

Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance opens today

Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), will preside over the opening ceremony of the third Global High-level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance. The two-day conference, which is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, is participated by 30 ministers and representatives of 40 countries. **DETAILS ON P2**



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A MEDLEY OF EMOTIONS ON STAGE



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MSX-LISTED COMPANIES Q3 NET PROFITS INCREASE



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39 TEAMS TO COMPETE AT 2022 RS VENTURE CONNECT



BERLIN

GREETINGS CONVEYED TO GERMAN PRESIDENT

Maithaa bint Saif al Mahrouqiyah presented her credentials to President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federal Republic of Germany. The ambassador conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his best wishes of good health and happiness to President Steinmeier. His Majesty also wished the people of Germany further progress and prosperity. She also underscored the keenness of His Majesty to enhance bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries in all areas. **DETAILS ON P4**

BERN

GREETINGS CONVEYED TO SWISS PRESIDENT

Mahmoud bin Hamad al Hasani presented his credentials to President Ignazio Cassis of the Swiss Confederation, as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Swiss Confederation. The ambassador conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his best wishes of good health and happiness to President Cassis. His Majesty wished the people of the Swiss Confederation further progress and prosperity. On his turn, President Cassis asked the ambassador to convey his sincere sentiments and best wishes to His Majesty and the Omani people. **DETAILS ON P4**

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RUSSIA FIRES MISSILES ACROSS UKRAINE

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ENERGY SHIFT GIVES WOMEN LITTLE CHANCE TO SHINE

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CHILDREN'S PUBLIC LIBRARY MARKS FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

The Children's Public Library celebrated the fifth anniversary of the opening since its establishment in November 2017, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Wednesday.



SAYYID ASAAD BIDS FAREWELL TO BRAZIL, UK AMBASSADORS

On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received, separately, at his office on Wednesday Ligia Maria Scherer, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Sultanate of Oman, and Bill Murray, Ambassador of the United Kingdom (UK) to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid them farewell at the end of their tours of duty. **DETAILS ON P2**

MINISTER CAUTIONS ON GEOPOLITICAL FLUCTUATIONS

Economic measures are yielding positive results

MUSCAT: The Majlis Ash'shura on Wednesday hosted Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, in a closed-door round of discussion on the draft version of State Budget 2023.

The meeting was part of the second ordinary session of the Majlis's fourth annual convening during the 9th Term.

Reading out his ministry's statement on the draft State Budget, Al Habsi said that some economic sectors are experiencing growth and improvement in fiscal indicators, mostly resulting from a rise in oil prices that peaked to record levels.

The amelioration is also due to financial and economic measures that reflected positively on prospective results of State Budget 2022, leading to a fiscal surplus that contributed to a decline in public debt, Al Habsi added.

However, the minister cautioned against the fact that enduring geopolitical fluctuations and changing global scenarios may impact the future of the state's fiscal stability.



Sultan bin Salim al Habsi

He pointed out that the State Budget 2023 was drafted bearing in mind precautionary policies to address financial and economic challenges, as well as a determination to achieve the national goals of the 10th Five Year Plan (2021-2025).

CREDIT RATINGS

The session covered salient features of the budget — its financial, economic and social aspects, as well as policies governing allocations for development projects, the mechanisms of the Omani economy, an uptake in Oman's credit rating, deficit and debt management during 2023.

The session also stressed the

need to cut down the actual cost of production of oil (per barrel) so that it could tally with the sustainable oil sector costs, while at the same time leveraging any potential gains to the advantage of social priorities.

Discussions revolved around the most prominent features of the budget particularly those related to the financial, economic and social aspects, the state's fiscal policies directed to the economic and development projects, the developments of the national economy, improving credit ranking of the Sultanate of Oman and deficit and debt management during the year 2023.

Majlis Ash'shura will hold its third ordinary meeting of the ninth term (2019-2023) on Thursday to discuss the Financial and Economic Committee's report on the draft state's general budget for the fiscal year 2023.

The Majlis Ash'shura will also discuss the draft Higher Education Law and School Education Law which were referred to the Majlis from the government. — **ONA**

57,360 Omani babies born in 10 months

YUSUF AL HABSI
MUSCAT, Nov 23

A total number of 62,241 babies including 57,360 Omani babies were born in the Sultanate of Oman during the last 10 months as of the end of last October, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

NCSI statistics indicate that 6,364 newborns were registered in October compared to 6,065 in September, 6,867 in August. A total of 82,224 babies were born by the end of 2021.

The statistics showed that a total of 8,136 deaths were registered in the first 10 months of this year compared to 12,649 deaths reported last year. There were 6,765 deaths among the



Omani population and 3,801 among residents. Last month, 717 deaths were registered among the Omani population compared to 575 deaths in September and 673 deaths in August.

According to the population clock at National Centre for Statistics and Information, the percentage of Omanis fell to 58.47 per cent to reach 2,859,217 on November 14.

Frankincense Festival to start next week in Salalah

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, Nov 23

A five-day Frankincense Festival will showcase the Sultanate of Oman's incense-based heritage, the centrestage of which is Salalah in Dhofar Governorate.

From November 28 to December 2, there will be many events in Salalah and places which are known for frankincense production.

Organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the

festival will open on November 28 and continue for a week, until December 2, at different locations, including Land of Frankincense inside Al Baleed Archaeological Park, Samharam Archaeological Park, and Wadi Dawka Nature Reserve.

Khaled bin Abdullah al Abri, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar Governorate, said, "The event aims to highlight the historical features of the sites of the Land of



Frankincense and the civilisational role it played by building bridges of cultural and commercial exchange

with various ancient civilisations of the world, as well as attracting tourist traffic flow during the winter season."

He explained that the festival would include a presentation on how farmers extract frankincense and products based on it are manufactured involving traditional and modern methods. "It will also share insights into caravan-based exports of aromatic resin through historical ports in ancient Dhofar."

Other activities planned during the 'Frankincense Season' will

include an exhibition of perfumes and Omani frankincense products from leading local companies.

An exhibition of photos of Khor Rori depicting the wildlife of Samharam Archaeological Park will be staged as well.

Al Abri referred to the events accompanying the frankincense season, including the establishment of a corner for restaurants and a children's theatre, in addition to allowing visitors to experience the leisure boats in Khor Al Baleed.

TURN TO P2



In brief

MUSCAT



OMAN, TANZANIA EYE COOPERATION IN IT, COMMUNICATIONS

Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, received Nape Moses Nnauye, Minister of Information, Communication and Information Technology of Tanzania, in Muscat on Wednesday. The ministers reviewed cooperation in communication and IT. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest.

SUR



SOUTH AL SHARQIYAH MUNICIPAL COUNCIL HOLDS MEETING

The Municipal Council of South Al Sharqiyah Governorate held its 6th meeting for 2022 under the chairmanship of Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of South Al Sharqiyah and Chairman of the council, on Wednesday. The meeting discussed a range of topics, namely proposals from the council's members on designating locations to set up tourism, economic and service projects in the governorate, among other topics.

KHASAB



MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF MUSANDAM CONVENES

The Municipal Council of Musandam Governorate today held its 9th meeting for 2022 under the chairmanship of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam and Chairman of the Council, on Wednesday. The council discussed several topics, including solutions to keep pace with increasing energy demands and investing in agriculture, to name a few.

NIZWA



DISCUSSION ON AL DAKHILIYAH ANNUAL FESTIVAL

The Municipal Council of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate held a meeting under the chairmanship of Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah and Chairman of the council, on Wednesday. The meeting discussed the programme of activities and events of the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate Annual Festival, which will be held during the first quarter of 2023.



Envoys of Brazil and UK bid farewell

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received, separately, in his office Ligia Maria Scherer, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Sultanate of Oman, and Bill Murray, Ambassador of the United Kingdom (UK) to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid them

farewell at the end of their tours of duty.

The two ambassadors expressed their thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to them in the Sultanate of Oman from His Majesty, the Government and the Omani people, which had enabled them to carry out their duties.

They also wished His Majesty good health, happiness and a long life and the Sultanate of Oman further development and growth under the wise leadership of His

Majesty.

In his turn, HH Sayyid Asaad expressed his appreciation to the ambassadors for the efforts they exerted in serving the relations between the Sultanate and their respective countries. He also wished them success and the peoples of their countries further progress and prosperity.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary-General and the two advisers at the Office of HH Sayyid Asaad.

— ONA

Global antimicrobial resistance conference starts today

MUSCAT: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), will patronise over the opening ceremony of the 3rd Global High-level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance.

The two-day conference, which is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, is participated by 30 ministers and representatives of 40 countries in the fields of human health, animal health and the environment. The conference aims to enhance political commitment to the "One Health" approach in tackling the pandemic of antimicrobial resistance. It also targets highlighting the role of the environment in the spread of antimicrobial resistance and the importance of monitoring and detecting antimicrobial resistance in humans, animals and the environment.

The conference agenda includes discussion panels between participating ministers and organisations. These panels



will cover a spectrum of topics, including the progress made in tackling the antimicrobial resistance pandemic, challenges and opportunities in this field and alleviating the negative impacts of antimicrobial resistance on human health, animals, economy, growth and international development, among other topics.

The event is considered an opportunity to encourage interactive dialogue on the importance of "One Health" action in combating antimicrobial resistance. The theme of the conference is "The Antimicrobial Resistance Pandemic: From Policy to One Health Action".

— ONA

First edition of Amad Duqm begins tomorrow



STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 23

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth are gearing to host the first edition of Amad Duqm 22 from November 25 to December 3. It will be held on an area of 500,000 square metres and will include more than 30 youth activities in various fields such as culture, sports, innovation, technology, sustainability and entertainment. The event is expected to attract more than 20,000 people.

Amad Duqm 22 comes as a mini experimental laboratory for the aspirations of Omani youth. The design and implementation processes were entrusted to a selected group of creative Omani youth to create a vision that combines science, technology, art and entertainment to create a better world.

Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, Acting CEO of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, welcomed the participants in the Amad Duqm 22 Event and introduced them to the elements that the Special



Economic Zone at Duqm, which make it the city of the future and youth.

Akaak noted that the idea behind this Event is to enhance the role of culture, innovation, sports, technology and sustainability, and to introduce the economic potential and the growing investments in the region.

"We, in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, welcome all youth activities that support youth," he said.

Dr Said bin Khalifa al Tuwairsh, Head of the Supervisory Committee for Amad Duqm 22, stated that the event will

host more than 30 youth activities in various fields such as culture, sports, innovation, technology, sustainability and entertainment, in line with the aspirations of young people.

He pointed out that the idea of "Amad Duqm 22" Event came as part of the efforts being made to enhance the presence of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm as a modern and prosperous city that embraces art and innovation. It also seeks to introduce Duqm as a futuristic city that attracts young people and their projects in various fields such as energy, industry and logistics, in addition to tourism projects. The Event provides an opportunity for young people to transform their skills and innovations into promising economic projects that take advantage of the available opportunities. It also aims to provide various options for infrastructure and housing.

"Since Duqm is the city of the future, it provides a lot of opportunities and economic potential. It also seeks to become a model in work, housing and lifestyle, he added.

Agriculture minister Al Habsi receives FAO Director-General

MUSCAT: Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, received Dr Shu Dino, Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and his accompanying delegation currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman, in Muscat on Wednesday.

They discussed matters of common concern and exchanged views about various aspects of

cooperation between Oman and the FAO, notably in the agricultural, livestock and fisheries sectors. The meeting also touched on cooperation in the fields of food security and related investments.

The FAO director general commended the comprehensive development taking place in Oman under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Frankincense Festival to start next week in Salalah

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Besides, around 1,000 frankincense trees will be planted in the Wadi Dawka Nature Reserve on December 2, to celebrate the inclusion of the sites of the land of frankincense in the World Heritage list of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

Frankincense played an important role in trade in the south of the Arabian Peninsula in the past, and it is still an important source of income for many in the country.

The Sultanate of Oman is known for producing the best quality frankincense in the world,

as there is a suitable climate for frankincense trees at certain places in the Dhofar Governorate.

A local Omani official assisting in the organisation of the festival added, "This event will help stimulate domestic tourism in the country, as well as provide opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to showcase their products and services, and thereby augment their incomes. Local communities will also have the opportunity to showcase potential and distinctive cultural identity. Besides, the festival will enhance the broader appeal of Dhofar's winter tourism season."



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■ INFORMATION MINISTER, TANZANIAN COUNTERPART DISCUSS COOPERATION



MUSCAT: Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, received Nape Moses Nnauye, Minister of Information, Communication and Information Technology of Tanzania, in Muscat on Wednesday. The meeting reviewed the advanced relations between Oman and Tanzanian. The two sides discussed areas of media cooperation with the prime aim of highlighting the two countries' historical, economic, trade and investment relations. Then, the guest went on tour of Oman News Agency, News Centre and digital studios of Oman TV, as well as Oman Arabic daily and Oman Observer. He was briefed about the media and news services rendered by the Ministry of Information. — ONA

Competitiveness panel strives to improve Oman's global rankings



Dr Said bin Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy, chairs meeting of the National Competitiveness Committee in Muscat on Wednesday.



MUSCAT: The National Competitiveness Committee held its third and last meeting for 2022. The meeting, which was held at the Ministry of Economy on Wednesday, was chaired by Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy.

The meeting reviewed the decisions made at the committee's last meeting. Then, the two action plans related to improving Oman's performance in the Network Readiness Index, and the Global Innovation Index were presented before the committee for discussion.

The committee was also briefed on the progress made for Oman Annual Competitiveness Report 2022 which lists all the international indices. The National Competitiveness Office follows and seeks to improve Oman's rankings, in collaboration with the parties concerned in Oman.

The meeting also reviewed the recommendations presented at the conclusion of the study which was co-conducted by the National Competitiveness Office and State Audit Institution (SAI). It also discussed the proposal raised to subscribe in Gallup Inc. The step aims to include Oman in their annual international opinion polls, which is one of the main sources of data that feed many organisations publishing different international reports and indices.

The mandate of the National Competitiveness Office is to monitor the major international indices, in close cooperation with the entities concerned in Oman. It aims to improve Oman's performance in each of the indices, which will in turn increase Oman's ranking regionally and globally. Present at the meeting were ministers and under-secretaries as well as private sector representatives who are members of the committee. — ONA

King of Jordan confers First Class Order on Omani Ambassador



AMMAN: King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan conferred the Order of Independence (First Class) on Shaikh Hilal bin Marhoon al Maamari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Jordan, at the end of his tour of duty as ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Jordan. Bestowing the Order on the Shaikh Al Maamari also comes in appreciation of his efforts in carrying out diplomatic duties, which has contributed to strengthening the Omani-Jordanian relations.

The Order was conferred

on the ambassador when the Monarch of Jordan received him at Al Hussein Palace in Amman on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the King of Jordan asked the ambassador to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

On his turn, the ambassador expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Jordanian King for honouring him with the Order of Independence (First Class). He also thanked the government of Jordan for the cooperation provided to him during his tenure in Jordan. — ONA

Octogenarian footballer dreams Oman team in World Cup

KABEER YOUSUF
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"I am dreaming of the day the Sultanate of Oman team plays the Fifa World Cup one day. Someday, some generation will make it happen," said Mohammed bin Abdullah al Balushi, an avid footballer, who popularised football among past generations.

Al Balushi dreams of the Sultanate of Oman coming up with flying colours in the future World Cup tourney. He is optimistic his country will lift the coveted title one day.

"We won the Gulf Cup a decade ago, and nobody had predicted it. The Oman team has the potential, and we have brilliant players. It's only a matter of time before we can lift the Cup one day."

Al Balushi, aka Diesel Balushi, who is now in his eighties, introduced football in Oman in the sixties along with his friend Dawood Jamal Dilwish.

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MOHAMMED AL BALUSHI

Together they played in the farms and rocky mountainous terrains, and knowingly or unknowingly, they were inculcating the game among the youth.

"Together with my friend Jamal, I played on empty lands and tried to train the youth in a new culture during our youth," said Al Balushi, who runs a shop that sells curios



Mohammed bin Abdullah al Balushi

and souvenirs.

He recalls that he was born in Pakistan's port city of Gwadar, and

football has been his passion since childhood. He came to Oman in 1956 and started doing odd jobs.

Al Balushi dreamed of fine-tuning his skills in football and gathered some friends who shared a similar passion. This ended up in forming a football team, and needless to say, he was the leader.

"That's how the 'Team Bijli' was born, and we played every evening on empty grounds and on different terrains. The team helped many young Omanis learn their first lessons of playing this game," Diesel said.

Those days, the youth used tennis balls to play, and their game was confined to either Muttrah and Jibroo until they met with the then UK ambassador, who invited Al Balushi to play football as he had heard about him through his friend, Ahmed Gheilani, who was working for the diplomatic mission then.

With the support from the UK ambassador, Al Balushi and his team continued to involve themselves deeply in the game, and that legacy continues till today.

Al Balushi is seen juggling with a football in the corridors of the traditional buildings of Muttrah.

On why he was called 'Diesel', Al Balushi said he was the "last hope" for drivers and seamen or those who ventured into the deserts. They used to seek his help when a diesel tank fell off a moving vehicle or ship or a car stuck in the desert. They started calling him 'Diesel Balushi' for his sheer size and strength.

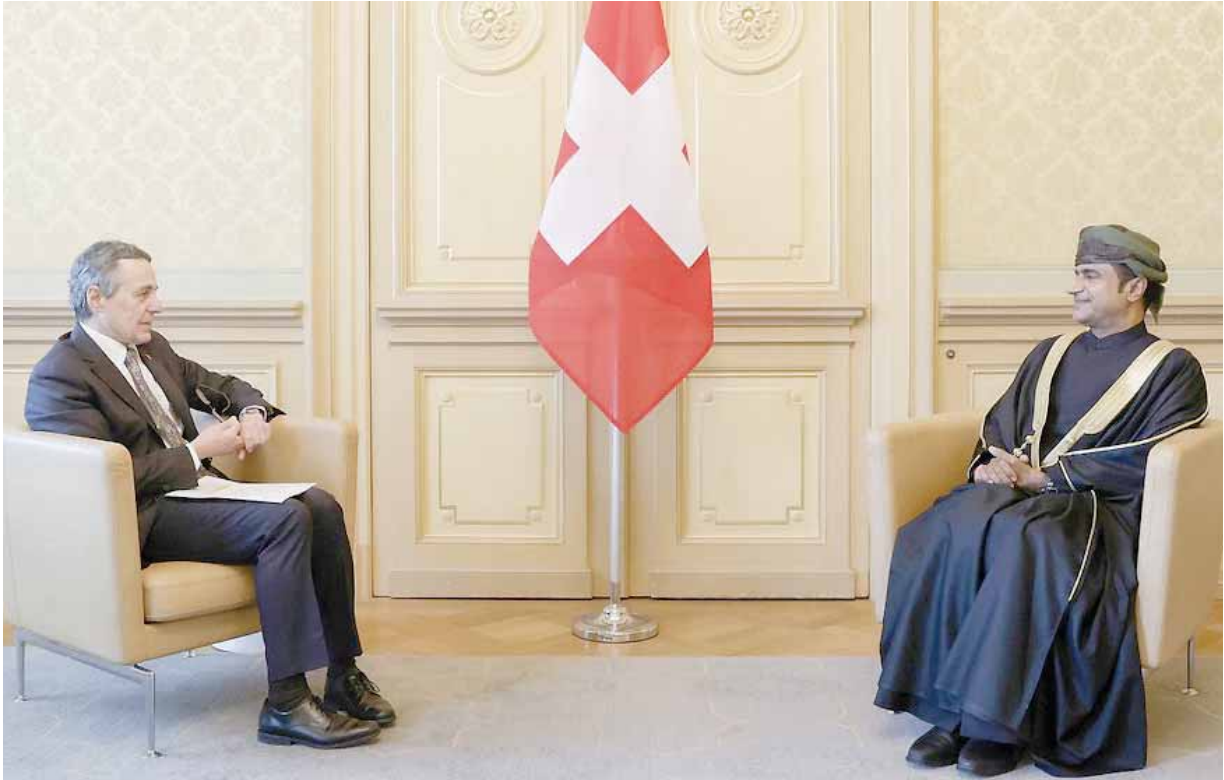
"I enjoy the name Diesel Balushi because it is a kind of appreciation for my strength and ability."

Of late, his only worry is his failing health. "My health doesn't permit me to perform heavy tasks anymore, let alone play my favourite game," he laughed.

The truly humane Al Balushi donates food to the jobless youth and one rial every day until they find a job, and that has been the practice from the days he ran some restaurants in and around Muttrah.



Ambassadors of Oman present credentials



BERLIN/BERN: Maithaa bint Saif al Mahrouqiyah presented her credentials to President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federal Republic of Germany.

The ambassador conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his best wishes of good health and

happiness to President Steinmeier. His Majesty also wished the people of Germany further progress and prosperity. She also underscored the keenness of His Majesty to enhance bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries in all areas.

In his turn, President Steinmeier asked the ambassador to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan. He also expressed his sincere sentiments to

Oman's leadership and people on the 52nd Glorious National Day.

The German president wished the ambassador success in carrying out her duties. He also lauded the advance relations between the two countries and affirmed that all necessary support will be offered to boost bilateral cooperation in various fields.

Mahmoud bin Hamad al Hasani

presented his credentials to President Ignazio Cassis of the Swiss Confederation, as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Swiss Confederation.

The ambassador conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his best wishes of good health and happiness to President Cassis. His Majesty also wished the people of the

Swiss Confederation further progress and prosperity.

On his turn, President Cassis asked the ambassador to convey his sincere sentiments and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people. He also wished the ambassador success in carrying out his duties and the relations between the two countries further progress and prosperity. — ONA

Saplings of 1,300 mangrove trees planted in Khor Shinas



The Environment Authority on Wednesday planted saplings of 1,300 mangrove trees in Khor Shinas in North Al Batinah Governorate. More than 100 people, including school students, took part in the event.

This is part of the national initiative to plant 10 million trees across the Sultanate of Oman. Khor Shinas, in particular, is considered one of the most important mangroves sites in the governorate.

The number of mangroves in Khor Shinas reached 50,000, since

the beginning of the cultivation campaigns in 2008.

The mangrove cultivation campaigns will continue in Khor Shinas as well as in other areas of the Wilayat of Shinas.

The Environment Authority is intensifying campaigns to plant and preserve mangroves in these sites.

Mangroves are important for the marine environment. It can preserve environmental balance and act as a storm barrier. They are home to fish and other marine creatures.

Made-in-Oman buses commute World Cup fans

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
[@afrahbalushia](#)

Buses made in the Sultanate of Oman are proving to be one of the most prominent means of transport to commute fans in the Qatar World Cup.

The bus project is part of a strategic investment initiative between Qatar, represented by the National Transport Company (Qatar Mowasalat), and the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Investment Authority. In its early stages, production focused on the production of buses for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

The investment reached \$71 million in the joint venture of Oman Investment Authority (30 per cent) and Qatar Transport Company (70 per cent). This investment is meant to achieve the economic diversification goals and priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

The new bus bears the brand 'Salam' and 'Made in the Sultanate of Oman' tags. The buses are



manufactured by the 'Karwa Automotive' company, which is specialised in manufacturing and assembling buses in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. Public transport buses play a major role in transporting the masses.

Dr Saad bin Ahmed al Mohannadi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Karwa Automotive Company, revealed at the beginning of this year that the company's target market at present is Gulf.

The company is a partnership strategy between the Sultanate of Oman and Qatar, which reflects the strong political, economic and

commercial ties between the two brotherly countries.

The bus project has in-country value contributing to youth empowerment and creating more than 300 direct and indirect jobs.

The Oman Investment Authority (OIA) invests in such projects to enhance the Sultanate of Oman's efforts towards economic diversification and in harmony with the vision of strengthening the logistic sector, which aims to make the Sultanate an industrial hub.

In addition, such projects help build technical knowledge in the automotive sector in the Sultanate of Oman and contribute to the

development of a group of primary industries that feed the sector.

The last batch of electric buses for the World Cup had about 130 buses, thus completing the supply of all-electric buses with a total of 741 electric buses.

They are entirely operated by Mowasalat Company (Karwa) as part of public transportation to serve transportation operations during the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022.

The project also supports an exceptional 'eco-friendly' and 'carbon neutral' World Cup.

Karwa buses provide all modern, comfortable and environmentally friendly transportation solutions using the latest technologies to create world-class transportation facilities in preparation for hosting the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022.

Mowasalat will be one of the mainstays in transporting fans, athletes and all tournament guests through the largest operation of electric buses in the history of sports tournaments.

This lab grooms future IT professionals, ethical hackers

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, NOV. 23

It is ten to eight in the morning. Mohammed Tariq sits in the corner of a computer lab at the left wing of the Information Technology and the Business building in University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) Nizwa.

Before the students arrive for the morning lecture, he finalises the next set of attack sequences and security misconfigurations for the Ethical Hacking course. However, it is not just any lab. The state-of-the-art cybersecurity lab inaugurated in 2021 after a generous sponsorship by Daleel Petroleum comprises 31 high-specification machines that host not one but three operating systems (each). The independent lab provides students with an environment for conducting potentially risky experiments, like the ones Mohammed Tariq is

preparing for.

The lab is also equipped with high-performance servers, a plethora of wireless networking, and security appliances for teaching more than 20 networking and information security courses.

"The rising cybersecurity threats has resulted in a massive surge in demand for technically skilled information security professionals," says Tariq. "Given the importance of cybersecurity, UTAS offers a hands-on, highly specialised program that aims to enhance the knowledge and skills of graduates in this field."

Ten metres away from the cybersecurity lab sits the Course Project lab. Besides being a laboratory for students doing their final year project, it hosts some high-tech gear supporting the department's virtual reality (VR) research. Being in this lab gives you a strong sense of place that values ideas and scientific debate. The Ministry of



University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Nizwa students undergo training in VR.

Higher Education, Research and Innovation funds the VR research at UTAS-Nizwa. A project led by Rolando Lontok investigates the impact of experiential learning and immersive multimedia in higher education.

"Understanding that virtual reality (VR) has been one of the most disruptive technologies during the past several years. It just fits the department to start exploring this area and look for ways to implement it in different

aspects of the unit's operations," says Dr Lontok. "As stakeholders' interest grows, embracing this technology increases. The department is now trying to expand the VR Laboratory by finding additional funding for

VR gadgets such as VR headsets, backpack PCs and leap motion trackers."

"One of the objectives at the IT department is to achieve and sustain excellence, not only in teaching and learning methodologies, but also producing readily employable graduates," said Duhai Alshukaili, the head of the IT department. "We aim to help students improve their hard and soft skills, build the right attitude towards scientific inquiry and help them become contributors to the growth of the Sultanate."

UTAS-Nizwa is taking several initiatives to equip the labs with state-of-the-art facilities to help our students get a real-hands-on study. One of the plans is to provide a data science and artificial intelligence lab. By achieving this, they will be meeting the goals of academic programmes and enabling them to serve the community better.



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In brief

■ ISTANBUL



TURKEY SAYS IT HAS ATTACKED 471 TARGETS

Turkey's armed forces have attacked 471 targets since the beginning of the latest military offensive in northern Iraq and Syria. A total of "254 terrorists have been neutralised," Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said on Wednesday. "The operation will continue with attacks from the air and with land-based guns," Akar added. He gave no details about possible civilian casualties.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has signalled that his country will launch ground offensives to follow up on recent airstrikes on Kurdish positions in Syria and Iraq.

■ LONDON



SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE VOTE PLANS REJECTED

Britain's highest court on Wednesday rejected a bid by the devolved Scottish government in Edinburgh to hold a new referendum on independence without London's consent.

The ruling torpedoed the Scottish nationalist government's push to hold a second plebiscite next year. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, who leads the Scottish National Party (SNP), said she respected the ruling, but accused Westminster of showing "contempt" for Scotland's democratic will.



Rescuers clear debris of the destroyed two-storey maternity building in the town of Vilnyansk, southern Zaporizhzhia region, on Wednesday. — AFP

Russia fires missiles across Ukraine to knock out heat as severe winter looms

KYIV: Russia rained down volleys of missiles across Ukraine on Wednesday, hitting infrastructure in the capital Kyiv and other cities as Moscow pursued its campaign to knock out Ukraine's power and heat ahead of the looming winter.

Air raid sirens blared in a countrywide alert.

Explosions could be heard on the outskirts of Kyiv, where the mayor said infrastructure had been hit, giving no immediate further details. Bombs were also reported in other cities. Information about casualties was not immediately available.

Since October, Russia has repeatedly targeted electric power and heating infrastructure. Moscow says the aim is to reduce Ukraine's ability to fight; Kyiv says the intentional strikes on civilian infrastructure constitute a war crime.

In an overnight video address, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy announced special

"invincibility centres" would be set up around Ukraine to provide electricity, heat, water, internet, mobile phone connections and a pharmacy, free of charge and around the clock.

Russian attacks have knocked out power for long periods for up to 10 million consumers at a time.

Ukraine's national power grid operator said before Wednesday's attacks that more blackouts were necessary across the country.

"If massive Russian strikes happen again and it's clear power will not be restored for hours, the 'invincibility centres' will go into action with all key services," Zelenskiy said.

With the first snow of the winter falling, authorities have warned of power cuts that could affect millions of people.

Russia's attacks on Ukrainian energy facilities follow a series of battlefield setbacks that have included a retreat of its forces from the southern city of Kherson to

the east bank of the Dnipro River that bisects the country.

A week after the city was retaken by Ukrainian forces, residents in Kherson were tearing down Russian propaganda billboards and replacing them with pro-Ukrainian signs.

"The moment our soldiers entered, these posters were printed and handed over to us.

We found workers to install the posters, and we clean up the advertisement off as quickly as possible," said Antonina Dobrozhenska, who works at the government's communications department.

Russia has been striking Ukraine with expensive long-range cruise missiles and with cheap drones.

Britain's Defence Ministry said on Wednesday there had been no public reports of Russia using one-way attack drones since around November 17, which it said was a sign Moscow might be running out of them, and would try to get more. — Reuters

Boy survives two days under rubble after quake

JAKARTA: A 6-year-old boy was rescued from rubble two days after a magnitude-5.6 earthquake devastated a district in Indonesia's West Java province, leaving at least 271 dead, a rescue official said on Wednesday.

The boy, named Azka, was found alive under the ruins of a house in the Nagrek village of Cianjur district on Wednesday morning, about 40 hours after Monday's quake, said Aman Riyanto, a fireman who took part in the rescue.

"He was still breathing. Thank God he was safe and immediately received treatment," Riyanto said.

Many of those killed in the disaster were children attending religious classes in mosques after school, officials said. The National Disaster Management Agency said the death toll rose to 271 after three more bodies were found

on Wednesday. The number of people listed as missing dropped to 40, from 151 a day earlier, said agency head Suharyanto.

"Our focus is to find those still missing for the next three days," he told reporters.

More than 1,000 people were injured and 58,000 displaced after the quake, which unleashed landslides that buried homes and people alike, according to the agency.

More than 2,300 buildings and homes were damaged, with many reduced to rubble.

The quake struck at 1:21 pm (0621 GMT) with the epicentre 10 kilometres south-west of Cianjur, the National Meteorological, Geophysical and Climatological Agency said. The quake caused high-rise buildings in Jakarta to sway, prompting residents and office workers to rush out in panic. — dpa

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROVISION OF GEOTECHNICAL SURVEYS UNDER ADHOC SERVICES



The Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC (OPWP), a member of Nama Group, is responsible for procuring new capacity for power and water in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the requirements of the law for the regulation and privatization of the electricity and related water sector promulgated by Royal Decree 78/2004 as amended and the OPWP license.

Tender Description	OPWP is looking to hire a qualified and experienced consultant(s) under an ad hoc consultancy service contract(s) to carry out Geotechnical surveys. The contract(s) will be for a term of three (3) years. Depending on the work required for each survey, the Consultant for geotechnical surveys shall be able to conduct all the required geotechnical investigations, screening for contamination, and ground water pumping test survey.
Tender Number	OPWP/2022/28
Tender Purchase Period	17 November 2022 till 4 December 2022
Tender Fee	25 OMR / Free of charges for (SME) with a valid Riyada card
Submission date	29 December 2022 at 12:00 PM Gulf Standard Time GST
Collection & Payment Methods	The tender documents are available for purchase in an electronic format through OPWP website (https://www.opwp.com/new/Default.aspx). The payment is done electronically through OPWP website. In case of any queries, please send an email to: procurement.officer@omanpwp.nama.om .
Bank Guarantee	A Bid Bond of OMR 600 valid for a period of 120 days from the submission deadline date referred to above is required to be enclosed as part of the Bid. (SME) with a valid Riyada card are exempted from tender bond requirement.



Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC (OPWP)
5th Floor, Building 5, Muscat Grand Mall, Tilal Complex (Office)
Tel.: +968 24508400 | Fax: +968 24399946 | www.opwp.com



TENDER NOTICE

Sohar University invites sealed tenders from specialized, experienced and authorized suppliers for the Supply of Supply, Delivery and Installation of Furniture who have sufficient experience in providing similar services to Government/Private Organizations.

The tender details are as follows:

Tender Number	Description	Fee OR	Submission Date
004/2022	Supply, Delivery and Installation of Furniture	150/-	22/12/2022

The tender document can be obtained from the Procurement and Contracts Department from 27/11/2022 to 04/12/2022 from 8:00 to 15:00 hrs at Sohar University Main campus in Sohar after payment of tender fees in cash (Non-refundable) at the cash counter located in the Al Khauboora Building. The receipt of payment has to be taken to the Procurement and Contracts Department to collect the Tender Document.

Tender offers must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed, delivered at the Sohar University premises; tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and the deadline for submission of offers is **22/12/2022 at 12:00 hours**.

Tender should be addressed to Vice Chancellor and deposited in the tender Box as given below during office hours 08:00 to 15:00, Sunday to Thursday.

Resources Office
Sohar University
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar. Sultanate of Oman.

Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 421 & 289 (Procurement and Contracts Department)

2 Chinese cities to tighten Covid rules

BEIJING: Eight districts in the central Chinese city of Zhengzhou will conduct mass Covid-19 testing for five consecutive days from November 25, state television CCTV reported on Wednesday. Residents in "high-risk" compounds are required to stay at home, while those living in other areas should not go out unless necessary, CCTV reported.

People are not allowed to enter venues such as restaurants, shopping malls and indoor gyms within five days of arriving in Zhengzhou city, and need to complete three PCR tests within these days, local media reported, citing a media briefing. — Reuters

SULTANATE OF OMAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Health, Directorate General of Health Services in the Governorate of Dhofar, in coordination with the Sultan Qaboos Hospital, announces a public auction will be held as follows:

- Government vehicles.
- Office and residential furniture, electronic devices, medical supplies, equipment and apparatus and miscellaneous equipment.

The auction will be held at 4:30 pm on Thursday corresponding to 8/12/2022 at the Warehouse's Yard, the campus of the Sultan Qaboos Hospital, Salalah. The items can be inspected during official office hours in the aforesaid place in accordance with the following requirements:

- The buyer is to pay a subscription fee amounting RO 100 in cash, refundable if the auction is not won otherwise.
- The successful buyer is committed to pay the value of purchase in cash on the date and time of sale.
- The successful buyer is committed to pay brokerage fee amounting to 3 per cent of the purchase's value.
- The successful buyer is committed to move the items after paying the amount in full no later than 7 days from the date of the auction. In case of non-fulfillment, no responsibility is to be held against the DG.
- The displayed items are sold as is.
- The Directorate General does not provide a warranty against any defect in the sold items.
- The DG will not hold responsibility after placing the auction against any defection, addition, or loss of the purchased items.
- The buyer is committed to move the movables after their values have been paid in full according to the period stated above. Failing to do so will incur redoing the sale on the buyer's expenses where all expenses of the resale are to fall on them.

Investing in our best friend...

Is there anything more beautiful in our world than this beautiful nature and souls all around us? What’s even more beautiful are the people who dedicate their lives care for this nature so that we and future generations can enjoy it.

One success story always cited as the prime example of investing in biodiversity is the nation of Costa Rica, where “Pura Vida” is their pure way of life, literally. Investing in biodiversity and ecotourism is helping this Central American nation become one of the most highly educated and stable nations in the world.

In our Islamic spiritual teachings, there is a great value in every living being, and this includes the human beings’ best friends - dogs.

In the story of “The People of the Cave” in Holy Quran a group of friends choose to peacefully stand up for what they believe and seek refuge in a nearby cave and who they choose to accompany them? Their best friend, a dog. “They were seven and their dog was the eighth.” (Surat Al Kahf 18:22).

The moral of this part of the story is that we have cherished the companionship of dogs for thousands of years.

Fast forward to our present day, because we lack the culture of sharing the moral from such stories, we witness on rare occasions that dogs are seen as a threat, that needs to be brutally eliminated. I would argue that there are moral, natural and economic benefits to taking better care of animals in Oman including dogs.

MORAL BENEFITS
Mercy and empathy have proven to be the most crucial personal and professional success factors



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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

INVESTING IN BIODIVERSITY ENTAILS INVESTING IN NATURE AND ALL OF ITS ANIMALS AND PLANTS TO ACHIEVE BALANCE

for human beings. Mercy is associated with the names of God in many cultures, and many scientific studies including a 2021 study published in *Forbes* magazine concluded that empathy was seen the most important leadership skill.

How can we instil empathy in society and especially in our children when they see images of shot dogs gasping for air with blood all over them? This is why taking good care of animals means embracing the values mercy and empathy as a matter of principal above anything else.

NATURAL BENEFITS
Investing in biodiversity entails investing in nature and all of its animals and plants to achieve balance.

Campaigns that excessively impact species mean that we are causing an imbalance that could cost us and future generations dearly.

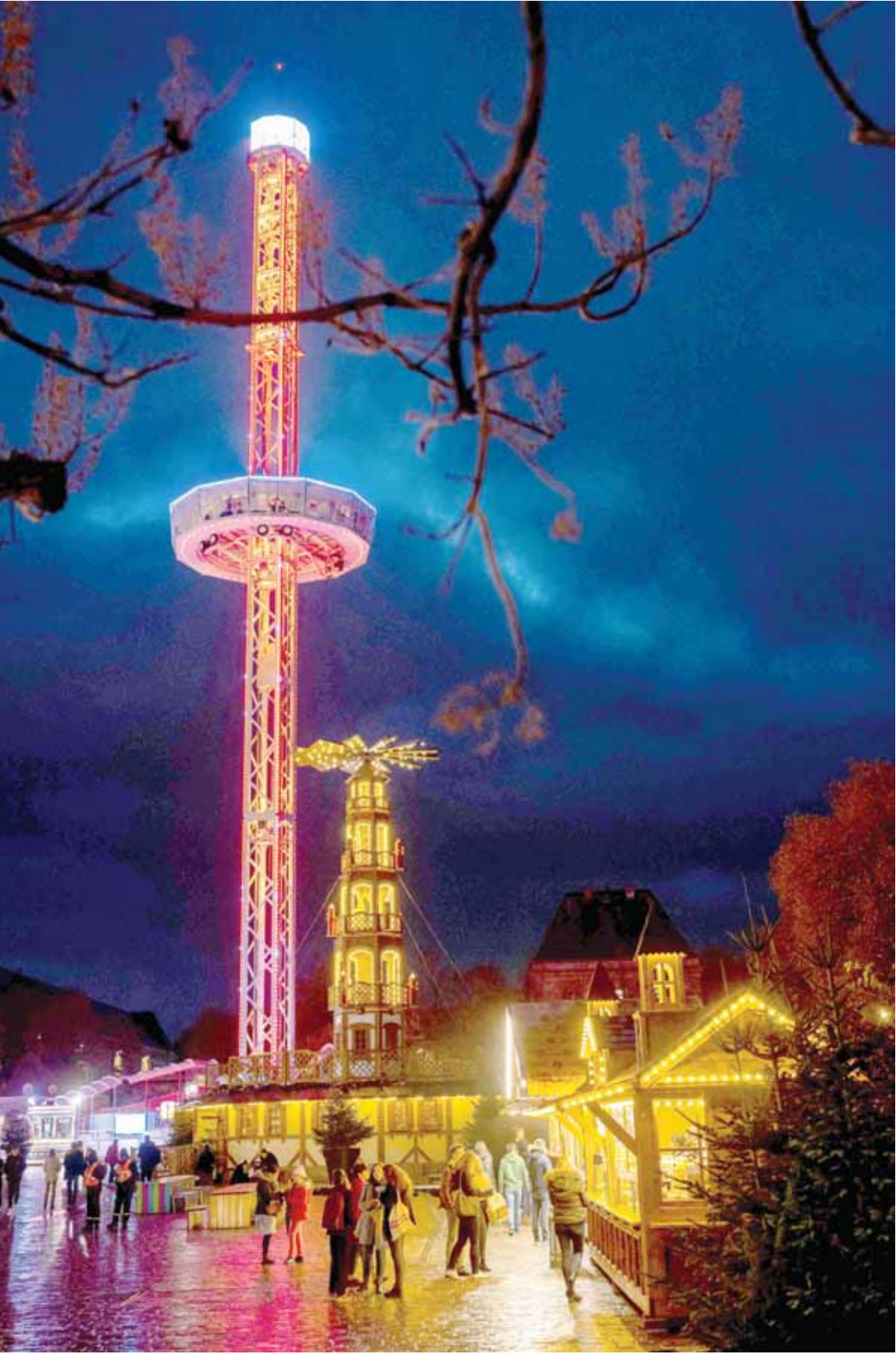
Campaigns to eliminate species can be expensive because they include personnel, weapons and most importantly time that personnel can put to much better uses.

Moreover, the species that live among us survived and adapted to our environment over thousands of years, hence studying them means that we could learn about life, medicine, and science in general a great deal.

Solutions such as Trap, Neuter and Release, or TNY campaigns, by groups such as “Omani Paws” make much more humane and economic sense than other campaigns.

This call to save dogs is not about love for one type of animals, it’s about mercy and love for all God’s creature and our nature’s beauty.

THE CITY SKYLINER



The City Skyliner, one of the highest mobile observation towers in the world, is seen as pedestrians visit the Christmas Market of Place de la Republique in central Metz, northeastern France. The City Skyliner is installed in France for the first time, in Metz, northeastern France, with a total height of 81 metres, a lift height of 72 metres and a capacity of 60 people. – AFP

Bangladesh clean energy shift gives women little chance to shine

MD TAHMID ZAMI AND MOSABBER HOSSAIN

When Shefali Khatun separated from her husband, her biggest worry was how she would support her young son and cover all the expenses for their home in central Bangladesh - without a job.

Then she heard about a programme run by a Bangladeshi green energy initiative that teaches women to build and fix solar-power systems. She signed up, despite having no engineering background or experience in the renewable energy sector.

Five years on, Khatun now works making solar equipment and earns about 10,000 taka (\$95) a month, enough to meet her family’s needs and send her son to school.

“This work changed my fortune and helped me become self-reliant,” she said from her home in Mymensingh. “I discovered women, also, can be self-dependent and able to support their families.” Bangladesh’s fledgling

BANGLADESH DOES NOT COLLECT GENDER-SEGREGATED DATA ON THE MAKE-UP OF ITS RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR, BUT THOSE WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY SAY THEY SEE THE SAME PATTERN IN THEIR COMPANIES

clean energy industry, which the country says is crucial for increasing access to renewable power and curbing its already low greenhouse gas emissions, is creating thousands of new jobs and, with them, opportunities for more women to join the workforce, say industry experts.

More and more Bangladeshi women are reaching for those opportunities.

A report finalised by the European Union last week said the share of women students enrolled in a masters programme on renewable energy at the University of Dhaka’s Institute of Energy, in the capital city, rose from 17 per cent to 27 per cent between 2019 and 2021.

But some climate campaigners and gender experts say Bangladesh’s clean energy transition is still leaving women behind, with the government and companies not doing enough to allow women to benefit from the push to cut carbon emissions, even as they are hardest hit by the

impacts of climate change.

Bright Green Energy Foundation, the non-governmental organisation that trained Khatun, has helped more than 5,000 women workers acquire skills in manufacturing and repairing equipment for solar home systems over the past decade, said chairman Dipal



Barua. If Bangladesh wants to reach its goal of sourcing 40 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2041, it needs more women to build up the workforce that installs and maintains the systems supplying much of that clean energy, he added. “The solar power expansion in rural areas would be unthinkable without

involving women,” he said.

Efforts to cut carbon emissions have created about 12.7 million jobs in renewables worldwide and that number could nearly quadruple by 2050, according to a report published this year by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). In the solar photovoltaic (PV) sector, the largest employer in the field of renewables, the report said globally women make up 40 per cent of full-time roles involved in developing, building and installing solar energy systems.

But most of those are in administrative jobs - when it comes to positions in the PV sector related to the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), less than a third are filled by women.

Bangladesh does not collect gender-segregated data on the make-up of its renewable energy sector, but those working in the industry say they see the same pattern in their companies.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation



A medley of emotions on stage

By Kabeer Yousuf
@kabeeryousef

It was a medley of emotions shared in the limelight of the stage when the disciples of Jhumpa Chakraborty under 'Leelangika', the Kathak dancer, choreographer, and founder-director of the dance group, staged an ensemble of 'Kathak' at the majestic Oman hall of the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) recently.

Titled 'Abhivyakti', a palette of Rasas', the nearly two-hour-long bouquet of performances by these 'kathakars' were so enthralling it stole the heart of every person in the audience and left them wanting for more. It is no wonder that every member of the multi-ethnic audience gave a standing ovation to the stomping steps and the stories that transpired throughout.

One of the eight major forms of Indian classical dance and mostly attributed to the classical dance form of the state of Uttar Pradesh, Kathak traces its origin to the travelling bards in ancient northern India known as 'Kathakars' or storytellers. There are three distinct forms of Kathak called 'gharanas'. Interestingly, they are named after the states of Jaipur, Banaras and Lucknow where the Kathak dance tradition evolved. The Jaipur Gharana focuses more on foot movements while the Banaras and Lucknow gharanas focus more on facial expres-



sions and graceful hand movements.

"Basically, Abhivyakti means expression and we, human beings emote different kinds of expressions throughout our life which has been categorised in Bharata's Natyasastra as 'Navaras' - nine expressions or emotions. Everyone expresses these varied emotions, but in Abhivyakti, these rasas were expressed through Kathak dance via different mythological stories," Jhumpa explained.

Prema Nagesh, the chief guest and founder director of Vyaniti Yoga Studio, lit the traditional oil lamp marking the beginning of the Kathak recital followed by a Guru Vandana, which Jhumpa dedicated as a tribute to both her dance Gurus Late Pt Birju Maharaji and Late Munna Lal Shukla ji. Following the Guru Vandana the



students of Leelangika presented tukras, parans, tihais and kavittas in Teental, Ektal and Pancham Sawari and Jhumpa performed Gat Nikas. A vision of Kathak in the Mughal court was presented through 'Darbar-e-Kathak', a spellbinding choreography by Jhumpa.

As the title indicated, the ballet 'Abhivyakti, a palette of Rasas' comprised the presentation of nine emotions through dance. The nine rasas are Raudra (anger); Karuna (pathos); Adbhuta (wonder); Hasya (humour); Bhayanaka (terror); Bhibatsa (dis-



gust); Veera (valour); Shantha (peace); and Shringara (beauty). Directed by Guru Jhumpa, the students of Leelangika expressed each of the rasas beautifully through different mythological stories, leaving the audience spellbound.

The group of dancers of Leelangika comprised Arya, Vishwa, Aaheli, Ahana, Priyanjana, Anya Anoop, Kanyana, Rihanna, Bhavya, Suhana, Pehel, Diya, Juana, Jahnabi, Anoushka, Dishita, Bhoomi, Reina, Rupsa, Anya Sharma, Maheeka, Vyatiba, Aviva, Aditi, Shaivi, Manvi, Shrabosti, Zanam, Mahua, Dona, Subhasree, Dilna, Vandana, Anu, Sunita and Jhumpa.

While Rahul Kar did the narration for the ballet, Tapas Chakraborty proved his magical hands in professional lighting effects which further embellished the show and made it a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to watch such a graceful performance on stage.

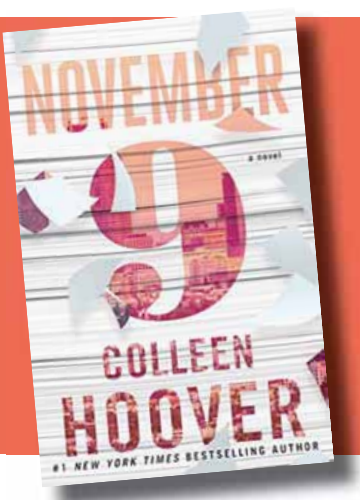


READ

NOVEMBER 9

BY COLLEEN HOOVER

Ben and Fallon meet on the same day each year but a possible untruth might spoil their relationship.



CULTURE

Performers place the joss sticks on the "fire dragon" during the Tai Hang Fire Dragon dance at Tai Kwun in Hong Kong. The Tai Hang fire dragon dance is one of ten Hong Kong events recognised under the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. — AFP



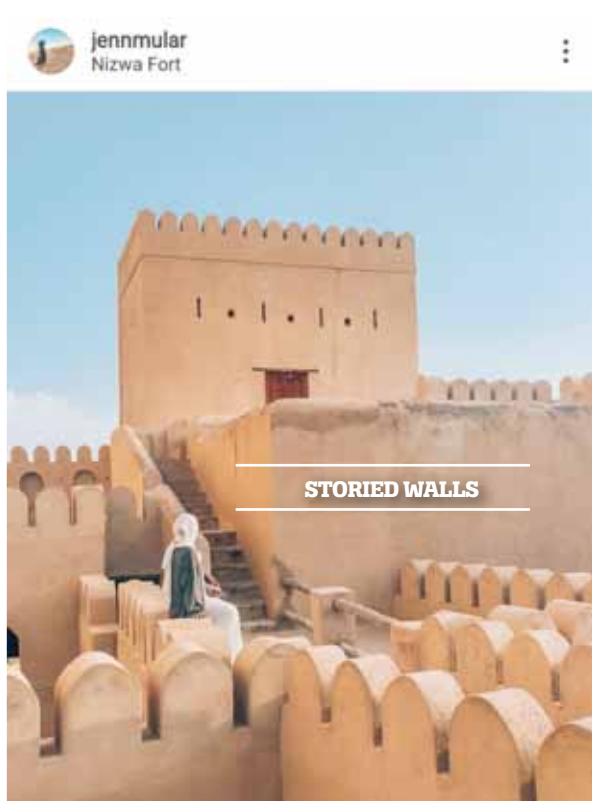
DINING

A full English breakfast with eggs, baked beans, bacon, sausage and gravy sauce is served on a table alongside a cup of coffee and bread with butter at Regency Cafe in London. A "full English breakfast" is not full without eggs. Whether fried or scrambled, they round out the calorific mainstay of traditional British cafes. But on top of inflationary pressures which have sent the price of ingredients soaring. — AFP





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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Freud centenary exhibit reunites artist with closest friends



BRITISH ARTISTS Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon were friends for decades before a bitter falling out.

Now a new exhibition explores the pair's friendship with two other influential painters with whom they shared models, rivalries and a belief in portraiture in 1950s and 60s London.

Freud's first wife Caroline Blackwood famously said of Bacon that he came over for dinner "nearly every night for more or less the whole of my marriage to Lucian".

"We also had lunch," she added.

But while their friendship is well documented, the lesser known relationship the pair had with two other artists – Frank Auerbach and Michael Andrews – was equally important, said exhibition curator Richard Calvocoressi.

The four friends and rivals sat for and painted one another and hung out together in central London's Soho district.

Freud and Auerbach also shared a common history, having both fled Nazi Germany as children.

"Friends and Relations", which opens on Thursday at central London's Gagosian gallery and runs until January 28, was inspired by a famous black and white photograph taken of the four artists in 1963 by John Deakin.



- 'RADICAL ARTISTS' -

The men are pictured along with the much younger painter Timothy Behrens in a Soho restaurant.

"I thought it would be interesting to look at him (Freud) in the context of these close friends," Calvocoressi said.

The four painters "were seeing a lot of each other in the 1950s and 1960s. They, very unfashionably at the time, held out for figurative art... at a time when abstract art was all the fashion."

"I think they found the conventions of representational painting tired and in need of rejuvenating and refreshing and that's what they did, and over the course of half a century – they stuck to the human figure as the core subject in their art," he said.

A highlight of the exhibition is the group portrait "The Colony Room I" by Andrews depicting Freud, Bacon and artist's model Henrietta Moraes among others at the storied drinking club that was a favourite haunt.

Calvocoressi said that Soho and the British capital, where each made their home, was another theme running through the exhibition, with works such as the rubbish-strewn view from Freud's studio and a painting of Primrose Hill by Auerbach.

The exhibition features more than 40 paintings gathered from private and public collections, including many of the artists' portraits of one another.

Calvocoressi said the quartet "sparked off each other" and were "the most radical" of their generation of artists. — AFP

TRAVEL TALES

Greece's treasures caught between tourism and conservation



WITH 18 UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the Acropolis facing a new push for tourism, experts are calling for a "fine balance" to be struck between protecting Greece's great ancient monuments and further development.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, an international conference opens in Delphi on Thursday under the banner of "challenging times enhancing resilience and sustainability".

More than half of Greece's World Heritage sites date from Antiquity, such as the Parthenon in Athens, the Temple of Apollo, Olympia and the sanctuary of Delphi itself.

But Byzantine and Middle Age sites are also on the UNESCO list, including the Cave of the Apocalypse on Patmos, the mediaeval city of Rhodes and Mount Athos, the monastic enclave that bans women.

They all have "reinforced protection", culture minister Lina Mendoni said.

"Obviously the already high number of visitors has increased," she added.

The world heritage sites enjoy a privileged position compared with Greece's other monuments, although they too come under strict legislative

protection.

The UNESCO sites "more easily attract European funding for their conservation," said Antonia Zervaki, assistant professor of international relations at Athens University.

- 'GROWTH THE PRIORITY' -

In August, at the height of the summer season, Mendoni and tourism minister Vassilis Kikilias boasted the Acropolis was seeing 16,000 tourists a day, far more than the previous year.

The first nine months of 2022 saw foreign tourist arrivals more than double over the previous year.

That sparked debate about the threat of over-tourism.

Turning a page on the economic crisis of the last decade and the Covid-19 pandemic, Athens has put tourism development as the main economic driver and top of its priorities, a decision criticised by experts.

"The Greek crisis exacerbated the decline of the scientific model... to the benefit of growth, which is now more of a priority than ever," said Yannis Theocharis, an archaeologist at the culture ministry, adding that it does not help sustainable development.

The vice-president of the Union of Greek Archaeologists deplored that "numerous mon-

uments have been degraded" by development work.

"The contractors get involved in restoration for money reasons," rather than cultural, he said.

The Acropolis was at the centre of controversy two years ago when the Greek government decided a lift and a concrete ramp were "necessary" to improve access for the handicapped.

That led some archaeologists to condemn an over-technical approach that "alters a monument aesthetically", though both innovations were built.

- 'Major challenges' -

"The reception and management of visitors poses major challenges," World Heritage Centre director Lazare Eloundou Assomo said at the Delphi conference.

"Greece is making a real effort to take into account what is at stake from over-tourism, with tangible results," he added.

Electronic ticketing and other management systems have been set up to cope with visitor numbers at sites such as the Acropolis, he said.

For Antonia Zervaki, "It's not all black or white. Conservation and exploitation are in a constant struggle to find a fine balance." — AFP



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Envy and its ugly head

WE ARE ALL AWARE that envy is one of the heart diseases-morally – that afflict some people. Because of jealousy, a malicious soul creates turmoil for other individuals that God has honoured with certain blessings. It would have been better for all to pray for goodness and continuity of blessings to others but this is not always the case.

Undoubtedly, envy here may spoil our love and dry our souls. It brings out the ugly and spiteful delusions within a person that takes pleasure in the suffering of others for no other reason than their good fortune and makes him/her feel inadequate in comparison.

I can briefly say and believe that envy kills happiness. Unfortunately, envy is completely natural as we notice it in any society and cannot be completely eliminated, but if you understand it better morally and follow the approach of our noble values, then you can stop of stoking it and step back from the edge of that cliff.

Interestingly, when that individual sees that he has fallen behind others in something, the pain he feels often pushes him to build himself up or destroy others. All of this could have been life or death in cave times, but it seems largely outdated today. And you're probably not likely to die alone because your social media posts are less popular than those of others. But the pain can be just as intense!

On the other hand, medically you realise that envy, when it is malicious, is horrible for you. Neuroscientists have found that envy of others stimulates the anterior cingulate cortex of the brain, which is associated with physical and mental pain. They also noticed through their research and after following up on that envious individual, how his psychological health deteriorated and his level of happiness decreased in his future.

Moreover, people usually become more psychologically healthy as they get older, but unfortunately, envy can get in the way of this trend. And while you are also

looking at this era and its remarkable changes, you may notice that this individual also feels envy, when he gets to know the people who seem more fortunate than him. This is simple enough in normal interactions. But conditions of envy explode if we expose people to a wide range of strangers who care about their lives looking as glamorous, successful and happy as possible. I'm describing social media here and the unique fertile conditions it creates for these destructive feelings.

So it was better for anyone to look deeply at himself and leave those around him because in a way the main way we water those dry weeds (envy) is with our attention. We focus intently on the qualities we want but lack.

Social media – for example – may sometimes sow envy: aren't you with me that it shows you the lives of people who are more fortunate than you, so it has become easier than ever for anyone to brag about their good fortune to the masses and put you in the same virtual society as people who are not in your society. The realist, which makes you compare yourself to them.

Aren't the posts of some celebrities and influencers a particularly powerful and unnecessary source of envy for those individuals? And by that I mean the solution is not to ditch social media, but rather to unfollow people you don't know whose posts you see simply because they have what you want. The individual uses social media to keep up with real friends, learn fun and empowering things and maybe even laugh a little.

In the end, there might be an antidote for everyone-too! Gratitude and appreciation for your gifts, whatever they may be helpful. Sincere gratitude extinguishes envy – unfortunately many are aware of that. Hence, if next time your envy is barking, calm it down with thoughts of people who love you, things you enjoy and the good luck you have!

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and writer.

business

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Government to subsidise animal feed production



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, NOV 23

Oman Flour Mills Company announced on Wednesday that it has received a letter from the government pledging financial support for four basic raw material inputs that go into the production of concentrated animal feed industry. The subsidy will be valid for six months, starting from last July, it said adding that it is in line with the government's keenness to stabilise the prices of concentrated animal feed in local markets.

Dhofar Food and Investment Company also disclosed in a similar filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA) that it has received a letter from the Directorate General of Food Security at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources approving subsidy support towards animal feed.

The subsidy, also effective for six months starting from July 1, will cover one third of the difference between the base price and the ceiling price – a gesture aimed at reducing the company's losses in the production of concentrated feed.

MSX-listed companies Q3 net profits increase to \$457.6 million

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Total net profits for listed companies in Muscat Stock Exchange increased by 14% year-on year (y-o-y) to \$457.6 million in Q3 2022 as compared with \$401.4 million in Q3 2021, according to Kamco Invest.

The biggest sector in the exchange by market cap, the banking sector, improved 21.4% to reach \$279.8 million up from \$230.6 million in Q3 2021. The diversified financials sector followed with the second largest total net profits among the sectors with \$92.4 million during Q3 2022 up from \$17.2 million in Q3 2021.

Bank Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman's largest bank by assets, posted the biggest profit of 7.7% growth y-o-y to reach \$127.4 million as compared to \$118.2 million in Q3 2021.

The earnings growth is due to revenue increase from both non-interest income and net interest income from the conventional banking business. Bank Muscat's Q3 2022 earnings represented 45.5% of the total profits in the banking sector.

National Bank of Oman recorded Q3 2022 net profits of \$34.9 million as compared to \$20.4 million in Q3 2021. The bank attributed its quarterly performance to a combination of growth in net interest income,



fee income and a fall in operating expenses. All the eight banks which announced Q3 2022 net profits registered y-o-y growth in earnings except for Bank Dhofar which witnessed 14.1% profits slide to \$25.1 million.

In the diversified financials sector, Ominvest posted the biggest profits during Q3 2022 with net profits of \$86.8 million as compared to \$14.6 million during Q3 2021.

The investment company attributed the jump in its quarterly net profits to an increase in revenue on the back of its acquisition of RSA ME by National Life and General Insurance Company.

Despite witnessing subdued growth of 3.9% y-o-y during Q3 2022, the telecom sector's

aggregate profits were the third largest among the sectors reaching \$51.2 million as compared to \$49.2 million during the corresponding period of 2021.

Omantel's Q3 net profits dipped 7.9% y-o-y to reach \$39.5 million down from \$42.9 million. The dip in profits was attributed to the growth of Omantel's total service expenses as well as cost of material consumed, and goods sold. Comparatively, Q3-2022 net earnings for Ooredoo Oman jumped 83.4% y-o-y to \$11.7 million.

The energy sector's Q3 net profit reached \$21.3 million as compared to \$16.3 million in Q3 2021 witnessing a 30.2% y-o-y growth. Al Maha Petroleum Products registered the largest

absolute profit rise among the five companies in the sector with Q3 2022 net profits of \$6.2 million up from \$2.7 million in Q3-2021.

The company attributed its robust performance to the expansion of its customer reach underpinned by a strategic repositioning to meet changing customer preferences after the Covid-19 period.

On the other hand, Renaissance Services Co recorded the biggest Q3 2022 net profit among the companies in the sector with \$6.7 million as against \$6.5 million in Q3 2021. Of the five companies in the sector, National Gas was the only loss-making company registering a loss of \$0.61 million in Q3 2022 as compared with a loss of \$0.9 million in Q3 2021.

Oman to venture into smart farming

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

In an effort to decrease reliance on food imports and to achieve self-sufficiency in agricultural products, the Omani government decided to venture into smart farming by collaborating with Nongshim, a South Korean food and beverage company.

Nongshim said on Wednesday it has won a bid to export a smart farm system to Oman, marking the first sale since it formed a dedicated in-house startup for the business in 2018.

The Omani government will buy two units of container-type vertical smart farm worth \$200,000 made by Nongshim. The 40-foot-long boxes will provide a total of 165-square-metres in cultivation area.

Nongshim said its smart farm export is meaningful in that it has become the first partner of Oman's state smart farm initiative.

The smart farm enables crop cultivation up to 18 times a year. Cultivation is possible immediately if only electricity and water are connected locally.

With its deal with Oman, Nongshim aims to export smart farm technology to other Middle East countries.

TURN TO PAGE 12

Visit Oman signs pact to launch short-term rental market

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 23

Visit Oman has signed a partnership agreement with the UnderTheDoormat Group – the award-winning global short term rental technology company. This first-of-its-kind partnership will pave the way for opening government approved short-term rentals in Oman, while offering travelers from around the world choice in the types of accommodation they can access to explore everything Oman has to offer.

It will further enhance Visit Oman's capabilities to connect international travel trade with tourism suppliers and new types of accommodation in the Sultanate of Oman. At an official ceremony hosted by Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, the partnership agreement was signed between Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman,

and Merilee Karr, Founder and CEO of UnderTheDoormat Group. As the partnership launches, Integrated Tourism Complex's (ITCs) will lead this innovation in the Sultanate of Oman, including some of the largest property developers and hospitality companies.

The first properties will be live through the Hospiria technology towards the end of 2022. ITCs, Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) and in future individual property owners with an approved license, will be able to access the global short-term rental market through a single technology system, Hospiria.

This will connect their homes, villas or apartments to guests and travellers seeking short-term rental accommodation during their stay in the Sultanate of Oman, through an officially approved channel.

The partnership will provide the opportunity for both large tourism companies and SMEs to provide their services to property owners and deliver additional



rental income opportunities, as the Hospiria technology will link and market their properties via the largest online booking engines and aggregators in the world with a single system to distribute and manage their portfolios.

As a leader in short-stay rental market, and the first in their sector accredited by the UK Short-Term Accommodation Association (STAA) and Quality in Tourism, UnderTheDoormat will also work with Visit Oman to help Omani ITC's, SME's, property owners and leasers gain confidence in

offering their short-stay guests a "home away from home" managed according to internationally accredited and verified quality standards. Speaking about the new partnership, Merilee Karr, Founder and CEO of UnderTheDoormat Group, said: "Oman's innovation in opening the short-term rental sector for approved companies and owners is a gamechanger for tourism in the country, and a great example of how technology can help enable the responsible growth of our sector. We are excited to partner with a forward-thinking

market to open short-term rentals for visitors from around the world wanting to experience the authenticity of this amazing country and stay in a beautiful home, villa, or apartment for their visit, with confidence."

The company's founder and CEO added, "The Hospiria technology covers the whole guest lifecycle which will provide many benefits to short-term rental owners and companies – from distributing to 40+ channels (including the likes of Booking.com, Airbnb, Expedia, vrbo and Marriott Homes and Villas as well as Omani travel portals in the future), dynamic pricing to maximise rates, direct booking capabilities, automated check-in software and smart scheduling to enable owners and companies to manage their guest experience efficiently and to the highest standards. The Hospiria platform will provide crucial technology infrastructure to the country that will enable this ecosystem to thrive by supporting a balanced

approach to opening up the sector. Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director, Visit Oman, added that the UnderTheDoormat partnership is another significant milestone for Visit Oman in its journey to provide Oman tourism suppliers opportunities to market their products to global travellers.

"Through the Visit Oman gateway, the Hospiria platform will provide an efficient launching point for Omani companies, SME's and property owners to place their apartments, villas and homes onto the short-term rental market globally.

This latest Visit Oman initiative with UnderTheDoormat falls in line with the broader, existing Oman Tourism Vision 2040 strategy, and serves to shift the Sultanate of Oman towards a more diversified and developed tourism economy, and one that leverages digital innovation and technology to maximise value for the Omani tourism market, as well as the tourism-related SME economy in Oman," Al Maamari explained.

Bank Muscat concludes Tadhmun programme, supports over 200 social welfare families in 2022

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has successfully concluded the 2022 edition of its landmark Tadhmun programme, which is implemented annually in line with the bank's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility and community service.

The bank executed the programme for the 10th consecutive year, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development, with a joint team distributing household appliances to over 200 social welfare families across different governorates in the Sultanate.

A number of volunteers from the bank participated in the programme and distributed over 800 household appliances including air conditioners, refrigerators and other appliances to the beneficiary families.

It is a matter of great encouragement to the bank's strong



efforts in social responsibility that the Tadhmun programme has so

far benefitted 1,880 families since being launched in 2013.

This year too, the programme was implemented in cooperation

with specialists from the Ministry of Social Development, who received applications and finalised the list of families entitled for the benefits.

The bank has been particularly encouraged by its partnership with the ministry on a number of initiatives including Tadhmun in line with its commitment to public-private partnership.

Bank Muscat also took the opportunity to thank the Ministry of Social Development and members of its volunteer team for the successful implementation of the programme.

Bank Muscat, which is Oman's leading financial services provider, runs several long-term social responsibility projects including Green Sports, Al Wathbah SME Academy, the Maliyat financial literacy programme and Irshad financial coaching, which are all aimed at supporting different segments of Omani society.

This year, the bank extended its support to 20 youth sports teams as part of its flagship Green Sports programme.

The bank has recently signed an agreement to implement an advanced training programme for 30 Omani entrepreneurs. Bank Muscat also continues to closely partner with the Royal Oman Police to curb cyber fraud through repeated awareness campaigns for the general public.

Over the past decades, the bank has been working closely with government institutions and a number of civil-society organisations to support programmes, which create sustainable, positive changes in communities across the Sultanate. As a result, Bank Muscat was once again honoured in 2022 by the Ministry of Social Development for its pioneering role in Corporate Social Responsibility.

ahli islamic to offer 1% gift on Qitaf new-to-bank deposits

MUSCAT: Upholding its commitment to enhance customers' banking experiences with products and services that are rewarding and gratifying, ahli islamic has announced an exciting 1 per cent gift for new-to-bank deposits.

The cashback offer will be eligible for all new-to-bank and existing customers of Qitaf for deposits of RO 5,000 and above, and the same who are seeking to grow their fortunes with the Qitaf Savings account that is based on the Islamic Mudaraba principle.

As per the scheme, the 1 per cent gift will be credited to the customer's Qitaf account after three-month deposit period. There will, however, be a cap of RO 5,000 per cashback, per account.

Highlighting the benefits accruing from the new gift



offer, Noora Sultan, AGM – Head of Retail Banking ahli islamic, said, “We are leveraging the popularity of our Qitaf Savings Account to

help new-to-bank customers establish a strong financial base with the added benefit of gift. Our objective is to reward customers with an

attractive cashback offer that will augment their financial strengths and inculcate a strong savings culture.

We have, from the very beginning, demonstrated our intent to enhance our customers' banking experiences and financial inclusion with products and services that are tailored to meet the customers' immediate and future needs, and the one per cent gift on Qitaf deposits is aimed at precisely this factor. With the one per cent credited directly to the account, after the 3-month deposit period, we are opening investment avenues for our new customers an easy and convenient option to grow their finances.

“The new offer is a part of our ongoing efforts to provide easy platforms for new-to-bank. We have taken constructive steps to create better awareness

and understanding of Islamic banking, inspiring new customers to join our fold. In the recent past, we have introduced a referral scheme, which rewarded our loyal patrons for referring new customers.

We will continue to implement newer avenues for customers to bolster their investments in a Sharia compliant way,” she added.

ahli islamic's Qitaf Savings Account is an investment account that enables you to invest your money based on the Sharia rules of Mudaraba, whereby the account holder (Rabb ul-Mal) invests funds with ahli islamic (Mudarib) through an unrestricted Mudaraba contract. Furthermore, you can optimise your profitable investments with the option to withdraw funds at any time.

Salalah Mills launches barley flour-based products

MUSCAT: As part of its efforts to strengthen the food security system and to achieve self-sufficiency in food products in the Sultanate of Oman, Salalah Mills Company has launched “barley flour” as one of the new products through which it promotes healthy food options.

The new barley product is a high quality nutrition product as it is rich in minerals, vitamins and dietary fibre, while it is being used for preparing various types of baking items with a delicious flavour, such as flat bread, yeast bread, sliced bread, as well as the well-known Omani bread.

Publicly-listed Salalah Mills has four different factories which are working to keep up with the demands of the local and regional markets. The company is considered as the largest flour mill in the Sultanate of Oman with a production capacity of 1,500 tonnes of flour per day, in addition to the pasta factory, with production capacity of 432 tonnes of pasta per day.



Sohar International sponsors 4th ‘Jalasat Mulhmoon’

MUSCAT: Dedicated to nurturing a knowledgeable, pragmatic and socially conscious generation that can drive transformational change, Sohar International recently extended its support to the Coach4Change and acted as the exclusive sponsor of the 4th edition of ‘Jalasat Mulhmoon’.

The event, held at the Grand Hall in the Cultural Centre at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), witnessed the presence of HH Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), as the guest of honour. Representing the bank, Mazin bin Mahmood al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer of Sohar International, attended the event.

The latest edition of ‘Jalasat Mulhmoon’ was themed ‘Himam’ where four inspiring speakers with disabilities from different Arab countries sparked the youth with motivation and guided them to trust their capabilities in achieving success.

The event was moderated by Dr

Lamia al Haj, Assistant Professor at Sultan Qaboos University and founder of Coach4Change, and hosted Zainab al Harrasi from Oman, Faisal al Mousawi from Kuwait, Dr Asim Kamal El Din from Sudan, and Yehia Qandil from Egypt. Recognised as a highly popular platform, the event received an overwhelming response from the community and was attended by students and faculty members.

Commenting on Sohar International's support at the event, Mohamed bin Mahfoodh al Ardhi, Chairman of Sohar International, said, “The youth are the future of the country and will play an instrumental role in driving the nation's progress. Sohar International is strongly aligned with Oman Vision 2040 which places increased emphasis on nurturing the local youth workforce.

“Through the years, ‘Jalasat Mulhmoon’ has positively influenced young minds and its



speakers have served as a beacon of inspiration. As a forward-thinking organisation that believes in responsible growth, it is important for us to continue supporting initiatives that touch the lives of the youth and inspire them which may result in them contributing further

to the society in the long run.

“At Sohar International, we always chart innovative ways to engage with the youth and contribute to their development. The Sultanate, with its vibrant young community, has immense potential, and we seek to tap into

that ability to drive sustainable socio-economic progress.”

In line with the bank's vision to encourage such quality programmes, Sohar International extended its support to ‘Jalasat Mulhmoon’ during its previous edition too. The approach

deployed at ‘Jalasat Mulhmoon’, which focuses on promoting interaction with international experts and facilitating knowledge exchange, resonates with Sohar International's techniques.

Dr Lamia al Haj, Associate Professor at Sultan Qaboos University and founder of Coach4Change, said, “We appreciate Sohar International support of such initiatives that touch the nation and have an overall positive impact on the community. ‘Jalasat Mulhmoon’ is a youth empowerment platform that connects inspiring role models from the Arab world to the younger generation. The platform presented a successful youth model that was inspirational yet exposed to the young minds present there on ways of common sense.

“The platform mainly targets the youth who shape the majority of this nation and the Arab world and with such young bright minds the Sultanate will navigate to further heights and prosperity.”

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SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES

Oman Aviation Academy secures first-ever aviation training licence

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 23

Oman Aviation Academy, majority owned by Omani government agencies, received a formal licence to provide civil aviation training services in the Sultanate of Oman, becoming the first such institution in the country to be awarded these coveted credentials.

The licence was awarded by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) at an event held at the Authority's headquarters in Muscat earlier this week.

"We congratulate the Oman Aviation Academy for obtaining the license certificate from the Civil Aviation Authority as the first accredited institution for civil aviation training in the Sultanate of Oman," the CAA said in a recent post.

"The Academy is one of the projects supervised by the Ministry of Finance through the Partnership for Development Programme (Offset)," it further stated. Presenting the prestigious 'Approved Training Organisation' (ATO) certificate to Oman Aviation Academy, Eng Naif bin



Ali al Abri, President – CAA, said the license was issued following an extensive audit of the Academy's capabilities, its compliance with various national and international requirements, and overall financial wherewithal.

The four-stage audit also covered a review of the Academy's training manuals and curricula, and a full inspection of its

simulators and flight training aircraft.

Capt Abdullah bin Murad al Balushi, CEO – Oman Aviation Academy, said the new license will enable the institution to place the country on "the world map for civil aviation training".

It will also strengthen Oman's positioning in the regional and international aviation

training markets, he added.

Located at Suhar Airport, Oman Aviation Academy was established in February 2018 as a partnership involving, among others, the Ministry of Defence Pension Fund, Oman National Investments Development Company (TANMIA) and

Al Hosn Investment Company. Also playing a key role as an offset partner is Airbus Helicopters, while CAE, a global aviation training organisation, is a strategic partner in the establishment of the campus and its curriculum. In May this year, OAA took delivery of its first two training aircraft. When fully operational, the Academy will boast a campus designed to international standards.

Featuring a total built-up area of 35,000 sq metres, the facility will have a capacity to accommodate around 150 students per annum and will be equipped with state-of-the-art training systems, including four flight simulators. An 80-foot high Air Traffic Control (ATC) will be integrated with the main building.

The struggle of the importing companies



KARL JACKSON

Following the lackluster performance in the 2nd quarter, due to the headwinds from the fallout from the outbreak of war between Russia and the Ukraine, we see no let off in the 3rd quarter as the service sector companies continue to shine at the expense of many import/export companies that continue to face increased raw material input and transportation costs.

In the financial sector, we see the banks and leasing companies, continuing to post improved performance, primarily as a result of lower loan impairment charges, in addition to improved net interest income, as asset portfolios have remained high, due to the lack of repayments, because many large companies are still negotiating loan restructures, combined with favourable liquidity that has kept funding costs low.

However, since the restructuring (of problem loans) has been delayed, the full impact on impairment provisions may be still to come.

Furthermore, internationally, banks have started increasing impairment provisions ahead of impending recessions.

After benefiting from increased values of their investment portfolios in the 1st quarter, the insurance companies are finding it challenging to deliver premium income growth in the current operating environment.

The improvement in the other category is due solely to Ominvest that posted a profit of RO 48 million compared to just RO 25 million in the prior year, due primarily to the inclusion of the recently acquired insurance activities of RSA Middle East.

The industrial sector, comprising of construction and manufacturing companies has been hit the hardest. In the construction sector, with the exception of Oman Cement, all companies have posted

deteriorating results with two companies (Al Hassan Engineering and Aluminium Production) posting combined losses of RO 7 million. Also, as a result of terminating long-term charter vessels combined with increases in raw material prices, Raysut Cement alone posted losses of RO 16.3 million, compared to losses of just RO 2.2 million in the prior year.

The manufacturing sector exhibits a very mixed story with those escaping high input costs (such as Gulf Mushrooms, Oman Cables, Oman Chromite and Oman Chlorine) posting substantial profit increases, contrasting with those companies that rely heavily on imported inputs that must grapple with the dual external challenges of higher costs of imported raw materials and shipping to customers, either within Oman or in the overseas markets they export to.

A situation that continues to be aggravated by the ongoing conflict between Russia and the Ukraine.

Whilst most of the food related companies have been hit hard, Oman Flour Mills is the most detrimentally affected, with increases in wheat prices reducing profits to RO 1.1 million compared to RO 5.8 million in the prior year.

Finally, as we look at the service sector, the major story is the continuous rebound of Omantel. Within the oil and gas sector, the three petrol station owners continue to reap the benefits from the ending of lockdowns and drivers returning to the highways.

Although not a major sector for listed companies, the six hotels within the tourism sector are still waiting to see the return of mass tourism and business demand is still to rebound.

The performance of the energy sector has been essentially flat compared to the prior year, as company restructures have been able to meet the challenge of the introduction of the spot market for electricity prices.

[This article by Karl Jackson, an Audit and Assurance Partner with Crowe Oman karl.jackson@crowe.om is based on financial data published by the Muscat Stock Exchange]

Oman to venture into smart farming

FROM PAGE 9

"The Middle East is mostly desert, so farming is almost impossible," an unnamed Nongshim official said in a statement on Wednesday.

"As most countries there rely on imported food, their interest in smart farms has been increasing, so there is a very high possibility of market growth."

Earlier this month, a delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth & Water Resources and Oman Agricultural Society visited the POMIT Company in South Korea, which was contracted to implement a development research project to introduce and evaluate smart farm technologies.

Funded by Omani Indian Fertiliser Company (Omifco), smart farm technologies use hydroponic system for the production of leafy vegetables.

All environmental conditions, including carbon dioxide,



light, and nutrients, as well as temperature and humidity, are automatically controlled.

Users can monitor and control Nongshim's smart farm anytime, anywhere with a smartphone. Nongshim has developed most of the materials and software such as cultivation facilities, light-

emitting diodes (LEDs), and an environmental control system used in smart farms.

A smart farm is an automated indoor farm created by combining information and communication technology with agriculture. Because smart farms can automatically analyse temperature,

humidity and the amount of sunlight using the Internet of Things (IoT) technology, farmers can grow plants without having to worry about weather conditions.

Smart farming increases the quantity and quality of products while optimising the human labour required by production.

Calling out hypocrisy amid a dazzling World Cup



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The State of Qatar has achieved its dream of organising the first World Cup 2022 since it has received the honour of hosting this tournament in this first Arab country through competition and perseverance 12 years ago.

In recent weeks however it has faced many malicious campaigns, especially with regard to the rights of expatriate workers who worked on the implementation of these huge sports projects that are unique showpieces in the sporting world.

This is what prompted the President of the International

Federation of Football Association (FIFA), Gianni Infantino, a few days ago, to assert that Qatar organised the best version of the World Cup in the history of football, criticising Western countries and those that continue to criticise them to stop these campaigns.

During his speech at the press conference held in this regard, the Fifa official said that Qatar has developed many legislations that concern the protection of workers' rights, and has become a model of tolerance and teamwork, criticising at the same time the problems and challenges that Europe has created for immigrants and

migrant workers that force them to live in miserable conditions.

During his talk about the conditions of foreign workers in Qatar, the Fifa President focused on the issue of slogans raised by some countries of the world against Qatar, explaining that the moral lessons and slogans about betray hypocrisy and lies, and the conditions of workers in this country are much better than what immigrants suffer in Europe, while the standards of workers' rights in Qatar are similar to those available in Europe, if not better.

The speech of the Fifa official also carried a rebuke of the Europeans. He called on them

to apologise to the countries of the world, especially those that suffered racism, forced labour, unlawful deaths, destruction, occupation and control of their capabilities, resources and economic resources.

The Fifa President said he had also suffered from bullying and discrimination as the child of an immigrant worker of Italian origin who had travelled to Switzerland with his family. Such racial problems cannot be found in a country like Qatar, which has hosted millions of workers who have lived in a milieu characterised by tolerance and justice.

Qatar has been able to

organise this tournament with efficiency and competence, and in an environment characterised by the Arab and Islamic identity, with the integration of Arab and international culture.

Qatar, as Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani noted in his opening speech, continues to make strenuous efforts to make this championship a success in the history of World Cups.

He expressed hope that the whole world will witness a dazzling football festival in Doha that lives up to the Fifa President's description of the Qatar Championship as the best version of the World Cup in the history of football.

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Japan's Takuma Asano scores their second goal against Germany during the Group E match at Khalifa International Stadium in Doha.
— Reuters



JAPAN DEAL LATE BLOW TO GERMANY

REPORT & PICTURES **P15**



Spain's Gavi celebrates scoring their fifth goal with Aymeric Laporte during the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 Group E match against Costa Rica at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha.
— Reuters



SPAIN HIT SEVEN PAST COSTA RICA

REPORT & PICTURES **P14**





Spain's Ferran Torres scores their fourth goal against Costa Rica during the Group E match at Al Thumama Stadium, Doha. — Reuters



Stunning Spain rout Costa Rica, join World Cup 100 club

DOHA: Former champions Spain got their World Cup off to a pulsating start on Wednesday through a record 7-0 win over a shell-shocked Costa Rica, with an early Dani Olmo strike taking his country past the 100 goal mark in soccer's showpiece event.

The European giants sought to make their mark in Group E with an unrelenting pursuit of goals against a Costa Rican side that posed no threat, taking the points with ease thanks to Olmo, Gavi, Marco Asensio, Carlos

Soler, Alvaro Morata and a brace from Ferran Torres.

Spain were in control from the first kick, with Costa Rica dizzied by their early onslaught at the Al Thumama Stadium in Doha and unable to find any rhythm in a game where Pedri, Olmo, and Asensio dazzled.

Spain almost went ahead after five minutes, when Pedri's deep cross from the left found Olmo in space, whose shot went wide of the post.

Asensio squandered a clear chance

moments later, connecting awkwardly with the ball and sending it wide after being picked out by the pivotal Pedri, who had a role in seemingly every Spain attack.

They went ahead 11 minutes into the game when Gavi, who became Spain's youngest ever World Cup player at the age of 18, put the ball into the path of Olmo, who turned and deftly lifted it over the advancing keeper Keylor Navas.

Spain pressed hard for a second and

got it on 21 minutes when Jordi Alba's neat pass across the box found Asensio who fired low past Navas.

Spain searched eagerly for a third and won a penalty on 31 minutes when Oscar Duarte tripped Alba, with Ferran Torres coolly stroking the ball down the middle past the helpless Navas.

Spain returned from the break hungry for more, with Asensio firing over the bar as Olmo's dangerous runs tested a Costa Rica defence that was all

at sea.

Torres gave Spain a fourth and himself a brace on 53 minutes, finding Gavi on the right, who played it back into the area for the Barcelona forward to turn and fire home his second.

Gavi found the net himself in the 16 minutes from time with a sumptuous volley in off the post after from a floating cross from Alvaro Morata, then Carlos Soler and Morata completed the demolition with two goals in the dying minutes. — Reuters



* Japan deliver second stunning Asian World Cup win after Saudis

* Doan and Asano score after Germany dominate first hour

* Both scorers play in German Bundesliga

* ‘Ludicrous loss’ says German striker Mueller

Japan's midfielder Ritsu Doan and Germany's defender David Raum fight for the ball during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group E match at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha. – AFP

JAPAN FIGHT BACK TO STUN GERMANY

DOHA: Late goals by substitutes Ritsu Doan and Takuma Asano gave Japan an incredible 2-1 comeback victory over Germany in the World Cup on Wednesday in another emotional fillip for Asian soccer after Saudi Arabia's shock win over Argentina.

Four-time champions Germany had looked to be cruising to a routine victory via Ilkay Guendogan's first-half penalty but paid a fatal price for profligacy in front of goal.

The shock result was a repeat of their 2018 World Cup nightmare when, as defending champions, they lost their opener to Mexico and, after another defeat by South Korea, were condemned to an unheard of group-stage exit.

The Asian team, half of them who play their club football in Germany, had shown almost nothing in attack until a series of second-half substitutions injected some energy into their first competitive fixture against a country that did so much to develop the game in Japan in the middle of the 20th century.

Doan equalised in the 75th minute before Asano smashed home the winner in the 83rd for a stunning turnaround.

“We wanted to start playing aggressively, we wanted to dominate the game,” said Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu, whose second-half changes changed the whole feel of the game. “But Germany are very strong so we needed to defend persistently and take our chances.”

Japan are playing in their seventh



successive World Cup, having never qualified before 1998, but have never claimed such a high-profile scalp. “It’s a big surprise. We saw the Saudi victory over Argentina — the Asian countries are reaching the global

standard,” Moriyasu added.

It was an outcome that looked unlikely in the extreme as Japan struggled to get any foothold for most of a game played against the backdrop of Fifa’s threat of sanctions if

German captain Manuel Neuer wore a ‘OneLove’ armband. In response to that act of protest being effectively banned, the German team covered their mouths in a “silenced” gesture for their team picture.

EARLY DOMINANCE

It was certainly a subdued atmosphere in the ground until Germany’s early dominance was rewarded when Joshua Kimmich picked out David Raum in acres of space in the box and goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda clumsily brought him down as he turned, with Guendogan dispatching the penalty in the 33rd minute. Kai Havertz knocked in what he thought was a second in first-half stoppage time but that, like an early effort for Japan’s Daizen Maeda, was ruled out for offside.

There was initially little change to the pattern in the second half as Jamal Musiala shot over after a penetrating run and Guendogan clipped a post when he should have scored.

There then came a thrilling spell when Gonda made amends by somehow making four successive quickfire saves to deny Jonas Hofmann and Serge Gnabry, keeping his side in the game.

Neuer, appearing in his fourth World Cup, had barely touched the ball but then had to save from Hiroki Sakai as Japan finally found some attacking spark. He did well again to block from Takumi Minamino only for fellow substitute Doan to gleefully knock in the loose ball. Japan pushed on and Asano, inexplicably left to roam by Antonio Ruediger, then showed great touch to bring down a high Ko Itakura free kick. He then held off defender Nico Schlotterbeck before hammering the ball into the smallest of spaces. — Reuters



Fans of Morocco remain on the stands at the end of the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F match between Morocco and Croatia at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha. – AFP

SOLID MOROCCO HOLD MODRIC’S CROATIA

AL KHOR: Morocco held Croatia to a 0-0 draw in their opening game of the World Cup on Wednesday, producing a spirited display against the 2018 runners-up led by Luka Modric.

Backed by Qatar’s large Moroccan community at the Al Bayt Stadium, the Atlas Lions followed up north African rivals Tunisia’s strong performance against dark horses Denmark a day earlier to frustrate Croatia.

“This was an extremely difficult game,” said Croatia captain Modric. “I do believe as the tournament goes on we’ll be better and we’ll adopt a more proactive attitude.”

Modric insisted Croatia are capable of making another deep run despite a sluggish start in the early afternoon heat.

“We’ve not come here to just play and get out the group,” said Modric.

“Our ambitions are a bit greater on the

basis of our Russia achievement, but we need to take it one step at a time.

“Even before the 2018 World Cup we said our primary goal was to make it out the group. If we manage to do that we can be a dangerous opponent for any team.”

Coach Zlatko Dalic had urged Croatia to exercise caution following Saudi Arabia’s shock win over Argentina, a result Morocco captain Romain Saiss said had “opened the door” for the tournament’s less-fancied teams.

Morocco took the game to a Croatia side featuring four players who started the 2018 final but struggled to create genuine chances against a defence marshalled by the experienced Dejan Lovren.

Azzedine Ounahi strangely opted against shooting when well placed inside the area, with Hakim Ziyech and Achraf Hakimi heavily involved down the right

without ever truly threatening Croatia.

Ivan Perisic fired just over from distance for Croatia after intercepting a dreadful pass from Selim Amallah, while goalkeeper Yassine Bounou blocked well with his legs to deny Nikola Vlasic from close range. Modric, the former Ballon d’Or winner appearing at his fourth World Cup at the age of 37, then hammered over from the edge of the box.

Only once have Morocco gone beyond the group stage, in 1986, but they will rate their chances of advancing with games to come against an ageing Belgium team and Group F outsiders Canada.

Croatia pushed for a late winner but found Morocco’s defence in unforgiving mood as Walid Regragui’s side secured a valuable point. “I think it’s a very good point for us,” said Regragui, who took charge of Morocco in August. — AFP



CROATIAN PLAYERS GIVE CREDIT TO MOROCCO DEFENCE

ADIL AL BALUSHI
DOHA, NOV 23

Croatian player Borna Sosa, said that Morocco’s players were very good in defence after their goalless draw. Luka Modric added in his exclusive statements post the match that he is really proud to play this edition of 2022 Fifa World Cup in Qatar and attending in this top football event is a big achievement for any player.

“Morocco is an organised team and they got good support from the crowd as well. They managed to defend with eleven men properly. We had many scoring attempts while the rivals did not have chances as ours. The target was to end the game with three points but it is time now to close the chapter of this match and start preparation for the forthcoming two encounters,” Sosa said.

Responding to an inquiry on the



Morocco’s defender Achraf Hakimi and Croatia’s defender Borna Sosa fight for the ball at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor. – AFP

stadium, he said:” Stadium was very comfortable and the temperatures were few degrees lower,” he said. On the other hand, Croatia’s Josip Juranovic, affirmed that the team did not take the advantages of many

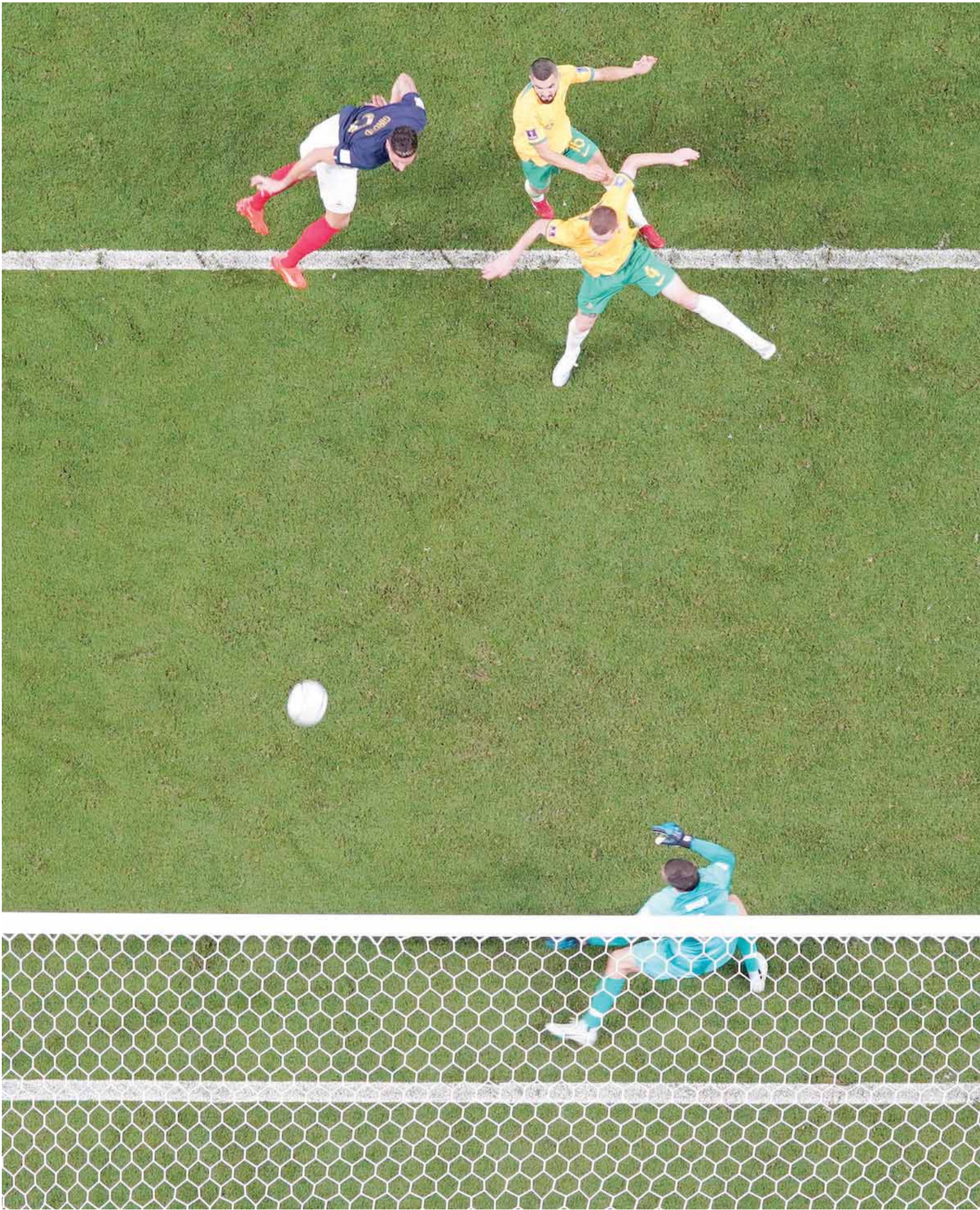
scoring chances. “In the world Cup, you may predict anything in the score. The team’s goal was to win the match but it finished in a goalless draw. Morocco were strong team and they managed to save all our attempts. We will focus in the rest of the matches in group stage in order to qualify,” he said.

Commenting to an inquiry on team’s chances this year in comparison with the previous edition as Croatia ended as runners-up, he responded:” The team’s objective is very high in this World Cup but surprises may happen at any time as Saudi Arabia defeated Argentina on Tuesday.”

Juranovic commented on the tournament’s venues and facilities, he said:” Stadiums are good and temperature are 23 and 24 degree Celsius but we need to adapt quickly in playing at these venues,” he concluded.

France's Olivier Giroud scored their fourth goal against Australia during the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 Group D match at Al Janoub Stadium, Al Wakrah. – Reuters

FRANCE THRASH AUSTRALIA FOR STRONG START



Standings									
2022									
Group D GROUP STAGE									
France		Australia		Denmark		Tunisia			
Standings	Pts	P	W	D	L	f	a	d	
1 France	3	1	1	0	0	4	1	3	
2 Denmark	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	
3 Tunisia	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	
4 Australia	0	1	0	0	1	1	4	-3	
Matches: Played - Won - Draw - Lost Goal for - against - Difference									
Tuesday, November 22									
Denmark	0	0							Tunisia
France	4	1							Australia
Saturday, November 26									
Tunisia	-	-							Australia
France	-	-							Denmark
Wednesday, November 30									
Tunisia	-	-							France
Australia	-	-							Denmark
Source: FIFA									

AL WAKRAH: France started their World Cup title defence in style with a 4-1 comeback win against Australia on Tuesday, with Olivier Giroud scoring two goals to become Les Bleus' joint all-time top scorer.

Giroud netted before and after the break to take his tally to 51 goals, matching Thierry Henry's mark. He scored either side of a Kylian Mbappe goal after Adrien Rabiot had levelled for France following Craig Goodwin's shock early opener.

Les Bleus are the first defending champions to win their opening match since Brazil in 2006, which has already put them in a good position to advance from the group phase, something Italy in 2010, Spain in 2014 and Germany in 2018 failed to do.

France, whose defender Lucas Hernandez was ruled out of the World Cup after picking up a serious knee injury in the first half, have three points and lead

FRANCE COME FROM BEHIND TO WIN 4-1 AFTER GOODWIN OPENER

LES BLEUS FIRST DEFENDING CHAMPIONS TO WIN OPENER SINCE 2006

FRANCE DEFENDER HERNANDEZ OUT OF THE WORLD CUP WITH KNEE INJURY

STRIKER GIROUD EQUALS HENRY'S RECORD OF 51 GOALS FOR FRANCE

Tunisia and Denmark by two after they played out a 0-0 draw on Tuesday.

Didier Deschamps's side, who started the tournament on the back of the disappointment of striker Karim Benzema being ruled out injured last Saturday, next face Denmark on Saturday.

"We got a scare but reacted quickly afterwards. Even if we could have scored more goals, we found each other, we were efficient," said 36-year-old Giroud, who is now France's oldest scorer

in the World Cup.

"It's very good for our self-confidence to have turned things around. We'll have to learn from these little mistakes however."

Australia coach Graham Arnold said his team ran out of gas against a superior side.

"Look, at the end of the day, they're are a quality side. They are world champions for a reason," he added.

"I thought the first half, we did well. Second half, we ran out of legs a bit, but

that's the type of level of those players play at."

POOR START

It was not quite the start France were expecting at the Al Janoub Stadium.

Australia's Goodwin smacked the ball into the roof of the net from Mathew Leckie's cross from the right, leaving Lucas Hernandez holding his right knee after being beaten to the ball after nine minutes.

Hernandez's brother Theo came on as a substitute and

France continued to struggle to create space, with only Mbappe threatening on his left flank.

Australia were much more direct, making the most of Les Bleus's non-existent midfield.

It was Rabiot who levelled in the 27th, however, leaving his marker behind to head home from Hernandez's cross.

Mbappe caused more chaos early in the second half but could not quite find the breakthrough, until he silenced the Australia fans, who in the first half were shouting 'Who are you?' at him, with a glancing header in the 68th minute.

Three minutes later, Giroud headed home from Mbappe's cross before falling on his back in apparent disbelief and being surrounded by his team mates in a goal celebration that lasted longer than usual, giving an exhilarating feel to France's win.

It took Giroud, who owed his place in the starting line-up to Benzema's absence, 115 international appearances to score his 51 goals, while Henry needed 123 from 1997-2010.

— Reuters





Uruguay's defender Diego Godin (R) takes part in a training session at Al Erssal in Doha. – AFP



South Korea players during training. – Reuters

STAR-STUDDED URUGUAY WARY OF ASIAN OPPONENTS

SON ‘FIT ENOUGH’ TO PLAY AGAINST URUGUAY

DOHA: Son Heung-min will be able to play in South Korea's opening World Cup match against Uruguay on Thursday despite wearing a mask after facial surgery, coach Paulo Bento said.

The Spurs attacker and South Korean skipper had surgery earlier this month after suffering a fracture around his left eye in a collision during a Champions League game.

“Son can play and will be able to play,” Bento said on Wednesday.

It remains to be seen to what extent the South Korean talisman features, with the Portuguese boss cautioning: “He knows and we know that after this injury we cannot take any risks.”

The 30-year-old Son has been training in Qatar in a mask and South Korean fans have been eagerly awaiting updates on his fitness.

At one training session in Doha the mask appeared to be troubling Son as he went through fitness drills with the rest of the squad.

Bento insisted the mask was



South Korea coach Paulo Bento during the press conference. – Reuters

“natural” for the player, who has scored 35 times in more than 100 internationals and shared the Premier League Golden Boot last season with Liverpool's Egyptian star Mo Salah.

“The fact he will be wearing a mask is not inconvenient for him,” said Bento.

“We have stuck to the plan since we arrived here, also the way we integrated him into our group shows he has been natural.

“We will see tomorrow how it will be. Our hope is that he will feel comfortable as far as possible.”

Wolves forward Hwang Hee-chan is, however, unlikely to feature because of a hamstring problem.

URUGUAY WARY

Uruguay, who boast veteran attackers Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani, plus younger talents such as Federico Valverde and Darwin



Uruguay's coach Diego Alonso gestures during a press conference at the Qatar National Convention Centre. – AFP

Nunez, will be favourites to win the opening Group H match.

But coach Diego Alonso said the two-time winners would be wary of South Korea whether or not Son is involved.

“Obviously Korea do not only have this player,” Alonso said.

“I have lots of respect for Son, but Korea also have other players, they are very well trained, have a good coach, a very good XI, we

respect everyone.”

After Lionel Messi's Argentina were on the end of a shock loss to Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, veteran captain Diego Godin said Uruguay would have to “tread carefully”.

The Koreans reached the semifinals of the 2002 World Cup, which they jointly hosted with Japan, but failed to get beyond the group stage at the past two tournaments.

“We have a lot of respect for our opponents, we know we're up against a great team,” said Godin. “They're very competitive, they're very dynamic, with good individual players who also have a particular way of playing.”

The 36-year-old is one of a number of veterans for Uruguay playing in their fourth World Cup, alongside Cavani, Suarez, Fernando Muslera and Martin Caceres.

But they also have impressive Real Madrid star Valverde and fellow midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur, Son's team-mate at Tottenham. — AFP

Match program

GROUP STAGE

Thursday, November 24

G Al Janoub Stadium, 02:00 pm
Switzerland Cameroon

H Education City Stadium, 05:00 pm
Uruguay S. Korea

H 974 Stadium, 08:00 pm
Portugal Ghana

G Lusail Stadium, 11:00 pm
Brazil Serbia

Source: FIFA



PORTUGAL ‘WON’T BE DISTRACTED’ BY RONALDO’S MAN UTD SAGA

DOHA: Portugal will not be distracted by the drama surrounding captain Cristiano Ronaldo's acrimonious departure from Manchester United, coach Fernando Santos said on Wednesday, a day before their World Cup Group H opener against Ghana.

“This is something that has not even been discussed,” Fernando Santos told reporters. “This conversation has not come up at any moment, not even from him.”

Manchester United announced on Tuesday that Ronaldo would leave the club with immediate effect, bringing to a bitter end his second spell at Old Trafford after he said in a media interview that he felt betrayed by the club.

Portugal midfielder Bruno Fernandes, who plays for Manchester United, told the same news conference in Qatar that he had not discussed the situation with his now former club team-mate. “I don't feel uncomfortable. I don't have to pick a side,” Fernandes said, adding it had been a dream to play with him in the English Premier League. “We know that nothing lasts forever. It was good while it lasted.”

The Portugal coach said it was “critical” that his team perform better in the World Cup this year than they did in Russia in 2018 when they were beaten by Uruguay in the first knockout round, starting with Thursday's encounter with Ghana. — Reuters





39 teams to compete at 2022 RS Venture Connect World sailing

MUSCAT: Oman Sail welcomed 39 teams from 19 nations to the Barcelo Musannah Resort for the 2022 RS Venture Connect World Championships, the first exclusively para sailing event to be held in Oman.

Over the next six days, sailors in both the para and open categories – including Oman Sail’s own SailFree squad — will compete in the ultra-versatile RS Venture Connect boat, before a grand final on November 27 will decide the 2022 world champion.

Six two-person teams will represent Oman in the para category; Hassan al Lawati and Sami al Sulaimi, Sultan al Wahaibi and Ahmed al Balushi, Adil al Siyabi and Nasser al Rahbi, Malik al Qartoubi and Ghalya al Jabri, Rayyan al Mujaini and Hamed al Subhi, and Zaher al Atbi and Ali al Ghasaini.

Feras Asqul, Project Manager



Feras Asqul of Oman Sail

at Oman Sail, said, “This is a first for Oman and a first for the region. We are delighted to be able to welcome so many talented and determined sailors to the Barcelo Musannah Resort for a milestone event. Conditions are perfect for great sailing, and we look forward to making history here together. The practice days brought exceptional conditions and amazing sailing, with light winds allowing the athletes to



Dermot Birchall, General Manager of the Barcelo Musannah Resort

show their best form. Already we have seen how talented the para sailors are and this promises to be an incredibly close but exciting championship. We look forward to great racing tomorrow and the chance to show the potential of para sailing.”

Dermot Birchall, General Manager of Barcelo Musannah Resort, says, “We are delighted to host the first parasailing competition in Oman at Barcelo Musannah Resort. Oman Sail has

done a phenomenal job with the recent sailing competitions in the Sultanate, and we are grateful to be a part of their ongoing journey. It is a true testament to the sailors’ determination and strong will, inspiring people to overcome challenges and extraordinary circumstances to pursue their goals in life as the world watches on. We would like to wish all participants of the RSS Venture Connect World Championships the very best of luck and look forward to welcoming them to Barcelo Musannah Resort.”

The next leg of the nationwide Oman Sailing Festival also kicks off tomorrow at Barcelo Musannah Resort, with professional instructors from Oman Sail offering free sessions to Try Sailing, Try Windsurfing and Try Kitesurfing, as well as the RS Venture Connect for people with disabilities.

Seeb Warriors clinch ISC volley title

MUSCAT: Seeb Warriors clinched the title in the Indian Social Club (ISC) Volleyball Championship 2022 after beating UFSC Muscat 2-1 in the final recently.

The 2022 ISC Volleyball Championship presented by Purshottam Kanji Exchange Co LLC was held on November 18 at Al Ahli Club Darsait. Nine teams competed for the ever-rolling trophy sponsored by Al Raka Trading Co LLC.

It is the largest championship held in Oman by the expatriate community as the top seeded players from Oman, Pakistan and India participated in this tournament which was divided into two groups.

The tournament began with top-seeded team Al Raka Trading facing UFSC Muscat at 10 am in the morning. Following the opening match, the teams Seeb Warriors, Charva Eleven, DB Champs, Oman Strikers, Malabar Warriors, Nizwa Friends and Muscat Super Strikers played their league matches. All the league matches played with a score of 21, 21 and 15 and the semifinals and final played with best of 3 sets of 25, 25 and 15. All the teams displayed



Winners Seeb Warriors (Oman team)

best of their play and four teams advanced to the semifinals and the championship matches held same day from 6 pm.

Al Raka started off a little nervously, but after some really good rallies they gained confidence, which was shown through the great services and powerful smashes. UFSC outplayed with smart movements and smashes made the final set in their favour and emerged as winner of first semifinal with scores 25-17, 23-25 and 15-9.

In the second semifinal, Omani team Seeb Warriors thrashed Malabar Warriors with some terrific attacks and excellent movements scoring 25-13 and 25-16.

In the final, Seeb Warriors and UFSC displayed an outstanding

volleyball show and the crowd enjoyed every moment of the game. Seeb Warriors were very consistent throughout the event and the confidence level was very high. UFSC defence forced them ample errors in the first set to claim victory by the opponents in the first set scoring 26-25. However, UFSC played an outstanding game in the second set with their attacking style to bring the second set in their favour scoring 25-16. Seeb Warriors was impeccable throughout the set and the home ground helped them to turn the final set in their favour to emerge as champions with a score of 15-13.

Sanoj Sajjad was adjudged as the best attacker whereas Abu Ghazi as the best setter and Shyam as the best all-rounder. Ajay Ghosh National Referee,

Volleyball Federation of India, supervised the tournament with the support of Vijay Rajkumar, referee with Kerala State Volleyball Association.

Jose Varghese Kerala state referee, former volleyball players Saji John, Manoj Francis and Goutham assisted them in conducting the tournament smoothly.

The trophies and cash prizes were distributed to the winners by Karanjeet Singh – ISC Vice-Chairman, Babu Rajendran – General Secretary, Saji Abraham - Sports Secretary and Sanjit Kumar- Joint Sports Secretary. Ever rolling trophy sponsored by Al Raka Trading LLC was handed over to Seeb Warriors by Nikin Shajahan — Managing Director of Al Raka group of companies.



Runners-up UFSC (Indian team)

Oman junior tennis team finishes second in Maldives tournament



Oman junior tennis team with the coach.



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 23

The Oman national junior tennis team succeeded in achieving good results during the participation in the Maldives Challenge Championship recently.

Oman’s Abdulrahman al Rahbi claimed second place after losing the final match against Al Adam of Maldives 6-0, 6-3.

Omani players Azzan al Busaidy was third and Moataz al Mazrouei finished fourth. In the doubles

category for boys under-12 years old, Abdul Rahman al Rahbi and his partner Al Adam from the Maldives defeated Azzan al Busaidy and Louth of Maldives 6-4, 6-0 to claim the title.

In the girls’ category, Oman’s Aisha al Busaidy got second place after losing to Liyan of the Maldives 6-2, 6-0.

In the women’s doubles, Rayyan al Busaidy and Zoe from the Maldives took second place after losing to Liyan and Sarah from the Maldives 7-5, 7-6 (6).

Stassen joins hands with Oman Cricket



MUSCAT: Oman Cricket’s endeavour to rope in private companies to support the game of cricket in the Sultanate of Oman took another step forward when the game’s governing body in Oman signed a partnership agreement with Stassen Tea, one of the best-known tea companies from Sri Lanka.

Stassen was named the Associate sponsor of the national team, which is expected to have a hectic schedule in the coming months.

OC chairman Pankaj Khimji signed the deal along with Srinith De Silva, CEO of Aitkin Spence Hotels – Oman, which represent Stassen Group in the Sultanate of Oman, at a ceremony held at the OC headquarters recently.

Speaking after signing the agreement, De Silva said: “Stassen is delighted to be associated with Oman Cricket as an Associate Sponsor of the national team. This partnership will go a long way in establishing the relationship that has been ongoing for a long period. “We wish the Oman national team all the very best and Stassen Tea will continue its journey in the Sultanate of Oman

by serving the best Ceylon team.” Khimji said: “The involvement of corporates and private players to support the game is a very encouraging development. Oman Cricket prides itself as one of the sports organisations that has forged strong relationships between the government and private sectors.”

He added: “Oman Cricket is on the forward mode and our national team has been doing well at all levels. This partnership with Stassen will give more strength to our team’s preparations for the forthcoming tournaments and we hope to brew a strong relationship with them to achieve laurels for the Sultanate of Oman.”

The signing ceremony was attended by Paul Sheridan, OC vice-chairman, Duleep Mendis, OC chief development officer, and other officials. Later, Khimji presented a national team jersey to De Silva to mark the agreement.

Oman national team is due to play a three-match 50-over series against Canada at the Oman Cricket Academy ground, starting on Wednesday night. The next two games will be held on November 25-26.

Brazil need to capitalise on ‘best mode’ of Neymar, says Silva



DOHA: Brazil must take advantage of having Neymar in his “best mode” at the World Cup, according to captain Thiago Silva.

Neymar heads into the Qatar tournament in supreme form. He has directly contributed to 26 goals for Paris Saint-Germain, scoring 15 and setting up a further 11 this season.

His tally of goal involvements is the joint-most in the top-five European leagues, along with Erling Haaland (23 goals, three assists) and club-mate Lionel Messi (12 goals, 14 assists).

With 75 international goals to

his name, Neymar needs just three more to overtake Pele and become Brazil’s all-time leading scorer.

With Vinicius Junior, Richarlison, Gabriel Jesus, Rodrygo and Raphinha supporting Neymar in attack, Silva believes Brazil have to make their attacking quality count.

“Neymar has a good level for this competition,” Silva said in a press conference ahead of Brazil’s clash with Serbia on Thursday.

“Now, without injury or worry, we see a better Neymar. Best of all, he is humble.

“Our group has welcomed all of

our colleagues and in my opinion they will make Neymar even more at ease. “We will share our responsibilities as players and that will help us move forward. I think we need to take advantage of this best Neymar mode.”

It has been 20 years since Brazil won their fifth World Cup, and Silva — who was captain in 2014 but not in Russia — believes that only serves as extra inspiration.

“The 2002 win is a great inspiration for all of us,” he explained. “We have images of all the World Cups we have won and that’s a source of inspiration and

motivation so we can continue making history.

“We know it’s up to us. I know those who could lift the World Cup in the past have had beautiful stories. It makes me even more motivated to honour our jersey.”

Silva believes the blend of youth and experience in Tite’s squad is ideal, as the 38-year-old claimed his experience of captaining Brazil in their disappointing campaign on home soil has only benefitted his own development.

He said: “Nowadays I am better prepared. Sometimes we need to learn the hard way.” — **dpa**

Serbia counting on coach Stojkovic’s WC experience, says Mitrovic

DOHA: Serbia have never moved past the group stages at the World Cup since the breakup of Yugoslavia but defender Stefan Mitrovic believes coach Dragan Stojkovic has instilled the right mentality for the team to reach the knockout stages.

Serbia were knocked out at the group stage in 2010 and 2018 and they did not qualify in 2014. Last year, they appointed Stojkovic, a former Yugoslav international who has played at several World Cups and European Championships.

Serbia topped their World Cup qualifying group ahead of Portugal to automatically qualify for the finals while they also won their Nations League group in September to gain promotion to League A.

“He’s unbelievable, from the first moment, he gave us a great mentality, he played as a player at the World Cup. He knows we have to put pressure from the start,” Mitrovic said on Sunday.

“Definitely, he’s a very important person in everything we’ve done till now. With his

experience, he can show us how to be successful in this tournament.”

Serbia’s biggest test comes in their first Group G game, however, when they take on Brazil on Thursday.

Both Mitrovic and goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic admitted the South Americans are one of the tournament favourites, but they had no qualms about playing the five-time champions so early.

“Everyone knows their history, their mentality and the quality of the players... But I think it’s excellent we play Brazil immediately,” Milinkovic-Savic said.

Mitrovic said “it doesn’t matter” who they play first but said they would have to gel together as a unit if they are to advance to the last 16.

“Their team is very strong with a lot of stars,” he said.

“What we need is an amazing atmosphere in the team and that’s the most important thing we need to be successful in the tournament.” — **Reuters**



Serbia’s defender Stefan Mitrovic addresses a press conference at the Al Arabi SC in Doha. — **AFP**

Dealing with pressure must be natural for Brazil: Tite

DOHA: Brazil have no problem being the favourites to win the World Cup and dealing with the pressure must be natural for their players, coach Tite said on Wednesday.

“The pressure is natural. Brazil have the biggest history in soccer and with that legacy always comes the pressure,” Tite told a news conference ahead of their World Cup Group G debut against Serbia on Thursday.

“We have some of the players that call the biggest media attention in the world so we take it naturally, it’s our dream winning a World Cup. Pressure is inevitable.”

Brazil have won the World Cup a record five times and Tite

said it is not his responsibility that Brazil have not won the tournament in 20 years.

He said he can only be accountable for the last four years, his only complete cycle since Brazil lost against Belgium in the quarterfinals in Russia in 2018.

“In Russia we only had two years to fix the team and I came to the rescue. Now is different because I had the opportunity to build the team the way I wanted,” Tite said.

“That’s why my feeling today is completely different than four years ago. I’m not that nervous because all the work has been done.”

Tite did not disclose his team



Brazil’s coach Tite attends a press conference at the Qatar National Convention Center (QNCC) in Doha on the eve of the Qatar 2022 World Cup match between Brazil and Serbia. — **AFP**

selection.

His background as a defensive coach means there has been much speculation over his picks for the match against Serbia, with the biggest question mark surrounding Vinicius Jr.

The 22-year-old scored Real Madrid’s winner in the Champions League final against Liverpool and finished eighth in the Ballon d’Or last month, elevating him to world-class level in his fifth season with the La Liga side.

However, only the players know if he will secure a place in the starting 11 against Serbia, with Tite not disclosing whether he will pair Fred with his Manchester United team-mate Casemiro to strengthen the midfield or unleash Vinicius up front alongside Neymar, Richarlison and Raphinha.

“We have three models and we will adapt accordingly regarding each opponent that we face. All the players know that and are aware,” Tite said.

“Me as a coach, I need to have the capacity to potentialise the best characteristics of each player.

“Vinicius is one of the players up-front that have made their cases playing at the highest level with their clubs. They were the one who call themselves upon. Now is my job to fit them in my scheme,” the Brazil coach added.

— **Reuters**