

Inflation stands at 1.98% in December

The inflation rate of the Consumers Price Index (CPI) in Oman stood at 1.98 per cent during December 2022. The data indicated a rise in the prices of main groups in December 2022 compared to the corresponding period in 2021, such as food and non-alcoholic beverages by 5.4 per cent, restaurants and hotels by 4.05 per cent, health by 3.82 per cent, furniture, household equipment and household maintenance by 2.27 per cent.

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P10

OMAN FACES STERN TEST AGAINST BAHRAIN TODAY



P14

BANK MUSCAT POST RO 200 M NET PROFIT



P20

SECOND LARGEST SUBTERRANEAN CHAMBER



MUSCAT

INMA GAVE RO 20M FOR SMEs

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (Inma) funded 144 small and medium projects in 2022 to the tune of RO 20 million. Saleh bin Hilal al Maawali, CEO of Inma's fund said that 123 projects worth RO 16 were funded through Inma fund's headquarters at Muscat. Moreover, 9 projects worth RO 3 million were financed through the fund's office at Suhar and 9 projects worth approximately RO 1 million through the fund's office at Salalah.

LONDON

UK TO GIVE HEAVY TANKS TO UKRAINE

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Saturday pledged to provide 14 Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine, making it the first Western country to supply the heavy tanks Kyiv has been calling for. The pledge saw a swift reaction from Russia which warned it would only "intensify" the conflict. Sunak said the tanks were a sign of the UK's "ambition to intensify our support to Ukraine."

SEE P6

LIMA

PERU DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY

Lima was under a state of emergency on Sunday, along with three other regions, as the government responded to weeks-long protests against President Dina Boluarte that have seen at least 42 people killed. The state of emergency, in force for 30 days, authorises the army to intervene to maintain order and suspends several rights.

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INSIDE



RESCUE HOPES FADE AFTER RUSSIAN ATTACK IN DNIPRO

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ATLEAST KILLED 67 PEOPLE IN NEPAL PLANE CRASH

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ROHM MARKS ANNIVERSARY OF HM ACCESSION TO POWER

The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) held a special event on Sunday to celebrate the 3rd anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's Accession to Power in the Sultanate of Oman. The concert saw the participation of the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, led by conductor Hamdan al Shuali alongside Plácido Domingo, as well as the Omani Opera Choir Group and the prestigious Choir Camerata Musicale of Parma. The concert is attended by members of the Royal family, ministers, high-ranking government officials and senior dignitaries.

SEE ALSO P2

\$463m OQ ammonia plant to boost value creation

MUSCAT: OQ, a global integrated energy group, launched its new ammonia plant in Dhofar Governorate on Sunday with an investment cost of about \$463 million and a production capacity of 1,000 metric tonnes per day of liquid ammonia.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

HH Sayyid Marwan toured the facilities of the ammonia plant. He listened to a detailed explanation about the production stages and the role played by the plant in supporting the governmental plans related to the economic diversification policies and the efforts made to maximise the added value of Omani natural resources. Like other strategic development projects of the Group, OQ's ammonia plant in Dhofar contributes to enhancing the in-country added value.

SEE ALSO P13

17 nights of fun, e-sports begin on Thursday

KABEER YOUSUF AND LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JAN 15

Muscat Nights, which will feature laser shows and drones, will boost tourism and add colour to winter nights, organisers said on Sunday. The municipality is looking at a designated site for holding entertainment events in the future editions of the extravaganza, said Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, at the press conference.

Al Humaidi said for the first time e-sports is going to be featured in a major way and many international e-gamers are expected during Muscat Nights.

"A festival like 'Muscat Nights' has a great role in reviving the economy, travel and tourism and creating a space for entertainment and cultural communication, especially in the post-Covid era. Muscat Nights 2023, will be a launching pad for the activities included in Muscat Municipality's agenda during the current year and we are hopeful that the 17 nights would live up to the aspirations of society in all its categories," Al Humaidi said.



LOCATIONS

- Al Qurum Natural Park
- Al Naseem Park
- Oman Automobile Association
- Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre

Muscat Nights will be held from January 19 to February 4 at Al Qurum Natural Park, Al Naseem Park, Oman Automobile Association and Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Briefing the details of the

17 day-day-long festival at the Al Bustan Palace, Ritz-Carlton Hotel in the presence of the representatives from Royal Oman Police (ROP), the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism,

TURN TO P2

Regular fast food consumption linked to fatty liver disease

CALIFORNIA: A new study from the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine has linked the regular consumption of fast food with potentially life-threatening liver disease.

The study suggests that eating fast food can increase the likelihood of developing non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, which causes fat to build up in the liver.

While regular fast food consumption has been linked to obesity and diabetes, researchers say this is one of the first studies to demonstrate a negative impact on the liver as well.

As part of the study, researchers found that people who suffer from obesity or diabetes and also consume 20 per cent of their daily calories from fast food have highly elevated levels of fat in their livers compared to the same subset of people who eat less fast food or avoid it entirely.

The researchers surveyed

roughly 4,000 adults and reviewed their fatty liver measurements and fast-food consumption. For the study, meals from a drive-through restaurant or one without wait staff were considered "fast food." Of those surveyed, slightly more than half (52 per cent) said they consumed some fast food. Of those, 29 per cent received at least one-fifth of their daily calories from fast food. These were the only participants that experienced a rise in liver fat levels, according to the study.

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease can lead to cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver. Cirrhosis can lead to liver cancer or even liver failure

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease can lead to cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver. Cirrhosis can lead to liver cancer or even liver failure.

Dr Ani Kardashian, lead author of the study and an assistant professor of medicine in gastroenterology and liver diseases, said healthy livers usually contain a small amount of fat, but even the slightest increase in fat can lead to non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

— Agencies



ROHM marks anniversary of HM accession to power



MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) held a special event on Sunday to celebrate the 3rd anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's accession to power in the Sultanate of Oman. The concert saw the participation of the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, led by conductor Hamdan al Shua'ili alongside Plácido Domingo, as well as the Omani Opera Choir Group and the prestigious Choir Camerata Musicale of Parma. The concert was attended by members of the Royal family, ministers, high-ranking government officials and senior dignitaries. – ONA

الأوبرا السلطانية
دار الفنون الموسيقية
ROYAL OPERA
HOUSE OF MUSICAL ARTS

An Evening of Jazz
Kenny Garrett
'Sounds of The Ancestors'



19th, 20th January | 7:00 PM

Composer, saxophonist, and flautist Kenny Garrett excels at emotional melodies. The GRAMMY Award-winning jazz musician, is considered one of the top alto saxophonists in the world. His newly released album 'Sounds of the Ancestors', explores an innovation in jazz by involving Yoruba chants and African drums.



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SEASON 2022-2023

17 nights of fun, e-sports begin on January 19



FROM PAGE 1

Chairman of Muscat Municipality and the Head of the Festival Committee told the Observer that the festival is all set to be a complete family entertainment avenue.

“We have been studying the requirements of various communities as well as the Omani population and we have made sure that each one will have something or the other to make their visit an unforgettable one.”

Al Humaidi pointed out that the activities of Muscat Nights are not limited to entertainment, but extend to tourism promotion and means of supporting local industries by providing access for social and cultural communication.

“We wanted this event to enhance innovation among ambitious youth, productive families and business owners by offering all these segments to showcase their products in various locations of Muscat Nights venues,” Al Humaidi said.

Al Humaidi stressed that Muscat Nights aims to strike a balance between identity and modernity.

The venues of Muscat Night's activities have been selected with great precision. Pavilions have been dedicated for global firms to showcase their products. Also, a smartphone app has been designed to book tickets and provide Muscat Nights event schedules prior to the start of the extravaganza.

Speaking about the economic impact of Muscat Nights, Al Humaidi pointed out that the majority of the

event's contracts (90 per cent) have been awarded to local companies.

Al Humaidi affirmed that, when planning Muscat Nights, emphasis was laid on the quality, rather than the number, of activities. “We are discussing with other departments concerned to find a specialised alternative location for entertainment activities in future,” Al Humaidi said.

“We are extremely excited about collaborating with Muscat Municipality for the Muscat Nights. This is our biggest event and we are doing it differently because these kinds of events happen usually in two to three days but this year's event is going to be held for 17 days,” said Mustafa al Ajmi, CEO of 968 Gamez.

“This is going to be a treat. All the events will be announced on our Instagram page @968gamez. The participants can just head to the stall for the activity one is interested in to register and participate. We are all about community. It is pop culture and people always surprise us with new activities,” he said.

“Globally speaking the e-games run into millions in revenue. The growth in revenue has been growing especially during Covid-19. People were staying at home not knowing what to do with their time. Gaming was the thing that kept people entertained,” he pointed out. “We do not say gaming is for a certain age group because people go to that parallel universe and the person is someone younger or someone older. That is gaming and it is making huge strides especially in Oman,” he noted.



Shura reviews draft water law



MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura referred the draft water and sanitary drainage law to the Services and Social Development Committee. The Majlis sought the opinion of the Legal and Legislative Committee regarding legal drafting of the law.

Majlis Ash'shura held its fifth

ordinary meeting of the fourth annual session (2022-2023) held under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman, on Sunday.

The meeting reviewed the final report of the draft law and the opinions of the two committees including details and explanation

of the draft law that aims to upgrade the water and sanitary drainage sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr Hamood bin Ahmed al Yahyaei, Chairman and Rapporteur of the Services and Social Development Committee, presented a detailed explanation



of the draft law. After thoroughly discussing the draft law, the Majlis mandated the Legal and Legislative Committee and the Services and Social Development Committee to review the legal drafting and other aspects of the draft before discussing it at the Majlis's upcoming meetings.

Training programme implemented in Dhofar



SALALAH: The Ministry of Labour on Sunday began implementing the training programme codenamed 'Tamkeen Sahim', third round, in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The five-day programme targets 261 youth from the Governorate of Dhofar, who are appointed on job contracts.

The programme seeks to hone the skills of trainees and comprises many themes. These include defining personal goals, career planning, communication and understanding of personality, mastering functional skills and 4IR skills, developing positive behaviour and improving productivity, learning strategies and leadership skills.

'Tamkeen Sahim' is an empowerment programme that stems from the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to consolidate the principle of decentralisation, develop Omani governorates, encourage the utilisation of scholarly expertise and open up new vistas for investment. — ONA

Device to treat bone marrow complications

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health Acting in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) on Sunday inaugurated the first-of-a-kind Extracorporeal Photopheresis (ECP) device in Oman.

The apparatus helps in the treatment of bone marrow transplantation complications, as well as cases of rejection of biopsy and tissues implanted in the body.

To be installed at the SQUH Blood Diseases Department, the ECP constitutes a major step forward in transfusion medicine. It is a therapeutic procedure



that purifies the blood from the antibodies resulting from the body's rejection of implanted tissues.

The ECP will spare patients the inconvenience of travelling abroad or the ministry's sending patients abroad to receive such treatment, usually for indefinite and prolonged periods.

Besides saving time and cost, the step offers access for integrated healthcare, as the patients often need other forms of intervention after tissue transplant and rehabilitation. — ONA

GCC AIR QUALITY PANEL MEETS



The GCC Air Quality Committee on Sunday held a meeting, headed by the Sultanate of Oman, at the headquarters of the GCC Supreme Council's Consultative Authority. The meeting discussed a spectrum of topics, including environmental approaches of the GCC, requirements of the current environmental situation and initiatives of the strategic plan of environment ministers committee, among other topics. It also touched on recommendations submitted to the committee. — ONA

Al Buraimi records highest inflation rate at 3.3 per cent

MUSCAT: The inflation rate of the Consumers Price Index (CPI) in the Sultanate of Oman stood at 1.98 per cent during December 2022, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data indicated a rise in the prices of main groups in December 2022 compared to the corresponding period in 2021, such as food and non-alcoholic beverages by 5.4 per cent, restaurants and hotels by 4.05 per cent, health by 3.82



per cent, furniture, household equipment and routine household maintenance by 2.27

per cent, miscellaneous goods and services by 1.87 per cent, clothing and footwear by 1.09 per cent, recreation and culture by 1.05 per cent, housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels by 0.63 per cent, transport by 0.41 per cent and education by 0.05 per cent.

Meanwhile, inflation declined in the group of communications by 0.06 per cent, and stabilised in the tobacco group.

Prices also went up for oils and fats by 19.49 per cent, meats by 8.42 per cent, milk, cheese and eggs by 7.65 per cent, fruits by 6.51 per cent, non-alcoholic beverages by 5.43 per cent, bread and cereals by 5.10 per cent, other foodstuff by 2.75 per cent and sugar, jam, honey and sweets by 2.33 per cent.

Prices dropped in the main groups of fish and seafood by 5.80 per cent and vegetables by 1.03 per cent.

— ONA

Recall Campaign for Bissell® Cordless Wet Dry Vacuum Floor Cleaners with Model Numbers 25825 and 2588E

Date of the Campaign: 16/01/2023
Campaign Type: Safety
Campaign Section: Electricity
Product Description: Bissell® Cordless Wet Dry Vacuum Floor Cleaners with Model Numbers 25825 and 2588E

Photo of the affected product

The Number of Affected Products	Model Number/Year of Production	Product Type
135 units (approximately)	Model Numbers 25825 and 2588E	Cordless Wet Dry Vacuum Floor Cleaners

Description of defect:
Through BISSELL's internal quality procedures and field monitoring, it has identified that some circuit boards inside the affected products' battery pack may be susceptible to the creation of localized hot spots. In a small number of cases, this could lead to a risk of the circuit board overheating or catching fire

Procedure:
BISSELL is asking that consumers check the model number against the details above and, if their product is affected, immediately remove the affected product from the charging base, stop using it and visit ([recall.BISSELL.com](https://recall.bissell.com)) to arrange for a free replacement. The model number of the affected products is visible when the clean water tank is removed.

For more information:
Please visit ([recall.BISSELL.com](https://recall.bissell.com))

Contact data:
If you need additional information please visit ([recall.BISSELL.com](https://recall.bissell.com)) or call us on 24434910

TENDER NOTICE

Oman Development Bank is the leading player in financing projects that add value to national development and providing facilities for micro, SMEs and major ventures.

Oman Development Bank SAOC seeks tenders for the following services from reputed insurance companies approved by the Capital Market Authority, Sultanate of Oman.

Tender No	Description of service	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date for Purchasing Tender	Last Date of Submission of Tender
12/2023	1 Medical insurance for bank employees and their families 2 Insurance on the bank assets 3 Vehicle insurance 4 Housing loan insurance 5 Fidelity insurance	500 RO Non-Refundable	19/01/2023	26/01/2023

◆ Interested companies may obtain tender documents from the Head Office of the bank (Human Resource Department) located in MBD Area near the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Investment Promotion on any working day (Sunday to Thursday) between 8 AM and 2 PM on payment of non-refundable tender fee.

◆ The Tender enclosed in a sealed envelope addressed to Human Resource Department, Oman Development Bank, should be submitted to the Human Resource Department at third Floor by 2:00 PM on or before 26/01/2023.

◆ Oman Development Bank SAOC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the offers, extend the tender closing date, modify tender document(s) or cancel the tender without assigning any reason. Tender Committee's decision shall be final and binding.

Bank Name: Oman Development Bank
Bank Account: 000-10121129300-45
Bank Name: Bank Muscat
Corporate Branch
Swift Code: BMUSOMRXXXX

OMAN DEVELOPMENT BANK SAOC

Post Box 3077, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman. 24726915 j.yaqoobi@odb.om odb.om



DIGITALISATION OF SERVICES

IT IS POSSIBLE TO TRANSFER THE OWNERSHIP OF A VEHICLE ONLINE FROM ONE INSTITUTION TO ANOTHER OR BETWEEN AN INDIVIDUAL AND AN INSTITUTION THROUGH THE ROP WEBSITE

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The traffic department of Royal Oman Police (ROP) has not only managed to reduce the number of road accidents by 81 per cent over a period of nine years, it has also gone through a complete transformation while providing services to citizens and residents. This is in line with the government's target to digitise 80 per cent of basic services by 2025, apart from plans to launch a national portal for electronic services by the end of 2023 for one-stop shop for services. Currently, most traffic services such as vehicle registration and renewal, vehicle licence transfer service, vehicle licence printing, technical examination, issuance and renewal of driver's licence and driver's education licence, and booking test appointments among others, are now provided

online or via mobile applications. Majid, a PRO, told the Observer, "In today's era of high-speed Internet and wired economy, waiting in queues for some basic services in a country like Oman is just not acceptable. We should make all services remotely available any time," he says as he visits ROP offices for some work very often. On Sunday, ROP said that it is possible to transfer the ownership of a vehicle online from one institution to another or between an individual and an institution through its website. ROP said the service available for transport vehicles with a number plate for individuals will be for private and commercial vehicles and motorcycles, while for companies and institutions, it will be applicable for commercial vehicles only. The traffic department said that the service is available

through the ROP website and conditions include that the vehicle licence must be valid, the seller must ensure that there is an activated phone number registered (certified) in the civil status system, to obtain the secret code (OTP) to confirm the signature of the first party. Vehicle insurance transfer procedures must be completed, and the vehicle must be insured with approved insurance companies. Vehicles that are subject to technical examinations must have passed the inspection. ROP also further stated that the records of the service beneficiaries and the vehicle whose ownership is to be

transferred should be free of any restrictions that prevent the transfer process electronically in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Traffic Law. The seller must personally submit a request to transfer ownership of a vehicle and must approve the deal using the digital certification method or he legally authorised a person. Ratification of approval and payment of fees must be the buyer in person or by whoever is authorised by him legally. The buyer must ratify and pay the transaction fees within 24 hours from the moment the transaction is created by the seller, and the transfer procedures are considered canceled if they are not ratified by the buyer within the specified period.





Oman at Tunis Arab Media Conference



TUNIS: The Ministry of Information participated in the activities of the second session of the Arab Media Conference, which was held on Friday at the headquarters of the Arab States Broadcasting Union in the Tunisia.

Mohammed bin Fahd al Harthy, President of the Arab States Broadcasting Union, pointed out the need to confront digital domination and to confront it firmly, given its negative impact on the nations and on the Arab identity.

Abdullah bin Saeed al Shueili, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Information in Dhofar Governorate, stated that this forum will establish national policies and an Arab strategy to deal with global digital dominance. He also noted that the Sultanate of Oman has a pioneering experience in the digital field.

The two-day conference, titled “Global Digital Domination and Arab Ways to Confront It,” will discuss digital challenges in the Arab world in the cultural, social, media, cybersecurity, child protection and personal privacy, in addition to reviewing global experiences in this field. — ONA

Special e-service for entrepreneurs and SME owners launched

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@AfrahAlBalushia

A special service for entrepreneurs and owners of SMEs was launched by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority.

The Authority will receive suggestions, observations and ensure a clear methodology in dealing with requests from the beneficiaries.

The service is an electronic system that organises and documents the process of receiving, managing and following up various requests.

These also include inquiries, observations, suggestions, complaints and opinions, which contribute to the implementation of effective governance and the continuous improvement of the services provided by the Authority.

Ahmed bin Humaid al Asimi, Director, Customer Services Department, said “The service

requests and proposals stems from the commitment of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority to provide the best services to the beneficiaries of entrepreneurs and SME owners and its endeavour to develop its performance in a way that achieves the satisfaction of the beneficiaries.

The opinions and observations will be a reference that the Authority takes into account and contribute to improving its performance and quality.”

The platform allows the beneficiary to specify the classification, whether it is an inquiry, observation, proposal or opinion related to one of the services provided by the authority, so that the concerned administrative division in the authority plays its role in diagnosing and reviewing the application and communicating with the applicant within a period based on the classification of the application.



The beneficiary can access this service through the website of the Authority through the services tab, or through the online portal for entrepreneurs’ services.

A special page also launched to provide the Commercial Franchise Service, with the aim of spreading and strengthening the culture of commercial franchise in the Sultanate of Oman and encouraging distinguished Omani brands to expand and spread worldwide.

It is also expected to enhance the contribution of the Omani Commercial Franchise to the growth, diversification and empowerment of local economy.

Commercial Franchise is an agreement in which a project or an existing trademark grants a licence to a second party to operate and conduct commercial activity using the same first brand name, whether using the same name, manufacturing system, distribution, production, sales, or all of these elements.

This is done in exchange for the main trademark and obtains a percentage of the profits and revenues or a certain value provided in return for granting the franchise, or both.

It is worth noting that the authority launched, at the end of 2022, about seven electronic services that serve the owners of SMEs in Oman, and are represented in the economic feasibility study, entrepreneurship card, the mentoring programme, marketing and promotion, the training programme, general and specialised consulting programme, and usufruct lands.

■ THREE HELD IN DRUG CASE



The Directorate-General for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in cooperation with the Special Task Police arrested three people including a male citizen in connection with drug possession for the purpose of trafficking and using. The defendants had smuggled drugs into the country in connivance with an international drug cartel. An amount of 36 kg of morphine, hashish and psychotropic tablets were found in their possession. Legal action against the defendants is underway.

Al Mudhaibi hosts 2nd edition of global sculpture symposium today

AL MUDHAIBI: The Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi in the Governorate of North Al Sharqiyah will host from January 16-25 the second edition of the International Sculpture Symposium.

This is being organised by the Sports Team of the Al Mudhaibi Sports Club, under the supervision of the Governor’s Office of North Al Sharqiyah.

The global event aims to spread the culture of sculpture in the Omani society so that the art will gain wide popularity.

The meeting also mains to promote the various types of arts and for the forum to be supportive and motivating Omani youth.

In addition the forum also aims to introduce the the participating international artists from different countries of the world about Omani culture, customs and traditions.

The forum will see the participation of 17 male and female sculptors from 11 countries, including six sculptors from the Sultanate of Oman, and one sculptor each from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Sudan, Jordan, Tunisia, Iran, Australia, Italy, Slovenia and Tanzania. The forum will place the Sultanate of Oman on the map of international forums and exhibitions in the world of sculpture.

The organisers seeks to create an international artistic and cultural movement represented in the village of Khadra Bani Difaa in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, in addition to displaying sculptural works in an art museum of contemporary sculpture with nature.

The International Symposium



for Sculpture includes many events, entertainment activities, cultural evenings, tourist trips for artists. The visitors will also be able to acquaint the cultural aspects in the governorates of Oman and the aesthetics that abounds them.

A group of Omani artists in various fields of art, university and college students, and visitors in general are expected to attend throughout the days of the forum. — ONA

MOORE STEPHENS LLC
NOTICE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF LIQUIDATION OF
ARABIAN SUPPLY CENTER LLC
(AS APPEARED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE NO 1476)

Moore Stephens LLC, announces the liquidation process of Arabian Supply Center LLC, bearing commercial registration number 1318521, in accordance with the decision taken by the Company’s Members on 27 November 2022. The liquidators alone have the right to represent the Company under liquidation before third parties, and all parties are to confirm with the liquidator for all matters concerning the company’s business at the following address:

Office No. 41, 4th Floor, Building No. 1022, Way No. 1013;
Al Walaj Street, Al Qurum
P O Box 933, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24061000, Fax: 24061099

By this announcement, the liquidator calls the company’s creditors to submit their claims against the company, together with the supporting documents, to the above address within 180 days from the date of publishing this announcement for the first time, and any debtors should settle the company’s rights with the liquidator on the address above.

Moore Stephens LLC
Official Liquidators of Arabian Supply Center LLC
(Under voluntary liquidation)

THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN

Tender Advertisement

The Royal Guard of Oman, announces the following tender:-

Tender Reference	Subject	Tender Document Value	Bid Submission Date
01/2023	Construction of New Office Building for DG Finance at RGO HQ, Seeb	RO 1,000/- non-refundable	13 th March 2023

Specialized cantracting Companies registered with the Government Tender Board, having Grade 1 & above, can collect the tender document from the Tender Committee Secretariat, The Royal Guard of Oman, Seeb during working hours from **Monday 16th to Thursday 26th January 2023.**

Wax-sealed Tenders addressed to the Chairman - Tender Committee should be submitted to RGO before 1200 hours on the submission date along with a Tender Bond in the name of The Royal Guard of Oman equivalent to 1% (One Percent) of the tender value from any registered Bank in the Sultanate of Oman, valid for a period of 120 days from the date of bid submission. The tenderer should not reveal his identity other than the tender title and the address mentioned below.

No Tender will be accepted after the submission date. Tender submitted without the bond will be rejected.

The Royal Guard of Oman reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender without giving reasons.

Tender Committee
P.O Box 381, C.P.O,
Postal Code 111



AT LEAST 25 CONFIRMED DEAD AFTER SATURDAY’S RUSSIAN STRIKE

Rescue hopes fade after attack in Dnipro

DNIPRO: Ukraine said there was little hope of pulling any more survivors from the rubble of an apartment block in the city of Dnipro on Sunday, a day after the building was hit during a major Russian missile attack, with dozens of people expected to have died.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said a child was among 25 people confirmed dead so far and 73 people had been wounded, including 13 children. Thirty-nine people had been rescued but a further 43 were missing, he said on the Telegram messaging app.

Emergency workers said they had heard people screaming for help from underneath piles of debris from the nine-storey apartment block in the south-central city and were using moments of silence to help direct their efforts. Freezing temperatures added to rescuers’ concerns.

A group of firefighters found a lightly-dressed woman still alive more than 18 hours after the attack. They carried her to safety in their arms as dozens of grim-faced residents, both young and old, watched in horror from the street. A body had earlier been



Rescuers work on a residential building destroyed after a missile strike, in Dnipro on Sunday. – AFP

retrieved by firefighters and lifted from the ruins on a stretcher using a crane.

“The chances of saving people now are minimal,” Dnipro’s Mayor Borys Filatov told Reuters. I think the number of dead will be in the dozens.”

Filatov said a Russian Kh-22

missile had struck the apartment block in the east-central, rocket-making city of Dnipro, destroying two stairwells totalling around 76 flats.

Russia fired two waves of missiles at Ukraine on Saturday, striking targets across the country as fighting raged on the battlefield

in the eastern towns of Soledar and Bakhmut.

Moscow, which invaded last February, has been pounding Ukraine’s energy infrastructure with missiles and drones since October, causing sweeping blackouts and disruptions to central heating and running water.

In a statement on Sunday about its previous day of strikes, the Russian defence ministry did not mention Dnipro as a specific target. “All assigned objects were hit. The targets of the strike have been achieved,” it said.

Rescuers toiled through the night searching for survivors. On Sunday morning, they could be seen punching and kicking through heaped mounds of smashed concrete and twisted metal. “Two rooms on the second floor remain practically intact but buried,” Oleh Kushniruk, a deputy director of the regional branch of Ukraine’s State Emergency Service, said on television.

A spokesperson for Ukraine’s southern command said Russia had fired only half of the cruise missiles it had deployed to the Black Sea during Saturday’s attacks.

“This indicates that they still have certain plans,” said the spokesperson, Natalia Humeniuk. “We must understand that they can still be used.” In his nightly address after the strike, Zelenskiy called on Western allies to supply more weapons to end “Russian terror” and attacks on civilian targets. — AFP

UK to give heavy tanks to Ukraine

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Saturday pledged to provide 14 Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine, making it the first Western country to supply the heavy tanks Kyiv has been calling for.

The pledge saw a swift reaction from Russia which warned it would only “intensify” the conflict. “Bringing tanks to the conflict zone, far from drawing the hostilities to a close, will only serve to intensify combat operations, generating more casualties, including among the civilian population”, the Russian embassy in the UK said.

Ukraine’s European allies have sent Kyiv more than 300 modernised Soviet tanks since Russia invaded in February 2022. But they have so far held off on dispatching the Western-made heavy tanks that Ukraine has repeatedly requested to push forward against invaders. — AFP

Gunmen shoot dead Afghan woman ex-lawmaker

KABUL: Gunmen shot dead an Afghan former lawmaker and one of her bodyguards in the capital Kabul in a night-time attack at her home, police said on Sunday.

Mursal Nabizada had been a member of parliament in the US-backed government that was overthrown by the Taliban in August 2021.

“Nabizada, along with one of her bodyguards, was shot dead at her house,” Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadran said.

“The security forces have started a serious investigation into the incident,” he said, adding that a brother of the former lawmaker was also wounded in the attack, which took place during the night between Saturday and Sunday.

Nabizada was a “fearless champion for Afghanistan”, former lawmaker Mariam Solaimankhil said on Twitter.

“A true trailblazer - strong, outspoken woman who stood for



A woman looks at a picture of former Afghan lawmaker Mursal Nabizada on her mobile phone, who was shot dead by gunmen last night at her house in Kabul on Sunday. – AFP

what she believed in, even in the face of danger,” she wrote.

“Despite being offered the chance to leave Afghanistan, she chose to stay and fight for her people,” she added.

Nabizada, 32, hailed from the eastern province of Nangarhar, and had been elected as a member of parliament from Kabul in 2018.

“I am sad and angry and want the world to know!” tweeted

Hannah Neumann, a member of the European parliament, in response to the killing.

“She was killed in darkness, but the Taliban build their system of gender apartheid in full daylight.”

Women had worked in prominent positions across Afghan society in the two decades since the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, with many becoming judges, journalists and politicians.

Many women in such professions have fled the country, however, since the Taliban returned to power.

Taliban authorities have rapidly squeezed women out of almost all areas of public life, banning them from secondary and higher education, public sector work and even from visiting public parks and baths.

They have also ordered women to cover their bodies in public, ideally in an all-encompassing burqa. — AFP

TOP OF THE WORLD



Miss US R'Bonney Gabriel reacts after being crowned Miss Universe during the 71st Miss Universe pageant in New Orleans, Louisiana, US, on Sunday. – Reuters

SHORT TAKES

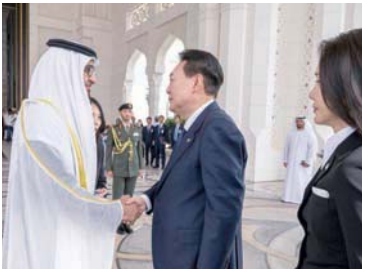
DUBAI

UAE pledges to invest \$30 billion in S. Korea

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has decided to invest \$30 billion in South Korea’s industries, South Korea’s presidential office said on Sunday, as the two countries seek to expand economic cooperation.

The investment decision was announced as South Korea’s President Yoon Suk-yeol met his UAE counterpart, Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, in Abu Dhabi during a four-day state visit, Yoon’s office said.

“We have decided a \$30



billion investment based on the trust on South Korea which keeps promises under any circumstances,” Yoon’s office quoted the UAE president as saying.

BAGHDAD

Iraqi PM backs indefinite US troop presence

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed al Sudani defended the presence of US troops in his country and set no timetable for their withdrawal, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal published on Sunday. Referring to the US and Nato troop contingents that train and assist Iraqi units in countering IS but largely stay out of combat, Sudani said that the foreign forces are still needed.

“Elimination of ISIS needs some more time,” he said. Sudani said he planned to send a high-



level delegation to Washington for talks with US officials, adding that Iraq would like similar relations with Washington to those enjoyed by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries.

JERUSALEM

Herzog tries to prevent ‘constitutional crisis’

Israel’s president warned on Sunday that the country faced an “historic constitutional crisis” over a contested judicial reform plan, and said he was mediating between the relevant parties.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, now in his sixth term, wants to rein in the Supreme Court, which members of his religious-nationalist coalition accuse of overreach and elitism.

Opponents of the plan, who held nationwide protests on Saturday, say it would



cripple judicial independence, foster corruption, set back minority rights and deprive Israel’s courts of credibility that helps fend off war-crimes charges abroad.



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In brief

■ WILMINGTON



BIDEN TO GIVE SERMON AT KING'S CHURCH IN ATLANTA

President Joe Biden will become the first sitting US president to speak at a Sunday service at Martin Luther King Jr's church in Atlanta as he seeks to bolster support among African Americans ahead of an expected run for re-election in 2024.

Biden will deliver a sermon at the invitation of its pastor, Democratic US Senator Raphael Warnock of Georgia. Biden "will sit in the spiritual home of Martin Luther King, Jr, Georgia's greatest son, arguably the greatest American, who reminds us that we are tied in a single garment of destiny, that this is not about Democrat and Republican, red, yellow, brown, black and white," Warnock said.

■ BUCHAREST



ROMANIA SEIZES \$4 MN OF ASSETS IN TATE CASE

Romanian authorities said they have seized goods and money worth \$3.95 million as a part of a criminal inquiry into alleged human trafficking that led to the arrest of divisive internet personality Andrew Tate.

In the past week, the National Agency for the Management of Seized Assets has taken into administration 29 movable assets, including luxury vehicles and watches, and various amounts of cash in different currencies, it said on Saturday.

Andrew Tate, his brother and two Romanian female suspects were detained on December 29 on charges of forming a criminal gang to exploit six women sexually.

■ LÜTZERATH



SOME 70 POLICE INJURED IN GERMAN COAL MINE PROTESTS

Around 70 police officers have been injured in environmental protests at a German village being razed to make way for a coal mine expansion, police said on Sunday.

In an operation that began on Wednesday, hundreds of police have been removing activists from the doomed hamlet of Luetzerath in western Germany.

The site, which has become a symbol of resistance to fossil fuels, attracted thousands of protesters on Saturday, including Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. Some of the protesters clashed with police. The organisers reported that dozens had been injured.

NO WORD ON THE FATE OF THE FIVE PEOPLE STILL UNACCOUNTED FOR

At least 67 killed in Nepal plane crash

POKHARA: At least 67 people were confirmed dead on Sunday after a plane with 72 on board crashed in Nepal, police said, in the Himalayan country's worst aviation disaster in three decades.

Those on board the ATR 72 twin-engine turboprop aircraft that plummeted into a steep gorge, smashed into pieces and burst into flames in the central city of Pokhara included six children, officials said.

As light faded on Sunday and soldiers extracted bodies with ropes and stretchers out of the 300-metre-deep (1,000-foot) ravine, there was no word on the fate of the five people still unaccounted for.

"We are actively working to retrieve and identify the bodies as soon as possible and hand (them) over to their families," police official AK Chhetri said at the crash site, which was still smouldering and strewn with aircraft debris, including the mangled remains of wings and passenger seats.

A local official had earlier said that "some survivors" had been taken to hospital, but this was not confirmed by the aircraft's operator Yeti Airlines or other



Rescue teams work to retrieve bodies at the crash site of an aircraft carrying 72 people in Pokhara on Sunday.

— Reuters

officials.

Yeti spokesman Sudarshan Bartaula said that 15 foreigners were on board, including five Indians, four Russians and two South Koreans, with one passenger each from Argentina, Australia, France and Ireland. The rest were Nepalis. The flight from

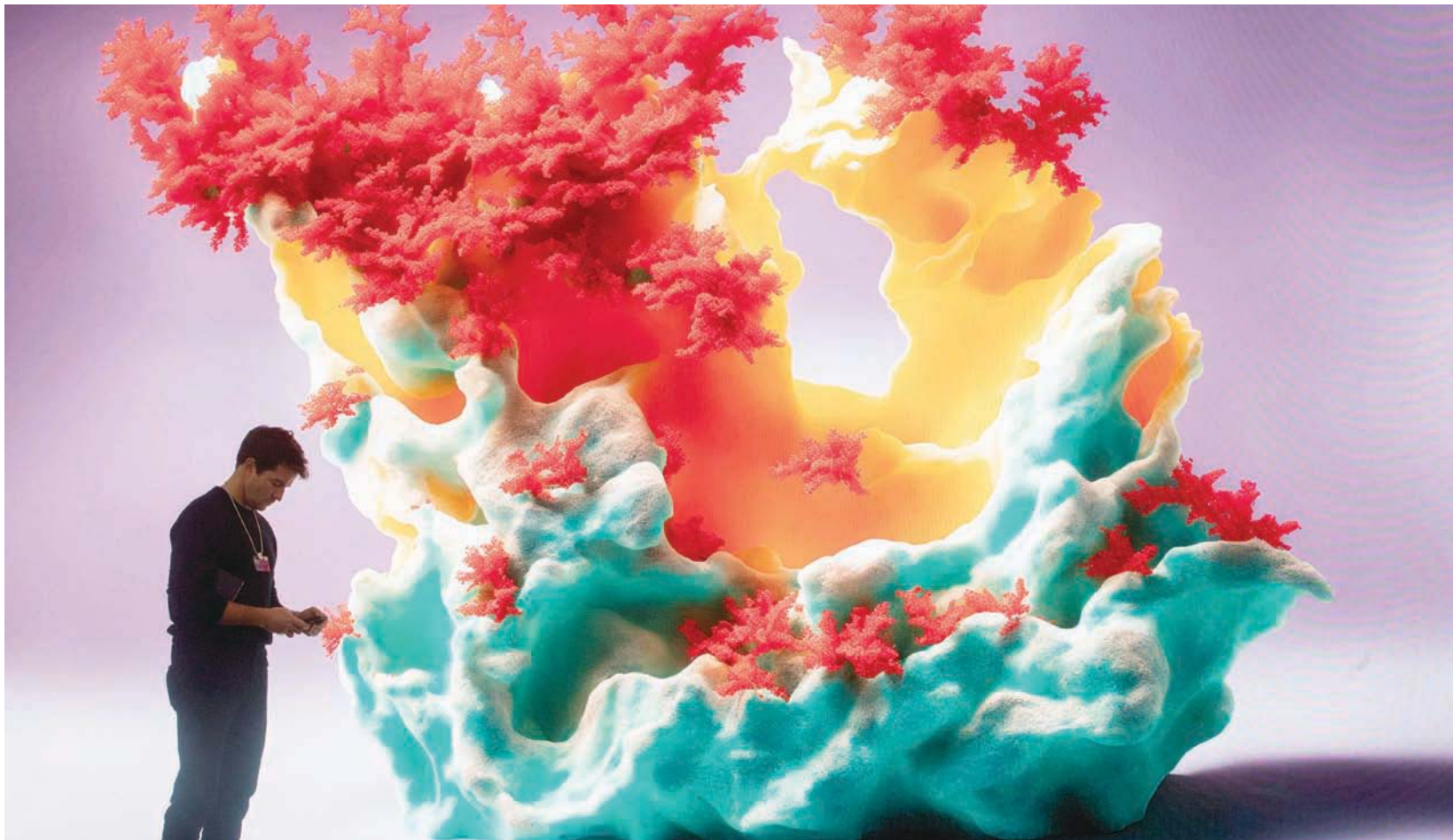
Kathmandu slammed into the gorge between Pokhara's domestic and brand new international airport on Sunday, shortly before 11:00 am (0515 GMT).

An unverified clip shared on social media purportedly showed the plane flying low over a residential area before banking

sharply to the left, followed by a loud explosion.

"I was walking when I heard a loud blast like a bomb went off," said witness Arun Tamu, 44, who was around 500 metres (yards) away and who posted live video of the blazing wreckage on social media. — AFP

■ COLOURS OF DATA



A man stands in front of the data sculpture "Artificial Realities: Coral" by Turkish-born artist Refik Anadol shown on a huge screen at Davos Congress Centre, the venue of the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2023, in the Alpine resort of Davos, Switzerland, on Sunday. — Reuters

Traffic could double if driverless cars become norm

LONDON: Motorists could be stuck in double the amount of traffic as what is currently on the road if self-driving cars become commonplace, a British government report warns.

Department for Transport (DfT) traffic projections for England and Wales show delays may rise by up to 85 per cent from 2025 to 2060 in that scenario.

The analysis is based on connected and autonomous vehicles making up half the car fleet by 2047 and with a "fast uptake" of electric vehicles.

This would lead to more traffic by "increasing the mobility of the elderly and those who do not currently hold a driving licence," according to the report.

But the document, published last month, claims "the ability to work or relax while travelling in a self-driving car" means occupants will be "more amenable to sitting



The ability to work or relax while travelling in a self-driving car means occupants will be more amenable to sitting in traffic.

in traffic."

"There are currently 5.9 million licence holders aged 70 or over in Britain, so we know the demand for mobility is there among those of a senior age, said Steve Gooding, the director of the RAC

Foundation, a British transport policy and research organisation.

"In the foreseeable future, automated vehicles offer the tantalising prospect of independence for the many millions more people who fall

into the older age group but for whatever reason - cost, medical impairment - don't currently drive," Gooding said.

Gooding said how autonomous technology is deployed will be significant. "If everyone insists on having their own driverless car then traffic volume and parking pressures will rise," he said.

"However, if we are prepared to access these vehicles on-demand and forego personal ownership then we could have a win-win situation: quieter roads, fewer cars shared by the many, and cheaper transport."

Recent analysis by traffic information supplier Inrix found that UK drivers lost an average of 80 hours last year due to congestion, a seven-hour increase from 2021.

London was found to be the world's most congested city in 2022, with drivers in the capital

spending an average of 156 hours sitting in traffic.

Writer and broadcaster Christian Wolmar, the author of Driverless Cars: On a Road To Nowhere, insisted that the government should "not be trying to accommodate" the traffic levels self-driving cars will generate.

"We should be doing everything in our power to ensure that doesn't happen. The idea that you have a technological fix to congestion is nonsensical."

Wolmar thinks the suggestion there will be a "critical mass" of self-driving cars by 2047 is "fanciful" because "there has been very little real progress in terms of creating cars that could go anywhere in any conditions. "It doesn't look feasible."

Fully driverless cars are not legally permitted in the UK but autonomous features are being developed by car makers. — dpa

Protest-hit Peru declares emergency in Lima

LIMA: Peru's capital Lima was under a state of emergency on Sunday, along with three other regions, as the government responded to weeks-long protests against President Dina Boluarte that have seen at least 42 people killed.

The state of emergency, in force for 30 days, authorises the army to intervene to maintain order and suspends several constitutional rights such as freedom of movement and assembly, according to a decree published in the official gazette.

It covers Lima and the regions of Cusco and Puno, as well as the port of Callao adjacent to the capital.

Supporters of ousted president Pedro Castillo have taken to the streets and blocked roads across the South American country since December, demanding fresh elections and the removal of Boluarte, who has refused to step down. Protests have been announced for Monday in Lima as well as the marginalised southern Andean regions, which have been the epicentre of the unrest.

Some groups of protesters from the south plan to travel to Lima for a "takeover of the city".

"We have the decision to go to Lima (from Monday), yes or yes," said Julio Vilca, a protest leader from the province of Ilave, in the Puno region. "We cannot indicate the time, because what we want is to travel in unity." — AFP



Security forces stand guard as a demonstrator waves Peru's flag during a protest to demand the dissolution of Congress and democratic elections, rejecting Dina Boluarte as Peru's president, after the ouster of leftist President Pedro Castillo, in Lima. — Reuters

Road trippers, beware of highway hypnosis



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician, content creator

You are an avid road tripper and have that driving geek inside you but as the route becomes desolate you are thinking of planning your next day, pondering over prospects or some past chats with people running through your mind.

Hence, all you are witnessing is the repetitive set of scenes on the road, milestones, and the never-ending stretch of the road in front.

Highway Hypnosis is a state of mind when your brain becomes fogged after visualising the same route on and on. This sets your brain into automation mode and decreases the reaction time of the brain; thus, increasing the vulnerability to road accidents. Not every time the culprit is the fatigue, but your brain setting onto autopilot

mode on the monotonous roads. As per a study published in Elsevier Journal, “drivers tend to show more fatigue, measured by large steering movements while driving on the more monotonous road.

Also noteworthy was the fact their fatigue peaked after approximately 20 minutes of driving. This suggests highway hypnosis may happen very quickly on monotonous stretches of road, not only after long periods of driving.”

Another finding from Research gate states, “your oculomotor system, or the system that controls eye movements, also plays a part in highway hypnosis.

When you drive along a road you know well or stare at a largely unchanging road for a long time,

HIGHWAY HYPNOSIS IS A STATE IN WHICH YOUR BRAIN BECOMES FOGGED AFTER VISUALIZING THE SAME ROUTE ON AND ON. THIS SETS YOUR BRAIN INTO AUTOMATION MODE AND DECREASES THE REACTION TIME OF THE BRAIN; INCREASING THE VULNERABILITY TO ROAD ACCIDENTS

your brain begins to depend less on retinal feedback, or what you see. Instead, your brain begins to depend more on your mental

prediction of what you’ll see (extra-retinal feedback).

In other words, your brain switches to a less-alert mode and begins to pay less attention to visual stimuli.”

How to take care of highway hypnosis?

- Get accompanied by a spouse or a friend and stay active in the conversation. Chat on silly stuff; be it sharing your first childhood romance stories or ghost encounters. Trust me, it works. If you cannot find anyone to come with you, talk to yourself, solve some riddles or problems that’s been on your mind for a long.
- Take frequent stops to break the monotony of the route.

Stretch and walk.

- Grabbing on your dose of tea or coffee could help to keep you stimulated.
- When sleepy, park on the roadside and catch on a nap. It refreshes and activates your body system.
- Take light meals or snacks on the way to prevent post-meal sluggishness.
- Try rolling down the window panes or keep the air conditioning low so you won’t feel too comfortable to calm and relax.
- Do catch a good amount of sleep before you hit the road.

Hope this helps and you stay safe on the road!

Logistical challenge looms for Ukraine over promised tanks

DAPHNE BENOIT

The imminent arrival in Ukraine of Western-made light tanks and armoured vehicles, as well as possibly heavy tanks, means Kyiv will need to quickly train up troops to use and maintain the sometimes-complex equipment, analysts say.

Ukraine’s European allies have sent Kyiv more than 300 modernised Soviet tanks since Russia attacked more than 10 months ago.

But they have so far held off on dispatching the Western-made heavy tanks that Ukraine has repeatedly requested to push forward against Russian invaders.

Near the battleground city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian captain Volodymyr Tchaikovsky said Nato tanks had “a huge advantage” for any soldier inside.

“If he has the coordinates of his target, he can destroy the target with one shot,” the 54-year-old said.

Initial reluctance to provide Ukraine with advanced weaponry seems, however, to be lifting.

Poland on Wednesday said it was willing to send Kyiv 14 advanced Leopard 2 battle tanks as part of an international coalition.

The German-made model is largely seen as one of the best-performing worldwide and is widely used across Europe, meaning spare parts and ammunition are readily available.

But Germany has so far refused to give its necessary green light to the delivery, fearing an escalation that would more directly pit the West against Russia.

Finland on Friday said it was not opposed to any shipment of Leopards, after a discussion with European countries who have them.

“(But) this requires not only the transfer of the material itself, but also training and the creation of the necessary maintenance and servicing expertise in Ukraine,” Finnish defence ministry official Tarja Jaakkola said.

Britain has not ruled out providing Challenger 2 battle tanks. And a meeting of Ukraine’s allies in Germany on January 20 could see Western nations make new pledges.

Last week, France, Germany and the United States opened the way with promises of French AMX-10 RC light tanks, 40 German Marder infantry vehicles, and 50 Bradley fighting vehicles.

A French source said Paris could dispatch around 40 of the highly mobile AMX-10 RCs, which are wheeled rather than tracked but have a much heavier cannon typical of a tank.

The French defence ministry said late on Thursday that a first batch would be delivered “within two months”. — AFP

German village at centre of fight over coal and climate is cleared



Christopher F Schuetze

The writer covers German politics, society and breaking news

The fight for Lützerath was long, but the end, when it finally came, was quick.

In a matter of days this past week, more than 1,000 police officers cleared out the hundreds of climate activists who had sworn to protect the small village, once home to 90 people but no church, which was scheduled to be razed as part of a sprawling open-pit coal mine in western Germany.

The relatively fast demise added to the host of contradictions surrounding Lützerath and how a tiny, now uninhabited, village had taken on an improbable, outsize place in Germany’s debate over how to wean itself off coal.

For years, environmental activists had hoped to forestall the fate of Lützerath — possibly the last of hundreds of villages in Germany to fall to open-pit mining since World War II.

For a while, it seemed that the activists would succeed.

But this year, the political winds and public sentiment shifted against them. Europe’s energy crisis, ushered in by the war in Ukraine and the end of cheap Russia gas, made coal too hard to quit for now. Even a government that includes the environmentalist-minded Green party turned its back on them.

The activists nonetheless prepared themselves to defend the half-dozen houses and farmyards with their bodies. They barricaded themselves in a complex of barns and other structures. They erected and occupied tall watchtowers. They carved out a tunnel network. They nested in the branches of 100-year-old trees.

But the clearing, which started on Wednesday, proved to be less dramatic than some had feared.

A few firecrackers were heard, and some stones and bits of food were thrown (it turned out that activists had stockpiled too much).

But for the most part, the standoff ended peacefully, almost businesslike. By Friday, the bulk of the activists were gone, some leaving of their own accord, some carried out by police officers, with just a few stragglers left in a few hard-to-reach places.

On Saturday, an estimated 15,000 climate activists, including Greta



Police remove activists structures as part of the clearing of Ltzerath.

LÜTZERATH’S ROLE AS A NATIONAL SYMBOL WAS AS SURPRISING AS THE SPEED WITH WHICH THE

Thunberg, staged a march in the area, with police using water canons and nightsticks to prevent protesters from charging the site, even though by then the village was virtually empty and many of its trees already felled.

Thunberg had also visited the village on Friday afternoon.

Considering that the last farmer moved out of the village months ago, and that courts had reaffirmed the right of the regional power utility to eject the activists, Lützerath’s role as a national symbol was as surprising as the speed with which the village fell.

Lützerath’s fate was sealed last fall, when Robert Habeck, the country’s business, energy and climate minister, and Mona Neubaur, state minister for the environment and energy,

announced a deal to continue mining coal in the region until 2030.

What climate activists and others considered to be the betrayal of Lützerath became a source of controversy for Habeck, an otherwise-popular Green leader whom critics accuse of compromising the party’s environmental principles now that it is in power. He nonetheless defended the decision to extend the use of coal.

“I also believe that climate protection and protest need symbols,” Habeck said this past week at a news conference in Berlin.

“But the empty settlement Lützerath, where no one lives anymore, is in my view the wrong symbol.”

The regional power supplier, RWE, had already bought the land from farmers to expand its mining for brown coal, which the protesters pointed out is an especially polluting fuel.

Moritz Lahaye, 37, would quibble with Habeck’s assertion that Lützerath was uninhabited.

Among the hundreds of activists who had made Lützerath their home, he was acting as its unofficial mayor.

At first, he lived in an apartment rented from a farmer, and in the last days, he squatted in the neighbouring house, where he waited for police to enter. — *The New York Times*

Listen to your inner cheerleader

As we were all born with only pure love inside of us, self-love is the epitome of coming back to source light, to the energy we were created in. Children have no issues with sharing and honouring their truest expression of emotions.

They do not possess even the smallest of concern that others will judge them.

As judgement of others is a studied skill.

Over time, adults learn to become so contrary in their beliefs due to many factors and past conditioning. In turn, our choices and decisions become easily swayed as we adopt the attitudes of others, worried the way we act does not abide by societal nor cultural demands.

However, who when following the herd has truly allowed their real, authentic self to shine?

One of the main reasons why our self-love turns into self-loathing is due to the mere fact we have become quite savvy in dissociating ourselves from our bodies and have learnt, as a protective mechanism, to remain in our heads.

The majority of humans become overthinkers as it's far easier to rationally deduct reasoning to defuse a situation, rather than to sit in the discomfort of deciphering our emotions and feelings.

Self-loathing and the harsh inner critic co-exist together; their relationship is fuelled on misguided trust and negative co-dependency. Similarly our self-love and inner cheerleader have a wonderful, creative partnership too.

Becoming aware and mindful of how these two couples dance and feed off each other is the beginning



Hyesha Barrett
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The writer is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

UNING INTO
YOUR TRUTH
MORE WILL
INEVITABLY
ALLOW YOU TO
SHARE MORE OF
YOUR ESSENCE,
REGARDLESS OF
WHAT ANYONE
THINKS

to consciously creating a pattern interrupt, a disruption in your system.

Our ruthless inner critic has the loudest, cruelest voice. We judge ourselves much unkindler than anyone else does.

When we place ourselves in the empowering seat of truly understanding and believing all this is changeable, all the while connecting more with the truth of our inner cheerleader, the quicker we can give ourselves more credit and less criticism.

Self-love comes hand in hand with self-acceptance, self-honouring and self-reassurance.

When we are able to love ourselves for who we are, teamed with the dismissal of our critical inner critic, then automatically flows more self-compassion and self-worth.

When we understand that the negativity that's being thrown at us is actually none other than our own voice of unreason, it's far easier to manage rather than worrying about controlling everyone else's thoughts and feelings.

Overtime, quietening the volume of our inner critic and increasing the joyous sounds of our inner cheerleader can only guarantee an upsurge of nourishment and nurturement to our self-esteem and indeed, in turn our confidence will strengthen and flourish too.

Remember when our self-love turns more into self-loathing, it's our unforgiving inner critic rearing its' ugly head attempting to make us lean into a certain thinking.

Tuning into your truth more will inevitably allow you to share more of your essence, regardless of what anyone thinks, because your self-love will be enhanced and your thinking will be more heartfelt.

A SIEGE STAGED



Actors dressed as World War II Soviet Red Army soldiers fight against actors dressed as Nazi German troops as they take part in the reconstruction of the battle of Iskra, the offensive operation of the Soviet troops during the WWII, in the village of Dusevo, outside Saint Petersburg on Sunday. The battle conducted from January 12 to 30, 1943, by the forces of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts with the help of the forces of the Baltic Fleet, marked the 80th anniversary of the breakthrough of the siege of Leningrad (now St Petersburg). – AFP

Limits of Japan's military awakening

BRAHMA CHELLANEY

For decades, Japan has based its international clout on economic competitiveness, not military might. But, with China's lengthening shadow darkening its doorstep, Japan now seems to be abandoning its pacifist postwar security policy – which capped defense spending at about 1 per cent of GDP and shunned offensive capabilities – in favour of assuming a central role in maintaining security in the Indo-Pacific region. Last month, Japan unveiled a bold new national-security strategy, which includes a plan to double defense expenditure within five years.

That spending – amounting to some \$320 billion – will fund Japan's largest military build-up since World War II, and implies the world's third-largest defence budget, after the US and China.

Importantly, the new strategy includes acquisition of preemptive counterstrike capabilities, such as Tomahawk cruise missiles from the United States, and the development of its own hypersonic weapons.

Japan began laying the groundwork for this shift under former Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, who was assassinated last July.

On Abe's watch, Japan increased defence spending by about 10 per cent, and, more significantly, reinterpreted (with parliament's approval) the country's US-imposed "peace constitution" to allow the military to mobilise overseas for the first time since WWII.

Abe also sought to amend Article 9 of the constitution, which renounces "the threat or use of force" by Japan,

but his efforts were stymied by popular protests.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has not run into the same resistance.

On the contrary, opinion polls show that a majority of Japanese support the military build-up.

A similar shift has taken place in Kishida himself, who was widely considered a dove when he was foreign minister – a label that he publicly embraced.

The impetus for this shift is clear. In 2013, the year Xi Jinping became China's president, Japan's national-security strategy called China a strategic partner.

According to the updated strategy, by contrast, China represents "an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and security of Japan." China's incremental but unrelenting expansionism under Xi has rendered Japan's pacifist stance untenable.

This is more apparent than ever in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has intensified fears that China could pursue a military option against Taiwan, which is effectively an extension of the Japanese archipelago.

Last August, five of the nine missiles China fired during military exercises in the waters around Taiwan landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone.

Japan understandably views Taiwan's security as vital for its own.

Japan is not the only once-conciliatory power to respond to Xi's muscular revisionism with a newfound determination to

bolster its defenses and forestall the emergence of a Sinocentric Indo-Pacific.

Australia and India have embarked on the same path. Moreover, a similar trend towards militarisation has emerged among Japan's Western allies.

Germany, another pacifist country, has pledged to boost its defence spending to 2 per cent of GDP (the same level Kishida is targeting) and accept a military leadership role in Europe.

The United Kingdom has already surpassed the 2 per cent-of-GDP level, yet aims to double its defence spending by 2030.

The US has just hiked its already-mammoth military spending by 8 per cent. And Sweden and Finland are joining a reinvigorated Nato.

While Japan's rearmament is more widely accepted than ever – and for good reason – it is unlikely to be enough to deter China's expansionist creep.

After all, despite having the world's third-largest defence

budget, India has been locked in a military standoff with China on the disputed Himalayan border since 2020, when stealth encroachments by the People's Liberation Army caught it by surprise. Clashes continue to erupt intermittently, including just last month.

Unlike Russia, which launched a full frontal assault on Ukraine, China prefers salami tactics, slicing away other countries' territories with a combination of stealth, deception, and surprise.

The PLA's so-called "Three Warfares," which focus on the psychological, public-opinion, and legal aspects of conflict, has enabled China to secure strategic victories in the South China Sea – from seizing the Johnson South Reef in 1988 to occupying the Scarborough Shoal in 2012 – while barely firing a shot.

Because China generally avoids armed conflict, it incurs minimal international costs for its actions, even as it unilaterally redraws the geopolitical map of the South China Sea and nibbles away at

Bhutan's borderlands, one pasture at a time.

The government in Beijing managed to decimate Hong Kong's autonomy without facing significant Western sanctions.

All this impunity has only emboldened Xi, who is now seeking to replicate the South China Sea strategy in the East China Sea by escalating maritime and aerial incursions to strengthen its claims to the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands. It has even tried to police the waters off the Senkakus.

Japan's response to China's provocations has so far remained restrained, to say the least: no Japanese defense minister has so much as conducted an aerial inspection of the Senkakus, lest it anger China.

Yet Japan's embrace of Tomahawk missiles and hypersonic weapons does not necessarily represent an effective means of resisting China's hybrid warfare, either.

For that, Japan must find ways to frustrate China's furtive efforts to alter the status quo while avoiding the risk of open combat.

Japan's push to become more self-reliant on defense should be welcomed.

Improved defence capabilities will translate into a more confident and secure Japan – and a more stable Indo-Pacific.

But if Japan is to "disrupt and defeat" threats, as the national-security strategy puts it, Japanese leaders must move proactively to beat China at its own game.

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Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Washington, DC, on Saturday. – AFP



25th Arabian Gulf Cup



Oman face stern test against Bahrain

H O S T S I R A Q T A K E O N D A R K H O R S E S Q A T A R

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 15

Two-time champions Oman face reigning champions Bahrain on Monday in a high-voltage semifinal of the eight-nation 25th Arabian Gulf Cup at the 65,000-seat Basra International Stadium in the Iraqi city of Basra. The match will kick-off at 9.15 pm (Oman Time).

Oman, winners in 2009 as hosts and 2017-18 in Kuwait, will be keen to get a chance for a third attempt. Bahrain, who won their only title in the last edition (2019) in Qatar, are currently in top form in Iraq.

Oman head coach Branko Ivankovic said the target is to reach the final.

“The team is targeting the final and we are capable of reaching the stage. We are happy to grab seven points from a difficult group to qualify for the semifinals.”

Oman will miss the services of three players in the match against Bahrain. Amjad al Harthi and Mahmood Mabrook will be unavailable due to injuries while defender Juma al Habsi misses the



match due to yellow cards.

“The unavailability of some of our players is not an excuse for the performance against Bahrain. Our squad is full of talented players who can appear in the main eleven,” the Croatian coach added.

Ivankovic also appreciated the Iraqi fans for appearing in large numbers to fill up the stadiums.

Oman midfielder Salah al Yahyai said the team is confident of a good match.



Iraqis wave national flags as they take to the streets of the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah, the regional capital of Dhi Qar province, to celebrate their team's win against Yemen, during the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup championship. – AFP

“We are ready for a strong game against Bahrain. Both teams are good and those who make less mistakes will win the match,” Al Yahyai said.

Oman finished second in Group A behind toppers Iraq on goal difference after both teams collected seven points.

Oman started with a goalless draw against Iraq. In a five-goal thriller Oman managed to go past Yemen in their second match.

The Red Warriors showed their true colour against a quality Saudi Arabian side with a 2-1 victory to make the semifinals.

Bahrain topped Group B with seven points.

Bahrain began their title defence with a 2-1 win against the United Arab Emirates. They repeated the scoreline for a second straight win against Qatar and booked a last-four spot with a 1-1 draw against 10-time champions Kuwait.

IRAQ READY FOR QATAR

Hosts Iraq will meet the young brigade of Qatar, who sensationally sealed the last-four berth with a late equaliser against Kuwait. The first semifinal will kick-off at 5.15 pm (Oman Time).

Iraq head coach Jesus Casas underlined a strong desire to win the Gulf Cup at home.

“We are geared up for a tough match against Qatar as there is a strong desire to win the Gulf Cup at home. We will remain composed and confident to give our best against Qatar,” the Spanish coach said.

Qatar coach Bruno Pinheiro said his squad is all set for the semifinal.

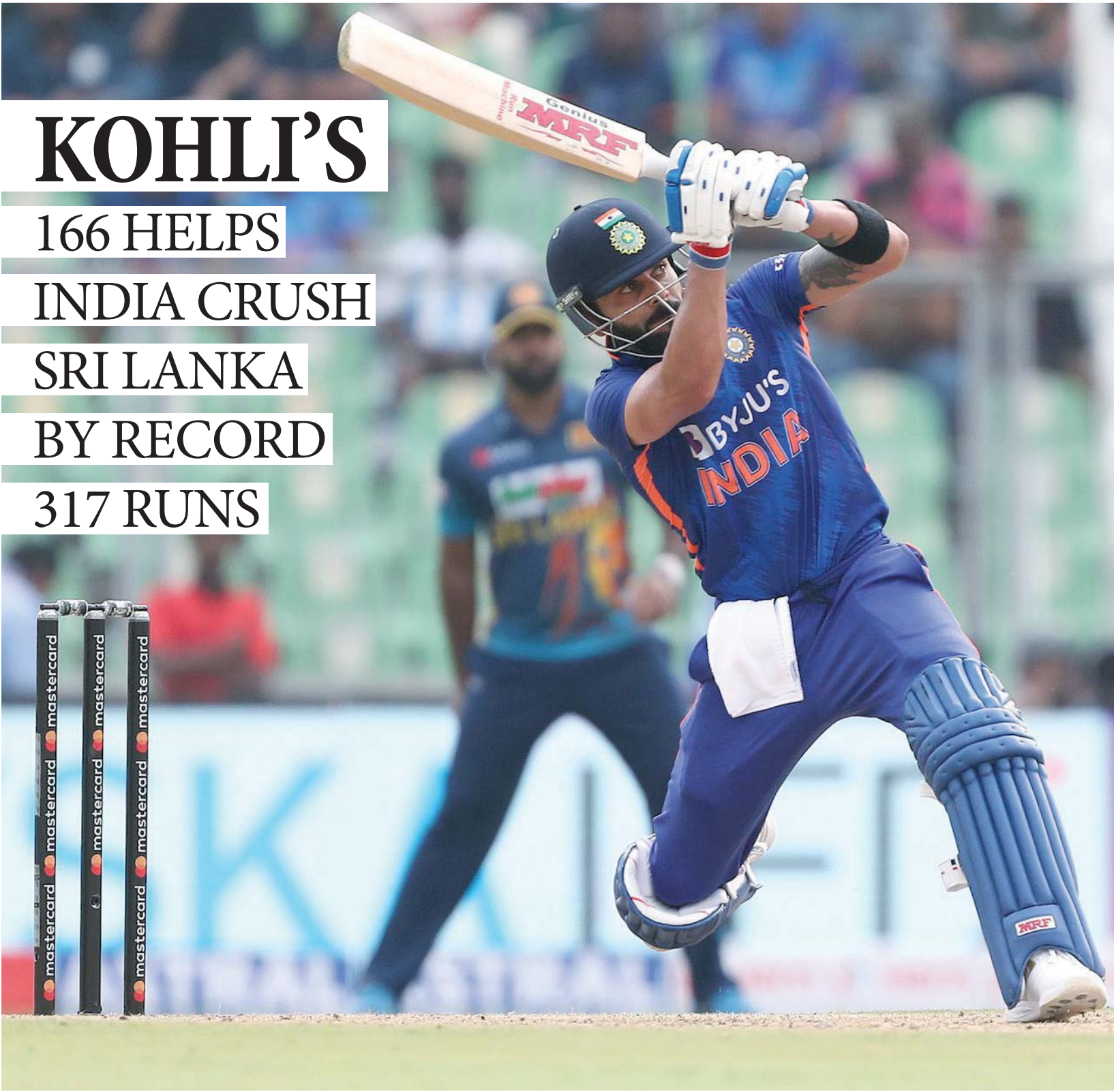
“From a tactical perspective we are confident and ready to face Iraq in the semifinal. We will give our best performance on the pitch. I trust my players regardless of the circumstances.”

Qatar player Homam al Amin said the team will put out its best to reach the final. “The match will not be easy. We are playing against the hosts in front of their fans. We promise our home fans that we will give out best performance.”

KUWAIT TO HOST NEXT GULF CUP

Kuwait will host the 26th edition of Arabian Gulf Cup in December of 2024, Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) president Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani announced in Baghdad on Sunday. In a press conference, Al Thani affirmed that the tournament would be held in Kuwait as efforts and preparations for the upcoming event are in place. The AGFF chief commended the 25th Gulf Cup held in Basra, saying that it was so far a success.

KOHLI'S 166 HELPS INDIA CRUSH SRI LANKA BY RECORD 317 RUNS



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, India: Virat Kohli smashed an unbeaten 166 to help India beat Sri Lanka by 317 runs and record the highest ever victory margin in a one-day international as they swept the series 3-0 on Sunday.

Kohli's third century in his last four matches and a 116 by opener Shubman Gill powered India to 390-5 in Thiruvananthapuram.

Fast bowler Mohammed Siraj then returned impressive figures of 4-32 as India bowled out the tourists for 72 in 22 overs as India went past New Zealand's 290-run thrashing of Ireland in 2008.

A 131-run second-wicket stand between Gill and Kohli stood out after India elected to bat first.

Gill put on 95 runs for the opening wicket with skipper

Rohit Sharma, who made 42, to set the tone for the team's batting domination.

Rohit missed out on a fifty after he fell to Chamika Karunaratne but Gill kept up the attack with Kohli and raised his second ODI hundred, celebrating it with a fist bump.

Gill smashed Jeffrey Vandersay for four fours in the over after the ton, but was soon bowled off a slower delivery from Kasun Rajitha.

'King Kohli' put on another century partnership with Shreyas Iyer, who hit 38, and went on to record the ton with his arms and bat raised to an applauding crowd.

The ball before Kohli got his hundred saw a nasty collision at the square-leg boundary between

Vandersay and Ashen Bandara, with both fielders stretched off.

Dunith Wellalage came in as a concussion substitute for Vandersay and batted for the tourists at number eight.

Kohli changed gears after his 46th ODI century -- three behind Sachin Tendulkar's all-time record of 49 -- as he smashed Karunaratne for two successive sixes.

Kohli, who surpassed Sri Lankan great Mahela Jayawardene's 12,650 ODI runs to enter the top five all-time run getters, reached his 150 in 106 balls and finished off with 13 fours and eight sixes.

Sri Lanka were never in the chase after Mohammed Siraj struck thrice in his first five overs including the wickets of Avishka

Fernando, for one, and Kusal Mendis, bowled on four.

The tourists kept losing wickets to Siraj's pace and swing and the quick also ran out Karunaratne with a direct throw that caught the batsman off guard and out of his crease at the striker's end.

Mohammed Shami and Kuldeep Yadav picked two wickets each to flatten Sri Lanka's batting with 28 overs to spare, with the tourists losing nine wickets and injured Bandara not batting. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES
India 390-5 in 50 overs (S Gill 116, V Kohli 166 not out; K Rajitha 2-81, L Kumara 2-87) v Sri Lanka 73 all out in 22 overs (N Fernando 19, K Rajitha 13 not out; M Siraj 4-32)
Result: India won by 317 runs
Series: India won the three-match series 3-0



NZ, Netherlands, Belgium and Germany win

BHUBANESWAR, India: The second day of the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 continued to thrill packed crowds in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela as New Zealand, Netherlands, Belgium and Germany earned comfortable victories, as Pools B and C got underway.

New Zealand took on Chile in the first contest of the day in Rourkela. Early nerves from the Chilean defence allowed the Kiwis to grab the initiative and get 3 first half goals, but Chile were resurgent in the second half and grabbed their first ever goal in the FIH Men's World Cup with a beautiful counter-attacking move to earn a well-deserved consolation goal.

It was the turn of the European giants next as each one of Netherlands, Belgium and Germany faced stiff opposition from Malaysia, Korea and Japan respectively, but stepped up their game in the second halves to register comfortable wins by big margins by full times.

Netherlands secured a 4-0 win against Malaysia in the second game in Rourkela.

It was then Pool B action in Bhubaneswar where Belgium scored 5 second half goals to win 5-0 against Korea, before Germany repeated the same pattern, scoring 3 goals in the second half against Japan to run away 3-0 winners.

NEW ZEALAND PREVAIL
Playing in their first ever World Cup game, the Chilean backline played tentatively and paid the price in the first half as

Sam Lane and Sam Hiha (twice) capitalised on individual errors to put New Zealand up 3-0 inside 20 minutes.

Ignacio Contardo weaved into the circle, beating three Kiwi defenders, before taking the ball past the keeper and finishing on the reverse to give Chile their first ever goal in the Men's World Cup. Chile keeper Adrian Henriquez was particularly terrific for them, pulling multiple saves to keep New Zealand out in the entire second half.

Sam Ward, who opened the scoring, was awarded player of the match and said: "Chile are a tough team to play against. We knew it would be a good game, so it is good to get the first win. Looking forward to the next game here."

In other matches, Netherlands showed their class to beat a valiant Malaysia 4-0 while Belgium smashed Korea 5-0.

FIH ODISHA HOCKEY MEN'S WORLD CUP 2023 DAY 2 RESULTS

- New Zealand 3-1 Chile**
Player of the Match:
Sam Lane (NZL)
- Netherlands 4-0 Malaysia**
Player of the Match:
Jorrit Croon (NED)
- Belgium 5-0 Korea**
Player of the Match:
Victor Wegnez (BEL)
- Germany 3-0 Japan**
Player of the Match:
Christopher Ruhr (GER)

Darsait Titans, Bousher Busters post wins in D20

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket's D20 that kicked off on January 11 experienced quality cricket and nail biting finishes to the initial leg of the league. The matches are being played at the Oman Cricket Academy Grounds which offer free entry to all spectators. The league is currently underway with teams competing for the coveted title -- final being on January 24.

DARSAIT TITANS BEAT AZAIBA XI
Batting First, Mansoor Mazher of Azaiba XI scored a 50 off 47 balls with Ishtiaq Muhammad, Zeeshan Maqsood and Sahil Shaik picking 2 wickets each bundling down Azaiba XI for just 95. In response, Darsait Titans successfully chased the target with Ghazanfar blazing out with his 46 off 29 balls taking them over the line.

BOUSER BUSTERS TRIUMPH
Ghubrah Giants couldn't hold the attack of Bousher Busters'



Ghazanfar Iqbal – Darsait Titans

bowlers tumbling down to just 66 runs with Nadeem Khan and Aqil Khan picking 3 wickets and Ahmed Fayyaz Butt claiming 2 wickets.

In reply, Bousher Busters chased down the target in the 9th over with Adeel Shafique scoring 40 off 30 balls making sure to take them over the line.

QURUM THUNDERS PREVAIL
Batting first, Pratik Athawale's (35

off 37) steady start helped Rafiullah (52 off 39) and Karan Sonavale (25 off 24) set a defendable total for the Royals. Qurum Thunders pacers were the key wreckers with Akash Mohit picking 3 wickets and Munis Ansari claiming 2 wickets.

In reply, Qurum Thunders got off to a good start by Aiyappa CR (29 off 27) creating a base for Hashir Dafedar scoring 53 off 38 balls including 4 sixes ably



Mohammad Nadeem – Ruwi Rangers

partnered by Ayaan Khan to take the thunders to their first victory in the tournament.

RUWI RANGERS WIN
Zeeshan Siddiqui's opening blitz scoring 32 of 22 balls set the tone for Khuwair Warriors with their middle order batsmen cashing in on the start with Arsalan Basheer (33 off 32) and Muhd Zeeshan (43 off 24) taking



Prabhakaran Kannan – Ghubrah Giants

control of the game and making sure Khuwair Warriors set a defendable total. Mohammed Nadeem was one among the bowlers picking 3 wickets.

In reply, Hannan Rizwan (43 off 32) started well for Ruwi Rangers continued by exemplary strokeplay from

Mohammed Nadeem (50 off 39 n.o.) and Mehran Khan (27 off 13 n.o.) taking the rangers over



Hashir Dafedar – Qurum Thunders

the line in the last over. Mohsin Qureshi and Asim Kamal picked 2 wickets each for the Khuwair Warriors.

The Oman D20 is set to roll out many more intense, action packed matches bring the best of talent in Oman under a lid. The matches are also broadcasted across the globe on Fancode, GeoSuper, WillowTV, CricTracker on Youtube and Sportseye on Facebook.

World’s top TT veterans compete for 44 titles

MUSCAT: The Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) will be transformed into a hive of activity this week as it plays host to the World Veteran Table Tennis Championships 2023. More than 1,600 players aged 40 to over 90 years of age will compete for 44 world titles during the coming week.

The men’s competition boasts many of the world’s top ten ranked players including the former world number one Raymond Lui of Hong Kong, number two Petr Wasik from Czechia, number four Youssef Shalhoub from Lebanon and Mazen Shaouabar representing Palestine, a former world number five.

The women’s event is equally competitive with former world number one Pia Toelhof of Denmark and Ursula Luh-Fleischer, part of a very strong contingent from Germany, joining the very best veteran players from China, the United States of America, France, India and Japan.

Oman’s nine-strong team consists of Sajad Baqir, Abdul Ghany Nasser Hassan, Soman Ukkath Variath, Mansoor al Wahaibi, Ismail al Sulaimani, Sultan al Riyami, Salim al Battashi, Saleh al Matrifi and Anwar Abbas.

Mohamed Eldawlaty, Competitions Manager of World Veteran Championships – Muscat 2023, affirmed that it is great to return back after five years absence of the World Veterans Table Tennis Championships. “We are in full readiness to kick off fantastic event for players and fans for one full week. The event will take place in a spectacular venue at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre which will accommodate more than 100 tables with great facilities. I believe the players will have a different experience in this edition of the championships,” he added.

“Due to some challenges in



MOHAMED ELDAWLATY

logistics and shipment, I would like to say special thanks to all the volunteers, workers and the organising committee who managed to install the flooring for all the 100 tables in less than one day which made possible made the event in one time. The team worked very hard during the past few days ago to complete all the technical and logistics preparations that will ensure to make table tennis accessible to veterans of all ages categories and help them fall in love with it.”

“The players began their warm-up sessions on Saturday and Sunday ahead of the competitions start on Monday. Wishing good luck to all the participants from different part of the world. Besides the competitions among the players, table tennis will always contributing for all ages to be more active and healthier,” he said.

The first round of matches begins today with the singles competition group stage. The doubles competition gets under way tomorrow.

Participants will be able to explore Muscat and further afield on January 18 before returning to action on January 19 for the first day of the knockout round. The semifinals and finals are scheduled for January 21.

First held in Goteborg, Sweden, in 1982, with just 450 participants from 21 countries, the World Veteran Table Tennis Championships have grown to



become a major fixture in the global calendar. Now in its 40th year, this is the first time the championships have been held in this region, allowing Oman the opportunity to showcase its unique culture and world-famous hospitality to a new audience.

The World Veteran Table Tennis Championships 2023 is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Oman Table Tennis Association, and the International Table Tennis Federation, with support from Oman Fiber Optic, STAG Sports, Omantel and Belltel.

EVENT SCHEDULE
January 15: Opening ceremony
January 16: Singles competitions, group stage
January 17: Singles and doubles, group stage
January 18: Day off/touristic offer
January 19: Singles and doubles, knockout round
January 20: Singles and doubles, knockout round
January 21: Singles and doubles, semifinals and finals

Five-star Al Attiyah and Benavides take honours



Toyota’s driver Nasser al Attiyah (R) of Qatar and his co-driver Mathieu Baumel of France celebrate after winning the Dakar Rally 2023, at the end of the last stage between Al Hofuf and Dammam in Saudi Arabia. – AFP



(From L-R) French driver Sebastien Loeb and Belgian co-driver Fabian Lurquin, Toyota’s Mathieu Baumel and Nasser al Attiyah, Brazilian driver Lucas Moraes and co-driver Germany Timo Gottschalk at the end of the Dakar Rally 2023. – AFP



(From L-R) Australian biker Toby Price (second place), Argentina’s biker Kevin Benavides (first place) and US biker Howes Kyler (third place) pose at the end of the last stage of the Dakar Rally 2023 between Al Hofuf and Dammam. – AFP

DAMMAM, Saudi Arabia: Qatari driver Nasser al Attiyah on Sunday won his fifth Dakar Rally driver’s title and second in a row, with Argentina’s Kevin Benavides securing his second motorbike crown.

The 52-year-old Al Attiyah won three stages and had more than an hour’s advantage in the overall standings over Frenchman Sebastien Loeb, who also finished runner-up last year.

Al Attiyah’s Toyota team-mate Lucas Moraes of Brazil finished third on his debut in the iconic test of endurance which reached its climax in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Al Attiyah took the overall lead after the third stage, having

built up a commanding advantage in the first week and deployed a safety-first strategy in the second half of the race.

“We just finished and I’m so happy. It was a difficult Dakar for everyone,” said Al Attiyah.

“It’s crazy to manage to defend my title. I’m very happy to win five times, and Mathieu (his co-driver Mathieu Baumel) four... Sorry, Mathieu!

“We didn’t have to attack like crazy. We managed to get through the second week and win the Dakar at the end, that’s what really matters.”

Loeb gave it all he could as he won a record six successive stages in the second week. But the

48-year-old Frenchman had lost so much time on the first part of the race that it was a lost cause.

“After the beginning of the Rally we had we could not hope for better than this,” said Loeb.

“Nasser was so consistent that he was unbeatable, he produced a brilliant performance without any mistakes.”

Moraes — whose co-driver Timo Gottschalk was Al Attiyah’s partner in his first win in 2011 — was proud as punch to be the first Brazilian to finish in the top three.

“It was important for the rally community in Brazil because it had never happened before,” he said. “I’m going to celebrate with all the Brazilian photographers.”

‘INCREDIBLE’

The car category may not have had a lot of suspense about it but the motorbike title race more than made up for it with plenty of thrills and spills.

Benavides, the 2021 champion, edged out Australian Toby Price by 43 seconds with Skyler Howes of the United States finishing third.

Benavides — who celebrated his 34th birthday during the race — trailed two-time champion Price by 12 seconds entering Sunday’s 14th and final stage.

He produced a sterling ride to win the stage, however, and post a time 55 seconds faster than his 35-year-old rival.

Benavides win will be a popular

one, as he showed selflessness in stopping to aid a stricken rival Matthias Walkner in Saturday’s penultimate stage. “It’s incredible to pull off the win at the end of this completely crazy Dakar, and with such a small gap,” said Benavides.

“I’m also the first to win with two different motorbike brands, and that makes me very proud.”

It brought to an end a fascinating battle for supremacy in the motorbike section which had seen Howes lead for six days.

‘DREAM COME TRUE’

Price could not hide his disappointment, despite praising Benavides for doing a ‘great job’.

“Yeah, hard to take at the

moment, but at the end of the day I’m going home in one piece and we got a Dakar trophy,” he said. “It hurts a little bit.”

For his part, Howes was ecstatic.

“How could I be anything but happy?” said Howes, who became the fifth American to finish in the top three. “You can always look back and say ‘Aw, man, maybe I could’ve saved this here and here’, but we’re at the finish safely, and I’m on the podium. “It’s such a dream come true and an honour to share the podium with two legends like Toby and Kevin.”

Several of the title contenders had bowed out in early stages including last year’s British winner Sam Sunderland. — AFP



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Oman ranked 8th in global index of countries with highest quality of life



JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 25

The Sultanate of Oman is ranked 8th on the index of countries with the highest quality of life, according to the world data encyclopedia, Numbeo.

The Netherlands topped the list with 196.7 points, with Denmark in second place with 194.7 points. Also ranked high are: Switzerland (3rd), Luxembourg (4th), Finland (5th), Iceland (6th), Austria (7th), Australia (9th) and Norway (10th).

The Sultanate of Oman, with a very high score of 184.7 points, also topped the list among the Arab countries. The UAE came in 15th in the world with 175.7 while Qatar came in 20th in the world with 167.5 points.

The quality of life index is an estimation of overall quality of life by using an empirical formula which takes into account purchasing power index, pollution index, house price to income, cost of living index, safety index, health care index, traffic commute time index, and climate index.

Meanwhile, the capital city of the Sultanate of Oman, Muscat, is ranked 14th globally among the safest cities with 79.90 points in safety index and the lowest crime rate in the world with 20.10 points.

GCC cities top the list

of the safest cities in the world with Abu Dhabi being number one, holding the title sixth year in a row.

On the other hand, Doha ranked second while Ajman (4th), Sharjah (5th) and Dubai (7th). Completing the top ten list include Taipei (3rd), Quebec City in Canada (6th), San Sebastian in Spain (8th), Bern in Switzerland (9th) and Eskisehir in Turkey (10th).

Survey participants are asked questions like how safe they feel walking at night, how worried they are about being robbed, and about the change in crime levels over the past three years.

In Muscat, the perception of how safe it is to walk alone during night is high, while the worries of being mugged or robbed, car being stolen, being subject to a physical attack because of your skin colour, ethnic origin, gender or religion are very low.

Numbeo is the largest and most famous online database in the world, and it is concerned with evaluating the level of crime and the degree of safety in the countries of the world, by measuring crime rates.

The index ranks countries on a scale ranging from zero to 100, so that the closer a country is to zero, the lower its crime rates, while these rates rise if the assessment of a country approaches 100.

\$463m OQ ammonia plant to boost value creation from gas resources

NEW LANDMARK: National petrochemical projects to enhance economic growth and diversification in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 15

OQ, a global integrated energy group, inaugurated yesterday its new ammonia plant in Dhofar governorate with an investment cost of about \$463 million and a production capacity of 1,000 metric tonnes per day of liquid ammonia.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the patronage of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, in the presence of a number of their excellencies, shaikhs, CEOs and local dignitaries.

HH Sayyid Marwan toured the facilities of the ammonia plant. He listened to a detailed explanation about the production stages and the role played by the plant in supporting the governmental plans related to the economic diversification policies and the efforts made to maximise the added value of Omani natural resources.

Like other strategic development projects of the Group, OQ's ammonia plant in Dhofar contributes to enhancing the in-country added value. The value of OQ's procurements from Omani companies amounted to about \$199 million. Products manufactured in the Sultanate of Oman had a big share of it. The project has also contributed to creating many job and training opportunities. Additionally, it has supported some social investment initiatives in Dhofar governorate.

Economic Diversification On this occasion, HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, said: "The National projects in the petrochemicals sector, implemented by Oman Investment Authority (OIA) through OQ Group would contribute to enhancing the economic growth and diversification plans in the Sultanate of Oman to keep pace with the overarching development under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, may Allah protect Him.



The plant will contribute to supporting the economic activities in the energy sector, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and provide direct and indirect employment opportunities for fresh and experienced Omanis.

HH SAYYID MARWAN BIN TURKI AL SAID
Governor of Dhofar

They also reinforce the economic diversification efforts in the country to be in line with Oman Vision 2040."

The Chief Guest expressed his happiness over the success achieved with the inauguration of OQ's Ammonia plant which was built in line with the highest levels of operational efficiency. He also indicated that this reflects the efforts exerted by OQ Group to leverage the use of Omani natural resources, maximise its benefits and boost the processing industries in the Sultanate of Oman.

HH Sayyid Marwan pointed out that the plant will contribute to supporting the economic activities in the energy sector, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and provide direct and indirect employment opportunities for fresh and experienced Omanis.

For his part, Mulhim bin Bashir al Jarf, Deputy President for Investment at Oman Investment Authority and Board Chairman of OQ Group, expressed his happiness on this occasion saying: "We are extremely happy with the inauguration of OQ's Ammonia

Plant in Dhofar governorate, as an investment that is being inaugurated to mark Oman's celebrations of its 52nd National Day. I would like to express our sincerest gratitude to HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, on patronising the inauguration ceremony of the plant and touting its facilities."

"The ammonia plant is one of the strategic development projects owned by OQ. It goes in line with the drives of Oman Investment Authority to promote investment in heavy and downstream industries by leveraging the Omani natural resources with the objective of increasing its role in increasing their contributions of to the gross domestic product," Al Jarf added.

He concluded: "We hope that this project would contribute to achieving added value from its products that will be exported to international markets. This will enhance the position of Omani exports and attract more foreign investments to the economic sectors according to the priorities of Oman Vision 2040".

In his speech during the ceremony, Talal al Awfi, CEO of OQ Group, said: "Today marks a significant milestone in OQ's journey as we celebrate a qualitative addition to the investments of OQ, a global integrated energy group. OQ, which is affiliated to Oman Investment Authority, always seeks to support our national economy to achieve Oman Vision 2040.

TURN TO PAGE 14

MoF launches National Register of Government Assets

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance began on Sunday the execution of a project titled "National Register for Government Assets", which aims to initiate a comprehensive, integrated system for inventorying government assets.

The register will help draft a

unified strategy to ensure the centralisation of its management, raise its efficiency and maximise benefits and revenues from the government.

The overall aim is to utilise these revenues in an optimum manner, to help provide the State Budget



with additional financial resources.

The first phase includes the preparation of a model for the implementation of the Asset Registration Guide and the inventorying of assets belonging to the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health and Muscat

Municipality. The assets of other units of the State's Administrative Apparatus will follow suit.

The project seeks to highlight the authentic value of government assets and determine the assets involved in public-private sector partnerships. — ONA

Oman invites proposals for PPP-based drug rehab Centre of Excellence

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 15

Plans by the Omani government to rope in the private sector in the development and operation of a drug rehabilitation centre in Suhar on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) basis continue to make headway.

On Sunday, the Ministry of Finance — which is overseeing an ambitious and well-diversified PPP programme on behalf of the government — issued a Request for Proposals from suitably qualified companies operating in the healthcare services sector to bid for its licence to build and operate the facility in the Wilayat of Suhar in North Al Batinah Governorate.

The proposed Taafi Suhar Centre is envisaged to be a modern de-addiction and rehabilitation facility designed to enable users of narcotics and psychotropic substances to reintegrate back into the society.

The Ministry of Finance is overseeing the procurement of the PPP based project in coordination with the Ministry of Health. The longer term goal is to establish the facility as a Centre of Excellence



for drug rehab services in the Sultanate of Oman.

According to the Finance Ministry, the selected developer will be granted a long-term contract for the Design, Build, Finance, Operation and Maintenance (DBFOM) the Taafi Suhar Centre. It will include a provision for the expansion of the complex as well at some point in the future.

Sunday's Request for Proposals (RfP) builds on an Expression of Interest (EoI) issued by the

Ministry of Finance that elicited a significant number of responses from private sector developers registering their interest in bidding for the competitive PPP based tender.

Interested bidders must have proven experience in the development and operation of at least two centres set up on a PPP model and dedicated to detoxification and rehabilitation services. They have until April 13, 2023 to submit their firm offers.

A London-based PPP advisory practice specialising in healthcare, among other sectors, says it has been retained by the ministry as its Lead Transaction PPP Adviser for the Al Taafi Suhar PPP initiative.

The latter is working with a number of subject matter experts in psychiatry and drug addiction, as well as architectural and legal consultants, to support the ministry in the successful procurement and delivery of the drug rehab project. Significantly, PPP-based projects

and initiatives are expected to take off in a big way during 2023.

As part of Oman's 2023 State General Budget, the Ministry of Finance unveiled a sizable portfolio of projects and initiatives for implementation under the PPP programme during the year. Proposals listed in the Budget for development via the PPP route span the Education, Health, Transport & Logistics, Communications & IT, Fisheries, and Infrastructure sectors.

Khazaen signs pact to set up Pharma City



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 15

Khazaen Economic City has signed an agreement with Invest in Oman to help attract new investments in a Pharma City currently under development in the hub. The Pharma City aims to contribute to the achievement of the Sultanate of Oman's strategy for pharmaceutical security.

It aims to attract expertise and advanced technology, in addition to achieving integration between

educational qualifications and market demand in the pharmaceutical industry. Investments in Pharma City currently total around RO 25 million as of 2022-end.

The Pharma City is being established on around half a million square metres to support investments in pharmaceutical factories, integrated stores, laboratories and advanced medical research centres in addition to medical centres of Import and export specialised in the health sector.

\$463m OQ ammonia plant to boost value creation from gas resources

FROM PAGE 13

The plant is another economic asset that is being added to OQ's investments in Dhofar Governorate, which houses three major projects of the Group including the Methanol Plant and Salalah LPG Plant, OQ Ammonia Plant, as well as Raysut Petroleum Products Storage Terminal, which is the oldest facilities of the Group in Dhofar.

"This plant is integrated with the existing 1 million tonnes per year capacity methanol plant, which will enable OQ Group to rationalise the cost and optimise performance and production efficiency. The plant uses the most advanced technologies licensed by international ammonia production entities according to the highest occupational safety standards applicable in Oman and across the world," Al Awfi pointed out.

He explained that the ammonia plant will promote the Omani exports. The plant exports



its products to international markets via Salalah Port through OQ Trading limited, the trading arm of the group. He elucidated that the demand for ammonia products in the global markets is witnessing constant growth leading to higher returns and rendering the project highly feasible.

Al Awfi concluded: "The economic significance of the Ammonia Plant is paramount in

light of its integration with other projects. Ammonia is used in the production of green hydrogen, which is a key component of the OQ Energy Transition Agenda."

Ammonia is used as a key ingredient in the production of fertilisers and is an important intermediate chemical in the manufacturing of synthetic resins, detergents, coolants, synthetic fibres, and polyurethanes, among other applications.

Omantel's Zain subsidiary announces new tower sale transactions



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JAN 15

Majority Omani government-owned Omantel has announced new transactions by its subsidiary, Mobile Telecommunications Company (Zain), in the sale of stakes in its passive telecom infrastructure.

In a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Sunday, Omantel said Zain Iraq — a subsidiary of Zain Group — has signed agreements for the sale and leaseback of passive components along with supporting facilities, such as power generators, fuel tanks and protection kiosks (collectively known as tower assets) in Iraq with TASC Towers Iraq Company.

The agreements include the sale and leaseback rights for 4,968 tower assets at a value of \$180 million, it said. As part of the deal, TASC Towers Iraq will expand the network and build new tower sites across the country, including 198 new sites over the next 12 months.

Following the agreements, Zain Group has increased its share in TASC Towers to 83.47 per cent, up from 69 per cent previously. TASC Towers will however continue to operate as an independent entity with a board consisting of non-Zain Group majority members and an independent management team.

The accounting gain from this transaction is estimated at \$36 million, which will be recorded in the financial states of Zain Iraq in Q1 2023, the filing added.

Just last week, Omantel announced that Zain KSA had completed the sale of stakes in its tower infrastructure Golden Lattice Investment Company, owned 60 per cent by the Public Investment Fund (PIF), 20 per cent by Zain Saudi Arabia, 10 per cent by Prince Saud bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz, and 10 per cent by the Sultan Holding Company.

The transaction will result in a gain of up to 1.1 billion Saudi rials (US \$293 million, with the equivalent of RO 112.8 million to be realised over the period of transferring ownership of the towers in batches within a period not exceeding 18 months," said Omantel in its filing to the Capital Market Authority (Oman).

Zain Group's share will be 37.045 per cent following this transaction based on its ownership in Zain KSA, it stated.

Bank Muscat posts RO 200.75 million net profit

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the year ended December 31, 2022.

The bank posted a net profit of RO 200.75 million for the period compared to RO 189.63 million reported during the same period in 2021, an increase of 5.9 per cent.

The key highlights of the results for the year are as follows:

1) Net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing stood at RO 344.86 million for the



year ended December 31, 2022 compared to RO 335.54 million for the same period in 2021, an increase of 2.8 per cent.

2) Non-interest income was RO 157.96 million for the year ended December 31, 2022 as compared to RO 139.94 million for

the same period in 2021, mainly due to higher income from sale of investments.

3) Operating expenses for the year ended December 31, 2022 was RO 207.30 million as compared to RO 191.46 million for the same period in 2021, an increase of 8.3 per cent.

4) Net Impairment for credit and other losses for the year ended December 31, 2022 was RO 59.94 million as against RO 60.22 million for the same period in 2021.

5) Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 2.4 per

cent to RO 9,414 million as against RO 9,191 million as at December 31, 2021.

6) Customer deposits including Islamic Customer deposits decreased by 1.5 per cent to RO 8,647 million as against RO 8,775 million as at December 31, 2021.

The full results for the year ended December 31, 2022 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during January 2023.

Investors sit on a plastic waste ticking bomb



LISA JUCCA

The writer is Breakingviews' European Business Editor. Based in Italy, she focuses on key corporate trends across the European Union.

Investors should worry about a rising plastic tide. The pandemic and a war in Ukraine have focused money managers' attention on supply chain disruption and energy security risks. Yet as the world continues to drown in packaging waste, the public and private sectors may come after big users like PepsiCo, Coca-Cola and Mars. Four years after the consumer goods giants signed up to voluntary reduction targets under the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, progress is disappointing. Ellen MacArthur Foundation data shows that the packaging employed by companies like PepsiCo, Mars and Coca-Cola increased its usage of virgin plastic, made from fossil fuels rather than

recycled materials, by 5%, 3% and 11% respectively between 2019 and 2021. That makes it unlikely they can meet their commitments to curb its use by 5%, 20% and 25% by 2025. Big plastic users are also making insufficient progress in using recycled material. The latter amounts to just 10% of plastic packaging used by pact signatories. Reusable containers, the most environmentally friendly form of packaging, amounted to only 1.2% of the total in 2021, and that figure is decreasing. Despite citizens' effort to sort out used plastic for collection, especially in Europe, only 9% actually gets recycled each year, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development says. In the United States 73% of

EUROPEAN INVESTORS' GREATER FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY MEANS THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO HASSLE DOMESTIC LAGGARDS. BUT IF GOVERNMENTS DECIDE TO IMPLEMENT MANDATORY RECYCLING QUOTAS, RIVAL US LATE-STARTERS WOULD SUFFER THE MOST.

plastic waste ends up in landfills, where it takes up to 500 years to decompose. The rest gets incinerated or washes up on developing countries' shores. That will only worsen as annual demand of about 450 million tonnes a year is expected to treble by 2060. Solving the plastic challenge is complex and expensive. Plastic comes in different types that cannot be bundled together. Certain materials or additives make it difficult to recycle. Substituting plastic with biodegradable material can be expensive. Using recycled plastic, while less energy-intensive than creating virgin plastic, can cost more overall. Yet, having pledged to act, big corporates are in a vulnerable

position. Danone is facing a legal challenge over its plastic use. In March, 175 governments agreed to work out binding laws to end plastic pollution by end-2024. Around 70% of citizens surveyed last year in 34 countries want new anti-plastic rules. European investors' greater focus on sustainability means they are more likely to hassle domestic laggards. But if governments decide to implement mandatory recycling quotas, rival US late-starters would suffer the most. In a worst-case scenario, companies could face a collective \$100 billion annual bill if lawmakers ask them to cover waste management costs in full, the PEW Charitable Trusts says. For investors, plastic inaction could become toxic. — Reuters

Debt fixes can help rebuild Ukraine

Almost 11 months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the country's tragedy, and that of its people, is staggering. Daily missile strikes bring death, but also reveal remarkable resilience and fortitude. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, it is the end of the beginning, not yet the beginning of the end. Nonetheless, it's time to look forward to a new beginning for Ukraine. Just as the Allies began preparing for post-World War Two economic order at Bretton Woods in 1944, so policy planners in Kyiv, Washington, Brussels and London must start the complex and essential process of planning for rebuilding before the conflict ends. In doing so they should deploy the financial innovation which helped to halt the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s: Brady bonds. The approach of the United States and President Joe Biden will be pivotal to planning and executing the reconstruction. It requires a 21st-century Marshall Plan led by America and joined by European allies. Direct financing of the rebuilding and recovery will be essential. Ukraine's leaders, though mightily burdened with the defence of their country, should simultaneously focus on multilateral talks to delineate the outlines of financing and support for the reconstruction that will be essential once the guns fall silent. The need is huge and grows larger by the day. The World Bank's Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, published in August last year, estimated rebuilding costs of \$349 billion and rising. A portion of these expenses can come from multilateral development banks. For example, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has 520 projects in Ukraine and will play an important ongoing role. But these institutions cannot shoulder the entire burden. The European Union will be a key part of the solution. Whether its financial backing

comes through existing methods or via a new European institution is less important than the output. The funding must be considerable and sustained, for failure to rebuild swiftly would eventually cost Europe more. Other mechanisms have been discussed, such as applying Russia's frozen central bank reserves to the reconstruction of Ukraine. The amounts are considerable: at the end of 2021, the Bank of Russia had foreign currency assets equivalent to \$62 billion in France, \$59 billion in Japan, \$99 billion in Germany and \$40 billion in the United States, according to calculations based on central bank data. However, the international legal difficulties of this route are significant, and as yet unanswered. Private sector creditors are also crucial. In August lenders representing approximately 75% of the country's \$20 billion in foreign bonds deferred payment of interest and principal until 2024. Though that is a good start, it is not enough. Debt restructuring talks should commence, drawing on the lessons learned in the past. Specifically, the government in Kyiv should investigate an equivalent to the Brady bonds. These securities, named after former US Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, replaced countries' existing sovereign obligations with dollar-denominated debt backed by long-term US Treasuries, as part of a negotiated restructuring process. The bonds typically had a maturity of 25 or 30 years. This offered the debtor permanent interest rate relief and protection from fluctuations in borrowing costs. By reducing the sovereign debt burden the programme supported recovery and economic growth. The bonds, first agreed in 1989, were eventually issued by 17 countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. Country-specific Brady plans covered \$160 billion, representing a 35%-40% reduction in debt levels. For Ukraine to benefit from similar relief, the US Treasury and other key finance ministries should back new Brady bonds. — Reuters

A better year for stock markets?



JIM O'NEILL

The author, a former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management and a former UK treasury minister, is a member of the Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development.

Although it has been almost a decade since I gave up a full-time job in finance, markets – and market oddities – still fascinate me, especially when they send signals that run against a widely held consensus among analysts and investors. Given all the disappointments in 2022, the outlook for the new year is quite downbeat. Major corporations are announcing layoffs, and the International Monetary Fund is forecasting that at least one in three countries will experience a recession this year. The reasons for such pessimism are not hard to find. The big inflationary surprises of 2022 triggered a massive and rapid tightening of monetary policies in most major economies, and key central banks have continued

to talk tough. Although the US Federal Reserve reduced the size of its interest-rate hikes from 75 basis points to 50 bps in December, it has made clear that more rate hikes are likely – and that a rate cut is not in the cards for 2023. Making matters worse, many other problems, like Russia's war in Ukraine, continue to simmer, threatening supply chains, markets, and economies around the world. At some point in my career, I was introduced to an old almanac that offered an endless array of heuristics about US stock markets' past performance. One nugget that always stuck with me is the five-day rule: If the S&P 500 index makes a net gain during the first five trading days of the calendar year, equities will perform well for the year overall. When I asked my colleagues to check it for the 1950-2014 period, they found that it held true more than 80% of the time. Well, in the first five days of 2023, the market rose by just over 1%, which means there is over an 80% chance that it will be positive on the year – at least according to the five-day rule. But before you rush to buy your favourite stocks, let me add a few obvious caveats. First, the stock market tends to rise more than it falls: down years are nowhere close to as frequent as up years. This is not particularly surprising, considering the prominent

role that equity markets play in finance. Second, the five-day rule is not airtight. There is almost a 20% chance that a rising market during the first five trading days ends up being down on the year. Ultimately, economic conditions, not some hoary heuristic, will determine the outcome. After all, why should the first five days be determinative of anything? It is understandable that many retail and institutional investors would want to signal confidence for the year, but there is no underlying economic reason why this period should be considered especially predictive. Nevertheless, other recent developments offer some cause for hope. Commentators may soon change their tune, and that could make investors more open to embracing a different collective narrative than the one that has been influencing their behaviour so far. I can see three reasons why that could happen. First, despite the war in Ukraine, many commodity prices – including natural gas – fell significantly in the second half of 2022. That not only increases the probability that inflationary pressures will ease; it also means that companies and consumers' disposable income is not as vulnerable as was previously assumed. Equally important, several high-frequency indicators for late 2022 and early 2023 have been better than expected, notably in Europe

Second, other inflation indicators have also been better than expected on both sides of the Atlantic, including the most recent US wage-data series. While the Fed and many other central banks insist that they will remain hawkish, I am reminded of something a famously successful US hedge fund manager once told me: The only thing you can know about the Fed is that it will change its message when the evidence changes. If the inflation picture continues to improve faster than Fed officials expect, they will change their view. Finally, one must not forget China, which suddenly abandoned its zero-Cvoid policy in December. Notwithstanding the massive surge in infections and hospitalisations, the end of lockdowns sets the stage for a big cyclical bounce in the Chinese economy – even with all the other structural challenges that Chinese authorities must confront. Recall that there was a similar post-lockdown rebound in many other countries (even the United Kingdom, despite all its other problems). Investors will seek further clues in what happens next. If markets manage to remain slightly more bullish through the end of the month, I suspect many commentators' views will also shift. Then it will be time to consider whether things are really looking up – or whether the five-day rule is best ignored. © Project Syndicate, 2023



A specialist trader works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. — Reuters

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Be Careful. Be Responsible! #Living_with_Covid19

ESTABLISHED IN 1981 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHUELI VOL. 39 NO. 239 | PAGES 16

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

NEW YORK: António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has commended the role of the Sultanate in supporting international efforts to establish security and peace in Yemen.

In a virtual video call to countries lacking the global ceasefire initiative, Guterres said that the international community is grateful to the Sultanate of Oman for its crucial role in enhancing efforts aimed to establish peace and security in Yemen.

"The United Nations values this vital and positive role," he said.

Guterres added that the "Sultanate represents a unique model, not only in the Middle East, but also in the world." He urged other countries to follow the example of the Sultanate in advocating and supporting peace and stability. — ONA

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Said bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al Habsi (pictured), Chairman of the Supreme Court Swayid Khalifa bin Said bin Khalifa al Busaidi, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court Shaukh Al Muhtashir bin Abdullah bin Issa al Harthy, took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO P2

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 KUTTY

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 Ruwi 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,"

scare away a group of people at a sidewalk in Ruwi. The Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Health have said it more than enough times that social distancing is the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19.

While expressing his ire, Hamud said, "The attitude of some people is not acceptable that they pave the way for the spread of the infection. Even if we do not have the authority to lay charges on the offenders, at least we can scare them away," he told the Observer.

and in some cases, it is necessary to police the behavior of other people as well," said Hamud al Wahabi, who stopped his car to

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

TURN TO P4



Majlis Al Jinn: The second largest subterranean chamber on earth

Around two hours drive from Muscat, Selma Plateau is home to Majlis Al Jinn, one of the biggest chambers in the world and four other amazing sinkholes making it a great playground for cavers... **P20**

Princess in villa with unique Caravaggio faces eviction

A US-BORN PRINCESS who lives in a Roman villa featuring the world's only known mural by Italian baroque artist Caravaggio said on Friday she faced eviction from the unique property at the centre of a raging inheritance battle.

A court in Rome served an eviction notice to Princess Rita Jenrette Boncompagni Ludovisi after part of an outside wall of

the residence, known as Casino dell'Aurora, collapsed, forcing the closure of a nearby street.

Boncompagni Ludovisi said she had been given 60 days to vacate the property, saying was "stunned" by the decision and would definitely appeal.

She adding that she believed the court's decision had been influenced by the fact she had

offered unauthorised paying tours of the mansion, which is under court oversight as part of a judicial process to sell it at auction.

She said the tours were organised to raise money for maintenance.

The Casino dell'Aurora was put under the hammer in January 2022, with a minimum bidding price of around 350 million euros (\$380 million), making it potentially one of the most expensive homes in the world.

That auction attracted no bids, and the four that followed also failed, despite a progressively lower asking price. A fifth auction closed on Thursday with a minimum bidding price of 108.5 million euros.

Princess Boncompagni Ludovisi, a former actress, Playboy model, ex-wife of a US congressman and New York real estate broker, married the late Prince Nicolo Boncompagni Ludovisi, scion of one of Europe's most aristocratic families, in 2009.

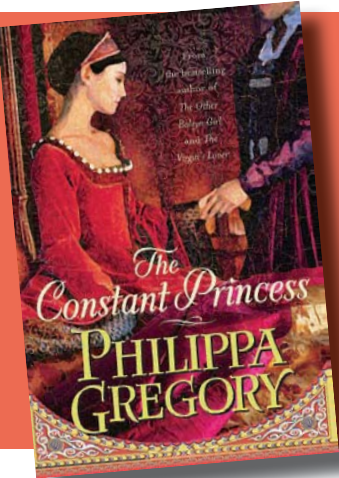
— Reuters



READ

THE CONSTANT PRINCESS

The Constant Princess is the story of a young girl who was raised to be a queen, the lengths to which she goes to fulfil a deathbed promise, and the crucial lie that changed the course of history.



LIFESTYLE

Miss USA R'Bonney Gabriel (C) celebrates after winning the 71st Miss Universe competition at the Ernest N Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Louisiana on January 14. — AFP



FASHION

A model presents a creation for Gucci's men's fall/winter 2023/24 fashion collection in Milan on January 13, 2023

— AFP





Remembering a dawn that changed fate of Zanzibar

By Nasser bin Abdulla al Riyami

AS DAWN BROKE over the Island of Peace on Sunday, January 12, 1964 the deafening sound of fusillades of bullets shook the island, the normally tranquil Island of Cloves.

At first, people thought it was the municipal workers shooting stray dog, but then the rounds of gunfire seemed to go on and on, pounding the city relentlessly, and more intensely, with shorter intervals between firing bouts. Suspicion quickly began to creep in, with sinister premonitions of imminent disturbances.

The worst suspicions were soon confirmed with the shouts of men rising from different directions declaring general mobilisation. An atmosphere of panic, fear, even of forlornness reigned supreme as people started to recall the events of

June 1961 when racial violence erupted and resulted in the death of 86 innocent people.

Some people were on a rampage while others were at sixes and sevens as to what to do and where to go to keep themselves out of harm's way and avoid an impending disaster. The confusion, ranting and raving and the general state of hysteria in the streets made the situation worse, particularly for old women and the elderly as they rightly anticipated ominous days ahead. The atmosphere was charged with tension, anger and confusion. Some Omanis were seen carrying their rifles and running towards Malindi Police Station.

Others took the precaution of locking themselves indoors to protect themselves and their families from the riots in the streets, the worst prospect they had anticipated thus far. Indeed, the majority of the



people who had been living in peace and tranquillity could not imagine that they were facing an invasion, and that as a consequence their lives would change beyond all recognition.

The international community was shocked, astounded by the news filtering from Zanzibar regarding the overthrow of a legitimate government that had only recently gained independence after 73 years of British Protection. The words of John Okello - Ugandan national, who came to Zanzibar in 1959, for better life - announced the toppling of the Sultanate regime. His words came as painful stabs, like sharp knives in their chests. His words augured ill and foretold of the deadly harm and destruction that would soon befall them and their country. Okello's statement read as follows:

"I am Field Marshal Okello! Wake up, you imperialists, there is no longer an imperialist government on this Island; this is now the government of the Freedom Fighters."

THE SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT CAME AS FOLLOWS:

"Wake up, you black men. Let every one of you take a gun and ammunition and start to fight against any remnants of imperialism on this Island. Never, never relent, if you want this Island to be yours."

The discussion of the bloody events of January leads simultaneously to the question that has long puzzled many researchers as to who was responsible for the January genocide. This topic has generated much interest and therefore an attempt will be made to take an analytical look at the events leading up to the overthrow of the legitimate government.

In an attempt to make our way through to the truth and in order to avoid any misleading statements or facts, it was deemed necessary to obtain first-hand information from those who lived these events by virtue of their political positions in the usurped Sultanate. It was also

necessary to review some archived documents and the few publications that shed light on this painful state of affairs.

WAS IT A REVOLUTION?

However, it was important before doing so, to determine the most suitable term that can best describe the events that resulted in the fall of independent Zanzibar. Such events are referred to by many as "Revolution," as a way of adding a public dimension to it, almost as if they are saying that the events were a direct result of the will of the people.

However, this could never be so, because the term revolution basically refers to a movement or organisation of people, having a set of justified demands that emanate from a feeling of suppression by the authorities and where those suppressed or aggrieved people have no other means of achieving their objectives, having their fair demands met or liberating themselves from the yoke of oppression and corruption other than through imposing their

collective will on the authorities, normally in the form of deposing the government.

This was not the case in Zanzibar where the elected government had ruled for just 32 days, thereby rendering utterly groundless any claims of suppression, tyranny, corruption or public injustice. So, could we say that Zanzibar was a subject to a coup d'état then? To answer is absolutely no, as the movement wasn't led by an internal armed force.

Based on the above assumptions, it is fair to conclude that what happened in Zanzibar was neither a coup d'état nor a revolution.

Moreover, since history has revealed that foreign quarters were at work in Zanzibar; it would therefore be a misnomer to describe the events by either name. The "Invasion Theory" would be more appropriate and logical here.

To be continued next week.
Translated by Ali bin Rashid al Abri





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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

A Penguin-Like Shape May Have Helped This Dinosaur Dive



BIRDS, THE ONLY group of dinosaurs still alive today, have evolved to make themselves at home in just about everywhere. And then there are penguins, which plunge a quarter-mile deep into icy waters in search of food.

It now seems that modern birds are not the only dinosaur group to embrace the plunge-and-prey lifestyle. A team of researchers say they have found the earliest example of an extinct dinosaur with a body that was streamlined for diving. They described the dinosaur discovery in the journal Communications Biology.

The new duck-size dinosaur was at first overlooked. In 2008, Robin Sissons, then a master's student at the University of Alberta, was on a dig in Mongolia's Gobi Desert when she noticed a "string of white bits poking out of the rock." After she shared a photo of what she had seen with her colleagues over lunch, they went to the spot and ultimately transported the fossil to South Korea for further study. (The fossil has since been returned to the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.)

"After preparation in Korea, a whole skeleton came to light," said Yuong-Nam Lee of Seoul National University, who led the expedition and is an author of the study.

The researchers found the fossil had a mouth full of more than 100 tiny, sharp teeth and a long, slender neck. These features pointed to a dinosaur that spent time by the water, Lee said, with teeth, packed at the front of the snout, capable of hanging on to slippery, thrashing fish.

Similar fossils have also been found in Mongolia, including one called Halszkaraptor escuilliei, and scientists have debated whether it was semiaquatic. But the new dinosaur before Lee was better preserved than Halszkaraptor, especially in its ribs, which were slightly flattened and pointed toward the animal's tail.

"Although the rib cage was not completely preserved, the rib orientation and shape clearly indicate that this animal had a streamlined body, as penguins do," Lee said. This made the rib cage the smoking gun: Not only was this dinosaur feeding on fish, the researchers said, but it had a sleek body perfect for diving. The name they chose for it reflects this claim: Natovenator polydontus, "swimming hunter with many teeth."

If the researchers are correct, Natovenator is among the first dinosaurs (besides birds) to dive for its dinner. — KATE GOLEMBIEWSKI/NYT

ENTERTAINMENT

Let's waltz!
Vienna ball season
back in full swing



AFTER COVID RESTRICTIONS had wiped out Vienna's glamorous winter ball season for two years in a row, 50-year-old Wahyuni couldn't wait any longer to get all dolled up and put on her dazzling floral-patterned ballgown to once again waltz the night away.

"We love to come here, because the very nice decorations are made out of real flowers and it's very lovely," Wahyuni said, alongside her friend Deasy, who declined to give their full names, as both were attending the legendary Flower Ball in Vienna's neo-Gothic city hall.

Admiring the riot of colours, 46-year-old Deasy, who originally hails from Indonesia, said that she had already been here a few years ago and "had to come back".

Known for being one of the most beautifully decorated winter balls among the approximately 450 hosted in the Austrian capital each season, the Flower Ball showcases mesmerising floral arrangements skillfully crafted out of 100,000 blossoms.

Donning snow-white dresses and classy black evening suits, four first-time debutants said they were "quite nervous" about opening the ball.

"I think it is so beautifully decorated, and that makes me super happy," 18-year-old Eduard Wernisch said.

The self-described "rookies" said they had attended dance classes for a couple of hours every week since September to be prepared.

The rhythm of the waltz can be tricky and 17-year-old classmate Emma said she was particularly afraid of dropping her flower bouquet.

"People come here with the expectation of experiencing spring" as opposed to the grey, foggy winters so prevalent in Vienna, Peter Hucik, art director of the Flower Ball said.

Even though the ball is not sold out, Hucik said he is pleased that 2,400 visitors are attending

Friday's ball, kicking off the season as one of Vienna's first big balls.

MOST SUCCESSFUL SEASON

The Covid-related shutdown of Vienna's famous ball season had caused the city to lose at least 152 million euros (\$164 million) in revenue per year.

This season, however, appeared to be on track to become one of Vienna's most successful ever recorded.

"The season is making a roaring comeback," Markus Griessler, chairman of the tourism and leisure division of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce, said.

Griessler said he expects the city to rake in "170 million" euros this season.

"Every third Viennese aged 15 and older is planning to attend a ball this year," compared to only one in four in 2019, he added, noting that "550,000 sold tickets" are within reach.

About one tenth of the ballgoers each year come especially from abroad. On average every ballgoer spends around 320 euros per ball.

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

There are "exciting parallels" between Vienna's ball season and travelling in general, Norbert Kettner, director of the city's tourist office said, when asked about why balls remained a top priority.

"Clearly, people insist on travelling and dancing," said Kettner while emphasising the city's age-old tradition of hosting such events.



site sex, lavishly wine, dine, spy and dance.

"The Viennese ball season and the waltz had always been a thorn in the side of the Catholic Church," Kettner said, because "waltzing was too close for comfort".

Therefore the famous ball season "loosely follows the Christian calendar and wraps up before Ash Wednesday," he added.

Thousands will earn their living in the flourishing sector, from hotels and restaurants to fashioning evening wear and hairdressing.

All businesses were as excited as the revellers to gear up and make this season a success.

— AFP

ART

Congolese
artist paints
politicians'
portraits in
plastic



NEAR THE BANKS of Lake Kivu in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, artist Patrick Cikuru Cirimwami wades knee-deep through a mountain of plastic bottles, scooping as many as he can carry into a large sack.

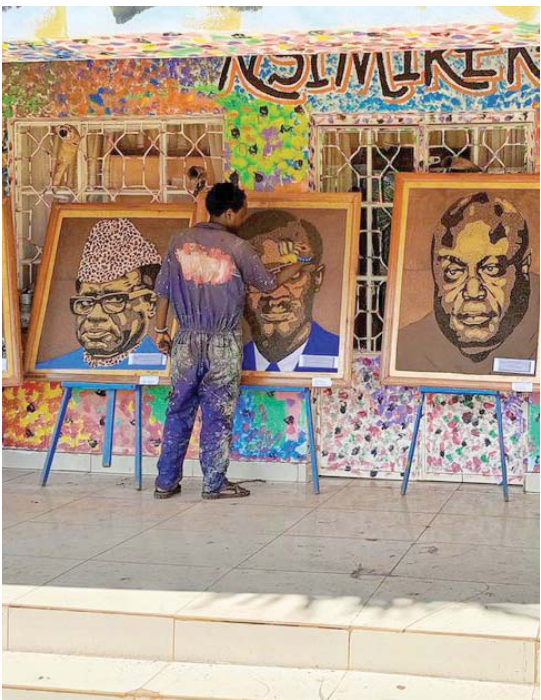
There is no public waste collection in the area, and the trash that ends up in Lake Kivu often causes breakdowns in the hydroelectric plant, leading to power cuts.

But Cikuru Cirimwami's goal is bigger than helping clean up. Later he will melt down the plastic to make a thick liquid which he uses to paint portraits of politicians - intended to be a condemnation of what he says is their inaction in protecting the environment.

"There have been many conferences in DR Congo, many meetings ... but we have not taken measures to protect nature. As a Congolese artist, I can send a message," said the 26-year-old.

Last month, the artist's portraits of political figures, from independence leader Patrice Lumumba to current president Felix Tshisekedi, were displayed at a cultural centre in his hometown, Bukavu.

Congo, like other African nations, has insisted on its right to develop its economy by exploiting its vast natural resources. It has come under criticism for putting oil blocks up for auction in the world's second-biggest rainforest. — Reuters



art & life

Local Scene

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Majlis Al Jinn: The second largest subterranean chamber on earth

BY KHALED ABDUL MALAK

Around two hours drive from Muscat, Selma plateau hosts Majlis al Jinn, one of the biggest chambers in the world and at 1300 m altitude above sea level, one of the most intriguing cave network to explore. Other than this gargantuan cave system, the area is also home to four sinkholes making it one of the best playgrounds for cavers. The four sinkholes found here include the three window cave, the arch cave, the funnel cave and the seventh hole. Departing from Muscat, take the coastal road to Sur, take the exit headed for Fins. Follow the road to the mountain in the direction of Taab and Harima. Keep driving uphill until you reach the plateau of Selma. Once at the top and after a few kilometers, the road splits in two. Take right to reach a small hamlet hosting the great chamber. Majlis al jinn has three entrances: the First drop, Cheryl's drop and the Asterisk hole. Don Davison, hydrogeologist by profession, was the first human being to abseil into Majlis al jinn through the First drop in 1983. He was followed few months later by his wife Cheryl through another entrance that eventually became eponymous to the lady explorer. At 157m, Cheryl's drop, was at that time, the highest freefall drop in Arabia. When it was discovered, Majlis Al Jinn was the second largest subterranean chamber on earth. On 27 February 2004, five amateurs Virginie, Vianney, Jacques, Johan and myself with two professionals Patrick and Nathalie set up our caving gears and started our descent into the heart of Selma plateau. Nathalie decided to send me first. I set up my descender on the rope and I started sliding

down the 1cm diameter rope very slowly. I could see Nathalie 20m below me at the belay point where I had to switch to the second rope and continue around 140m in a free drop. The first part of the descent (approximately 20m) is in a narrow chimney where you can't see further than the belay point after which you are dangling in the air like a spider on thin thread, the closest wall to you is at about 100m and the floor at 140m that you start seeing lit by a magnificent orange color. At that point I could see some pebbles on the floor of the cave but they were growing as I was progressing down the rope and I realized that they were boulders big as a small house once I touched the ground! The abseil was not scary to me because being the first one to go into the cave I didn't have any reference to realize how high I was. The chamber is just enormous and your brain cannot understand it! A surface of 58.000 square meter enough to fit 8 football fields and 4 million cubic meters in volume. The calcite formation are rare in this room, you can find very few stalactites and stalagmites and other cave pearls. You don't need headlamps because the holes in the ceiling are big enough to let the daylight penetrate and light up the room. Around mid-day the beams of light of the sun take a shape of a projector giving you the impression that you are a star on a theater scene! It was time to start climbing out and the ascent was much more impressive and scary and every move would make you bounce for few seconds because of the elasticity of the rope. It took me around 40 long minutes to reach the surface. Nathalie made it in 16 minutes! I hope that this exceptional site will be protected and will be accessible for nature adventure lovers exclusively.

