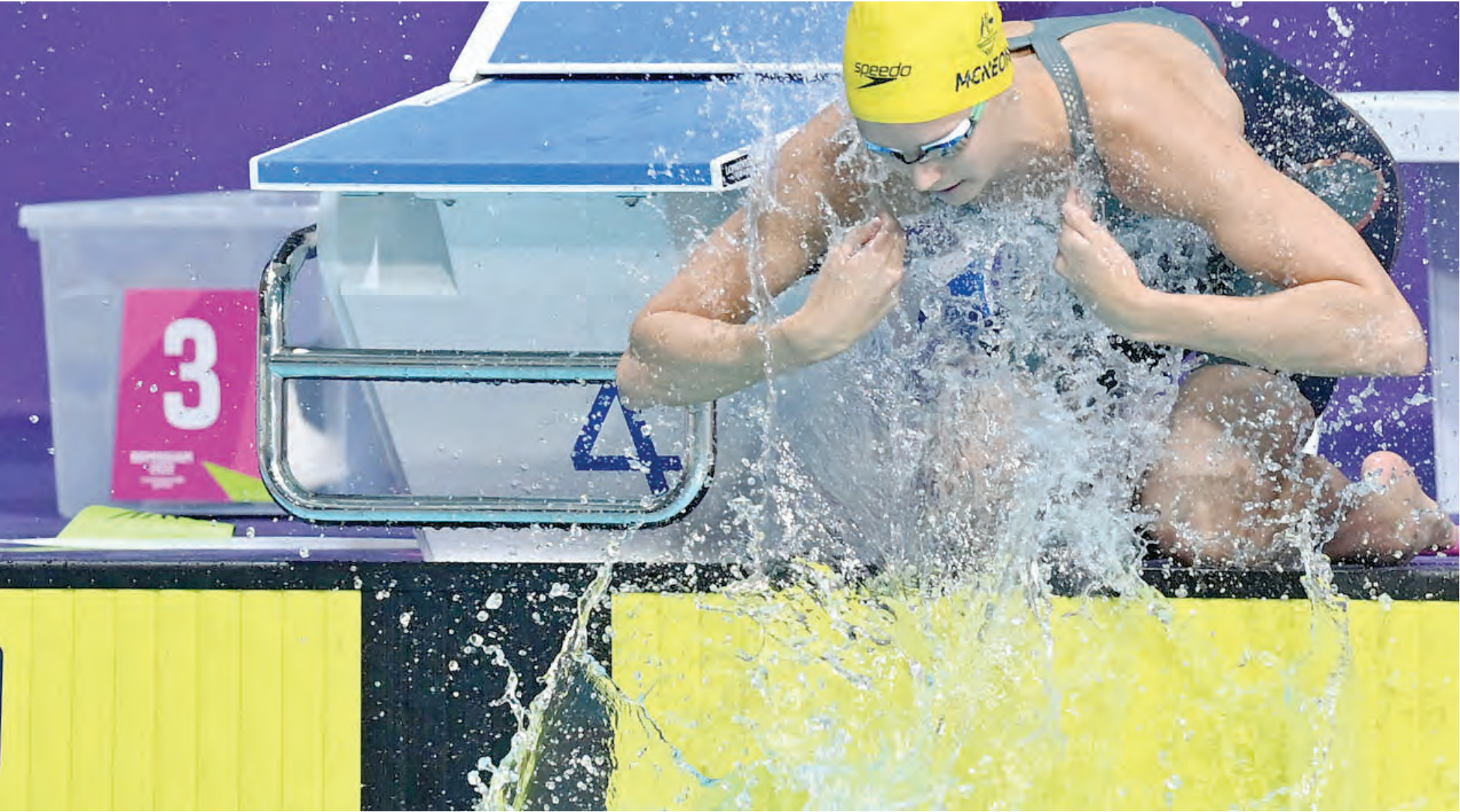
The injury absence of Ja Morant was no problem for the Memphis Grizzlies, who roared to a 128-103 home victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Tyus Jones scored 22 points and Jaren Jackson delivered 15 points, seven rebounds and a career-high eight blocked shots -- which tied the Grizzlies' franchise single-game record shared by Marc Gasol, Pau Gasol and Stromile Swift.

The Grizzlies won their sixth straight and moved within half a game of the New Orleans Pelicans atop the Western Conference.

In Dallas, Luka Doncic scored 38 points and pulled down 11 rebounds in the Mavericks' 121-114 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Tim Hardaway Jr. added 20 points for the Mavericks, who drained 22 three-pointers and withstood a 42-point performance from Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander to snap a two-game losing streak. — AFP



Australia, Italy shatter relay world records at short course championships

MELBOURNE: Emma McKeon led Australia to a new world record in the women's 4x100m freestyle relay on day one of the World Short Course Championships in Melbourne on Tuesday, while Italy shattered the men's mark.

The Australians — Mollie O'Callaghan, Madi Wilson, Meg Harris and McKeon — stopped the clock at 3mins 25.43secs to obliterate the old best of 3:26.53 set by the Netherlands in 2014.

The Americans led through the first 300m but pool queen McKeon -- who won seven medals at the Tokyo Olympics last year, a

feat no other female swimmer has achieved -- reeled in Erika Brown and powered to the wall first. Canada took bronze

"It's extra special doing it in front of a home crowd," said McKeon. "It's great for the sport."

The Italian men were also firing with Alessandro Miressi, Paolo Conte Bonin, Leonardo Deplano and Thoma Cecon outpacing Australia to set a new world record of 3:02.75.

It bettered the previous best of 3:03.03 held by the United States since 2018.

An electric Lani Pallister,

meanwhile, claimed the women's 400m freestyle title for Australia after Chinese defending champion and world record holder Li Bingjie failed to show up.

Li, who was the hot favourite, reportedly has a high fever and missed the heats, as did several other Chinese swimmers, including rising medley star Yu Yiting.

Li shattered Australian Ariarne Titmus's short course record at her national championships in October, clocking 3mins 51.30secs.

In her absence, Pallister

outpaced New Zealand's Erika Fairweather to touch in a personal best 3:55.04.

"It's a dream come true," said Pallister. "My parents are in the stands and winning this first medal in front of a home crowd in Australia is special."

Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Kate Douglass (2:02.12) won the women's 200m medley gold ahead of fellow American Alex Walsh, with Australia's Kaylee McKeown third and Canadian defending champion Sydney Pickrem fifth.

South African Matthew

Sates (1:50.15) took out the men's 200m medley honours, hitting the wall ahead of the USA's Carson Foster. Japanese defending champion and top seed Daiya Seto could only manage fifth.

"I genuinely don't know what to say. I'm so pleased with this swim," said Sates.

Italian great Gregorio Paltrinieri capped an exceptional season by winning the 1500m in 14:16.88, adding to his long course world title in Budapest, where he set a new European record. — AFP

Neymar cleared of corruption over Barcelona transfer

BARCELONA: Brazilian football superstar Neymar was cleared of corruption charges on Tuesday related to his transfer to Barcelona from Santos in 2013.

A court in Spain acquitted all nine defendants in the trial.

In addition to Neymar, this included his parents, FC Barcelona and former club presidents Josep Maria Bartomeu and Sandro Rosell, Santos FC and former president Odilio Rodrigues Filho, and N&N -- the company founded by Neymar's parents to manage his career.

Brazilian company DIS had argued they lost out financially on Neymar's transfer because they owned 40 per cent of Neymar's sporting rights at Santos and believed the true value of the deal had been obscured by those involved.

"According to the court, it has not been proved there was a false contract or that DIS was intended to be harmed," said the court in a statement.

Neymar's high-profile trial got underway in mid-October in Barcelona, just a month before the start of the World Cup in Qatar. — AFP



Qatar to host six-hour endurance race starting in 2024

DOHA: Qatar will host a six-hour endurance race to open the 2024 World Endurance Championship (WEC) season, the chief executive of the organisation that oversees the championships said on Monday.

"We will open the 2024 season here in Qatar... it will be a six-hour format," Frederic Lequien, CEO of Le Mans Endurance Management, said at a news conference, adding that the exact dates of the season have not been set yet.

The deal expands the Gulf Arab state's role in international motorsports as Qatar is already hosting an annual Formula One race for 10 years starting in 2023.

Qatar hopes to expand sports tourism fixtures following the soccer World Cup, which concludes on December 18.

"We are the world centre of football. We want to assure our colleagues here that we will be number one in motorsports," said Akbar al Baker, CEO of Qatar Airways and Qatar Tourism. — Reuters

Australia to launch T20-style teams event

MELBOURNE: Australia will launch a new short-format golf event involving 10 city-based teams that its backers hope will revolutionise the sport and broaden its audience.

The Ultra Golf Championship (UGC) will debut in December 2023, with teams competing over nine holes rather than the usual 18, the PGA Tour of Australasia, which is sanctioning the event, said on Tuesday.

The concept, echoing the rapid-fire Twenty20 format that has shaken up world cricket, was designed by Australian businessman and UGC founder Deke Smith, and will be promoted by the local tour.

"This is an event we are passionate about and it continues to align with our innovation in the game in Australia," PGA Tour of Australasia Tournaments Director Nick Dastey said.

"We know once this world first format has some of the best players in the world showcasing it on TV next year, Ultra Golf Championship will become a part of all golf fans' life through both professional and amateur golf."

The UGC follows the launch of the Saudi-backed LIV series which has lured away many of the sport's biggest names from the established US and European tours by offering massive prize money for 54-hole events.

The UGC is heavily geared towards Asian markets with seven teams from the continent, including Delhi Drivers, Tokyo Royals, Shanghai Jets and Seoul Condors.

Non-Asian teams are the London Lasers, Los Angeles Eagles and New York Tigers.

Four-player teams are split into pairs for the competition, which runs over four days. The scoring format is a major departure from traditional stroke play, with teams given 10 points for a hole-in-one, eight for an albatross, six for an eagle, four for a birdie and two for a par.

The rounds will include four "feature hole opportunities" where teams can earn extra points for the longest drive or double points for winning a nominated "power-play" hole.

After seven minor rounds, the top four teams will play off in a "finals" series.

Organisers have yet to fix dates and venues, and did not offer details of prize money or broadcasting arrangements.

However, they say the format will appeal to a younger audience more amenable to a result "in two hours of golf".

"We see parochial sports fans getting behind their own city team," said founder Smith.

— Reuters



SEMI-FINALS

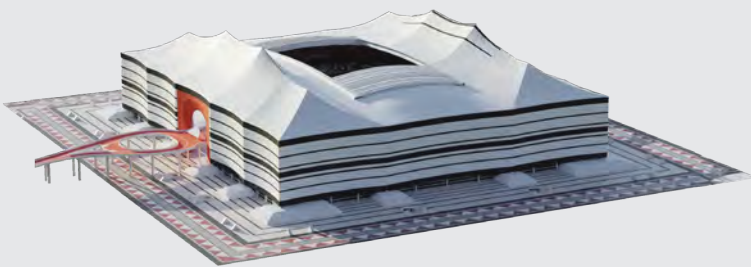


WEDNESDAY, 14 DEC



FRANCE

11:00 PM



MOROCCO

FRANCE

"Les Bleus"

World Cup
WINNER

★ | ★

2018 | 1998

4th

FIFA ranking

7th Semi- Finals



MOROCCO

"Atlas Lions"

World Cup
WINNER

★

0

22th

FIFA ranking

1st Semi- Finals



(Oman Time)



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