

HM receives ambassadors' credentials

HM extends support to envoys to help carry out their duties

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received separately at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday credentials of a number of ambassadors of Arab and other friendly countries accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

During their meeting with His Majesty the Sultan, the ambassadors conveyed the greetings and best wishes of their countries' leaders to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people.

They also expressed their great honour and delight at presenting their credentials to His Majesty the Sultan. They affirmed to exert sincere efforts to promote relations of their respective countries with Oman in various spheres in a manner that serves the joint interests of the

Omani people and their countries' citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors, expressing his gratitude for their leaders' greetings and best wishes. His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that they would receive all support from him, the Government and the Omani people to facilitate carrying out their duties.

The credentials presentation ceremony was attended by the Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, Foreign Minister, Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman, Head of Royal Protocols and Military Aides to His Majesty the Sultan.

ONA

See also [Page 02](#)



IN THE SERVICE OF NATION

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik receives credentials from Amina Ali Abdallah, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Kenya, at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday

NEWS BRIEF

SAYYID THEYAZIN TO PRESIDE OVER CELEBRATIONS OF WOMEN'S CLUB



Muscat - H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will preside over celebrations of the Women's Club for Sports and Cultural Creativity on Wednesday on the occasion of Omani Women's Day.

During the event, to be held at Al Bustan Palace Hotel, the logo of the club will be unveiled.

H H Sayyid Theyazin issued a decision on October 17, 2021, to launch the Women's Club for Sports and Cultural Creativity.

Sayyid Theyazin directs all to support Seeb Club in AFC Cup final



(Supplied photo)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, has directed all to support Seeb Club which represents Oman in the 2022 AFC Cup final.

Seeb Club has created Omani football history by booking a place in the final of the 2022 AFC Cup.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and

Seeb Club has created Omani football history by booking a place in the final of the 2022 AFC Cup. It will play Kuala Lumpur City FC at 3pm on Oct 22

Youth said that H H Sayyid Theyazin has directed relevant authorities to provide the necessary financial support to the club and, in cooperation with Oman Air, operate a plane for Seeb Club fans to attend the final match in Malaysia.

The ministry said that this is

to encourage Omani sporting achievements and to boost the sportsmen's efforts to raise the Omani flag in international championships, and in appreciation of the victories Seeb Club achieved in the 2022 AFC Cup by reaching the final for the first time.

The final match of the 19th edition of AFC Cup, Asia's secondary club football tournament organised by the Asian Football Confederation, will be contested between Kuala Lumpur City FC from Malaysia and Seeb Club in Kuala Lumpur at 3pm (Oman time) on October 22.

Seeb Club reached the final after a series of wins in the group stage to the playoffs. It reached the final, representing the West Asian region, after beating Bahrain's Riffa 4-0.

'Women in Oman are an essential element of national development'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sima Sami Bahous, Undersecretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN Women, praised the tangible progress made by Oman in empowering women and enhancing their position in various aspects.

"Oman realised from an early stage that the empowerment and advancement of women is an essential element in the march of nations. Women were at the forefront of the priorities of the national strategy for comprehensive development, pointing to the keenness of Oman Vision 2040 to make the person and society the main focus, by providing an appropriate environment and legislation that preserves the position of women in the home, work environment and society," Sima said.

In her speech via video conference, Sima stressed that the Omani woman over the past decades has been able to prove her distinguished presence and has effectively invested in the opportunities that have been made available to her.

"Statistics indicate that women's enrollment in educational institutions increased to 73 per cent in 2019, and in the same year women accounted for 40 per cent of the list of scholarship students, which are encouraging and inspiring percentages that



Sima Sami Bahous

send many messages of ambition to girls and women in the Arab region and the Middle East," she said.

Sima confirmed that the Omani woman has assumed distinguished leadership positions in the various state agencies in several locations.

Further, she said that the percentage of Omani women working in the government sector in 2019 amounted to more than 40 per cent of the total number of employees, and they also achieved a presence in the private sector, economy and business sectors with 88 per cent of the total number of craftsmen in 2019. Their percentage in the field of entrepreneurship rose to 23 per cent of the total.

The UN congratulated Omani women on the occasion of their annual day celebrated on October 17.



Oman-French joint exhibition at Bait Greiza



GCC project spending slows amid fears of global recession



Shehan Karunatilaka wins Booker Prize

Oman, Switzerland lead Global Health for Peace Initiative

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Continuing the central role played by the sultanate regionally and internationally in line with the belief of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in spreading the message of peace, H E Dr Hilal Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, headed the sultanate's delegation participating in the World Health Summit 2022 held in Berlin, Germany, till October 18.

Participation of Oman in this forum reflects its efforts in attaining cohesion and cooperation for peacekeeping and using health as a bridge for global peace.

The sultanate's speech at the World Health Summit (WHS)



(Supplied photo)

session on Global Health Insights shed light on the significance of the Global Health for Peace Initiative (GHPI) and how health interventions can contribute to peace

and social cohesion by fostering

dialogue, building trust, or addressing grievances.

It emphasised that GHPI is founded on the firm conviction of Oman that local, regional and global peace is a top priority,

and a condition for social and economic development. It is an essential requirement for health development and improving the health status of people and the quality of life.

The initiative, co-founded by Oman and Switzerland, and approved by the WHO Executive Board, uses health as a way to reduce the gaps between conflicting parties

The initiative, co-founded by Oman and Switzerland, and approved by the WHO Executive Board, uses health as a way to reduce the gaps between conflicting parties, as a gateway to

discuss peace-building means, and as an approach to engage these parties in an open dialogue on other related issues.

The address referred to the necessity of deploying the broader utilisation of health as a real bridge for peace. This is possible with the firm commitment of member states, partners and organisations to strengthen ties between health and peace.

WHS 2022 addresses global risks and threats, such as climate change and ecosystem degradation, as well as epidemics, natural and human-created disasters, conflicts, and violence. It also focuses on new approaches to investment in health and other health issues and challenges.

HM receives ambassadors' credentials



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq gives audience to Mohammed Nasser al Hajri (right), Ambassador of Kuwait, after the latter's accreditation



Syrian Ambassador H E Dr Idris Maya



Sudanese Ambassador H E Salah Al Din al Hajj Mohammed al Kando



Bangladeshi Ambassador H E Mohammed Nazmul Islam



Nepalese Ambassador H E Dornath Aryal



Hungarian Ambassador H E Barnabas Fodor



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Signals to control traffic at As'Salam in Seeb

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has announced that traffic lights will be made operational at As'Salam Roundabout in Seeb, starting October 20. In a statement, Muscat Mu-

municipality said, 'Operations of traffic lights at As'Salam Roundabout will be effective from the morning of October 20. Traffic lights at As'Salam Roundabout will control vehicular traffic and provide safe places for crossing in the dense urban area.'

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Omani-French joint exhibition inaugurated in Bait Greiza

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The National Museum of Oman inaugurated an exhibition titled 'Fragrance Journeys' at Bait Greiza, affiliated to the museum, in cooperation with the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon, France, and the Embassy of France, under the patronage of H E Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajmiya, Under-secretary in the Ministry of Health.

The inauguration was held in the presence of a number of high level dignitaries, members of the diplomatic corps, members of the Board of Trustees of the National Museum, and a number of people interested in museums and cultural affairs. The exhibition will continue till May 7, 2023.

Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, secretary-general of the National Museum, addressed the gathering, which was followed by speeches by Sylvie Raymond, director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon, and H E Luciano Rispoli, Deputy French Ambassador to the sultanate.

The exhibition presents 23 artefacts from the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon, and highlights the frankincense and incense pathways of the most prominent eras from the Pharaonic era to avant-garde art, including a mas-



We are honoured to cooperate with the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon and to host this exhibition as it is the first temporary exhibition from France to be hosted in Oman after many years

JAMAL BIN HASSAN AL MOOSAWI

terpiece of glazed pottery by the international artist Pablo Picasso shown for the first time in Oman.

Among the most prominent objects in the exhibition are an alabaster perfume bottle dating back to the Greek civilisation (5th and 6th centuries BC), an essential oil holder in the form of a bust of a Nubian man dating back to the Roman Empire, and an incense case in the form of a boat that was used to preserve and adorn incense from northern

Italy, dating back to the 14th century AH.

The exhibition also includes works of modern art, such as an oval vessel by Claudius Linossier (1893-1953 AH) in the 'Art Deco' style, which developed during the period between the two world wars.

On the occasion, Moosawi said, "We are honoured to cooperate with the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon and to host this exhibition as it is the first tempo-

rary exhibition from France to be hosted in Oman after many years."

Hosting the exhibition, he added, comes within the framework of cultural diplomacy pursued by the museum with the aim of strengthening the bonds of friendship and introducing visitors to the culture of appreciating fragrance in Oman, the land of frankincense, and how it reflected in artefacts of other ancient civilisations - Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Medieval Italy, Medieval France - before passing through to modern art, including contemporary artistic expression in France. These are historical milestones that arose as a result of Oman's gift to the world - frankincense.

Sylvie said the Museum of

Fine Arts in Lyon will display a selection of selected pieces from the valuable collection in the National Museum, all of which tell the history of the path of perfumes.

H E Rispoli said the depth of Omani-French relations dates back to the 17th century, when French merchant ships anchored in Muscat at the crossroads of the maritime trade routes leading to the Indian Ocean.

He added that the joint exhibition is a prelude to a series of long-term cooperation activities between the two sides.

The cooperation will extend in two phases. During the first phase, the 23 selected pieces of art have been loaned by the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon to be displayed in Bait Greiza.



PDO announces new social investment initiatives

Muscat - Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has committed to support a host of new projects costing more than US\$4mn, which will benefit communities and boost sustainable development across the sultanate.

The initiatives include commitments in the key areas of health, community infrastructure development as well as enhancing the education sector.

Nine memoranda of collaboration confirming these commitments were signed on Tuesday at an official ceremony held under the patronage of H E Badr bin Salim al Mamari, Secretary-General of Tender Board, at the PDO Knowledge World centre in Muscat.

To encourage provision of the best medical services across Oman, PDO is funding the construction of a new health centre in Mudhi in the wilayat of Thamarait, which serves 40 patients every day. It is also funding the

purchase of medical equipment for The Royal Hospital and Al Haniyat Health Centre.

In line with the company's commitment to support the education sector within its concession areas, PDO signed an agreement to provide lab computers to schools in Alm'arif and Al Kuhl in the wilayats of Haima and Al Jazer. More than 558 students will benefit from these computers which will contribute to enhancing the quality of education.

On the occasion, Abdulamir bin Abdulhussein al Ajmi, External Affairs and Value Creation Director of PDO, said, "Today's signings are in keeping with PDO's long-standing practice of supporting local communities through investments in sustainable development projects."

"These stand as a testament to PDO's dedication to supporting the prosperity of local communities."

HILAL ONLINE

HILAL TARIQ AL BARWANI IS A YOUNG COMPUTER ENTHUSIAST WHO ENJOYS WRITING AND SPEAKING ON COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

The importance of code

We all have many applications installed on our smartphones to give us different information. For example, you have a science project on space, and you want to search on which planets are in the solar system, the first app that comes to your mind is Safari. Or maybe you're bored and want to scroll through funny videos, TikTok comes to mind. Applications are one of the things we mostly use in our daily lives. But how do they work? Behind every application or software, is code. A code is a set of instructions given to a computer for it to function for you. People who write code, referred to as 'coders' or 'programmers', develop code for us to use our everyday apps.

Many of the people I've communicated with on coding - either in school, or in gatherings - tried coding at one point but gave up as they felt it was difficult, or they simply lost interest in learning it for a simple feeling that it won't benefit them in any way. However, code powers almost everything that we use on a daily basis, even our fridges and ACs! In this week's article, I will be covering the importance of code, how one can easily start learning as how to code and develop their own apps; and the different ways to develop apps using program-



ming languages.

In order to learn to write code, you will need a programming language. Just like we as humans have different languages - such as English, Arabic or French - in order to communicate with each other, likewise we can communicate with computers using different programming languages. Some of these languages are Java, Python, C++, and JavaScript. Each language has been created to develop different types of software. For example, JavaScript was made to create interactive websites, and C++ is used to make operating systems and applications for computers. I've started learning to code in Python, as it had really easy syntax and

is one of the most popular programming languages today.

One of the easiest and simplest programming languages for children and beginners who know nothing about programming, is called Scratch. Scratch is a fun block-based programming language, where instead of typing code yourself, the code is visual and you can drag and drop blocks in order for your sprite (character) to move around and say stuff! Scratch is the best way to start understanding the concept of coding and start programming yourself. Learning to code also opens up doors to programming careers that have great earning potential and are in high demand in many countries. For example, you could work as a software engineer, where you develop programs to solve real-world problems, or you could work as a web developer, where you can develop your own websites. Learning to code also gives you the ability to make robots function for you. Best of it all, you could even learn to develop your own video game!

In conclusion, learning to code benefits us in so many ways, and personally, I believe that technology is the future, so learning to code would be very essential for everyone, especially for the ones who are looking to stand out in the market and be employable in this fast moving economy.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Press & Publishing. The writer can be reached at hilal@tariq.net



International Day of White Cane celebrated in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Omar bin Al Khattab Institute for visually impaired people celebrated the International Day of White Cane showcasing the talents of these people in various fields.

H E Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary for Education in the Ministry of Education, presided over the celebration of the special day, which is observed on October 15 every year, the ministry said.

A 'white cane' is a mobility tool chosen for visually impaired people so as to navigate the world around them safely and independently without any assistance from others. It also helps onlookers to be alert and take appropriate care in the presence of such people amidst them.

The Omar bin Al Khattab Institute celebration included musical choral, short plays, singing,

poetry recitation, as well as fun and educational competitions, all of which were presented by the students of the institute.

All participants and supervisors were honoured with presentations after the ceremony.

Institute director Badriya al Wahaibi said: "The International Day of the White Cane comes as a support to the visually impaired and aims to spread awareness about their rights, discuss their issues, educate, and guide individuals on how to help the blind cross the streets."

The event of the day also saw an exhibition creating an introductory corner to explain the conditions for student admission to the institute, the braille method for writing and reading. There was also a corner that showcased potteries, beadings, plastic arts created by the students. A special walk was also offered for the audience to experience the use of the white cane.

MoCIIP warns against illegal use of Royal Emblem

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has on Tuesday warned against the use of the sultanate's logo or the Royal Emblem without a licence.

A statement issued by MoCIIP said, 'Private firms, commercial institutions, and social media accounts are strictly prohibited from using the Royal Emblem on commercial products without obtaining a licence from the ministry. The ministry called on all commercial establishments wishing to use the national emblem on their products or advertisements to submit their applications to the ministry to get the necessary approval. MoCIIP said it will continue to conduct inspections and take necessary legal measures against violators.'

Using the national emblem or the Royal Emblem without a licence is contrary to Royal Decree No 53/2004 on the Law of National Flag, Emblem and Anthem.

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FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

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Pakistan	571.49
Bangladesh	275.06
Philippines	153.01
Sri Lanka	950.01

*Rates as on October 18

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

EU's renewable energy on the rise

The record growth in the European Union's power generation during the Russian-Ukraine war avoided €11bn in gas costs, a new study from E3G and Ember revealed.

Nonetheless, the bloc spent an estimated €82bn on fossil gas to supply 20 per cent of its electricity in March, when the Russia-Ukraine war began, through to September.

Wind and solar produced a record 24 per cent share, equivalent to 345 terawatt-hours, of the EU's electricity over this period.

Power generation from wind and solar increased by a record 39 terawatt-hours compared to the same period last year when the share of the bloc's wind and solar power stood at 21 per cent.

Spain, Italy, Poland and France topped the list among the top nineteen countries of wind and solar generation at 35 per cent, 20 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively.

The record increase in electricity generation from wind and solar since the war began avoided 8bn cubic meters of additional fossil gas imports that cost €11bn.

GCC project spending slows amid fears of global recession

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Growing fears of a global economic recession due to high inflation, rising interest rates and war in Ukraine has impacted the GCC projects market this year.

Total value of GCC contracts awarded in the third quarter of 2022 declined by 40.8 per cent to US\$11.1bn as compared to US\$18.8bn in awards during the same period of 2021, according to the estimates released by Kuwait-based Kamco Investment.

All the GCC countries, barring Qatar that saw a smaller decline, witnessed a double digit fall in their aggregate year-on-year value of projects awarded in the third quarter.

'GCC project awards contracted during the third quarter of the year as global economic challenges mounted. The decline was intensified by high inflation and continuing supply chain problems mainly due to China's intermittent COVID-19 restrictions as well as the US-EU sanctions on Russia,' Kamco Investment said in a report.

In addition, the increase in benchmark interest rates by global and regional central banks to combat runaway inflation also affected project funding, it added.

The UAE overtook Saudi Arabia as the largest projects market in the GCC during the third



quarter of 2022 recording a total of US\$3.7bn worth of contracts awarded against US\$3.5bn awarded by Saudi Arabia. Qatar ranked third during the quarter with total con-

Total projects awarded in Kuwait declined by 69.1 per cent to US\$162mn down from US\$525mn for the same period of 2021. Oman witnessed new projects awards drop of 68.1 per

cent year-on-year to US\$154mn.

Aggregate value of contracts awarded in Bahrain reached US\$125mn in the third quarter of 2022 as compared to US\$659mn during the similar period in 2021.

In terms of sector classifica-

drawal of COVID-19-related restrictions and higher oil prices have contributed to the rise in the kingdom's projects market during 2022.

Comparatively, UAE's aggregate value of contracts awarded during the first nine months of the year dipped 5.8 per cent to US\$12.4bn against US\$13.1bn in 2021.

Projects pipeline remains strong

However, the projects market pipeline in the GCC region continues to remain strong with data from MEED Projects showing around US\$2.5tn worth of projects planned or underway in the GCC as of mid-October-2022 as compared to US\$2.61tn at the end of June-2022, Kamco Investment noted.

The aggregate value of projects in pipeline (pre-execution stage) in the GCC stood at US\$858bn as of October 12, 2022, according to data from MEED Projects. In terms of countries, Saudi Arabia makes up 44.8 per cent of the GCC projects in the pipeline followed by UAE with 17.2 per cent and Kuwait with 14.7 per cent.

In terms of sectors, the construction sector accounted for 28.4 per cent or US\$243.9bn worth of projects in the pre-execution stage in the GCC followed by transport and power sectors with projects worth US\$145.6bn and US\$122bn, respectively.



CBO issues RO13mn treasury bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tender of the government treasury bills (issue number 144) was issued this week by the Central Bank of Oman.

Total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO13mn, for a maturity period of 28 days, from October 19, 2022 until November 16, 2022.

The average accepted price reached RO99.820 for every RO100 treasury bill, while the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.810. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 2.3514 per cent and 2.3557 per cent, respectively.

The interest rate on the repo operations with CBO is 3.75 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with the central bank is 4.25 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. CBO acts as the issue manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (repo).



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MUSCAT DAILY

Oman, Oracle collaborate to set up first hyperscale cloud region



Muscat - Global technology giant Oracle on Tuesday announced that the government of Oman will implement a second Oracle Dedicated Region Cloud@Customer to help meet national data sovereignty requirements and establish a comprehensive disaster recovery process.

The first Oracle Dedicated Region Cloud@Customer, led by ITHCA (Oman Information and Communications Technology Group), was implemented earlier this year and is now live in production.

With the implementation of this second dedicated region, the Omani government is able to migrate its IT systems to Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) while retaining physical control of its hardware and data to help meet the sultanate's data sovereignty requirements, Oracle said in a press release.

"The Oracle Dedicated Region Cloud@Customer is at the heart of our National Data Centre Program that aims to implement hyperscale cloud services across all Oman government entities to optimise and modernise the government's IT ecosystem, and offer easy to access digital government services," said Eng Said bin Abdullah al Mandhari, chief executive officer ITHCA Group.

"The second Oracle Dedicated Region Cloud@Customer will help us build adequate disaster recovery capabilities, achieve high levels of data and business resilience, and together with the first dedicated region, we have now established Oman's first

hyperscale data centre region," he added.

Oracle has also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Oman ICT Group to train and upskill Omani government executives and Oman government customers on OCI's cloud services with live technical

building a cloud-ready centralised infrastructure that allows the government to easily scale operations, save costs, and drive innovation securely. The Oracle Dedicated Region Cloud@Customer is a complete OCI cloud region in Oman ICT's data centre, and with a second dedicated re-

icated Region Cloud@Customer, the ITHCA Group will be able to offer all 100 plus OCI cloud services as well as Oracle Fusion Cloud Applications to Oman government entities. The government will also be able to move its business-critical workloads to the cloud, enabling operational efficiency and cost savings while ensuring compliance with the Sultanate's data sovereignty requirements.

Designed for single-tenant usage, the Oman government's Dedicated Region Cloud@Customer is a self-contained region where all data, including API operations and metadata, remain local to the region.

The ITHCA Group will also have access to the tools needed to reliably run Oracle and third-party applications, create cloud native applications, and modernise existing ones with machine learning and modern cloud services.

ITHCA Group establishes second Oracle Cloud Infrastructure Dedicated Region to boost public sector innovation and help ensure data sovereignty

seminars and training labs.

Oracle University's training program on OCI will also be offered as part of this agreement. The executives will receive OCI certifications following the successful completion of the training.

"The Oman government's National Data Centre Program has set forth a clear vision for

gion, the Oman government has strengthened the foundation for the growth and development of Oman's ICT ecosystem," said Nick Redshaw, senior vice president - technology cloud, Middle East and Africa and UAE country leader, Oracle.

Following the implementation of the second Oracle Ded-

Oman issues decision to amend VAT regulations

Muscat – Oman’s Tax Authority has issued a new decision (No 456/2022) amending certain provisions of the Executive Regulation for value-added tax (VAT).

The amendments aim to harmonise the controls related to tax policies, exemptions for financial services and determining the place of supply of wireless communications services in a manner that is in line with international best practices, according to a press release.

Following are the details of the most important provisions of this new decision:

Place of supply of telecom services

The decision referred to the amendment of the text of Article 28 of the Executive Regulations related to determining the place of supply of telecommunication services.

The country from which the electronic chip used by the cus-

tomers is issued, instead of being subject to it at the place of use and actual enjoyment of the service as stated in the provisions of the executive regulations before the amendment.

Controls for exempting financial services from tax

The Executive Regulations issued pursuant to Tax Authority Decision No (53/2021) stipulated that financial services provided by banks and financial institutions licensed by the Central Bank of Oman or any of the competent authorities in which it is established to conduct banking business are exempted from tax in the application of the provision of Clause (1) of Article (47) of the Law.

The amendments to the provisions of this article come with the exemption of the origin of the financial service exempted under the law, regardless of whether or not its provider is licensed by the



competent authorities. This applies, for example, to financial services provided by business sectors (companies) other than financial institutions in the event that they provide financial services.

Determining deadlines for issuing tax invoice

The decision included amending

the provisions of Article (143) of the Executive Regulations, by adding a text indicating that the tax invoice must be issued no later than 15 days from the date of making the taxable supply or making the assumed supply (which is made between related persons) or receiving the consideration - in whole or in part - before the date of supply.

The amendment also in-

cluded Articles (146) and (150) of the regulations in a manner that requires the issuance of the simplified tax invoice within 15 days as well, and that the summary tax invoice (issued from supplies made within one month) must be issued within 15 days of the end of the month.

The provisions of Article (202) of the regulation were also amended by adding the violation of not issuing the tax invoice in accordance with the requirements and the specified period to the violations for which the head of the Tax Authority may impose an administrative fine of no less than RO500 and not more than RO5,000.

Electronic tax invoicing system

A definition of the electronic tax invoice has been added to the first article of the regulation related to tariffs, as it is defined as

a tax invoice issued in an electronic format organized through an electronic means. This invoice must include, at a minimum, the information specified in this regulation and any other information specified by the Tax Authority.

The amendment included the provisions of Article (143) of the Executive Regulation, where the amendment stipulated that the tax invoice must be issued in an approved electronic format in the cases specified by the Tax Authority, provided that the Tax Authority determines the additional requirements for issuing electronic invoices and the data that it must include.

Additionally, the Tax Authority’s decision also amends the articles related to refunding tax paid by foreign governments, diplomatic consular and military bodies and missions, international organisations, heads and members of diplomatic and consular authorities accredited

to Oman.

In accordance with the obligations of the sultanate towards international agreements regulating tax exemptions and exceptions granted to diplomatic and consular bodies and missions, international organisations and their heads and members, Articles (188) and (189) of the regulations have been amended, in a manner that gives the Tax Authority flexibility in determining and amending the conditions, controls and procedures related to tax refund to this category, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance.

The Tax Authority will issue decisions regulating tax refunds based on setting limits and ceilings for tax refunds, with the principle of reciprocity prevailing if Omani missions and their members obtain advantages and limits higher than what is permitted in Oman.

US officials not invited to Saudi investment forum: Organiser

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – US government officials have not been invited to a Saudi investment conference planned for later this month, its organiser told AFP Monday, saying he did not want the gathering “to become a political platform”.

The decision not to invite American officials, a departure from previous years, comes as tensions rise between long-time partners Washington and Riyadh over the Saudi-led OPEC+ cartel’s recent vote to cut oil production by up to two million barrels per day from November.

The Future Investment Initiative (FII), a three-day conference set to begin on October 25 in Riyadh, typically draws Wall Street titans and high-ranking officials from around the world, and up to 400 American CEOs are expected to participate this year, said Richard Attias, CEO of the group behind the event.

It is often referred to as



Richard Attias

“Davos in the Desert”.

Saudi Arabia has in recent days rejected US accusations it has aligned itself with Russia amid the Ukraine war by making oil production cuts to drive up crude prices, insisting it was purely a business decision.

In a speech broadcast on Sunday night, Saudi King Salman insisted his country was “working

hard, within its energy strategy, to support the stability and balance of global oil markets”.

Stephen Mnuchin, who served as treasury secretary under former US president Donald Trump, addressed FII during its debut in 2017, though he pulled out the following year amid global outrage over the killing of journalist Jamal

Khashoggi.

Last year’s edition was attended by Don Graves, deputy commerce secretary under current US President Joe Biden.

Asked about US attendance this year, Attias said: “We didn’t invite any US government” figures.

“We are not inviting too many politicians... because I realised that when you have political leaders on stage, the attention of the media, let’s be very frank, is diverted to the political agenda, and we don’t want FII to become a political platform.”

The US embassy in Riyadh did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Attias earlier told a press conference that “more than 12 ministers of economy and finance” would attend FII this year.

He also left open the possibility that heads of state would come, saying, “we will know in a few days who are the 100 per

cent confirmed heads of state.”

The FII Institute headed by Attias is not formally affiliated with the Saudi government, but the annual conference in Riyadh is closely associated with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom’s de facto ruler.

Attias said he did not expect the Riyadh-Washington spat to affect this year’s FII conference.

“No impact at all. At the opposite, we see more and more appetite from the US private sector to attend FII,” Attias said, adding that organisers were “starting to refuse some delegates” for lack of space.

“We are not doing politics at all,” he added.

“We never did politics since we were born in 2017, so we have not started... If people want to talk about geopolitics during the conversation, they are free to do it.” AFP

Sri Lanka opens fuel market to foreign firms

Colombo, Sri Lanka – Sri Lanka’s parliament on Tuesday approved legislation allowing foreign competition in the local fuel market, ending a 19-year duopoly as the bankrupt island struggles to import oil. The move cleared the way for international oil firms to re-enter Sri Lanka for the first time since the nationalisation of oil companies in the early 1960s, with the exception of the Indian Oil Corporation which has operated there since 2003.

“This will allow global suppliers to enter as retail operators,” energy minister Kanchana Wijesekera said. “This will liberalise the energy sector.”

Officials said private companies will have to finance the import of oil from their own foreign exchange reserves and agree to retain their profits in Sri Lanka for at least a year.

The new law was rushed through as the government is

out of foreign exchange to import fuel, a predicament that has brought acute shortages and strict rationing.

The shortages sparked widespread protests that toppled president Gotabaya Rajapaksa in July as Sri Lanka plunged into its worst economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948.

Sri Lanka nationalised foreign oil firms in the early 1960s, handing a monopoly to the state-owned Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC).

CPC’s monopoly ended in 2003 when Colombo introduced limited competition by allowing India’s state-owned Indian Oil Corporation to enter the local retail market.

The Indian company’s Sri Lankan arm now controls about a third of the domestic fuel market while the rest is held by CPC, which is seeing huge losses and is out of dollars to pay for new imports.

AFP

Meta speeds up metaverse, but success far from certain

San Francisco, US – A year after rebranding itself from Facebook into Meta, the social network titan is striving to make the metaverse a routine part of daily life, offering users new features and promoting new virtual reality gear.

But analysts say the company has toned down the hype a bit as it struggles to reach its goal of creating an interactive virtual world that it sees as the next phase of online activity.

The biggest announcement from this week’s Meta Connect event – the company’s giant’s annual conference focused on virtual reality – was the launch of the much anticipated Meta Quest Pro VR headset, targeted at professionals in creative fields.

But there were also legs – as in, legs for user avatars in Meta’s Horizon World virtual realm, as well as facial expressions.

Is this the future? The company says yes.

“The metaverse is going to sneak up on us,” Meta Reality Labs vice president Mark Rabkin predicted.

“I think it’s going to feel really far away and then there’ll be certain pockets and niches that are suddenly really useful – and then we’ll realize that the gaps... are getting smaller, and suddenly it’s here.”

For Rabkin, executives can save time and money by meeting in the metaverse, and artists can embrace virtual venues for concerts, comedy shows and other entertainment.

Bridges, skyscrapers, footwear and more could be designed in 3-D using digital tools in the metaverse.

“We’re building things that power the metaverse and will be part of the metaverse,” Rabkin said.

“We are investing heavily to pull the future forward a little bit.”

Smiles and nods

A year ago, Facebook renamed itself Meta to signal its devotion to a metaverse future.

In a small step on that path, the US\$1,500 Quest Pro headset – aimed at architects, engineers and designers, among others – boasts new features that are meant to improve users’ perception of actually being in the presence of others.

“The moment that they begin to break into a smile or when they raise their eyebrow... your avatar should be able to express all of that and more,” Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg said at Meta Connect.

The company said it is partnering with Microsoft, Adobe,



In this undated image courtesy of Meta Connect a person experiences the new Meta Quest Pro VR headset (AFP)

Meta said it is partnering with Microsoft, Adobe, Accenture and others to sync up popular work software with virtual worlds using Quest Pro

Accenture and others to sync up popular work software with virtual worlds using Quest Pro.

“At Microsoft, we’re incredibly excited about the metaverse and how digital and physical

worlds are coming together,” Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said during the presentation.

Microsoft is “really leaning in” to make its widely-used productivity software, as well as tools

built for its own HoloLens augmented reality headset, compatible with Quest Pro, according to Rabkin.

Zuckerberg stressed that Meta wants its VR platform to dovetail with offerings from other companies.

“Not only will our stuff run on a variety of devices, including not our own, but there will inevitably be multiple universes joined together in a variety of ways,” Rabkin explained.

Technical advances built into Quest Pro are expected to eventually be incorporated into lower-priced headsets destined for average consumers.

Handling the hype

Zuckerberg was quoted by tech news website The Verge as saying he didn’t expect the metaverse to make the company a meaningful amount of money for years, setting up a “trough of disillusionment.”

For Creative Strategies analyst Carolina Milanese, Meta has de-emphasised the hype of the metaverse in favour of talking more about the nuts and bolts of how it will work.

“I’m assuming it’s because they figured out how hard it is to actually make this stuff in terms of actually creating that world,” Milanese told AFP.

Companies are investing billions of dollars in building blocks of the metaverse, with Meta leading the pack, VRDirect managing director Rolf Illenberger told AFP.

Microsoft, Sony, and HTC are among the players, and Apple is rumoured to be planning to release its own virtual reality headset.

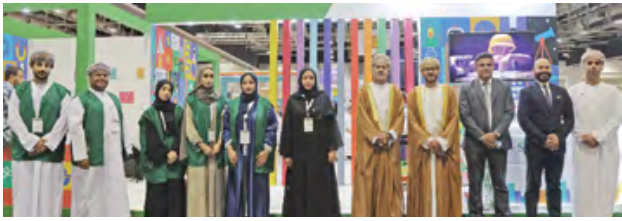
“On the one hand, Mark Zuckerberg needs to be acknowledged as a hero, as a visionary because he’s pushing the industry like no one else,” Illenberger said.

“But on the other hand, his bad reputation also kind of, to some extent, puts blame on the metaverse as a technology.”

Critics have said rebranding Facebook as Meta was a move to distance the tech firm from scandals including a whistleblower who said it valued profit over user safety.

AFP

KR Eshraqa’s Stemazone inspires young minds at OSF



Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa’s Stemazone kiosk enjoyed a remarkable student turnout at the third edition of the Oman Science Festival held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The KR Group was the Gold sponsor of the event, which witnessed students making a beeline for Stemazone’s interactive booth, where they were acquainted with its hybrid learning experience.

Initiated by Eshraqa, the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of Khimji Ramdas, Stemazone is a sustainable educational programme that has been conceived in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture (MoYSC). Khimji Ramdas Group director Nailesh Khimji said, “Our STEAM programme aims to equip students with the necessary skills required for the jobs of the future.” H E Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Education, said, “We were pleased to witness the support of private sector companies such as Khimji Ramdas Group for the Oman Science Festival, implemented and supervised by the MoE.”

UTAS Shinas student meets ambassadors, minister

To celebrate Omani Women’s Day, with a taste of ‘life in the world of foreign affairs’, student Rudaina al Shehhi from UTAS Shinas was one of the lucky finalists to be selected by the British Embassy in Muscat to be an ‘Ambassador for a Day’. The initiative, which was themed around women in leadership, to mark Omani Women’s Day, was launched by the British Embassy in Muscat.

Ten young Omani women aged between 18-25 were short-listed to be an ‘Ambassador for a Day’ after applications were received from entries across Oman. The event aimed to support women empowerment and provide the young Omani women the opportunity to develop leadership skills, diplomacy and negotiation skills, which are essentially required when considering a career in diplomacy and foreign affairs.

H E Laila al Najjar, the Minister of Social Development, was among the key dignitaries at the event, including women ambassadors from the USA, Italy, Kenya and Turkey. Other events of the day included a Young Ambassadors Workshop, followed by a ‘Women Leaders Networking Lunch’ hosted by the British Ambassador H E Bill Murray at his residence.

H E Lyutha al Mughairi, the first ever Omani woman to be appointed as an ambassador from Oman, joined the event virtually from London. She talked to the ‘young ambassadors’ about the positive impact of women in leadership and the contribution towards government and policymaking.

Kenyan ambassador H E Amina Abdalla presented special floral bouquets shipped from Kenya, to the ten aspiring young ambassadors.

Middle East Fashion Week launches Designer Hunt

In collaboration with Fun Asia Network, Middle East Fashion Week is launching a Designer Hunt to uncover budding talents across the United Arab Emirates.

Fashion designers are invited to submit their designs for the chance to showcase their creations at Middle East Fashion Week - held from November 7 in Dubai at The Agenda, Dubai Media City. The designer hunt is your opportunity to make your mark on the world of fashion. The more edgier, cooler, and more sustainable your look is, the greater your chance at winning on October 25. Entries can be submitted to pr@middleeastfashionweek.org

Middle East Fashion Week is set to bring talent across categories ranging from couture to street, filling the programme with four days of spectacular runway shows.

Governed by the Middle East Fashion Council, the November edition highlights the business to business segment, creating that much needed platform for local and global talent to connect with retailers and buyers.



GAC hosts ‘Outlander Experience’ drive for media

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor for Mitsubishi vehicles in Oman, organised an exclusive ‘Outlander Experience’ drive event for media and social media influencers yesterday. Hosted at the Ghala Golf Club, the event offered attendees the chance to experience the capabilities, technology and performance of the all-new 2023 Mitsubishi Outlander crossover SUV first-hand from behind the wheel.

In attendance were Zubair Automotive Group’s chief operating officer Mohammad al Farei, GAC general manager Manoj Ranade, Mitsubishi representative from Tokyo Tagawa Yuichi, as well as two senior representatives of the Mitsubishi Motors Middle East and Africa office together with other members of the senior management of GAC.

All new from the wheels up, the Outlander has been reimagined and reinvented in every way. Not only does it feature a bold new design direction for this vehicle and the brand, but it is also the best-equipped and most technologically advanced vehicle the company has ever sold in the region.

Commenting on the event, ZAG chief operating officer Farei said, “The 2023 Mitsubishi Outlander has been one of our most highly anticipated Mitsubishi models. Our exclusive ‘Outlander Experience’ drive event with Omani media and influencers builds on well-founded expectations: The 2023 Outlander is the best Mitsubishi model ever sold by GAC in Oman.

“With this more technology-driven model, Mitsubishi has re-imagined our driving experience focusing on safety,

Our ‘Outlander Experience’ drive event was meticulously planned with routes designed to offer the over 25 journalists and influencers an opportunity to drive the flagship Mitsubishi model, discover its premium features, and experience everything the vehicle has to offer

MOHAMMAD AL FAREI

innovation and a bold, authentic design. Our ‘Outlander Experience’ drive event was meticulously planned with routes designed to offer the over 25 attending journalists and influencers an opportunity to drive the flagship Mitsubishi model, discover its premium features, and experience everything the vehicle has to offer.”

Also attending the event, Mitsubishi representative Yuichi said, “From the design to its development, everything about the new Outlander is carefully thought out to showcase the best of Mitsubishi Motors. With this model, we are looking to challenge expectations and let people experience the new era of Mitsubishi vehicles. We are proud to work with GAC to bring our new flagship Outlander model to Oman.”

The 2023 Outlander was crafted under the design language of ‘1-Fu-Do-Do’, which means ‘authentic and majestic’ in Japanese. This design ethos is reflected in the vehicle’s bold proportions, muscular fenders, and the chiselled lines of the next-generation ‘Dynamic Shield’ grille. Standard 18-inch wheels and available 20-inch wheels

add a robust presence that emphasises strength and security.

Inside, the Outlander is a quiet and serene space, showcasing quality and convenience through class-above materials and placing a premium on comfort and convenience. It also features seating for seven, leather upholstery, a panoramic sunroof, a power remote lift-gate, numerous storage locations, and USB-A and USB-C charge ports. The comfortable seating also comes with a massage function, power adjustments and memory for the driver and front passenger.

Offering more technology and connectivity than any previous Mitsubishi model, the 2023 Outlander features an available 12.3-inch, full-colour LCD digital driver display, a first for Mitsubishi Motors. Also available on select trims is a 9-inch SDA centre touchscreen with a built-in navigation system, a 10-speaker BOSE sound system, and a 10.8-inch full-colour head-up display (HUD).

Also new is the engineering underpinnings of the 2023 Outlander. The new model now rides on a next-generation platform that offers a stable foun-

dition for a more confident and comfortable driving experience. With hot-stamped ultra-high tensile-strength steel used in crucial areas, torsional rigidity is increased by 33 per cent over the previous model. Powering the all-new Outlander is a newly developed 2.5-litre, four-cylinder gasoline engine producing 184PS@6000rpm and 244Nm@3600rpm mated to a six-speed continuously variable transmission (CVT) with Sport mode.

Mitsubishi’s motorsport-derived Super All-Wheel Control (S-AWC) all-wheel-drive system is available on higher-trim models, offering unmatched confidence for drivers in all environments. This optional system features a newly developed drive mode selector, which allows performance and grip to be tailored to the current driving conditions through six distinct settings, increasing on-road and off-pavement performance. Even two-wheel-drive models are fitted with the drive-mode selector, offering five distinct modes in this setup to help drivers feel more confident in all driving conditions.

As the best-equipped Mitsubishi ever sold in Oman, the all-new Outlander also offers an impressive array of standard and available advanced driver assistance systems to increase driver convenience, confidence, and safety.

“The Mitsubishi flagship model inspires with its premium-quality, innovative technology and seven-seat practicality, all at a competitive price. As a well-known brand in the market, the new Outlander model is set to become very popular in the sultanate,” said Manoj Ranade.

Bank Muscat’s Asalah priority banking hosts customer event in Sohar

Asalah priority banking from Bank Muscat recently hosted a special event in Sohar, in line with the bank’s customer-centric vision and commitment to further strengthen its partnership and communication channels with its customers.

Attended by Abdulnasir al Raisi, general manager - Personal Banking and a number of the bank’s management team, the event saw excellent participation from a large number of priority banking customers, who were able to freely exchange their views and feedback on a number of services and benefits provided by the bank to its esteemed clientele.

Bank officials also took the opportunity to explain details of a number of exclusive Asalah services, benefits and rewards during a detailed presentation to the audience.

Speaking on the occasion, Saleh Mohammed al Maaini,



Bank Muscat’s deputy general manager - Capital Regions, thanked Asalah customers for their whole-hearted support and confidence in Bank Muscat’s various high-tech services and products which are backed by its customer-centric vision.

He said that promptly responding to customer feedback

and having a strategy of keeping pace with global trends were key to Bank Muscat’s continued leadership in the financial services sector in Oman. He added that the bank would further work towards realising customer aspirations and expectations in line with the world-class banking experience provided by the bank.

Customers having a monthly salary of RO5,000 or those who maintain a savings deposit of RO30,000 are eligible for Asalah priority banking and enjoy a range of unrivalled benefits including access to a team of dedicated Relationship Managers, 39 Asalah Centres across Oman and a dedicated 24/7 Asalah call

centre.

Asalah customers also enjoy access to an integrated wealth management platform that allows them to invest in global asset classes through a single touchpoint. They also get the latest updates and reports on local and international investment opportunities.

Exclusive lifestyle benefits for its clientele include the Asalah Entertainer App, which has more than 3,500 ‘Buy 1, Get 1 Free’ offers in Oman and at international destinations as well as rewards of indulgence and merchant discounts across fine dining, entertainment, leisure, and the beauty and wellness segments.

The Asalah debit card offers access to 50 lounges worldwide and has a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO1,000. Asalah visa signature credit cardholders can enjoy airport lounge access at more than 1,000 lounges worldwide, and a 24/7 global concierge service. The credit card also offers one per cent cashback on purchases as well as free multi-trip travel insurance for customers and their direct family members. Cardholders can also enjoy complimentary chauffeur service to and from the Muscat International Airport.

Asalah customers can also

benefit from the special referral scheme launched earlier this year. Hailed as an excellent example of the bank’s continuous innovation in serving customers better every day, all that existing customers have to do is to refer new customers to Asalah priority banking during the promotional period which ends on December 31. A reward of RO100 per successful referral will be paid out once the referred customer meets all eligibility criteria for a minimum of three months after opening an Asalah account with the bank. Existing customers can win up to RO2,000 by making up to 20 successful referrals during this year.

To participate in the referral scheme, customers can download the referral form from <https://bm.click/3cZp9HL> and fill up the details of the referrer and the referee and then email it to AsalahReferral@bankmuscat.com.

Muscat's top hotels unite to donate food boxes to OFB

Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, has once again teamed up with a group of Muscat's most prominent hotels to mark World Food Day, celebrated annually on October 16. In keeping with the United Nations' #ZeroHunger and healthy eating theme, the resorts' 'Ladies and Gentlemen' joined over 120 volunteers from Shangri-la Barr Al Jissah, Muscat, Kempinski Hotel Muscat, Sheraton Oman Hotel and W Muscat in a food cart race at LuLu Hypermart in Darsait.

With a total fundraising from all hotels equally divided, the teams raced through the store to fill their carts with as much food as possible in ten minutes. Over 200 boxes were then packed and donated to Oman Food Bank Charity Association, which caters to the underprivileged families in Oman. In its fourth annual edition this year, the teams managed to raise a grand total of RO4328, where Kempinski Hotel Muscat contributed RO1116, followed by RO1064 from Sheraton Oman Hotel, which were collected through a series of charitable initiatives including flea markets, ice cream and popcorn corners and salary contributions.

flydubai, Argentine Football Association in partnership



The Argentine Football Association (AFA) and Dubai-based airline flydubai, announced a regional partnership that will see both partners collaborating on marketing and branding opportunities across their channels for the next four months. The Argentina national team, known as La Albiceleste, participated in five World Cup finals and are currently the Copa América champions, a title the team has historically won 15 times. This partnership will see flydubai become the regional partner for the Argentina national team and their airline of choice in the Middle East. Over the next few weeks, the AFA and flydubai will roll out a series of activations around this partnership that will feature both brands' most valuable assets. This includes the Argentina men's national football team players and special activations with the team during their training camp stay in the UAE's capital, Abu Dhabi.

AFA president Claudio Fabian Tapia said, "We are very enthusiastic about this partnership with flydubai. The Argentine Football Association is constantly looking for emerging experiences that improve the interaction and direct link of the Argentina national team with global fans. Our partnership with flydubai will allow more football fans around the region to feel even closer to the Argentina national team and join in the excitement of the tournament in Qatar."



Infiniti Oman announces special offer on QX series

Infiniti Oman has announced special offers across its crossover range of Infiniti QX50, Infiniti QX55, and Infiniti QX60 as part of a special promotion.

Life demands a vehicle that can do just about everything – one that's meticulously shaped to complement and enhance one's life. Built to cater to passengers but designed around the driver, Infiniti's range of award-winning crossovers delivers firsthand luxury that should be lived in. Customers who purchase Infiniti crossovers - QX50, QX55 and QX60 during the promotion period are eligible for free registration, free insurance, periodic vehicle maintenance, manufacturer's warranty, AAA/ Road assistance card. The special promotion which started on September 25 is valid till November 24. The scheme is applicable for all the customers purchasing Infiniti vehicles for personal use only. Vehicles purchased with commercial registration will not be eligible for the scheme. Vehicles bought for taxi, driving school, ministries, fleet, and rent-a-car usage will not be eligible for this scheme.



Bank Nizwa highlights opportunities for Islamic Finance at IFN Oman Forum

In line with its unwavering commitment to spearhead transformation in the Islamic banking sector, Bank Nizwa recently participated as the Lead Partner at the 7th annual IFN Oman Forum which was held by Islamic Finance Magazine - one of the leading international publication in the industry of Islamic Finance- in partnership with the Capital Market Authority.

The thought leadership event witnessed attendance of key delegates from leading financial establishments, industry experts, and potential investors from around the region. The forum, through a series of high-level dialogues, panel discussions, and case studies, highlighted the various capital and investment opportunities available for Sharia-compliant institutions in the Omani market. It also addressed the prevalent challenges in the Islamic finance industry while reviewing viable solutions to deal with an ever-evolving market.

Driving innovative change in the sector, Bank Nizwa actively participated in a number of panel discussions with the bank's Chief Executive Officer, Khalid al Kayed, leading the conversation on 'Islamic Financial Services: Momentum and Success'. Other prominent speakers from the bank were Mujahid al Zidjali, General Manager, IT and Operations, Mohammed Sajari, Head of Sharia'a Structuring, and Suad al Balushi, Head of Treasury. The topics took a holistic approach to the Islamic banking industry and included subjects that were centered on digitalisation, Islamic sustainable finance and investment, and the funding of national development through Islamic Finance.

Commenting on Bank Nizwa's participation in the forum, Kayed said, "We were indeed delighted to have been a part of the IFN Forum 2022. The forum was an excellent platform to not only gain invaluable insights on the latest

The IFN Forum was an excellent platform to not only gain invaluable insights on the latest trends in the industry but also to drive impactful dialogue between industry professionals

KHALID AL KAYED

trends in the industry but also to drive impactful dialogue between industry professionals. It is through the exchange of knowledge, shared experience, and cooperation that it is possible to further catalyse development in various segments of Islamic finance, bolster its competitiveness, and achieve sustainable growth in the sector."

As a bank revered for its excellence, Bank Nizwa has consistently demonstrated the highest levels of ethicality, integrity, and transparency in its operations while integrating international best

practices in all areas of business. At the same time, in strong alignment with the nation's digitalisation agenda, the bank has stayed ahead of the curve through continuous investments in industry-leading technologies and strategic Fin-Tech collaborations.

As a socially conscious Islamic institution, Bank Nizwa has also demonstrated unfaltering dedication toward contributing to the long-term development plans of the nation by offering a comprehensive suite of sustainable finance instruments.

ISWK, ISWK International celebrate Mental Health Awareness Week

With profound enthusiasm and excitement, the A B L E department of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir and ISWK International conducted the first in person Mental Health Awareness Week from October 10.

The objective was to break the stigma and to emphasize on the importance of speaking out when struggling with mental health issues, by conducting #BREAKTHESTIGMA activities.

The highlight of the inaugural ceremony was the Walkathon on October 10. All staff were dressed in white to show their solidarity and create awareness for this noble cause.

The Senior Student Council members assisted the department in compering and guiding the audience throughout the programme.

This occasion was graced by Alkesh Joshi, honorary president of the school management committee (SMC), Shilpa Pawani, Anisha Samuel and Jalpa Mehta,



esteemed members of the SMC. Principal D N Rao, vice principals and staff were present in the school multi-purpose hall to witness the grand inaugural ceremony of the Mental Health Week on October 10. Chief guest Sheeba Naqvi (in-charge of Care

and Special Education, Board of Directors of Indian Schools, Oman) was welcomed by head boy Lael Alva and head girl Gay-

athri Hari of ISWK. After the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by the chief guest and other dignitaries, the programme com-

menced with the A B L E department highlights, which was a brief summary presented by Rashmi Patankar, department in-charge about specific areas handled by the department.

The audience was addressed by the chief guest who spoke about the importance of mental health and well-being. One of the highlights of the event was the appreciation of the support staff at ISWK and ISWK-I with certificates and goody bags for their selfless contribution. They were felicitated by the chief guest, SMC president, principal and vice-principals.

During the entire inaugural function, tips on a #bettermentalhealth were shared with the audience who were collectively asked to join to take a pledge for a better mental health.

Following the pledge, the audience was guided to proceed to the senior school ground to be a part of the first and most awaited 'Mental Health Walkathon'.

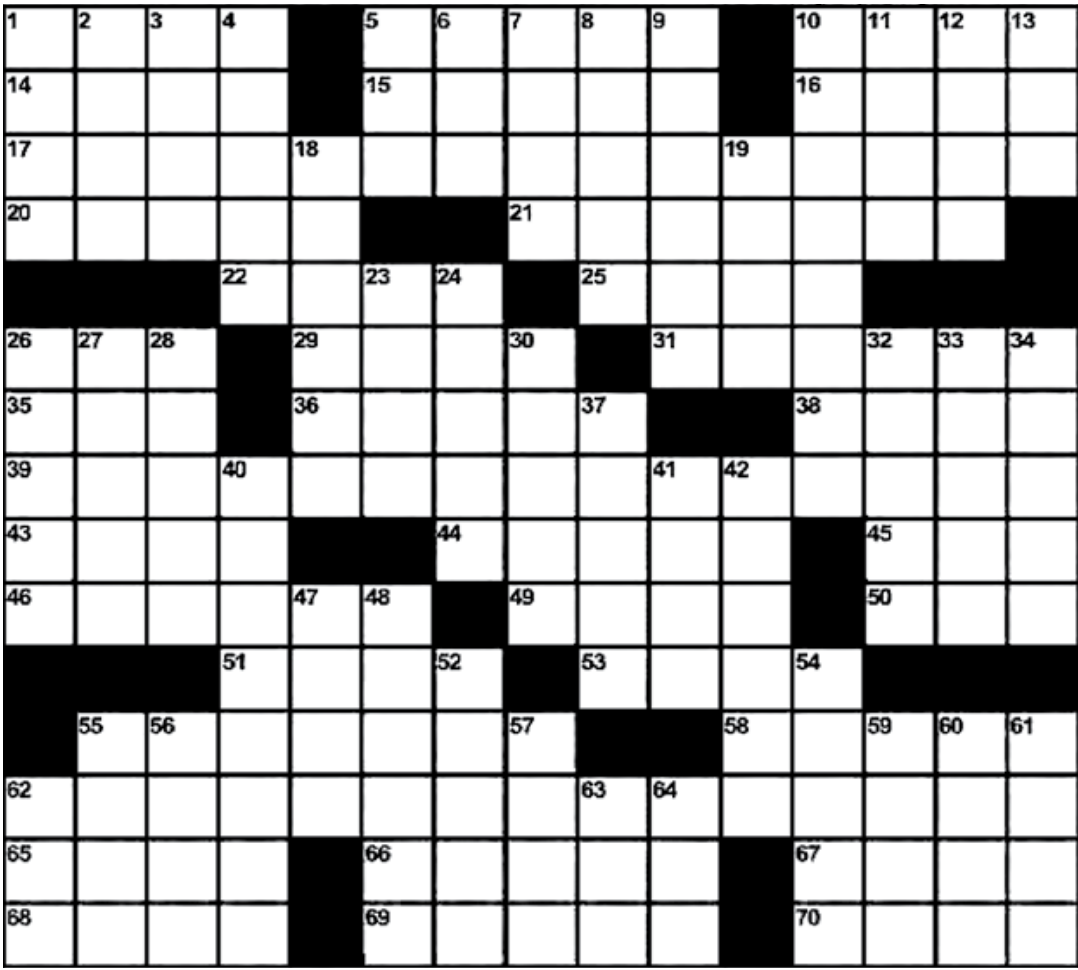
There was a surprise element also - a Flashmob - along with the walkathon. The event concluded with a fun filled Zumba session for the audience and staff of ISWK and ISWK-I.

To create awareness among the students and staff, Team A B L E (counseling and special needs department) hosted a number of events throughout the week including guest speaker sessions for middle school and senior school students of ISWK and ISWK-I, addressing challenges faced by students and how to deal with them.

The teachers had a 'Burst your Worries' activity conducted for them. Lastly, the students also got a chance to express themselves through art and short films on the topic 'Understanding Mental Health'.

The Mental Health Week was a great success with the active participation of the staff and students of ISWK and ISWK International, the school said.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Actor Guinness
5) Journalist Boothe Luce
10) Things to repent for
14) "Do you take me_ fool?"
15) Gobi green
16) Bright brain concoction
17) Using more and more credit
20) Old-fashioned music hall
21) Eternal
22) Immature salamanders
62) Promoting
25) Go to_ (deteriorate)
26) Almanac feature
29) After the deadline
31) Worked hard 68) "Use" homophone
35) Altar avowal
36) Zinc_
38) Like desert growth entertainment?
39) Revealing
43) Nero's robe
44) Artist's plaster
45) Poem type
46) A tool for 55-Across

49) Ice Follies venue
50) Bird's beak
51) Extremely deep sleep
53) And others, for short
55) The grim one and others
58) Short summary, for short
62) Promoting
65) Good bit of land
66) Acts of the Apostles?
67) Many household pets
68) "Use" homophone
69) Leave the flock
70) Leader in home entertainment?

DOWN

1) Bushy hair style
2) Clear's partner
3) Coastal eagle
4) It's due for a paddling
5) One in jail
6) Drop back
7) Largest continent
8) "The Lord of the..."
9) Have great respect for
10) Fries, often
11) Caesar's bad day
12) Bills on birds

13) Obeyed "Down in front!"
18) Receivables
19) Fake butter
23) Uber competitor
24) Emulate an angry bee
26) Some baseball gear
27) Committee type
28) Bess' love
30) Lawn straightener
32) Disclose
33) Wear away
34) Star in Cygnus
3 7) Borden cow
40) Bran muffin alternatives
41) "... It Romantic?"
42) Amusement park racing vehicle
4 7) Arizona Indian
48) Corrects text
52) In-group lingo
54) "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" host
55) "Con mucho dinero"
56) Beige shade
57) "Judge Judy" hopeful
59) "Bye bye"
60) Crafts partner

61) "Hey ... over here"
62) Mary_ Cosmetics
63) After-hours school grp.
64) Not outgoing

NOTE PAD

MISDO GAPS MIST
AREAL UPON ASTI
REQUISITIONFORM
UBOAT BAILEE
SHE WAVE RADAR
PENNE RARER EMS
ARCANA ROMAN
BEINQUISITIVE
LOUSE TONERS
NUS BASTE RANGE
ORIEL RYAN EST
BALLET RAISE
ONVISITINGTERMS
DIET EIRE CREPE
YARE REAR HEDGE

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Someone is looking for an intriguing influence or inspiration, and given your stature within the group, you could fill the bill perfectly. A surge of confident energy hits you either today or tomorrow, and it helps you realize how much influence you have. Important people are paying attention to you right now, and you might not be noticing how many questions they're suddenly asking. There are plans in the works and your name keeps popping up.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Your mood may shift from time to time today, but that doesn't mean you won't get a lot of things done. In fact, a long-anticipated conversation will set you straight on some confusing matters, a small but meaningful goal will finally be met, and a casual relationship will solidify into something more. Your feelings will be hard to pin down and your energy will be a bit erratic, but you'll end this day feeling contented about the steps you've taken.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You may wake up feeling like you're under a gray cloud this morning, but try not to let your pessimistic side take over every aspect of today. Worry and concern might surround you, but there are a lot of positive, even happy, things you can focus on, so keep an eye out for them! Cheerful people will be able to lift your spirits very effectively, so surround yourself with the folks who make you smile and not the ones who make you question your own abilities

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

If you've been waiting for a day when you can break loose and go a little nutty (in a good way, of course), today is the day! There's nothing holding you back from poking fun, having a laugh, and playing a few pranks. The only thing you need to remember is that certain commitments need to be honored or your reputation might suffer. The balance between play and work is easy to manage today, especially since you'll get to tip the scales in the direction of fun.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

As soon as you wake up this morning, you'll be raring to go! Whether your to-do list is tiny or a mile long, you'll be able to get everything done before sunset. Good work and a few lucky coincidences will save you a lot of time and prevent some pounding headaches. So what should you do with all the free time you'll have tonight? Whatever the heck you want. Go out for a night on the town or watch a sappy movie. Your time will be your own.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Today, if an unexpected cancellation happens, take it as a sign that you need to slow down, because you definitely do! What's the rush anyway? You've been running at full tilt for quite a while, but what you may not realize is that there's no deadline looming ahead that you need to be too worried about. Don't move according to someone else's schedule. Instead, go at a pace that enables you to feel relaxed and at ease with yourself. That's more important than anything else.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Stay on the straight and narrow today. Just because you see a shortcut doesn't mean you should take it. Today is all about keeping your head down, working hard, and playing by the rules. Even though you've seen other folks get ahead by making deals and cutting corners, don't get the wrong idea. Cheaters never prosper. The guilt alone will add so much stress to your life that any gains you make will be meaningless. You've got the skills and the drive, so why bother with the schemes?

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

It may be time to say goodbye to something that's been in your life for a very long time (too long, in fact). You're moving into an exciting new phase of life, and to make the journey all the more successful, you need to drop off some old baggage and lighten your load. Admit to yourself that you have limitations, and don't be embarrassed if you never reached that one thing you were working for. Let go of something that once inspired you but is now frustrating you.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

In this new push of yours to take more control over your future, don't forget that a big part of being industrious is calling upon other people to help you. While you certainly shouldn't depend on others to do things for you, there's nothing wrong with reaching out and using your connections. After all, if you don't use a connection, after a while you lose it. Call in a few favors, and be sure to make it clear to these folks that you know how to show the proper amount of gratitude.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Regardless of the weather today, you may find yourself feeling shrouded in clouds. Your moodiness or blue feelings aren't anything to be worried about, however. This is a normal phase of darkness that will pass as soon as you get back in touch with the emotional stimulation you've been missing out on. New ideas and innovative ways of thinking will expedite this process, so expose yourself to creative expression as much as you can.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Your temper might be quick to flare today, so try to prevent stressful situations before they happen. If you can, separate yourself from the rest of the crowd and try to do your work or study solo. If that's just not practical, keep your mind focused on your own priorities, and learn that when you argue with a fool, you're giving them too much credit. People who want to push your buttons are simply not worth your energy. If you're pushed, don't push back.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

The good news is that all of your plans are coming together nicely now, and everything is humming along without a hitch. The bad news is that with less to keep you busy, you have a greater weakness for distraction. The frivolous stuff will catch your eye and could keep you from staying on your toes. It's important to integrate entertainment and fun into your life, but you also need to maintain balance. Have fun, but stay alert.

01. His name could be loosely translated as "rule by, or supported by, horses" and is enshrined in the traditional doctors' oath. Who is he?

A. Confucius
B. Aesculapius
C. Frankenstein
D. Hippocrates

02. Where do arboreal animals live?

A. In burrows
B. In trees
C. Beside streams
D. On the ground

03. What creature is on the flag of Bhutan?

A. Elephant
B. Eagle
C. Dragon
D. Lion

Answers: 1.D 2.B 3.C

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

E	Y	U	I
S	E	D	L
T	F	R	X
F	L	A	I

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

3	4		2	7		5	8	
	9			6			4	
		7					2	9
	5		4		1	2	9	
	1	8	5		6		3	
8	6					4		
	3			4			7	
	7	9		5	2		6	8

WORD BUILDER

You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

8	9	1	2	3	5	6	7	4
2	7	6	8	4	9	5	3	1
3	5	4	7	1	6	2	9	8
4	3	7	9	2	5	8	1	6
5	1	8	3	6	7	4	2	9
9	6	2	1	8	4	3	5	7
6	2	9	4	3	1	7	8	5
7	4	7	3	5	9	8	1	6
1	8	5	6	7	2	9	4	3

Sri Lankan novelist Shehan Karunatilaka wins Booker Prize

London, UK - Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka on Monday won Britain's Booker Prize for fiction for his work *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*, about a journalist murdered amid the country's sectarian strife.

"My hope for Seven Moons is this... that in the not-so-distant future... that it is read in a Sri Lanka that has understood that these ideas of corruption and race-baiting and cronyism have not worked and will never work," he said.

"I hope it's in print in 10 years but if it is, I hope it's written in (a) Sri Lanka that learns from its stories, and that Seven Moons will be in the fantasy section of the bookshop... next to the dragons, the unicorns (and) will not be mistaken for realism or political satire," he added.

Karunatilaka, 47, is the second Sri Lankan to win the award, following Michael Ondaatje's victory in 1992 for *The English Patient*.

Aside from the £50,000 (US\$56,000) prize, winning the Booker can provide a career-changing boost in sales and public profile.

Chair of judges, Neil MacGregor, called the book 'an afterlife noir that dissolves the boundaries not just of different genres, but of life and death, body and spirit, east and west'.

The book is set amid the mayhem of a civil-war wracked Colombo in the late 1980s.

War photographer and gam-



Sri Lankan writer Shehan Karunatilaka poses next to Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort, after winning the British Booker Prize, during the award ceremony, in London, on Monday (AFP)

bler Maali Almeida has been killed, and sets out in the afterlife to work out who was responsible and expose the brutality of the conflict, having seven moons in which to do so.

Booker Prize judges called it a 'whodunnit and a race against time, full of ghosts, gags and a deep humanity'.

Mantel tribute

Karunatilaka's debut, *Chinaman* (2011), won the Commonwealth Prize and was selected for the

BBC and The Reading Agency's Big Jubilee Read last year.

The London award ceremony was the Booker's first large-scale in-person event since 2019.

Queen Consort Camilla awarded the coveted prize at the televised ceremony, in one of her highest-profile appearances since her husband King Charles III ascended the throne last month.

"Without meaning to sound trite, we are all winners for being part of this magnificent shortlist,

though, perhaps I might pocket the extra cash if that's OK?" Karunatilaka joked as he picked up the award.

The evening event also featured a speech by singer-songwriter Dua Lipa.

All but one of the six shortlisted authors attended in person, with Englishman Alan Garner, who turned 88 on Monday, appearing virtually.

Garner, who made his name with children's fantasy titles and folk retellings, was shortlisted for

Treacle Walker, which is the shortest finalist novel by word count.

Other shortlisted authors included NoViolet Bulawayo, for *Glory*, an animal fable set in her native Zimbabwe.

American Percival Everett was included for *Trees*, earning independent publisher Influx Press its first Booker shortlist place.

Fellow US writer Elizabeth Strout featured for *Oh William!* while Irish author Claire Keegan's *Small Things Like These*

Karunatilaka, 47, is the second Sri Lankan to win the award, following Michael Ondaatje's victory in 1992 for The English Patient

completed the shortlist.

The Booker is Britain's foremost literary award for novels written in English. Its previous recipients include Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood and Hilary Mantel.

Monday's ceremony featured a special tribute to Mantel, who died last month aged 70.

She was the first British writer, and first woman, to win the prize twice with the first two novels in her *Wolf Hall* trilogy.

AFP



Joel Estorial (centre), the alleged gunman in the killing of Philippine journalist, is being presented to the media in Manila on Tuesday (AFP)

Journalist murder in Philippines: Suspect surrenders

Manila, Philippines - A suspect who had allegedly gunned down a Philippine journalist surrendered to authorities, the interior secretary said on Tuesday, calling it a 'major breakthrough' in a case that drew international concern.

The archipelago nation is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, and most of the killers often go unpunished. Radio personality Percival Mabasa, who went by the name 'Percy Lapid' in his programme, was shot dead in a Manila suburb on October 3 as he drove to his studio.

He was the second journalist to be killed since President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. took office on June 30. Mabasa was an outspoken critic of former president Rodrigo Duterte, as well as of Marcos' policies and aides.

Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos said the suspect, Joel Estorial, had surrendered and turned in a gun on Monday 'out of fear for (his) personal safety' as police had broadcast his face

from security footage taken shortly after the shooting.

"The gun matched the slug (from the crime scene). The ballistics matched," Abalos told reporters, calling the surrender a 'major breakthrough'.

Police briefly wheeled the suspect, in a bullet-proof vest and kevlar helmet, out to the media but gave few details about his background.

He told reporters he and three others took part in the ambush on orders from an unnamed person at the country's national prison, and later split the 550,000 peso (US\$9,350) bounty among themselves.

Estorial - who named his three other co-conspirators still at large - also said he was told he would be killed if he didn't go through with the attack.

He did not cite the motive nor identified the mastermind behind the killing.

Mabasa's relatives welcomed the arrest but stressed the authorities needed to do more.

AFP

Rest vroom: Japan's oldest toilet damaged in car crash

Tokyo, Japan - A Japanese man tasked with preserving cultural heritage accidentally ploughed his car into the country's oldest toilet in a centuries-old Buddhist temple, partially destroying it, police said on Tuesday.

Tofukuji Temple in the western Kyoto region houses a toilet said to date back to the 15th century, earning it the designation of an important cultural asset.

But the original wooden door leading to the site was 'ruined' after the driver, a 30-year-old man from the Kyoto Heritage Preservation Association, accidentally backed his car into it on Monday morning, police told AFP. Having parked in front of the toilet, the man hit the gas to restart the car

without realising he was still in reverse, police said. "We've been told it's going to require a lot of work to restore," a Kyoto police official said.

Walls inside also sustained minor damage, but the actual latrines - two rows of pits - survived intact, Norihiko Murata, a Kyoto official in charge of cultural heritage preservation, told AFP. The toilet was traditionally used by monks as part of their ascetic training, although it is no longer in use.

"It is of course disappointing that part of this important cultural property has been damaged like this," Murata said. "We will discuss how to restore it in a way that will retain as much of its cultural value as possible."

AFP

Alleged accomplices on trial over Vienna shooting

Vienna, Austria - Six men accused of helping a gunman who carried out Austria's first deadly militant attack went on trial in a Vienna court on Tuesday.

Convicted Islamic State sympathiser Kujtim Fejzulaj went on a shooting rampage on November 2, 2020 in downtown Vienna, killing four and wounding 23 others before police shot him dead.

In the wake of the EU member's deadliest shooting in decades, the Austrian government and in particular its intelligence service were accused of failing to monitor the Islamist movement in the country.

According to the federal prosecutors' charge sheet seen by AFP, the six defendants - four Austrians, a Chechen and a Kosovar - were not directly involved in the deadly attack, but are suspected of actively helping



Journalists and members of the public await to enter the court room at the regional court in Vienna, on Tuesday (AFP)

Fejzulaj prepare for the shooting.

At the start of the trial, all six were led into the crowded court room, escorted by armed guards under tight security. Cameras were barred from the room.

The six men - aged between 21 and 32 years old - are accused

of 'enabling... or otherwise promoting' the execution of the crimes 'due to their shared affiliation with the radical Islamist scene and the terrorist organisation IS Islamic State', the confidential court document said.

The accused face charges

ranging from participating in terrorist crimes in connection with murder to involvement or membership in a terrorist group.

Four of them could be sentenced to life in prison if found guilty, while the two others face up to 20 years in jail.

All except one have been held in custody on remand in the lead-up to the trial.

'Ensure justice is done'

According to the Vienna state criminal court, verdicts are not expected before February.

Lawyer Mathias Burger, acting for the family of 21-year-old Nedzip Vrenezi, who was shot dead first by Fejzulaj during the attack, told AFP in an interview ahead of the opening of the trial that the family 'still suffers to this day' from what happened to their son.

The victim's family had received compensation from the Austrian state, but his clients' main interest was to 'ensure justice was done', Burger said.

With the help of some of the accused, the gunman - an Austrian citizen whose parents are from North Macedonia - was allegedly able to obtain the weapons and the ammunition needed for the attack, while others provided logistical aid or encouraged Fejzulaj, according to prosecutors.

Lawyer Astrid Wagner, who represents 32-year-old Chechen Adam Makhaev, accused of selling weapons to Fejzulaj, told AFP ahead of the trial, that her client was going to plead not guilty.

Makhaev has confessed to illicit arms trafficking, but did not know what the weapons would be used for, she said.

AFP

Mountainous Lesotho finds gold in trout fish farming

Lejone, Lesotho - It's harvest time in Lejone, a small village nestling in mountains in southern Africa more than two thousand metres above sea level.

The yield is not grain or fruit, but rainbow trout - the bounty from an undulating river at the foot of the peaks of Lesotho.

Fishermen haul nets bulging with trout onto a floating platform. The fish are killed and put on ice, the first step on their journey to dinner tables in neighbouring South Africa.

The settlement is home to one of Lesotho's two professional fish farms - pioneering ventures in the poor landlocked kingdom.

Stephen Phakisi, 59, launched Katse Fish Farms with two partners in 2005. Today, he chuckles at how the trio leapt into the business with meagre knowledge about some of its unknowns, including the best feed for fattening

fish quickly. "For five years, it was totally uneconomical."

He recalls how he once found a shoal of fish dead and belly-up in the water, while another time a full cargo of imported fingerlings died on a 16-hour drive from Cape Town. Today, the company is profitable, with a yearly output of 800 tonnes of fish, which is sold at about US\$4 a kilogram.

It supplies a few local restaurants, where the trout is usually pan-fried in butter for a few minutes and served with a side dish of kale and potato chips or rice.

But the bulk of its production lands on the shelves of high-end supermarkets in neighbouring South Africa, where a vacuum-packed one-kilogram bag can cost up to US\$50.

'Heads and bones'

Trout farming in Lesotho has grown on the back of another of



Fish farm workers lower a bucket filled with freshly harvested rainbow trouts into a tank, where the fish is chemically anaesthetised prior to being culled, at the Katse Fish Farms in Lejone (AFP)

the mountain country's most famous exports: water. South Africa gets much of its water from its neighbour, which has

dammed several of its waterways over the past three decades. The dams have widened riverbeds, creating inlets and basins that

are ideal for trout farming.

Katse Fish Farms lies more than 2,000 metres above sea level on the Malibamatso River,

upstream from the giant Katse Dam reservoir that supplies South Africa's capital Pretoria and the largest city, Johannesburg. Fish farming currently accounts for less than 0.1 per cent of Lesotho's US\$2bn GDP.

Locals say they have always eaten salted, sun-dried freshwater fish. And young boys sell fresh catch to passing motorists.

But as dam construction continues the country has the potential 'to become the regional leader in aquaculture', according to the Lesotho National Development Corporation.

In this country of just over two million people, who rank among the poorest in the world, few seem to be benefiting so far from the water boom.

"We are selling water to South Africa but we have no water to our homes," says Joshua Sefali, a village leader in

Lejone. Many of the village's stone houses with thatched roofs have no mains water or electricity. Large swathes of land were flooded after dams went up.

Some people lost their homes and access to farmland, receiving only small compensation in return. Machaka Khalala, 31, said she received about US\$165 when the field where she used to grow corn and spinach was submerged.

Now she makes a living selling 'fat cakes', a local doughnut.

But that's often not enough to make ends meet.

A cap on her head, Khalala was among dozens of people queuing up in the cold, a bucket in hand, on a mountain roadside.

Here, Lesotho's other fish farm hands out leftovers every week - 'the heads and backbones', Khalala said.

AFP

Australia reverses recognition of Israel's capital

The policy reversal prompted a curt rebuke from the Jewish state but was cheered by Palestinians

Sydney, Australia - Australia said it would no longer recognise west Jerusalem as Israel's capital on Tuesday, a policy reversal that prompted a curt rebuke from the Jewish state but was cheered by Palestinians.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong said the city's status should be decided by Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, unwinding a contentious decision by the previous conservative government.

In 2018, Australia's then-prime minister Scott Morrison followed US president Donald Trump's lead in unilaterally recognising west Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

The move caused a domestic backlash in Australia and friction with neighbouring Indonesia - the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation - temporarily derailing a bilateral free trade deal.

"I know this has caused conflict and distress in part of the Australian community, and today the government seeks to resolve that," Wong said.

Jerusalem is claimed by both Israelis and Palestinians, but

most governments avoid putting embassies there to avoid prejudging the outcome of negotiations for a lasting peace.

"We will not support an approach that undermines a two-state solution," Wong said, adding: "Australia's embassy has always been, and remains, in Tel Aviv." Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid criticised Tuesday's move - which comes as he prepares to face a November 1 general election. "We can only hope that the Australian government manages other matters more seriously and professionally," he said.

Israel annexed east Jerusalem following the Six-Day War of 1967, and has declared the entire city its 'eternal and indivisible capital'.

Palestinians claim the eastern sector as the capital of their future state.

The Palestinian Authority's civil affairs minister, Hussein Al-Sheikh welcomed the move by Canberra as an 'affirmation' that Jerusalem's status depends on the outcome of negotiations.

Hamas, the Islamist group



Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (right) and Foreign Minister Penny Wong attend a meeting at Parliament House in Canberra on Tuesday (AFP)

that controls Gaza, called it 'a step in the right direction'.

Indonesia also welcomed the decision.

"This policy would hopefully contribute positively to Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations," the foreign ministry in Jakarta said.

Steadfast friend

Wong insisted that the decision - which has limited practical impact - did not signal any broader shift in policy or hostility towards Israel.

"Australia will always be a steadfast friend of Israel. We were amongst the first countries

to formally recognise Israel," she said.

"We will not waver in our support of Israel and the Jewish community in Australia. We are equally unwavering in our support of the Palestinian people, including humanitarian support."

The centre-left Labour party, with Anthony Albanese as prime minister and Wong as foreign minister, came to power in May 2022 after strongly opposing the previous government's Jerusalem policy.

Wong accused the Morrison

We will not support an approach that undermines a two-state solution. Australia's embassy has always been, and remains in Tel Aviv

PENNY WONG



Symbolism

Canberra's shift was foreshadowed by the removal of language about the Israeli capital from the website of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Although Australia is not a major player in peace talks, Ran Porat, a historian and researcher at Melbourne's Monash University, said the move was significant.

"In the Middle East in general, symbolism is very much at the centre of many conflicts. Symbolism is not negligible, it's not unimportant."

Porat added that the move could be seized on by Israel's opposition Likud, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, as evidence of the government's failings ahead of next month's election.

Netanyahu tweeted on Tuesday that it was 'no surprise' Australia made the decision while Lapid was in power, condemning the premier for supporting Palestinian statehood in an address to the UN General Assembly last month.

AFP

Nearly 60 killed in 10 days of Syria rebel clashes: Monitor

Beirut, Lebanon - More than a week of inter-rebel fighting in Syria's Turkish-held north has killed 58 people, mostly combatants - a flareup that has allowed Al-Qaeda-linked fighters to gain ground, a war monitor said on Tuesday.

The clashes since October 8, in a volatile area near the Turkish border, have been among the deadliest in years, killing 48 rebel fighters and 10 civilians, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Among the 48 combatants killed, 28 were members of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance (HTS), which is led by Al-Qaeda's former Syria affiliate, according to the Britain-based war monitor, which relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria.

Dozens of rebel groups opposed to President Bashar al-Assad are confined to areas of northern and northwestern Syria that still evade government control after more than a decade of war. The latest fighting started this month between two rival pro-Turkish rebel groups in the town of Al-Bab in Aleppo



Demonstrators gather in the Syrian opposition-held crossing of Bab al-Salama, at the border with Turkey in Aleppo province on Monday (AFP)

province before spreading to other areas and drawing in other factions, including HTS.

HTS is widely seen as the strongest and best organised of the rebel factions and dominates the nearby Idlib region, Syria's last major opposition bastion.

Last week, the group captured the Afrin region from rival Turkish-backed rebels, advancing in the area for the first time since civil war broke out in Syria in 2011. The United States condemned the HTS advance in a statement on Tuesday.

"We are alarmed by the re-

cent incursion of HTS, a designated terrorist organisation, into northern Aleppo (province). HTS forces should be withdrawn from the area immediately," the US embassy said.

HTS has leveraged the latest bout of fighting to expand its zone of influence, in a move green-lit by Turkey, which has never publicly backed it, the Observatory said. "Hayat Tahrir al-Sham would not have entered the area without Turkey's consent," said Observatory chief Rami Abdul Rahman.

AFP

Afghan women protest after students expelled from university dormitories

Kabul, Afghanistan - About 30 Afghan women protested in front of Kabul University on Tuesday after authorities expelled students from the dormitories allegedly for breaking rules.

The protesters claimed that all the evicted students were women in a move that comes as the Taliban has increasingly restricted girls' access to education. "Today's protest was for girls who have been expelled," organiser Zholia Parsi told AFP after Taliban forces dispersed the rally. Organisers also called for the reopening of girls' secondary schools, which have been shut since the Taliban returned to power last year.

In several cities, women have staged sporadic protests against harsh restrictions imposed by the hardline Islamists.

The rallies are usually swiftly put down - often harshly - and journalists have increasingly been prevented from covering them.

"Don't expel us... education is our red line," chanted the pro-



Afghan women hold placards during a protest in front of Kabul University in Kabul on Tuesday (AFP)

testers in front of the university.

The Ministry of Higher Education said on Monday that an undisclosed number of students 'who violated the rules and regulations of the university's dormitory' had been expelled from their accommodations.

It did not say if they were all women.

In response to international

pressure over girls' education, Taliban officials have said the secondary school closures are temporary, but they have also wheeled out a range of excuses for the shutdown - from lack of funds to time needed to remodel the syllabus along Islamic lines.

Late on Monday, Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah

Akhundzada replaced the minister of higher education with a loyalist cleric, Neda Mohammad Nadeem, a government statement said. It was the sector's second such reshuffle in a month, following the appointment of a new minister of education.

The Ministry of Higher Education oversees universities, while the Ministry of Education runs schools up to 12th grade.

Nadeem, previously the governor of Kabul province, has for years held several key positions in the Taliban and was formerly chief of intelligence for the movement in eastern Afghanistan. Nadeem's personal views on girls' education are unknown, and it remains unclear why his predecessor Abdul Baqi Haqqani was removed.

"Given his proximity to the supreme leader and his performance he has been entrusted with key positions," a Taliban official who worked closely with Nadeem told AFP on condition of anonymity.

AFP

Three killed in fresh landslide in Venezuela

Maracay, Venezuela - Intense rain in northern Venezuela caused a landslide that has killed at least three people, President Nicolas Maduro said on Monday as he visited another site where over 50 died in similar circumstances last week.

"I am informed that there are three dead in El Castano, it was a mudslide that came from the mountain," said Maduro, referring to a neighbourhood in the city of Maracay, the capital of northern Aragua state, which is about 80km west of the capital Caracas.

Video footage from El Castano broadcast on Venezuelan television showed mudslides devastating everything in their path - sweeping away vehicles, trees and huge boulders.

AFP

Russian strikes pound Ukraine power sites

Kyiv, Ukraine - President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Tuesday that Russian strikes had destroyed about 30 per cent of his country's power stations in one week, speaking hours after a fresh barrage cut electricity to cities across Ukraine.

Russian attacks rocked energy facilities in Kyiv and urban centres across the country, causing blackouts and disrupting water supplies, just one day after the capital was bombed with a swarm of suicide drones.

The strikes in the early hours of Tuesday hit Kyiv, Kharkiv in the east, Mykolaiv in the south and central regions of Dnipro and Zhytomyr, where officials said hospitals were running on backup generators.

Drones bombed Kyiv on Monday, destroying a residential building in the centre and killing five people in what the presidency described as an attack of desperation.

It was the second Monday in a row that Russia launched puni-



Ukrainian artillerymen fire from a gun from their position in Kharkiv region on Monday (AFP)

tive strikes which military observers have said appear to be Moscow's response to battlefield losses.

Zelensky described the repeated targeted of energy infrastructure as 'another kind of Russian terrorist attacks'.

"Since October 10, 30 per cent of Ukraine's power stations have been destroyed, causing massive blackouts across the

country," the Ukrainian leader said on Twitter.

Hospitals on back-up power

He said the attack meant that there was 'no space left for negotiations with (President Vladimir) Putin's regime'.

Many settlements in the Zhytomyr region west of Kyiv and parts of the city of Dnipro in cen-

tral Ukraine were without electricity, while power was restored to the southern city of Mykolaiv after strikes overnight.

"Now the city is cut off from electricity and water supplies. Hospitals are working on backup power," the mayor of Zhytomyr Sergiy Sukhomlyn said in a statement on line. In the northeast meanwhile, Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv some

40km from the border with Russia was hit with eight missiles, the regional governor said.

Kharkiv's mayor Igor Terekhov said an 'industrial enterprise' had been hit.

In Kyiv, meanwhile, the DETK energy provider said its staff were 'doing their best to restore electricity supply after the destruction of a critical infrastructure facility in Kyiv city.'

Zelensky earlier said the fresh wave of nationwide strikes - which he said had damaged a residential building and flower market in Mykolaiv - was a Russian attempt to 'terrorise and kill civilians'.

"The terrorist state will not change anything for itself with these kind of actions. It will only confirm its destructive and murderous essence, for which it will certainly be held to account," Zelensky said on social media.

There was no immediate reaction from Moscow, but it has said following similar attacks that assigned military targets

were hit.

Kremlin denies Iran drone use

Following the wave of kamikaze drone attacks on Kyiv on Monday, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba demanded EU sanctions on Iran, accusing Tehran of providing Russia with drones.

The Kremlin said on Tuesday it has no knowledge of its army using Iranian drones in Ukraine.

"Russian tech is being used," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, referring other questions to the defence ministry.

Iran has denied exporting any weapons to either side, but the United States warned it would take action against companies and nations working with Tehran's drone programme following the strikes in Kyiv.

Senior presidential aide Mykhaylo Podolyak meanwhile called for Russia to be excluded from the upcoming G20 summit.

AFP

INDIA

Jayalalithaa death: Panel indicts Sasikala

Probe panel report was tabled in the TN State Assembly

Chennai, India - Justice A Arumughaswamy Commission of Inquiry constituted to probe the death of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and AIADMK leader J Jayalalithaa has called for an investigation against Sasikala, among three others. The report of the inquiry commission, which probed the death of Jayalalithaa, was tabled in the State Assembly on Tuesday. The Commission concluded that Sasikala, Jayalalithaa's personal doctor K S Sivakumar, then health secretary Radhakrishnan and C Vijayabaskar, who was the health minister then, are found to be at



AIADMK interim general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami with party leaders pays tribute to the statue of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa during the 51st foundation day celebrations of AIADMK, at the party headquarters, in Chennai on Monday (ANI)

fault and an investigation is to be ordered. The single-member commission had submitted its report to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin earlier in August, after a five-year inquiry. After the demise of Jayalalithaa in December 2016, full-scale politics erupted over the cause of her death and the medical procedures followed during her hospitalisation. Former Tamil Nadu chief minister O Pannerselvam had requested a probe into her death, which led to the formation of the Commission. It was assigned to enquire into the circumstances, health condition and situation leading to the hospitalisation of Jayalalitha on September 22, 2016 and subsequent treatment provided till her unfortunate demise on December 5 the same year. Aarumughaswami has filed his 608 pages final report in Tamil and 500 pages report in English. Over 159 witnesses have appeared before the Commission and have put forward their points of view. Notably, the Commission commenced its investigation in November 2017 with many hearings of close aides of Jayalalithaa and doctors who provided treatment, besides the then health minister, the health secretary and then finance minister and AIADMK senior leader O Pannerselvam. Meanwhile, a report by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences' panel of doctors has asserted that the treatment provided to Jayalalithaa was as per 'correct medical practice and no errors' have been found in the care provided. This clean chit provided relief for Apollo Hospital where Jayalalithaa was admitted. ANI

Safe, secure world is shared responsibility: PM



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the 90th Interpol General Assembly, in New Delhi on Tuesday (ANI)

New Delhi, India - Addressing the 90th Interpol meeting in New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that a safe and secure world is a shared responsibility, calling India a case study for the world in upholding diversity and democracy. "In upholding diversity and democracy, India is a case study for the world. Over the last 99 years, Interpol has connected police organisations globally in 195 countries. This is despite differences in the legal framework," the Prime Minister said. Modi stated that Interpol is approaching a historic milestone as the organisation will celebrate its 100 years in 2023.

From climate targets to COVID vaccines, India has shown willingness to take the lead in any crisis

NARENDRA MODI

"This is a call for universal cooperation to make the world a better place. India is one of the top contributors to the UN Peacekeeping Operations. From climate targets to COVID vaccines, India has shown the willingness to take the lead in any crisis," Modi said.

He also emphasised how India is calling for enhanced global cooperation 'for local welfare'. On the contribution of police forces, Modi said: "Police forces across the world are furthering social welfare. They are the frontline responders during any crisis. I pay my respect to the police personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service of the people." The Interpol General Assembly meeting is taking place in India after a gap of years. The event provides an opportunity to showcase best practices in India's law and order system to the world. ANI

'It's for Parliament to frame law on Uniform Civil Code'

New Delhi, India - The Centre on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that it could not direct Parliament to frame or enact any law on Uniform Civil Code in the country. The Ministry of Law and Justice in its affidavit stated that the matter of policy is for the elected representatives of the people to decide and no direction in this regard can be issued by the Centre. "It is for the legislature to enact or not to enact a piece of legislation," the ministry told the apex court. The affidavit was filed on a plea of advocate Ashwini

Upadhyay seeking uniformity in the personal laws regulating succession, inheritance, adoption, marriage, divorce, maintenance and alimony. The Centre while seeking dismissal of the plea said: "It is settled position of law as has been held in a catena of judgments by this court that under our constitutional scheme, Parliament exercises sovereign power to enact laws and no outside power or authority can issue a direction to enact a particular piece of legislation." It further said that Article 44 of the Indian Constitution is a directive principle requiring

State to endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens. The ministry said that Article 44 is to strengthen the 'Secular Democratic Republic' object as enshrined in the Constitution's Preamble. "This provision is provided to effect integration of India by bringing communities on the common platform on matters which are at present governed by diverse personal laws. Thus, in view of the importance and sensitivity of the subject matter, in-depth study of various personal laws is required," it said.

The Centre told the top court that it is conscious of the matter and that the 21st Law Commission undertook a detailed examination of the issue by inviting representations from several stakeholders, however, since the said Commission's term ended in August 2018, the matter will be placed before the 22nd Commission. "As and when the Report of Law Commission in the matter is received, the Government would examine the same in consultation with the various stakeholders involved in the matter," said the ministry. ANI

Six pilgrims, pilot killed in helicopter crash

Dehradun, India - Seven people were killed on Tuesday when a helicopter bringing Hindu pilgrims back from a shrine high in the Indian Himalayas crashed in the mountains. The pilot and all six pilgrims on board died when the chopper came down during the flight from Kedarnath temple, disaster response official Nandan Singh Rajwar told AFP from the crash site. The cause of the crash was not immediately known, Rajwar said. Kedarnath temple, dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, stands at an altitude of 3,584 metres in the northern state of Uttarak-



Police personnel gather at the site where a helicopter carrying Kedarnath pilgrims from Phata crashed, on Tuesday (ANI)

hand and is thronged by pilgrims from across India in the summer. It is one of several important shrines to Hindu gods dotted high in the Indian Himalayas, sometimes many hours of arduous trekking from the nearest road. A cottage industry of helicopter charter firms has developed to serve wealthy pilgrims who want to worship at the sites but prefer to reach them more easily than on foot. India's civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Twitter that the crash was 'extremely unfortunate'. AFP

US 'confident' in Pakistan's ability to secure nuke assets

Washington, US - The United States said on Monday that it had confidence in Pakistan's ability to control its nuclear arsenal after President Joe Biden expressed alarm, leading Islamabad to summon the US ambassador. "The United States is confident of Pakistan's commitment and its ability to secure its nuclear assets," State Department spokesman Vedant Patel told reporters. "The US has always viewed a secure and prosperous Pakistan as critical to US interests and, more broadly, the US values our long-standing cooperation with Pakistan," he said. Biden made the off-the-cuff remarks on Pakistan's nuclear



Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who recently visited Washington, has called for more interactions with the US (AFP)

programme on Thursday while at a private Democratic Party fundraiser in California where he began to discuss challenges facing President Xi Jinping of China, a close ally of Pakistan. "And what I think is maybe one of the most dangerous na-

tions in the world: Pakistan. Nuclear weapons without any cohesion," Biden said, according to a White House transcript. Pakistan - proud to be the only declared nuclear power in the Islamic world - summoned US Ambassador Donald Blome to lodge a protest. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif tweeted that Pakistan was a 'responsible nuclear state' and that it takes safety measures 'with the utmost seriousness'. US officials have long privately voiced alarm about nuclear safety if the political situation changes in Pakistan, whose military and intelligence apparatus has assisted Afghanistan's Taliban. Foreign Minister Bilawal

Bhutto Zardari said that Biden's remarks should not hurt relations, noting that the president was not speaking at an official function. But Bhutto Zardari, who recently visited Washington, called for more interaction, with Biden showing little interest in personally engaging his Pakistani counterparts. Patel noted, however, that USAID chief Samantha Power and State Department Counselor Derek Chollet have both visited since devastating floods hit Pakistan. "This is a relationship we view as important and it's something that we're going to continue to remain deeply engaged in," he said. AFP

Turkish hot air balloon crash kills two Spaniards

Istanbul, Turkey - Two Spaniards were killed and three others injured on Tuesday when their hot air balloon crashed in high winds in the tourist magnet of Cappadocia in Turkey, local authorities said. "The hot air balloon came down abruptly at 8:50am (0550 GMT) after it unexpectedly became very windy," said the governor's office in Nevsehir, the central province where the spectacular high plateau of Cappadocia is located. The balloon, which took off from a monastery near the town of Avanos, was carrying 28 tourists and two crew members. The authorities said that they had launched an inquiry

into the accident. Hot air balloon trips are a key attraction in Cappadocia, which is famous for its ancient troglodyte villages and 'fairy chimneys', fashioned out of the rock by millennia of erosion. There have been several balloon accidents in recent years. Three Brazilian tourists died and 22 other people were injured when two hot air balloons collided in 2013. In 2017, a Danish tourist died when a balloon crash-landed in high winds. Two months later a French diplomat was killed and several other people were injured when their balloon hit a power line. AFP

REAL REDEMPTION

Real Madrid captain Karim Benzema, frozen out of France team for five and a half years because of his involvement in a blackmail scandal, wins Ballon d'Or at 34



Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema receives the Ballon d'Or award next to his mother Malika Benzema during the 2022 Ballon d'Or France Football award ceremony at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris on Monday (AFP)

The Ballon d'Or might be individual but it's still a collective award. This is the Ballon d'Or of the people. Winning this trophy was always in the back of my mind

KARIM BENZEMA

Paris, France - Karim Benzema was rewarded for his remarkable success at Real Madrid with the Ballon d'Or at a star-studded ceremony in Paris on Monday, while Spain's Alexia Putellas retained the women's prize.

Benzema, who is the first French winner of the most prestigious individual award in football since Zinedine Zidane in 1998, scored 44 goals in 46 games for his club last season as Real won the Champions League and La Liga.

Fifteen of his goals came in the Champions League, including hat-tricks in knockout wins against Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea and three more across both legs of a stunning semi-final defeat of Manchester City.

The 34-year-old, who also won the UEFA Nations League with France, succeeds Lionel Messi with the Argentine not

the people," Benzema declared.

"Winning this trophy was always something that was in the back of my mind," he added.

Benzema pushed Sadio Mane into second place, although the Bayern Munich and Senegal star did have his off-field work recognised as he was given a new award named after former Brazil star Socrates. Kevin De Bruyne of Manchester City was third, with Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski coming fourth.

Winning the award, organised by France Football magazine, caps a remarkable career revival for Benzema, who was frozen out of the France team for five and a half years because of his involvement in a blackmail scandal over a sextape involving teammate Mathieu Valbuena.

He was later handed a one-year suspended prison sentence and fined 75,000 euros (\$73,848). He returned to the national team for last year's European Championship and will now go to the World Cup in Qatar with France next month.

"There were moments that were much more difficult for me, for example when I wasn't with the national team, but I am really, really proud of my journey," he added.

Benzema turns 35 on December 19, the day after the World Cup final, and is the oldest winner of the Ballon d'Or since the very first, Stanley Matthews in 1956.

AFP



Robert Lewandowski

Lewandowski wins Mueller Trophy for top scorer

Paris, France - Robert Lewandowski received the award for last season's top goalscorer, renamed the Gerd Mueller Trophy, for the second straight year at the Ballon d'Or ceremony on Monday.

The 34-year-old, who joined Barcelona from Bayern Munich in the close season, scored 57 goals in 56 matches for club and country last term.

He was the top-scorer in the Bundesliga with 35 goals.

Lewandowski also won the award last year when it was presented for the first time, after breaking the Bundesliga scoring record for a single season, previously held by Mueller, with 41 goals. But he is yet to win the Ballon d'Or itself, having narrowly missed out to Lionel Messi 12 months ago.

The Pole would have been a strong favourite to take the honours in 2020, but the ceremony was scrapped due to the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on the football calendar.

AFP

Benzema dedicates Ballon d'Or win 'to the people'

Paris, France - Karim Benzema said he had become more ambitious with age as the Real Madrid and France striker won the Ballon d'Or on Monday, and dedicated his trophy "to the people".

Benzema, who turns 35 in December, the day after the World Cup final, is five months older than Lionel Messi was when the Argentine won the most prestigious individual award in football for the seventh time last year.

Indeed he is the oldest winner since England's Stanley Matthews won the very first Ballon d'Or in 1956.

"Winning this trophy was always in the back of my mind but what has changed since I turned 30 is ambition," Benzema said after collecting the prize in a star-studded ceremony at the Chatelet Theatre in Paris.

Benzema was just 21 when he joined Real Madrid from Lyon in 2009. He has come into his own in the Spanish capital since Cristiano Ronaldo's departure in 2018, when Benzema was 30.

"Ambition really entered my



Karim Benzema poses with fans upon his arrival at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris for the Ballon d'Or ceremony

head after that. Ambition means working harder and being a leader for my team and I am lucky to play for Madrid, the best club in the world.

"When I was 21, or 22, I didn't have the same ambition I have today."

Benzema was rewarded for

scoring 44 goals in 46 games last season as Madrid won the Champions League and La Liga.

'Difficult moments'

He also won the UEFA Nations League with France, completing a remarkable career revival for a player who was involved in a

blackmail scandal over a sextape involving teammate Mathieu Valbuena.

"I have been through difficult moments, where I wasn't playing for the national team and so was alone at Valdebebas (Real's training ground) because everyone else was away playing for

their countries.

"I am very happy and very proud of the work I have put in."

On stage Benzema called his prize "the Ballon d'Or of the people", a statement he later said was not intended to be political but "just a nod to where I come from".

Among those to congratulate Benzema publicly was the French President Emmanuel Macron, who did so on Twitter.

When I was 21, or 22, I didn't have the same ambition I have today.

KARIM BENZEMA

Barcelona and Spain midfielder Gavi won the Kopa Trophy for the best player aged under 21, while Lewandowski received the award for top goalscorer.

Real Madrid's Thibaut Courtois won the prize for best goalkeeper of the year.

AFP



Barcelona's Gavi poses with the Kopa Trophy for best under-21 player (AFP)

Gavi wins Kopa Trophy for best youngster

Paris, France - Barcelona and Spain midfield prospect Gavi won the Kopa Trophy for the best player of last season aged under 21 at the Ballon d'Or ceremony in Paris on Monday.

The 18-year-old, whose full name is Pablo Martin Paez Gavira, succeeds his Barcelona teammate Pedri, who won the prize last year.

Kylian Mbappe and Matthijs de Ligt are also former winners of the award which is named after former Real Madrid and France star Raymond Kopa.

Gavi, who has already won 12

caps for Spain, was picked by a jury made up of former winners of the Ballon d'Or itself.

Last month he signed a new deal at Barcelona tying him to the club until 2026 and with a release clause of one billion euros.

Meanwhile Senegal and Bayern Munich star Sadio Mane was rewarded for his off-field work by receiving the first Socrates prize from the organisers France Football.

The prize is named after the late former Brazil midfielder, who also held a medical degree.

AFP

Barcelona's Putellas eyes return from injury this season after retaining Ballon d'Or

Paris, France - Alexia Putellas said she hoped to return from a serious knee injury before the end of this season but refused to discuss her future with the Spanish national team after winning her second successive women's Ballon d'Or on Monday.

The reward for Putellas, 28, came after a season in which she was the top scorer as her club Barcelona reached the Champions League final.

The prize, awarded at a star-studded ceremony at the

Chatelet Theatre in central Paris, is also a consolation for Putellas who is currently recovering from a serious knee injury.

The injury saw her miss the Euro in England in July and means she faces a battle to play at all this season.

"The knee is doing well. I just need to focus on recovering and if everything goes as I hope -- and as the doctors and my club hope - I hope to be back playing this season," she said.

There is a World Cup in Aus-

tralia and New Zealand in July and August next year, although the presence of Putellas appears in some doubt anyway for reasons other than her injury.

The Barcelona captain recently published a statement calling for change, along with 15 national team players who asked not to be called up by Spain, amid differences with the coach Jorge Vilda and the Spanish football federation.

"All I am going to say today about the national team is that

obviously it is a topic that makes me very sad," she said.

"I think it needs to be spoken about but today is not the day. This is a day for celebration, a historic day, and that's all."

Putellas saw off stiff competition, notably from three stars of the England team that won the European Championship, to take the Ballon d'Or following a campaign which also saw Barcelona win a domestic league and cup double.

AFP



Alexia Putellas receives her Ballon d'Or award at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris on Monday (AFP)



Manchester City's Erling Haaland failed to add to his incredible Pemeir League tally of 15 goals as Liverpool showed that Pep Guardiola's team can be beaten (AFP)

SPURRED ON!

Manchester City's stumble gives Spurs, Chelsea hope of Premier League title fight

London, United Kingdom - Manchester City's first defeat of the season has given the rest of the Premier League hope that the title race is not a foregone conclusion as Tottenham and Chelsea seek to close at the top of the table on Wednesday.

The arrival of rampaging forward Erling Haaland to supplement Pep Guardiola's squad, which has won the English top flight four times in the past five years, made City even stronger favourites to win the league again.

However, a rejuvenated Arsenal have opened up a four-point gap at the top of the table, while Spurs have kept pace with the defending champions.

Arsenal and City were supposed to be facing off this mid-week in a top-of-the-table clash. But that match has been post-

If we are good to improve and continue to grow in other aspects, not only tactical but also to show this maturity, then we'll have great satisfaction

ANTONIO CONTE



poned due to rescheduling caused by the death of Queen Elizabeth II last month, with the Gunners instead facing PSV Eindhoven in the Europa League.

With the top two not in action, Tottenham could move to within a point of the summit if they win at Manchester United on Wednesday.

Spurs have not won a league title for 61 years but have, in Antonio Conte, a manager who has won the league at each of his previous three clubs - Juventus,

Chelsea and Inter Milan.

"We are showing stability," said Conte. "I always say, to play against us is not easy.

"We have to continue to work and improve but we are a team, and I consider us really strong. If we are good to improve and continue to grow in other aspects, not only tactical but also to show this maturity, then we'll have great satisfaction."

The strength in depth of Tottenham's squad is being fully tested by injuries to Dejan Kulu-

sevski and Richarlison in forward areas.

But Harry Kane is carrying the burden, with the England captain scoring nine goals in 10 league games to stay on the coat-tails of Haaland in the race for the Golden Boot.

Potter works his magic

Chelsea looked to have blown their title chances with two defeats in their opening five league games under Thomas Tuchel.

But Graham Potter, who replaced the German as manager in September, has masterminded a turnaround in results for the Blues, with five consecutive wins in all competitions putting them back on track in both the Premier League and Champions League.

Chelsea have a game in hand on the top three and victory at

Brentford would lift them just two points behind City.

Potter has brought the best out of Kepa Arrizabalaga, who is performing to a level expected of the world's most expensive goalkeeper and keeping Edouard Mendy out of the side.

Liverpool lift-off?

Liverpool have been the side carrying the fight to City over the past five years and looked more like their old selves in defeating the champions 1-0 at a frenzied Anfield on Sunday.

The Reds still have a mountain to climb to get back in the title race, with just three wins under their belts in their opening nine games. And they cannot afford a hangover from their exploits against City when they host West Ham on Wednesday.

AFP

Portugal forward Diogo Jota ruled out of World Cup with calf injury

London, United Kingdom - Portugal's Diogo Jota will miss the World Cup after suffering a serious calf injury, Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp confirmed on Tuesday.

The winger was stretchered off in the closing stages of Liverpool's 1-0 Premier League win over Manchester City on Sunday.

"Not good news about Diogo - yes he will miss the World Cup," Klopp said at a press conference ahead of Wednesday's home match against West Ham.

"(It's a) pretty serious injury in the calf muscle and now the recovery process starts. That's it pretty much.

"That is the first diagnosis, which was pretty clear, and all the rest will now follow in the next few days. It is very sad news for the boy, and for us as well of course and for Portugal."

Klopp, who said Jota would not need an operation, did not put an exact timescale on his return but is expecting the 25-year-old to be sidelined for months.

"After such a good night at Anfield mine ended in the worst way! In the last minute

one of my dreams collapsed," Jota posted on Twitter.

"I will be one more supporting from the outside, club and country, and fighting to be back as soon as possible."

Jota's absence adds to Liverpool's injury woes, with Luis Diaz also ruled out until after the World Cup in Qatar, which starts next month.

Joel Matip will also miss the visit of West Ham, but Trent Alexander-Arnold and Ibrahima Konate could be fit to return to the starting line-up.

Klopp was sent off late on in an emotional encounter with City for taking his protests towards the referee's assistant too far. The German coach has so far not received a touchline ban from the Football Association and expects to take his place on the touchline on Wednesday.

"I think I will be there tomorrow because nothing happened yet," he said. "I don't think something will happen tomorrow a few hours before the game. I still think I should have dealt differently with the situation which I usually do. The whole game led to that a little bit."

AFP



Diogo Jota

Neymar tells fraud trial he signed documents his father told him to

Barcelona, Spain - Brazil superstar Neymar said Tuesday his manager father always handled his contracts as he took the stand at his trial in Spain over alleged irregularities in his transfer to Barcelona in 2013.

"My father has always been in charge" of contract negotiations, the 30-year-old told the Barcelona court hearing the case. "I sign what he tells me to."

He also said he did not remember if he took part in the negotiations which led to an

Neymar joined Qatar-owned PSG in a world record 222-million-euro transfer in 2017

agreement sealed in 2011 with Barcelona over his transfer two years later to the Catalan side from Brazilian club Santos.

Spanish prosecutors are seeking a two-year prison term for Neymar, a key member of the Brazil team that will be heading to the World Cup in Qatar next month, and the payment of a 10-million-euro (\$9.7 million) fine.

The trial is the culmination of a years-long legal saga over Neymar's 2013 move from Santos to Barcelona.

He then joined Qatar-owned PSG in a world record 222-million-euro transfer in 2017.

AFP



Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar gestures as he leaves after attending a hearing at the courthouse in Barcelona on Tuesday (AFP)

Indonesia to demolish football stadium where crush killed 133

Jakarta, Indonesia - The Indonesian football stadium where a stampede killed 133 people will be torn down and rebuilt, President Joko Widodo said Tuesday, as the head of FIFA pledged to help "reform and transform" the sport in the country.

Gianni Infantino met Widodo in the capital Jakarta, just over two weeks after the tragedy, and a year before the Under-20 World Cup is due to be held in the Southeast Asian nation.

More than 40 children were among those killed in the city of

Malang, East Java on October 1.

After supporters invaded the pitch at the end of a league match between Arema FC and rivals Persebaya Surabaya, police fired tear gas into packed stands, sparking a stampede.

"For Kanjuruhan stadium in Malang, we will demolish and rebuild it according to FIFA standards," Widodo told reporters.

He said the replacement stadium will have "proper facilities that can ensure the safety of both players and supporters".

AFP



Newly elected Indian cricket board president Roger Binny

Binny replaces Ganguly as Indian cricket board chief

Mumbai, India - World Cup winner Roger Binny was on Tuesday appointed head of India's cricket board - the world's richest cricket body - and will replace Sourav Ganguly after three years at the top, the board's vice-president said.

Binny, 67, was elected president at a meeting of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in Mumbai, where secretary Jay Shah won another term in office, Rajeev Shukla told re-

porters.

The BCCI, which has a net worth reported at \$2 billion, enjoys significant clout internationally in cricket but has been in chaos and there have been a slew of court cases involving the cash-rich body.

Bangalore-born Binny, who was part of India's historic 1983 World Cup-winning squad, steps into the shoes of Ganguly, widely regarded as one of the sport's greatest captains.

Ganguly, 50, had initially been tipped to earn a second term as president but reports said he was shunted out because he refused to join India's ruling party.

Ganguly's political allegiance has been a regular source of media speculation, especially after the country's Home Minister Amit Shah, father of BCCI secretary Jay, visited him at home earlier this year.

Politicians from Ganguly's home state of West Bengal -

where the former player enjoys near-godlike status - alleged that the former batsman was forced out.

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been pushing hard to win power in the eastern state, falling short in elections marred by deadly violence last year.

Ganguly's departure was a "political vendetta" by the government, opposition lawmaker Santanu Sen said on Twitter.

Shah's Hindu nationalist BJP has denied any involvement in Ganguly's ouster and accused their opponents of politicising the issue.

Ganguly has not spoken publicly on his departure but reports said he had been hoping to continue, especially after India's top court recently relaxed a rule that barred sporting officials from consecutive terms in office in the same position.

AFP



A total of 75 players attended the five-day coaching camp

First Gary Kirsten Cricket camp in Oman a grand success

Muscat - Oman Cricket (OC) has been constantly working hard to ensure that the domestic coaches, young cricketers and beginners are provided with top-class facilities to learn, train and improve their skills.

As part of OC's continued efforts, the recent maiden partnership initiative with South Africa's Gary Kirsten Cricket (GKC) Academy turned out to be a grand success.

A total of 75 players attended the five-day coaching camp that catered to grass-roots players, high-performance cricketers and domestic coaches.

Evert Laubscher, Oman Cricket Academy manager, said that a total of 21 cricketers, including three Omani

nationals and five girls, took part in the grassroots camp, conducted by two coaches from the GKC Academy - Ryan van Niekerk and Garreth Von Hoesslin.

He added: "Buoyed by the success of the inaugural camp, the founder of GKC and former South African great Gary Kirsten has expressed his interest to come to Oman when the second camp is held next year."

A total of 54 players took part in the high-performance camp, which included one Omani national and three girls.

Assisting the two GKC coaches were coaches from Oman Cricket - Laubscher, Mazhar Khan, Syed Amir Ali, Syed Amir Kaleem, Parviz al Balushi, Adeel Shafique, Muhammad Nadeem, Haider

Ali and Desmond Berhardt.

The senior GKC coaches also conducted a three-day coach education session for the OC coaches.

Visiting GKC coach Niekerk said that the "coaches session provided practical application of global coaching standards through CoachED Cricket across a variety of topics."

He added: "The high-performance camp with the local coaches was quite a useful exercise as they (domestic coaches) are now better equipped with more refined processes which they can continue to explore in the coming months."

During the high-performance camp for cricketers, the GKC trainers worked out a schedule that was split into Test, ODI and T20 formats.

KARTHIK HAT-TRICK NOT ENOUGH FOR UAE



UAE's Karthik Meiyappan (2nd R) celebrates with teammates after taking a wicket in their T20 World Cup group match against Sri Lanka on Tuesday

Geelong, Australia - Karthik Meiyappan lit up the Twenty20 World Cup with a hat-trick Tuesday but it was in vain as Sri Lanka dismissed the United Arab Emirates for just 73 to get their campaign back on track.

The Asian champions were stunned by Namibia in the tournament's opening game on Sunday, a crushing 55-run defeat that left no room for error.

They responded with a convincing 79-run victory, but not before some drama.

Sri Lanka were cruising at 117-2 at Geelong when spin bowler Meiyappan derailed their plans in the 15th over, removing Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Charith Asalanka and skipper Dasun Shanaka in suc-

Sri Lanka crush UAE at T20 World Cup despite spinner Meiyappan's historic achievement

cessive balls. It was only the fifth hat-trick at a T20 World Cup, and the first-ever for the UAE in any T20 international.

Shanaka's team recovered to post 152-8 with Pathum Nissanka making a gritty 74 and Meiyappan ending with 3-19.

It leaves Group A finely poised in the race to make the Super 12 stage heading into the third and final matches on Thursday where net run rate could prove decisive.

Sri Lanka, the 2014 champi-

ons, face the unbeaten Netherlands next, needing another win, while Namibia take on the winless UAE.

After being put into bat, Sri Lanka made a strong start, reaching 42 before Kusal Mendis was trapped lbw by Aryan Lakra on 18.

Nissanka was joined by Dhananjaya de Silva and with the trumpets blowing from the Sri Lankan fans, they both crunched big sixes.

Dushmantha Chameera rat-

tled UAE in their reply, clean bowling Muhammad Waseem and Aryan Lakra in the space of five balls.

The UAE had no answer to the pace attack, slumping to 21-4 in the sixth over and they never recovered as Sri Lanka ran riot.

In the earlier match in Geelong, Namibia were restricted to 121-6, with the Dutch using seven different bowlers to put the clamps on.

The Europeans, boosted by former South Africa and India coach Gary Kirsten on their staff, were cruising at 91-1 in the 14th over in reply before Namibia took four late wickets to set up a nervous finale.

AFP

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Al Harthy misses out on last pole of ELMS season

Muscat - Hundredths of a second made all the difference in the final LMGTE qualifying session of the 2022 European Le Mans Series in Portimao on Saturday with Oman's Ahmad Al Harthy concluding the run with the fourth fastest time - just 0.196 seconds shy of the round six pole position.

Competitive from the outset on his first visit to the Portuguese track, and in the fight for pole throughout the short 10-minute period at the Autodromo Internacional do Algarve, the Oman Racing driver delivered a salvo of typically consistent laps in the No.69 Aston Martin Vantage GTE.

Starting off with a time of 1m42.187 seconds to go second fastest after the first flying laps, Al Harthy made a marginal improvement the next time around to post a time of 1m42.084 seconds but slipped to fourth on the timesheets, albeit only a tenth of a second away from pole.

On his fourth flying lap of the session he was inside the pole time in the first sector, but the



Ahmad Al Harthy

lap as a whole wasn't an improvement, and he just missed out again on his fifth and final lap so the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sohar International Bank, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS backed driver had to settle for fourth on the grid.

"It was the best I could do, the Ferraris were quick, but I'm happy with P4", said Al Harthy.

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SURREALISM

From Salvador Dali's lip-shaped sofa to the dream-like video clips of Icelandic artist Bjork, Surrealism has influenced design for almost a century.

The complex evolution is now being explored in a new exhibition - 'Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 - Today' - which opens on Friday at London's Design Museum.

Visitors are welcomed upon arrival by one of the most notorious depictions of the human psyche - 'Metamorphosis of Narcissus', painted by Dali in 1937. The Spanish painter's entire oeuvre was influenced by theories on the subconscious, in particular, by Sigmund Freud's 'The Interpretation of Dreams', which he read while studying in Madrid in the 1920s.

Through his British patron Edward James, Dali met the Austrian neurologist in London in 1938. The exhibition begins with the fruit of Dali and James's close collaboration.

Dali created numerous pieces of iconic future for the British poet and patron such as a lobster-shaped telephone, a lamp stand made of champagne glasses, a chair with human arms, and a sofa shaped like the lips of actress Mae West.

Even before Dali, however, early 20th-century modernist architect Antoni Gaudi had already tried "to give objects which could be purely functional, an emotional kick and a psychological impact through this sort of changing form to something much more organic and emotional," said curator Kathryn Johnson.

Furniture, film, fashion

Born in literature before spreading to visual art, Surrealism declined as an artistic movement in the early 1950s but it survived in design. In fact, some of its creations "seem to have really found their moment in this century," Johnson told AFP.

Such was the case for a broken-foot lamp commissioned from Dali in 1937, which was considered too avant-garde for the market at the time and it wasn't until 2019 that the lamp was manufactured.

The exhibition features a huge lamp on a plastic horse by Swedish studio Front (2006) and an armchair made of Disney stuffed animals created by

Design dreams

A century of Surrealism on show at London Design Museum



Fashion items inspired by the surrealist movement are displayed in the exhibition



(Left) A gallery assistant studies La Mamma Chair' by Italian designer Gaetano Pesce (1973-88 edition of 1969 original) in the 'Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 - Today' exhibition at the Design Museum in London. (Above) The 'Horse lamp' by Swedish design studio Front Design. (Below) 'Lobster Telephone' by Spanish artist Salvador Dali

It's no accident that these moments coincide with periods of economic and political instability because surrealism was founded on a creative embrace of chaos

KATHRYN JOHNSON



Turbulent times

The exhibition argues that Surrealism, a reaction to the horrors of World War I and the 1918 flu pandemic, has undergone a

resurgence in turbulent times.

"It's no accident that these moments coincide with periods of economic and political instability because surrealism was

founded on a creative embrace of chaos, it accepts uncertainty, the inexplicable, and I think we need it now."

Music videos of songs such as

'Utopia', 'Mutual Core' and 'Hidden Place' - made by Bjork between 2001 and 2017 - show dreamlike relationships between humans, nature and technology. According to Johnson, even strange images generated by artificial intelligence can result in different kinds of art.

"Artificial intelligence is modelled on the way that the brain works, and it doesn't surprise us that it can be creative, but it's fascinating to see how that may play out in the future," she added.

Despite the exhibition's inclusion of iconic photographs such as Man Ray's 'Le violon d'Ingres' (1924), Mateo Kries, director of the German Vitra Design Museum which loaned many pieces to the show, said that today Surrealism is, 'no longer an art movement but an attitude that you can have towards art or design'.

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JAPANESE FASHION



Mariko Nakayama, a designer for Madison Blue



Looking at Virgil Abloh for Louis Vuitton, for example, I feel that now is an era of edit

MARIKO NAKAYAMA

Models display creations from the AYAME 2023 S/S Collection by Japanese designer Aya Takeshima at Tokyo Fashion Week in Tokyo in August

At Tokyo's prestigious Bunka Fashion College, students concentrate in silence that is broken only by the sound of scissors and sewing machines as they strive to emulate the global success of alumni like Kenzo.

The loss of greats Kenzo Takada and Issey Miyake heralds the end of a fashion era, decades after Japanese design revolutionised Parisian catwalks in the 1970s and '80s.

And the French capital remains a goal for emerging talent like Bunka graduate Takuya Morikawa, whose streetwear-inspired tailoring made its Paris Fashion Week debut two years ago. Morikawa, 40, hopes his shows at the industry's top event will lead to 'an amazing future, beyond my wildest dreams'.

Before launching his label TAAKK in 2013, Morikawa spent eight years at Miyake's studio, where he worked on runway collections and the famous 'Pleats Please' line, but also harvested rice and made paper to learn about traditional craft methods.

He said he was saddened by Miyake's death this summer, but implored younger designers not to feel disheartened.

"We need to do our best to not let these designers' deaths impact the fashion world. If that happens, it means we're doing our job badly," he said.

One of the big names picking

POINT

JAPANESE FASHION AFTER KENZO AND MIYAKE TAKES ON A NEW FORM. LEFT HOLDING THE TORCH ARE VETERANS LIKE YOHJI YAMAMOTO AND REI KAWAKUBO



Japanese fashion designer Aya Takeshima

up the baton is Nigo, who shot to fame in the 1990s with his streetwear brand A Bathing Ape. The designer, who also studied at Bunka and whose real name is Tomoaki Nagao, was named artistic director at Kenzo last

year, after founder Takada died of COVID-19 in 2020.

Another Japanese label enjoying international success is Sacai, founded in 1999 by Chitose Abe, who was tapped as the first guest couture designer for Jean



Japanese fashion designer Takuya Morikawa

Paul Gaultier.

Goosebumps

Kenzo and textile visionary Miyake became hugely influential by pursuing their passion in Paris, as did haute couture trail-

blazer Hanae Mori, who died in August.

Left holding the torch are Yohji Yamamoto, now 79, and 80-year-old Rei Kawakubo, founder of Comme des Garçons, who shook up the fashion establishment in the early 1980s.

New challenges, including the vast range of styles now available for every taste, have made it harder for emerging designers to

after Yamamoto launched his first monochromatic clothing line.

"But we no longer live in an era where a designer presents a collection and everyone wears it," she said at the school, whose basement archive is packed with valuable garments that students and teachers can study.

This is because of the explosion in diverse types of clothing, "not a decline in talent," stressed Aihara, adding that it was now also essential to study business to start a competitive brand.

Designer Mariko Nakayama, who worked as a stylist in Tokyo's fashion scene for decades, also remembers feeling goosebumps wearing Comme des Garçons for the first time. She agrees, however, that the industry is different now.

"Looking at Virgil Abloh for Louis Vuitton, for example, I feel that now is an era of edit," with designers making modern tweaks to classic shapes and patterns, she said at her boutique in Tokyo's upscale Omotesando district.

Create new values

Working in Paris, London, New York or Milan is still seen as key to succeeding for Japanese designers, said Aya Takeshima, 35, who studied at Central Saint Martins in the British capital.

Takeshima's recent show at Tokyo Fashion Week for her

brand Ayame featured women wearing sheer blouses and embossed dresses, while male models donned delicate dresses.

She told AFP she had chosen to study abroad to "learn what I needed to become an independent designer," adding that the experience had helped her understand different perspectives. "Honestly, I think it would be difficult to succeed internationally while only working in Japan," she said.

"In Japan, it felt like technique was drilled into you first, while ideas and concepts... were secondary," but it was the other way around in London, Takeshima explained.

Bunka college recognises these benefits and plans to offer a scholarship for studying abroad as part of its 100th-anniversary celebrations next year.

For 21-year-old Natalia Sato, a student at Bunka, Miyake and the old guard of Japanese designers brought a great deal of Japanese and Eastern values to the world, including techniques inspired by 'delicate' traditional craftsmanship.

"I'm worried that the foundation they built might be destroyed by their passing, but at the same time, this is a turning point that could provide new creative opportunities," she said. "It's a chance for me to think about creating new values."

AFP

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