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Poland spoils
Saudi party

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2022

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► NEWS BRIEF

SAYYID BADR SPEAKS TO SPANISH FM

Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received a phone call from Jose Manuel Albares, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain, on Saturday. They discussed bilateral ties, joint cooperation and consultation on several regional and international issues of mutual interest. "We continue close cooperation on enhancing bilateral initiatives and partnerships, and sharing views on regional and international issue," H E Sayyid Badr later tweeted.

05



India, GCC agree to resume talks on free trade agreement

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'Inspirations' - resin art show at Hormuz Grand Muscat

Second rating upgrade from S&P in 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's sovereign credit rating has been upgraded for the second time this year by S&P Global Ratings on improving fiscal position due to government reforms and higher oil prices.

On Friday, S&P raised its foreign and local currency long-term sovereign credit ratings of Oman to 'BB' from 'BB-'. The global rating agency also upgraded its transfer and convertibility assessment to 'BB+' from 'BB' and affirmed 'B' short-term sovereign credit rating of Oman.

Earlier in April, S&P had upgraded Oman's sovereign credit rating to 'BB-' from 'B+', which was a first rating upgrade by the agency in nearly a decade.

'Oman's fiscal and external positions are benefiting from government reforms and higher oil prices. In addition to rebuilding fiscal buffers on the back of windfall oil revenue, the Omani government has continued to reduce the budget's reliance on oil receipts, in line with its medium-term fiscal plan till 2025,' S&P said in its rating action report.

The rating agency has kept its outlook on Oman ratings 'stable'. It said the stable outlook balances the recent and expected strengthening in Oman's fiscal and balance-of-payments positions against the economy's structural susceptibility to ad-

Real GDP to grow by 3.9% in 2022

Non-oil growth to average 2.5% over 2024-2025

Fiscal surplus to be 5.8% of GDP this year

Public debt to decline to RO17.9bn from RO20.8bn



verse oil price shocks.

S&P expects Oman's fiscal reforms to continue, including the possible introduction of personal income tax on high earners and measures to increase value-added tax (VAT) receipts.

'Even so, there are indications that the government has advanced its efforts to lower the sensitivity of fiscal outcomes to commodity (oil) prices. Since last year, it has been using windfall oil revenue to reduce debt,' the rating agency said.

S&P noted that in the first-half of 2022, Oman engaged in sev-

eral liability management exercises including a voluntary buyback of US\$700mn in Eurobonds. It estimates Oman's government debt to decline to RO17.9bn (42 per cent of GDP) by year-end 2022 from RO20.8bn (61 per cent of GDP) at year-end 2021.

As per S&P forecasts, the sultanate's government will remain in a fiscal surplus and the economy in a current account surplus to 2024, providing additional opportunities to build fiscal and external buffers.

The rating agency recognised that over the past two years, the

government has introduced measures to address governance and public finance issues. Moreover, S&P expects the government's reform momentum will continue during the 2022-2025 period.

'Although the government intends to broadly continue with its fiscal reform programme, we expect it will allocate some of the forecast oil windfall this year to supporting economic activity and reducing the effects of past austerity on the population,' the rating agency added.

See also Page 05

Quadripartite welcomes Muscat manifesto in fight against AMR

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The third Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance concluded in Muscat on Friday where targets to address the global antimicrobial resistance (AMR) challenge were discussed for the first time.

The conference agreed on the Muscat Ministerial Manifesto, which sets three global targets:

- Reduce the total amount of antimicrobials used in agri-food systems by at least 30-50 per cent by 2030.
- Preserve critically important antimicrobials for human medicine, ending the use of medically important antimicrobials for growth promotion in animals.
- Ensure 'Access' group antibiotics (a category of antibiotics that are affordable, safe and have a low AMR risk) represent at least 60 per cent of overall antibiotic consumption in humans by 2030.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the UN Environment Programme, the WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health - known as the Quadripartite - welcomed the outcomes of the conference for accelerating action on AMR.

The globally agreed targets will be key to protecting the effi-

Countries committed to implement National Action Plans for AMR and strengthen surveillance through improved data reporting

cacy of antimicrobials and curbing the development of AMR worldwide, as well as reducing environmental pollution, in turn lowering the spread of AMR, the World Health Organisation (WHO) stated.

The conference and its numerical targets for antimicrobial use in the human and animal sectors will pave the way for bold political commitments at the forthcoming UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AMR in 2024.

Countries also made commitments to implement National Action Plans for AMR and strengthen surveillance through improved data reporting and management, private sector engagement and implementation of evidence-based practices.

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MUSCAT DAILY PRESENTS



City of future shows way forward for youth

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) projects Duqm as the city of the future but anyone visiting the nine-day mega youth festival - Amad Duqm 22 - would feel he or she has already stepped into the future.

With its Mars incubator, an arena to race drones and remote control cars, and a futuristic mosque, besides an area for mobile camping, art labs and video games, the Amad Duqm 22 calls for contemplation as dozens of abstract and interactive artistic works and structures spread over the village give a peek into the world of the future.

Being held at the Special Economic Zone in Duqm (SEZAD),



the event is being organised in cooperation between OPAZ and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

It seeks to introduce Duqm as a futuristic city that attracts young people and their projects in various fields such as energy, industry and logistics, besides

Since youth are the cornerstone of achieving future aspirations, Amad Duqm 22 event was organised to incubate the vision and creativity of youth

AHMED BIN ALI AKAAK

tourism.

'Amad Duqm 22 event comes as a mini experimental laboratory for the aspirations of Omani youth. The design and implementation processes were entrusted to a select group of creative Omani youth to create a vision that combines science,

technology, art and entertainment to create a better world,' stated SEZAD.

Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, acting CEO of SEZAD, welcomed the participants and introduced them to the elements of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, which make it the city of the future and youth.

Akaak noted that the idea behind the 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.

"Since youth are the cornerstone of achieving future aspirations, Amad Duqm 22 event was organised to incubate the vision and creativity of youth," he said.

Dr Said bin Khalifa al Tuwairshi, head of the Supervisory

Committee for Amad Duqm 22, stated that the festival 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 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.

"The event provides an opportunity for young people to transform their skills and innovations into promising economic projects taking advantage of the available opportunities. It also aims to provide various options for infrastructure and housing," Tuwairshi added.

Shura briefs members on new Labour Law

Muscat - The Majlis A'Shura briefed its members on the Labour Law forwarded by the government to the Majlis on Thursday.

The briefing took place during the shura's third session of the 4th annual convening, headed by H E Khalid Hilal al Ma'awali, Chairman of the Shura Council.

The shura discussed a report by its Economic and Financial Committee on the draft version of the State Budget 2023, as well as two laws forwarded by the government - one on the Higher Education Law and the other on the Basic Education Law.

The session covered other topics, including the biometric prints law, Oman-EU comprehensive air transport law, the Oman-South Africa air services agreement and the Oman-Rwanda air services agreement.

ONA

Oman, Slovenia hold political consultations

Muscat - The first round of political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Oman and Slovenia was held at the Foreign Ministry on Thursday.

The Omani side was headed by H E Sheikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry, while the Slovenian side was headed by Samuel Žbogar, Minister of Foreign affairs.

The two sides discussed relations between them and means of enhancing them. They also exchanged views on regional and international situations of common interest, as well as the efforts exerted to resolve them.

ONA

REGIONAL WEATHER		
	Max	Min
Muscat	30	20
Abu Dhabi	31	22
Doha	31	21
Kuwait City	28	18
Manama	30	22
Riyadh	30	15
PRAYER TIMINGS		
Fajr	5.10am	
Sunrise	6.29am	
Duhr	11.59pm	
Asr	3.04pm	
Maghrib	5.25pm	
Isha	6.39pm	



SEASON 2022 - 2023

December Performances

December 2022

The Global Music Ensemble
Royal Opera House Muscat

December 2022

Kulthumiyat
Featuring Yosra Mahnouch and Mai Farouk
Royal Opera House of Musical Arts

December 2022

Roberto Bolle and Friends
Royal Opera House Muscat

DAY	DATE	TIME
Saturday	3	7:00 PM

DAY	DATE	TIME
Friday	9	7:00 PM
Saturday	10	7:00 PM

DAY	DATE	TIME
Thursday	15	7:00 PM
Friday	16	7:00 PM

December 2022

Carousel
Performed by Kataklò Athletic Dance Theatre
Royal Opera House of Musical Arts

December 2022

Gile Bae with the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra
Conducted by Jan Latham-Koenig
Royal Opera House Muscat

DAY	DATE	TIME
Thursday	22	7:00 PM
Friday	23	7:00 PM
Saturday	24	4:00 PM

DAY	DATE	TIME
Saturday	31	6:30 PM



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SEASON 2022 - 2023

Football fans in Oman hail Japanese ‘cleaning’ culture

Our Correspondent
Muscat

After their historic victory over Germany at Khalifa International Stadium on Wednesday, Japanese fans were seen cleaning the stadium before leaving the arena. Images of them collect trash into plastic bags after the game went viral on social media, prompting a strong reaction from people in Oman with comments on the lesson to be learnt from the Japanese in keeping the environment clean.

Muscat Daily spoke to Omani fans who are watching the World

Cup closely. Issa al Masoudi said, “Japanese fans celebrated their 2-1 victory over Germany in their first 2022 World Cup game by cleaning out the trash. This isn’t the first time the Japanese fans have done such a thing; they have been doing similar good deeds at previous World Cups.”

Masoudi informed that the Japanese instill the culture of cleanliness in children from childhood. “This is a wonderful culture because children grow up into people who love their country and respect for others. We need to spread that culture at home, in our schools and mosques, even in



(AFP)

our private and government sector offices. Oman is a beautiful country and it is worth working for it and spreading awareness among those few who litter.”

According to Nasser al Hosni, the Japanese fans’ celebration by cleaning up the stadium after the game is evidence of their progress, civilisation and self-reliance. “The Japanese people built themselves up after the end of World War II that destroyed them and taught their children how to rebuild their civilisation in a very short time. It is a culture that we should learn from to build our homeland.”

Hosni believes preserving the environment is everyone’s responsibility. He called on all citizens and residents to follow the example of the Japanese. “I urge every one to pick up trash, wherever one sees it.”

Fahad al Yusufi said Oman should launch awareness campaigns on cleanliness and encourage people to throw waste in trash bins. “We have to tip our hats to the Japanese fans. We must start teaching the importance of cleanliness of the environment from an early age to our children.”

Government employee Yahya al Hassani said, “I like what the

Japanese fans did at the end of the match. I hope to see such scenes in our stadiums and tourist sites. Unfortunately, there are many who leave their trash on beaches and tourist places after enjoying an outing.”

Environmental specialist Ahlam al Muqbali observed that the Japanese are raised in a culture of cleanliness and respect for the environment from childhood. “They do not leave rubbish behind and they respect the place where they stay. We must teach our children and create awareness among people to preserve the environment.”



CAMPAIGN VEHICLES PHOTOS OF THE AFFECTED VEHICLES



RANGE ROVER (L322)

Date of the campaign: 27/11/22
Campaign type: Safety Recall
Campaign section: Airbags
Product description: Cars (Land Rover)

THE NUMBER OF AFFECTED VEHICLES	VIN NUMBERS						THE YEAR OF PRODUCTION	VEHICLE MODEL
275	SALLMAM347A245018 SALLMAM347A246106 SALLMAM347A250079 SALLMAM347A250400 SALLMAM347A250414 SALLMAM347A250420 SALLMAM347A253209 SALLMAM347A253248 SALLMAM347A255939 SALLMAM347A255997 SALLMAM347A256027 SALLMAM347A256310 SALLMAM347A256341 SALLMAM347A258277 SALLMAM347A258307 SALLMAM347A258336 SALLMAM347A258443 SALLMAM347A258494 SALLMAM347A258544 SALLMAM347A258699 SALLMAM347A258705 SALLMAM347A261064 SALLMAM347A261310 SALLMAM347A261421 SALLMAM347A261787 SALLMAM347A261908 SALLMAM348A263770 SALLMAM348A263773 SALLMAM348A266812 SALLMAM348A270719 SALLMAM348A271605 SALLMAM348A273332 SALLMAM348A273341 SALLMAM348A273417 SALLMAM348A273510 SALLMAM348A274099 SALLMAM348A274148 SALLMAM348A274291 SALLMAM348A274715 SALLMAM348A277596 SALLMAM348A277652 SALLMAM348A278344 SALLMAM348A278397 SALLMAM348A278444 SALLMAM348A278522 SALLMAM348A280051 SALLMAM348A280446 SALLMAM348A280478 SALLMAM348A280584 SALLMAM348A280609 SALLMAM348A285194 SALLMAM348A285692 SALLMAM348A286164 SALLMAM348A286313 SALLMAM348A286541 SALLMAM348A290268	SALLMAM348A290304 SALLMAM348A290389 SALLMAM348A290433 SALLMAM348A290444 SALLMAM348A290526 SALLMAM348A290545 SALLMAM348A290566 SALLMAM348A290675 SALLMAM348A290717 SALLMAM348A290938 SALLMAM348A290977 SALLMAM348A292367 SALLMAM348A293484 SALLMAM348A295588 SALLMAM349A298232 SALLMAM349A298536 SALLMAM349A298554 SALLMAM349A299109 SALLMAM349A299223 SALLMAM349A299351 SALLMAM349A299527 SALLMAM349A299571 SALLMAM349A299729 SALLMAM349A302224 SALLMAM349A302377 SALLMAM349A302394 SALLMAM349A302495 SALLMAM349A303043 SALLMAM349A303612 SALLMAM349A303639 SALLMAM349A303660 SALLMAM349A303676 SALLMAM547A241856 SALLMAM547A241874 SALLMAM547A241893 SALLMAM547A242011 SALLMAM547A250195 SALLMAM547A250243 SALLMAM547A250479 SALLMAM547A254623 SALLMAM547A254692 SALLMAM547A255785 SALLMAM547A255931 SALLMAM547A255966 SALLMAM547A256109 SALLMAM547A256327 SALLMAM547A256515 SALLMAM547A256523 SALLMAM547A256614 SALLMAM547A258390 SALLMAM547A258493 SALLMAM547A258508 SALLMAM547A258755 SALLMAM547A262423 SALLMAM548A270250 SALLMAM548A270294	SALLMAM548A270513 SALLMAM548A270623 SALLMAM548A270744 SALLMAM548A270998 SALLMAM548A271651 SALLMAM548A271705 SALLMAM548A271826 SALLMAM548A271842 SALLMAM548A271962 SALLMAM548A271977 SALLMAM548A272018 SALLMAM548A272089 SALLMAM548A272185 SALLMAM548A277160 SALLMAM548A277336 SALLMAM548A277342 SALLMAM548A277388 SALLMAM548A277400 SALLMAM548A278285 SALLMAM548A278552 SALLMAM548A278736 SALLMAM548A278747 SALLMAM548A284664 SALLMAM548A284675 SALLMAM548A284902 SALLMAM548A286567 SALLMAM548A286880 SALLMAM548A287027 SALLMAM548A290089 SALLMAM548A290098 SALLMAM548A290130 SALLMAM548A290170 SALLMAM548A290187 SALLMAM548A290207 SALLMAM548A290224 SALLMAM548A290267 SALLMAM548A290336 SALLMAM548A290558 SALLMAM548A291933 SALLMAM548A291979 SALLMAM548A292323 SALLMAM548A292519 SALLMAM548A293056 SALLMAM548A297602 SALLMAM549A298110 SALLMAM549A298603 SALLMAM549A298811 SALLMAM549A298849 SALLMAM549A299043 SALLMAM549A299239 SALLMAM549A299250 SALLMAM549A299461 SALLMAM549A299587 SALLMAM549A302466 SALLMAM549A302504 SALLMAM549A303578	SALLMAM549A303600 SALLMAMD4AA306901 SALLMAMD4AA306925 SALLMAMD4AA307160 SALLMAMD4AA307172 SALLMAMD4AA307174 SALLMAMD4AA310010 SALLMAMD4AA310020 SALLMAMD4AA310188 SALLMAMD4AA310284 SALLMAMD4AA310371 SALLMAMD4AA310520 SALLMAMD4AA310651 SALLMAMD4AA310807 SALLMAMD4AA315979 SALLMAMD4AA317353 SALLMAMD4AA317668 SALLMAMD4AA318460 SALLMAMD4AA318688 SALLMAMD4AA323029 SALLMAMD4AA323280 SALLMAMD4AA323453 SALLMAMD4AA323507 SALLMAMD4AA324996 SALLMAMD4AA325075 SALLMAMD4AA326759 SALLMAMD4AA326885 SALLMAMD4AA326965 SALLMAMD4BA340062 SALLMAMD4BA340133 SALLMAMD4BA349024 SALLMAMD4BA351750 SALLMAMD4BA356715 SALLMAMD4BA359372 SALLMAMD4BA359373 SALLMAMD4BA359395 SALLMAMD4BA359404 SALLMAMD4BA359431 SALLMAMD4BA359444 SALLMAMD4BA359449 SALLMAMD4CA365957 SALLMAMD4CA366660 SALLMAMD4CA372361 SALLMAME4AA306632 SALLMAME4AA306643 SALLMAME4AA306986 SALLMAME4AA309980 SALLMAME4AA310071 SALLMAME4AA310075 SALLMAME4AA310114 SALLMAME4AA310214 SALLMAME4AA310216 SALLMAME4AA310252 SALLMAME4AA310461 SALLMAME4AA310499 SALLMAME4AA310511	SALLMAME4AA310526 SALLMAME4AA310539 SALLMAME4AA310572 SALLMAME4AA310673 SALLMAME4AA310823 SALLMAME4AA315053 SALLMAME4AA315155 SALLMAME4AA315294 SALLMAME4AA315307 SALLMAME4AA317004 SALLMAME4AA317145 SALLMAME4AA318661 SALLMAME4AA318766 SALLMAME4AA319105 SALLMAME4AA323199 SALLMAME4AA325380 SALLMAME4AA325538 SALLMAME4AA327839 SALLMAME4AA327916 SALLMAME4AA330576 SALLMAME4BA334865 SALLMAME4BA337352 SALLMAME4BA337807 SALLMAME4BA337837 SALLMAME4BA338286 SALLMAME4BA338311 SALLMAME4BA338509 SALLMAME4BA338674 SALLMAME4BA339177 SALLMAME4BA339431 SALLMAME4BA339505 SALLMAME4BA339617 SALLMAME4BA342840 SALLMAME4BA343645 SALLMAME4BA344031 SALLMAME4BA344120 SALLMAME4BA344352 SALLMAME4BA345622 SALLMAME4BA347907 SALLMAME4BA359543 SALLMAME4BA359585 SALLMAME4BA360011 SALLMAME4BA360029 SALLMAME4CA361789 SALLMAME4CA367752 SALLMAME4CA368162 SALLMAME4CA368173 SALLMAME4CA370099 SALLMAME4CA371035 SALLMAME4CA371041 SALLMAME4CA371662	2006-2013	L322	

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United effort needed to tackle threat of antimicrobial resistance: H E Sabti



Muscat - The third Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance concluded in Muscat on Friday. It ended with conference participants agreeing to accelerate tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR) at the national, regional, and global levels and to enhance international cooperation.

The two-day conference, held under the theme 'Antimicrobial Resistance: From Politics to One Health Measures,' sought to stimulate interactive dialogue to address the epidemic of AMR.

H E Dr Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health, said, "The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the phenomenon of antibiotic-resistant microbes and highlighted the importance of readiness and preparedness for outbreaks and pandemics."

Oman lauded for efforts to stem spread of AMR

Muscat - Dr Ahmed Salim al Mandhari, Regional Director of the World Health Organization for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, has commended the efforts made by Oman to limit the spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) by drafting and applying strategies and policies that yielded fruit over time.

Mandhari told ONA that the measures include legalisation



of antibiotics use and the limitation of access to antibiotics, whether by government or private institutions, to prescriptions from a treating doctor. "Such measures were lacking in many countries in the world, resulting in the emergence of resistant types of bacteria," Mandhari said.

He added that Oman's hosting of the third Global High-

Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance reflects the country's keenness, as well as the interest of other countries and international organisations, to regulate the use of antibiotics. "The absence of such a collective action will undoubtedly affect human health and society by allowing the emergence of microbes that resist antibiotics."

published a strategic framework for collaboration across sectors to advance a One Health approach to AMR.

"Despite the magnitude of this global threat, we face significant challenges in establishing sustainable funding for the essential and effective interventions outlined in the strategic framework."

According to Dr QU Dongyu, Director General of Food and Agriculture Organization, 70 per cent of antimicrobials sold globally are used in production of animals. "In the One Health context, this disproportionate figure makes the agri-food sector critical in the response to AMR."

H E Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said that Oman has developed programmes to confront this mu-

ltilateral phenomenon in a more effective manner, and to integrate efforts in the fields of agriculture, health and the environment within the framework of the One Health approach.

"The most important thing to focus on at this stage is accelerating the pace of dealing with this global threat, at national and regional levels, and reaching a global partnership. This matter requires political commitment to implement international standards and guidelines, and develop appropriate national legislation."

He informed that the sultanate is "counting on the Muscat Manifesto to accelerate the One Health measures on AMR, in a way that contributes to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals".

(Contributed by Hibba al Kindi)

FORESIGHT



SYED ADIL ABBAS

Abbas, an MBA graduate from Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK), is currently based in Muscat, and has over 20 years of international experience working with the public and private sectors in the Middle East, Far East, Africa and India.

How often have you seen advertisements for yoghurts, fibre-rich breakfast products or nutritional supplements that "strengthen the body's natural balance"? We have long known that bacterial culture in our intestinal flora are important for our health but the potential of these microorganisms has now really gained momentum, as advanced medicines based on our microbiome are just around the corner.

The human microbiome is the term for the diverse collection of microorganisms that reside on and in the human body. Research efforts in the area are extensive, with a focus on identifying these microorganisms and their influence on our state of health.

Visionary researchers, pharmaceutical companies and startups are in the process of developing advanced products and forms of treatment based on research in the field. An early example (around 1950s) is Fecal Microbial Transplantation, where intestinal bacteria are transferred to a patient from a healthy donor. The field has developed significantly since then. Technologies under development are drugs based on sophisticated collections of specific health-promoting bacteria and metabolites, better known as postbiotics, that can cure, for example, cancer.

The potential is enormous, and researchers around the globe are working to develop solutions.

For example, it is expected that a microbiome-based drug for the treatment of infectious diseases will soon be in the market. The drug will be able to fight bacteria that is one of the most common causes of diarrhoea.

At the same time, promising studies indicate that the microbiome has an impact on, for example, COVID-19 in addition on a wide spectrum of other diseases from cancer to mental disorders to autism.

The microbiome has also created a new level of competition between dietary supplements on the one hand and pharmaceuticals on the other. Probiotics, which are described as live bacteria that aim to change the microbial gut flora, have been marketed for years by nutritional companies, while the field is new to the pharmaceutical sector.

While microbiome-based medicines are driving pharmaceutical companies into

BIOLOGICAL GOLD MINE

foodtech and the nutrition industry, innovation in the field of nutrition is increasingly leaning on the pharmaceutical industry. This is reflected in the partnerships that are currently being established across the two industries. A major player Nestlé, for example, has entered into a multi-million dollar strategic collaboration with the Boston-based biotech company Seres Therapeutics.

Renowned venture capital fund Flagship Pioneering, based in Boston, US, was one of the first to see the potential in the field with its investment in Seres Therapeutics way back in 2012.

Another Boston-based venture capital fund called CARB-X has recently invested in the fast-growing Danish company SNIPR BIOME, which will use CRISPR technology to precisely and effectively kill harmful bacteria in the microbiome.

Home to numerous microbiome startups and frontrunners in drug development research and innovation, Boston is undeniably the global centre for biotechnology.

In the future, medicines will be more tailored to you and your unique needs. Researchers have so far worked to characterise an individual person using genetics and environment but with the great knowledge we have about the microbiome, our intestinal flora will also be included in future.

The microbiome stands to bring a new dimension to personalised medicine in relation to both the diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of diseases. Sequencing each patient's microbiome may in the near future become common practice to help select optimal treatment for the individual, and microbiome-based drugs are expected to be a part of and complement current treatment methods.

Innovation in the field of the microbiome will thus play an important role in accelerating the development of drugs and treatments that reflect our unique genetic profile and lifestyle.

The development work to realise personalised medicine requires strong collaboration across disciplines and building of platforms that require the integration of health data.

Oman can play an essential role, as our health system and nationwide patient data create a basis for a huge data platform that can position Oman as a leading country for data management and clinical microbiome research. Higher educational institutes can be of great help in this regard. We have some of the appropriate tools to unearth what can be described as a biological gold mine.

Over 65,000 tourists visited nature reserves till Sept



Our Correspondent Muscat

As many as 65,880 people visited nature reserves in Oman this year till September, according to the Environment Authority (EA).

Nature reserves in Oman are a major tourist attraction, offering scenic nature, camping and diving facilities to enjoy coral reefs and other underwater treasures.

The EA 'seeks to conduct scientific studies and provide tourism and entertainment facilities for guests inside nature reserves', a statement said.

'Oman has 21 nature reserves through which we aim to preserve biological diversity and promote the sultanate in the world of ecotourism.'

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, an EA official informed that it issued 12,543 special permits and environmental licences in 2022 till September and environmental specialists conducted 29,725 field visits to nature reserves in order to protect wildlife.

"The authority is exerting

'Oman has 21 nature reserves through which we aim to preserve biological diversity and promote the sultanate in the world of ecotourism'

great efforts to protect endangered animals. There are 239 wild animals and birds in the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Reproduction Centre in Barka. The authority also saved and provided veterinary care for 16 animals and birds this year and documented the return of two green turtles."

He informed that recently a green turtle returned to Ras al Jinz after 20 years. "EA specialists were able to monitor the turtle that was first tagged - No 45470 - in November 2001."

Earlier in January, a turtle re-

turned to its nesting site after 31 years. It was tagged by Omani turtle expert Rashid al Ameri on March 30, 1991.

According to the EA official, "The authority tagged 116 new turtles and recorded the death of 28 this year till the third quarter."

Additionally, EA launched the second phase of a project to track turtles via satellites recently. The project aims to gather information to study the nesting behaviour and natural habitat of sea turtles.

Five tracking devices were installed in the Ras al Jinz area to achieve the project's objective by monitoring threats during turtle migration and the environmental risks to the creatures and their natural habitat.

The sultanate has several natural reserves that support domestic tourism. A Royal Decree issued earlier this year established the National Natural Park Reserve in Musandam. The reserve will nurture diverse fauna and flora, characterised by distinct nutritional, medicinal and cosmetic properties.

S&P projects Oman's GDP growth at 4% for 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's economy will grow by nearly four per cent this year supported by higher hydrocarbon production, continuing reform momentum and a pick up in investment spending, according to S&P Global Ratings.

S&P on Friday upgraded its foreign and local currency long-term sovereign credit ratings on Oman to 'BB' from 'BB-', with a stable outlook.

'We expect higher oil prices and production volumes, as well as public investment spending, to drive stronger growth this year. We forecast Oman's real GDP will expand by 3.9 per cent in 2022, up from 3.1 per cent last year, largely due to increasing hydrocarbon production under the OPEC+ agreement,' S&P said in its rating action report.

The rating agency expects that Oman's oil production will increase to 1.135mn barrels per day (bpd) in 2025 from an estimated 1.040mn bpd this year and 0.966mn bpd in 2021.

Although hydrocarbon production should spur growth in 2022 and 2023, in the later years of its forecast period S&P expects the non-oil sector to become the main growth catalyst.

As per S&P forecasts, Oman's non-oil growth will average 2.5 per cent over 2024-2025, up from 1.8 per cent in 2022.

'Having held back on capital expenditure over the past two



years the government and its public entities will now ramp up investment, in our view. The government has announced slightly higher spending than budgeted on development projects through 2025,' S&P said.

'Nevertheless, we understand

S&P expects higher oil prices and production volumes, as well as public investment spending, to drive stronger growth this year

that entities under the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and Energy Development Oman (EDO) will undertake the majority of investment projects and funding will be deployed over several years. Most of OIA's new investments will be in partnership with the private sector,' the rating agency added.

First surplus since 2014

S&P forecasts a general government fiscal surplus in 2022, the

first since 2014, thanks to higher oil prices and government's fiscal reforms.

The rating agency anticipates that Oman will achieve a fiscal surplus of about 5.8 per cent of GDP this year, well above the budgeted deficit of 4.6 per cent.

'The difference is driven primarily by higher realised oil prices, since the government's more conservative budget assumptions are based on US\$50 per barrel. Although the government intends to limit spending growth, we expect expenses will surpass budget plans, mainly because of higher-than-expected payments for gas, subsidies and transfers, and development projects,' S&P said.

Moreover, the rating agency said that the government reform

efforts and favourable oil prices will support fiscal surpluses over 2022-2024 period, placing the government in a marginal net fiscal asset position in 2023-2024.

'While we assume a gradual decline in oil prices going into 2023 and 2024, the government should remain in a fiscal surplus, thanks to ongoing fiscal reforms. If our long-term price assumption for Brent at US\$55 a barrel in 2025 is realised, the government would return to a deficit of about 5.5 per cent of GDP,' S&P said.

S&P noted that its Oman GDP growth forecast also factors in pressure from rising interest rates and spillover effects from the Russia-Ukraine conflict on food price inflation and global demand. The rating agency expects Oman's inflation to rise moderately to 3 per cent in 2022 on higher commodity prices arising from the Russia-Ukraine conflict. S&P anticipates that the Central Bank of Oman will follow the interest rate policy of the US Federal Reserve, given the currency peg.

Asyad Group signs MoU to set up multimodal logistics park, e-commerce hub in Tanzania

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Asyad Group, Oman's global integrated logistics service provider, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Tanzania Post to explore the potential for establishing a multimodal logistics park and e-commerce hub in Dar es Salaam.

Building on its advance e-commerce solutions, Asyad is expanding its presence to the Tanzanian market in furtherance to its long-standing partnership with Tanzania Post. The expansion aims to boost cross-border trade and increase the flow of e-commerce between the two countries, all while expanding their collective reach through East Africa and the Middle East using Tanzania Post as the entry gateway.

The MoU was signed by Nasser al Sharji, CEO of Oman Post and Asyad Express, and Macrice Daniel Mbodo, postmaster general of Tanzania Post. The MoU aims at augmenting revenues and employing Asyad Group's offering and expertise to enable and accelerate Tanzania Post's express and e-commerce capabilities.

Under the MoU, the multimodal logistics business park will be designed to serve as a one-stop-shop solution for all services required to ensure the development of a world-class e-



commerce hub. These include a range of products and services, such as warehousing, fulfilment center and cold chain solutions, as well as courier express parcels, container freight solutions and freight forwarding, driven by logistics technology and digital solutions.

The MoU also aims at conducting a feasibility study to provide a strategic direction for the project execution roadmap and investment strategy, taking the original partnership between Tanzania Post and Asyad to the next level. This involves assessing the overall feasibility of establishing a fully-fledged logistics park in Tanzania offering multimodal logistics services that connect Oman to Tanzania and open the East Africa region for end-to-end logistics using Tanzania as a regional logistics hub.

Highlighting the significance of this new milestone in the

Oman-Tanzania strategic partnership, Sharji said, "This MoU signed between Asyad Group and Tanzania Post is a powerful addition to the group's toolkit, as it helps translate our commercial plans to position Oman as a global logistics hub and a transit gateway to East Africa, the Middle East, the Arabian Gulf and India. We are proud to pursue our efforts to enter the Tanzanian market in a way that further improves the global logistics sector and enables its development in the East Africa region."

"We plan to utilize this cooperation to continue to launch our world-class logistics services in African markets which will unlock bilateral trade opportunities and allow us to deploy additional commercial and logistics offerings, with a key focus on e-commerce activities in the rapidly growing Tanzanian market," he added.

EU fails to agree gas price cap

Brussels, Belgium - EU energy ministers failed Thursday to agree a cap on gas prices to mitigate the energy crunch in Europe, amid deep divisions over an initial proposal slammed by many as a "joke".

The ministers will now meet in the first half of December to try to bridge differences, said Czech Industry Minister Jozef Sikela, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU.

During the "heated discussions" ministers did manage to adopt a couple of other "important measures", including joint gas purchases to avoid intra-EU competition driving up prices, supply solidarity in times of need, and hastening authorisation of renewable energy sources, Sikela said.

Several ministers going into Thursday's meeting complained that the gas price cap proposal on

the table, unveiled by the European Commission just two days earlier, was clearly designed to never be used.

The Polish and Spanish energy ministers called the proposal a "joke".

The price cap plan - which the commission was never keen on - sets a maximum threshold of 275 euros per megawatt hour.

But it comes with so many conditions attached that it would not even have been activated back in August, when the gas price briefly soared above 300 euros, alarming Europe used to historic prices around 10 per cent of that. The cap proposal would only be triggered if the 275-euro limit was breached continuously for at least two weeks, and then only if the price for liquified natural gas (LNG) rose above 58 euros for 10 days within that same two-week period.

The price of wholesale gas in Europe on Thursday was around 124 euros, according to the main TTF benchmark.

The commission's proposed price cap was seen as neutered under pressure from members including Germany and the Netherlands, which feared a cap could divert gas supplies to more lucrative markets, especially Asia.

Yet at least 15 EU countries - more than half the bloc - want some form of workable ceiling on wholesale gas prices to tackle a crunch in supply forced by Russia's war in Ukraine.

EU energy minister Kadri Simson said the European Commission was bound by "parameters" it was given by EU capitals in its formulation of a price cap, and that those governments were free to agree on a change to the parameters if they wished.

AFP

India and GCC agree to resume talks on free trade agreement

New Delhi, India - Piyush Goyal, India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution and Textiles, and Dr Nayef Falah al Hajraf, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), held a joint press conference in New Delhi on Friday to announce the intent to pursue negotiations on the India-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

With forward-looking and solution-oriented deliberations, bilateral engagements witnessed significant progress on all matters of mutual interest across the entire gamut of bilateral economic relations between India and the GCC nations.

According to a press release issued by the Indian government,



Piyush Goyal

both sides agreed to expedite conclusion of the requisite legal and technical requirements for formal resumption of the FTA negotiations. The FTA is envisaged to be a modern, comprehensive agreement with substantial coverage of goods and services. Both sides empha-



Dr Nayef Falah al Hajraf

sised that the FTA will create new jobs, raise living standards, and provide wider social and economic opportunities in India and all the GCC countries. Both sides agreed to significantly expand and diversify the trade basket in line with the enormous potential that exists on account

of the complementary business and economic ecosystems of India and the GCC.

The GCC is currently India's largest trading partner bloc with bilateral trade in the Indian financial year 2021-22 valued at over US\$154bn, with India's exports to GCC valued at approximately US\$44bn and imports of around US\$110bn.

Bilateral trade in services between India and the GCC was valued at around US\$14bn in the financial year 2021-22, with India's exports to GCC valued at US\$5.5bn and imports at US\$8.3bn.

The GCC countries contribute almost 35 per cent of India's oil imports and 70 per cent of gas imports.

Elon Musk's Twitter aims to diversify beyond advertising

San Francisco, US - Is it a pipe dream or a possibility? Elon Musk wants to meaningfully diversify Twitter's revenue stream beyond advertising, but no major social network has managed so far to go without ads altogether.

Something of a gold standard, social media ads can be fine-tuned and tailored to individual users on a mass scale, and have been particularly lucrative for Meta's Facebook and Instagram, as well as Google.

"Facebook pretty much set the standard for having an ad model for social networks," said Jasmine Enberg, an analyst at Insider Intelligence. "But that doesn't necessarily have to be the way that social platforms monetize."

Social networks are facing budget cuts from inflation-afflicted advertisers and increased

regulations on the use of lucrative personal data, so it makes sense for them "to be exploring new, non-ad monetisation techniques," she said.

The issue is delicate for Twitter, whose revenue is 90 per cent dependent on advertising. Advertisers, on the other hand, do not necessarily need Twitter and can turn to other social networks.

The advertising situation at Twitter has been particularly dire since Musk took over the company in late October.

In recent weeks, half of Twitter's 100 top advertisers have announced they are suspending or have otherwise "seemingly stopped advertising on Twitter," an analysis conducted by non-profit watchdog group Media Matters found.

They fear being associated with toxic content as Musk, who



describes himself as a "free speech absolutist," advocates for laxer moderation.

"Musk didn't understand that Twitter itself was a brand, had cachet," said Sarah Roberts, an information studies expert at University of California, Los Angeles.

"Now companies don't even want to be associated with it. It's not even that they worry about

the content. Twitter is a tainted brand, a brand non grata companies don't want to be associated with," she added.

Alternate solutions

Social media sites are testing two alternate solutions in particular: charging everyday users and charging content creators.

The forum platform Reddit has deployed a hybrid model,

making money via advertising, paid subscriptions and digital coins that allow users access to special privileges.

That said, "It's always hard to charge for something that used to be free," said Carolina Milanese of research firm Creative Strategies.

"Unless you give something different or create a different product, you can't go from not charging to charging," she said.

While Twitter has been offering a paid subscription with additional features since last year, Musk aimed to raise the price to US\$8 a month and include account verification in the plan's perks.

A partial launch was chaotic, however, and prompted the proliferation of so many fake accounts that the rollout of so-called Twitter Blue has now

been paused.

Musk has now tweeted that this feature called Verified will be launched next week.

"Figuring out a way to charge users for premium features and make money off of users is not a bad idea," Enberg said.

But she said the benefits Twitter offered may not have been enticing enough, and that the verification aspect should be more of a security feature than a monetizable feature.

Finally, because paid subscribers - arguably the most active on the network - would see 50 per cent less advertising than non-paying users, the plan would "dilute the quality and the size of the addressable audience for advertisers."

Some newer platforms are trying to do without advertising altogether, with no guarantee of

long-term viability.

For example, on Discord, a live-discussion social network, subscribers have access to more emoticons.

And the fledgling photo-sharing app BeReal is hoping to not have to sell ads by making money through in-app purchases instead, the Financial Times reported. Twitter had some 230mn daily active users as of June, and Musk continues to congratulate himself on growing that number since taking over.

But increased users do not necessarily translate into dollars. Snapchat, which also launched a paid version in June, has gained more and more users, but not necessarily money. Most users do not pay anything and advertisers have cut spending on this app.

AFP

Indian Minister concludes successful visit to Oman

Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Indian Minister of State (MoS) for Health and Family Welfare, on Friday concluded her two-day visit to sultanate after participating in the 'Third Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)' held in Muscat.

During the conference, Dr Bharati delivered India's National Statement recognising AMR as a multifaceted, complex problem with consequences for individuals and healthcare systems. She also highlighted India's high level political commitment under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to tackle AMR holistically.

The junior minister noted that India launched a National Action Plan (NAP) for AMR, in April 2017 to improve awareness, enhance surveillance measures, strengthen infection prevention and control, and promote investments to control AMR.

In her statement she also urged all countries to commit to a strong political will, promote



inter-sectoral coordination between public and private sectors, and comprehensively strengthen the healthcare systems worldwide to tackle AMR.

The junior minister also participated in a Ministerial panel discussion on AMR and the Political Response and shared India's experiences and suggestions to enhance global political commitment to this issue.

During her stay in Muscat,

Dr Bharati met with H E Dr Hilal al Sabti, the Health Minister of Oman and held warm and cordial discussions on ways to deepen the already excellent cooperation between India and Oman in the field of health and wellness.

She also met with the Minister of Health Ernst Kuipers and Vice Minister of Health Marjolijn Sonnemaa, of the Netherlands and the Minister of Social

Work Jakob Forssmed of Sweden on the sidelines of the conference, exploring ways to enhance cooperation in the healthcare sector.

The MoS also held discussions with other leaders, policy-makers, key global experts, representatives from the private sector, civil society, research institutions, and multilateral organisations on the issue of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Dr Bharati also had a fruitful interaction with the prominent members of the Indian community and community organisations in Oman. She spoke about India's successful transformational journey under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

She invited them to participate enthusiastically in the Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD), being organised in January 2023 in Indore.

During her visit, the MoS also offered prayers at the Shiva Temple located in Muscat, one of the oldest Indian temples in the region.



Oman Oasis announces winners of 'BMWM' offer

In line with its goal to delight customers with better products and offers, Oman Oasis recently announced 'Buy More Win More' offer which gives customers a chance to participate in a monthly raffle draw by purchasing Oman Oasis, Sifr or Mai Alkaline drinking water from Lulu, Nesto, Carrefour, Sultan Centre and Makkah Hypermarkets.

The first draw was held on November 3 with a total of 130 lucky winners were picked up from the draw.

The offer has been success-

fully running across Oman and will continue till December 31, Oman Oasis said, adding 'The more you purchase the more your chances to win prizes'.

Ahmed Alaamri, Sujith Amithabhavan, Ahmed, Hamood al Mamari, Mogaru Abdul Rahiman Abusali and Muhammad Ajmal were the six winners of iPhone 13. In addition, Taher, Jannice Andrada and Hussain won Lenovo laptops.

By participating in the offer, customers can win prizes like iPhone 13s, gold coins, laptops,

and petrol coupons.

Speaking about the raffle draw, Oman Oasis COO N S S Subramaniam said, "Oman Oasis continues to delight its customers with a series of offers and promotions all-round the year. Congratulations to all the winners who have won these prizes. There are many more such prizes to be won and we urge more and more customers to participate in the raffle draw."

Oman Oasis has been voted as 'Oman's Most Trusted Brand' for five consecutive years.

Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel brings communities together

Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel LLC (JSIS) held a community-driven National Day celebration as part of its commitment to improving the quality of life in the locality it operates in.

Organised at the JSIS's Al Noor Hall in Sohar, this patriotic event was graced by H E Sheikh Mohammed Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of North Batinah. Among the attendees were the Vulcan Steel Oman managing director, chief executive officer of Jindal Shadeed, high-ranking government officials, community and state representatives from Sohar and surrounding neighbourhoods as well as non-profit organisations and charities.

The event celebrated Oman's long-standing history, achievements, people, and heritage, with an array of locally sourced and freshly made traditional Omani food and dances. Highlights of the evening included performances by North Batinah Al Noor Association for the Blind, Sohar Special Needs Association, surrounding elementary schools, and other local organisations.

Commenting on the success of the event, Vulcan Steel Oman managing director Sanjay Anand said, "On this auspicious occasion of the 52nd National Day, on behalf of my Jindal Shadeed fam-



ily, I would like to congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - may the Almighty protect him - and pray for his long life, good health and happiness. I wish peace, progress and prosperity to this great nation and its people. I also thank H E Sheikh Mohammed Sulaiman Hamood al kindi, Governor of North Batinah, for being our esteemed guest on this joyous occasion."

On the success of the event, Harssha Shetty said, "His Majesty's vision, noble work and pro-industry diversification policies have helped us increase the company's in-country value, and heavily contribute to its GDP from non-oil and gas revenue.

"Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel is delighted to be interweaved within the Sohar culture; this celebration is a great opportunity for

us to extend our gratitude to the Omani government, and our communities, and celebrate JSIS's long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship with Sohar and its people, and the country."

Since its inception in Oman, JSIS's community engagement activities have been key to its growth. The company is fully dedicated to giving back to society through creating and nurturing social and sustainable initiatives. It delves into public matters and issues, establishing direct communication with local and national social leadership.

In addition, the company partners with various agencies in line with the sultanate's sustainability goals. Among its many ventures are blood donation camps, health screening programmes, and other development projects.



ISC-Purshottam Kanji volleyball championship held

The 2022 Indian Social Club 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 10am 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 finals played with best of three sets of 25, 25 and 15. All the teams displayed best of their play and four teams advanced to the semifinals and the championship matches held on the same day from 6pm.

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.

Every match was very exciting and thrilling till the end. Unfortunately, UFSC outplayed with smart movements and smashes made the final set in their favour and emerged as winner of first semifinal scoring 25-17; 23-25 and 15-9.

In the second semifinals, Seeb Warriors of Oman thrashed Malabar Warriors with some terrific attacks and excellent movements scoring 25-13 and 25-16.

Finalists Seeb Warriors and UFSC displayed an outstanding volleyball show and the crowd enjoyed each and every moment of the game. Seeb Warriors was 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 Volleyball Champions with a score of 15-13.

Sanoj Sajjad adjudged the best attacker whereas Abu Ghazi was the best setter and Shyam was the best all-rounder. Volleyball Federation of India's national referee Ajay Ghosh supervised the tournament with the support of Vijay Rajkumar, referee of the Kerala State Volleyball Association. Kerala state referee Jose Varghese, former volleyball player Saji John, Manoj Francis and Gowtham assisted them in conducting the tournament smoothly.

The trophies and cash prizes were distributed by vice chairman Karanjeet Singh, general secretary Babu Rajendran, sports secretary Saji Abraham and joint sports secretary Sanjit Kumar.

Three-day Ardha Race by Royal Camel Corps to kick off today

Our Correspondent Muscat

Organised by the Royal Camel Corps (RCC), Ardha Race will start on Sunday at Al-Felaij in Wilayat Barka. The three-day race comes as a part of the Annual Festival for Local Camel Races 2022-23.

RCC also revealed the event schedule with the names of the wilayats as distributed over three days in morning and afternoon sessions everyday.

On Sunday, the wilayats of Muscat, Seeb, Rustaq, Al Musanna, Al Awabi, Wadi Al Maawil, Nakhl, Yanqul, Mahdah, Al Buraimi, Liwa, Shinas,



Sohar, Ibri and Dhank will take part in the morning session, while the wilayat of Al Khaburah will take part in the race in the afternoon session.

On Monday, the wilayats of Bidiyah, Sur, Wadi Bani Khalid, Al-Qabil, Al-Mudhaibi, Dima wa Al-Tayin, Barka, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Al-Kamil wa Al-Wafi, and Ibri will show up in the morning session, while the wilayats of Al-Suwaqi, Samail and Bidiyah will participate in the afternoon session.

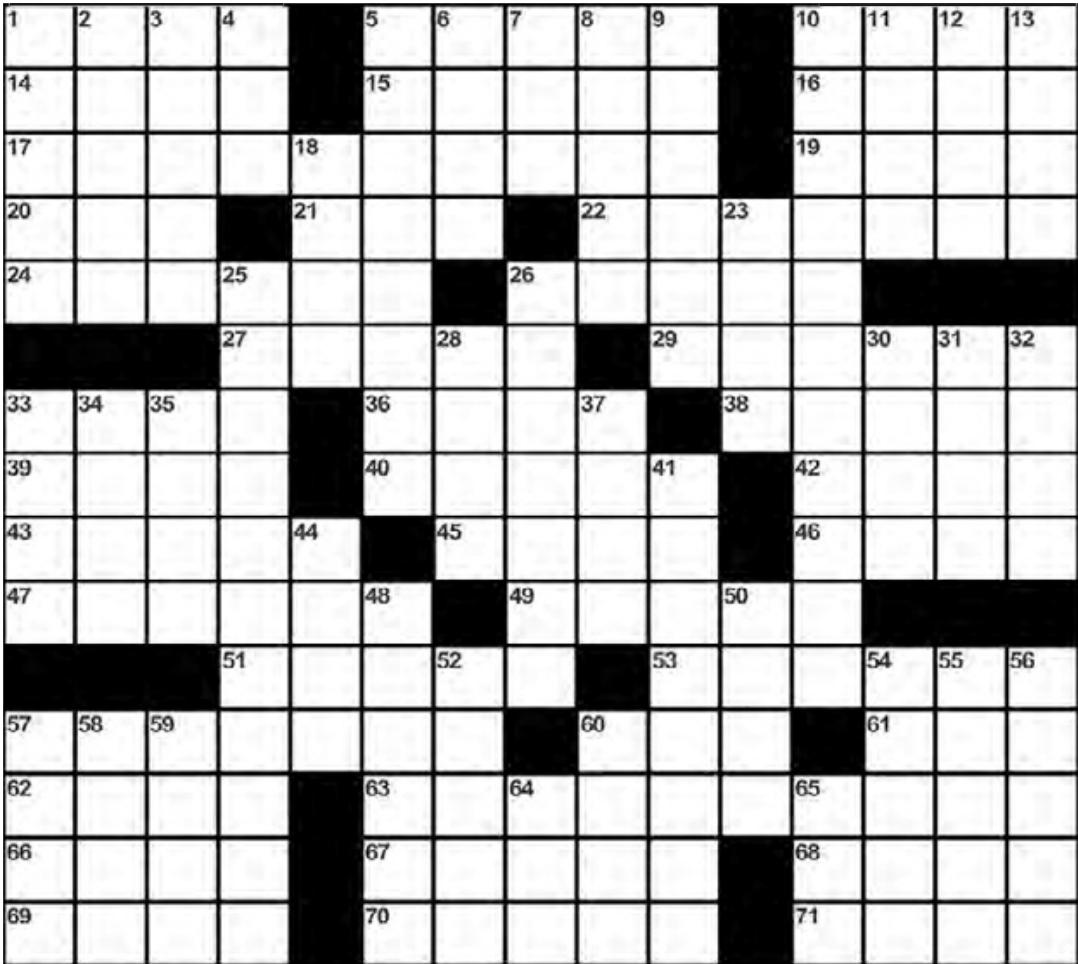
On the last day, the event will see the participation of the wilayat of Saham only.

RCC confirmed that partici-

pation is limited to pure Omani Ardha female camels of Thanaya and Hayel categories that were previously registered at the walies' offices. RCC added that the participating camels must complete the race to the end, and it has excluded some camels from participating. Ardha is a race in which two camels with their riders on them run side by side for a short distance without overtaking each other.

It is worth mentioning that the Sultanate of Oman succeeded in 2018 in registering the horse and camel Ardha on the Unesco Intangible World Heritage List.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Price-fol lowing phrase
- 5) About to explode
- 10) Verbal groaners
- 14) Hoop's locale, per-haps
- 15) "Unforgettable" singers
- 16) Straddling
- 17) Person knee-deep in formulas
- 19) Rocket's insignia, often
- 20) Suffix with "glob"
- 21) Function
- 22) Biker's wear
- 24) More than shouldn't
- 26) Florida's Key_
- 27) Ancient assembly area
- 29) Hom of Africa resi-dent
- 33) Harpo, for one
- 36) Con
- 38) Assumed as fact
- 39) Pins and needles
- 40) Like this puzzle's theme entries
- 42) Not nice at all
- 43) Sonata section
- 45) 1492 ship of note

- 46) Bothers
 - 47) Some foreign digni-taries (Var.)
 - 49) Brings home the bacon
 - 51) Large quantities of paper
 - 53) Second childhood, perhaps
 - 57) Vibrating effect
 - 60) Shortened restroom?
 - 61) Calif. airport
 - 62)" Ha'i"
 - 63) Person with one wife at a time
 - 66) "Poor me!"
 - 67) Popeye's love
 - 68) In charge of
 - 69) Cost of living?
 - 70) Neck parts
 - 71) Phoenix neighbor
- DOWN**
- 1) Vinyl spinner
 - 2) French doughboy
 - 3) Tubular instruments
 - 4) Chest muscle, in gym
 - ingo
 - 5) Freezing rain event
 - 6) Powerful empire, once
 - 7) Actress MacGraw
 - 8) Major car maker
 - 9) Fragrant compounds

- 10) Marcel Marceau, fa-mously
- 11) Beehive state
- 12) Plane part
- 13) Trade punches
- 18) Did wallpapering
- 23) Eagerly excited
- 25) Mounter of animal trophies
- 26) Bonny girls
- 28) Archaeological site
- 30) State unwaveringly
- 31) Plumber's pursuit, sometimes
- 32) Some stops in Ver-mont
- 33)_ mortals
- 34) Elementary particle
- 35) Ancient alphabetic character
- 37) Old gas burner
- 41) Golfing or football measurements
- 44) Cookie jar denizen
- 48) Chinook, for one
- 50)_ Scotia
- 52) Long green
- 54) Still in the running
- 55) Some are inert
- 56) One in a cast of thou-sands
- 57) Alpine transport
- 58) Abnormal chest

- sound
- 59) Distinctive flair
- 60) Frequent song sub-

- ject
- 64) Small drink of liquor
- 65) May honoree

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Trying to get into your routine could be pretty challenging right now, because your usual high energy seems to be AWOL. You might even be somewhat emotional with family or colleagues, which could be quite startling. If you're fortunate enough to have a door you can close, do so, and cancel any meetings or outings you've got scheduled, if possible. You'll do best now keeping to yourself with a little peace and quiet.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

A family problem that's been lurking beneath the surface could erupt today, and even if you're not one of the parties directly involved, you could still be called on to take care of it. You've most likely got a better understanding than anyone else of the deeper issues at stake, and your instincts are good now, so even though it's sure to be a pain, you've got lots to give. Take a familial, easygoing approach and see what good you can do.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

Some of the people you're dealing with today don't have your same priorities, so you need to double-check their work and make sure they don't have too much authority over group issues. While you want to get things done, they may just want to goof off. Be prepared to deal with interruptions today. You'll have to take the heat if the work isn't done, so any extra effort you make is in your own best interests.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

There might have been some positive changes in your earning ability, and your wallet could be heaving a sigh of relief right about now. Just make sure that you stay ahead of the curve! Now is not the time to spend all your money just because you have some to spend. Stick to your budget and let the savings accrue. And then, in a little while, you'll have a nice big chunk to spend on something worthwhile.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Listening takes you much further than speaking on a day like today. Sure, you're curious about what's really going on, so ask a few open-ended, neutral questions so you can learn more. If you get into an argument now, your dark side may break out, and that means you'll end up saying things you don't mean. While you might not agree with the different views you're hearing, you do need to hear them.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

All the thinking and pondering you've been doing should give way to making some serious, objective decisions. Your next big career move might suddenly become perfectly clear. If so, jump on it right away. You could also get the ball rolling on something you've been pining for lately, like a fun outing with friends or a date with a special someone. It's all up to you today, and your future is definitely in your hands.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You're feeling good this morning, which bodes well for the entire day. Add a bit more flirtation and flattery to a few serious conversations and watch what happens. There will be a lot of fun-loving people who want to talk to you today. They like your style so much that they want to be in your social circle. This might cause a few growing pains, but any stretching to accommodate new people will be worth the energy that they bring to your life.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your energy is lower today, and you might find it difficult to communicate with people who don't already know you inside and out. In conversations with newer acquaintances, you might start to feel like you're waist deep in mud, immobile and incapable of any forward movement. But if you adjust your expectations and try to be okay with little or no progress today, you'll still be able to enjoy all your interactions. Just don't expect too much.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Get ready for today's big moment of realization. You've been in kind of a haze lately, but today you may suddenly be called upon to discuss your ambitions or make some romantic advances. The feeling of vulnerability (and maybe even internal pressure) might not be completely pleasant, but it's definitely motivating you! Whether you step up and make things work or back away and move on is hard for you to say. You're unpredictable today.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

There are some obstacles to overcome before you can get closer to someone you've had your eye on for a while, but those walls are going to start tumbling down soon. This means that it's a great time to make your big move and dive into something new! There is a social net there to catch you when you take that leap, so don't worry. The last thing on your mind should be doubt. It's time to make a stronger connection.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Despite the fact that you always try to seek equality, you know that the world can be an unfair place. If someone you care about gets the short end of the stick today, you should focus more on consoling them than on getting righteously indignant about their situation. You'll be a better friend for helping them get over the slight than getting them all riled up about it. Everything can't be completely equitable all the time, and they need to accept that.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You're weirdly drawn to something that is a big mystery right now, which could be a new activity, idea, or even person. Before you get too deeply involved with this unknown, make sure you do your homework and learn as much as possible about it or them. Knowledge is power, and a bit of research should reveal something you'll be glad you know. Be smart and then follow your instincts.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Who led a campaign from 1798-1801, taking a force of 500 civilian scientists, specialists in fields such as biology, chemistry and languages in order to carry out a full study of ancient Egypt?cards?

- A. Inigo Jones
- B. William Flinders Petrie
- C. Heinrich Schliemann
- D. Napoléon Bonaparte

02. The Peripatetic School founded by Aristotle was called this for what reason?

- A. Their discussions covered a wide range of thought and knowledge
- B. They travelled from place to place to teach
- C. The members met in a walk-way
- D. Walking long distances was promoted as an aid to healthy thought

03. Which series, originally released in 2003 on Disney Channel, was the first in the network's history to produce 100 episodes?

- A. That's So Raven
- B. Phil of the Future
- C. So Weird
- D. Phineas and Ferb

Answers: 1.D 2.C 3.A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	G	E	G
E	S	A	N
W	T	O	Y
M	K	A	S

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long. **Solution** 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Three killed in twin school shootings in Brazil

A 16-year-old shooter wearing Nazi symbols opened fire on two schools in southeastern Brazil

Brasília, Brazil - At least three people including an adolescent girl were killed and 11 others wounded on Friday when a 16-year-old shooter wearing Nazi symbols opened fire on two schools in southeastern Brazil, officials said.

Authorities in the city of Aracruz, in Espírito Santo state, said the shooter fired on a group of teachers at his former school, killing two people and leaving nine others wounded.

He then left that school - a public primary and secondary school - and went to a nearby private school where he killed an adolescent girl and wounded two other people, officials said.

Authorities have arrested the shooter, said Governor Renato Casagrande, who declared three days of mourning in the state.

"He was a student at (the first) school until June, a 16-year-old minor. His family then transferred him to another school. We have information he was undergoing psychiatric treatment," Casagrande told a news conference. He said some of the sur-

vivors' lives remained at risk from their wounds.

"We are rooting and praying for them to recover," he said.

Security camera footage aired on Brazilian media showed the shooter running into the school dressed in military-style camouflage and brandishing a gun. He then sprinted through the hallways, sending staff fleeing in terror as he began firing shots.

Investigators said he had a swastika on his fatigues and that they were looking into whether he had links to any extremist organisations. Officials said the shooter, a policeman's son, used two handguns in the attack, both registered to his father - one his service firearm, the other a privately registered weapon.

Casagrande said the boy appeared to have planned the attack carefully, breaking in through a locked door and skirting the school's security guard.

He then entered the teachers' lounge - the first room he came to - and opened fire, the governor said.

"He was looking to shoot peo-



Relatives of pupils comfort each other at the entrance of the Primo Bitti state school, one of two schools where a shooting took place, in Aracruz, Espírito Santo State, Brazil, on Friday (AFP)

ple. He opened fire on the first people he came across," he said.

Civil police commissioner Joao Francisco Filho told reporters it appeared the suspect had been planning the attack for 'two years', and that he did not seem to have a 'definite target.'

Investigators could be seen carrying victims' bodies in coffins and loading them into police trucks outside the school, which was cordoned off with crime scene tape, an AFP photographer said.

The city has a population of

around 100,000 people.

'Absurd tragedy'

School shootings are relatively rare in Brazil, but have been increasing in recent years.

Brazil's deadliest school shooting left 12 children dead in

2011, when a man opened fire at his former elementary school in the Rio de Janeiro suburb of Realengo, then killed himself.

In 2019, two former students shot dead eight people at a high school in Suzano, outside Sao Paulo, then also took their own lives. Brazilian president-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva called

the two school communities."

Lula, who was previously Brazil's president from 2003 to 2010, will take office on January 1 after defeating far-right President Jair Bolsonaro in elections last month.

He has been sharply critical of Bolsonaro's dramatic relaxation of gun-control laws.

Since ex-army captain Bolsonaro became president in 2019, the number of registered gun owners in Brazil has more than quintupled, from 117,000 to 673,000, boosted by a series of presidential decrees relaxing regulations on firearms and ammunition. Public security expert Bruno Langeani of research institute Sou da Paz told AFP the outgoing administration's policies had made such attacks more likely.

"The increase in availability of firearms in recent years promoted by the Bolsonaro government facilitates this kind of episode," he said.

The latest attacks spurred calls for gun policy reform.

AFP

He was a student at (the first) school until June. We have information that he was undergoing psychiatric treatment

RENATO CASAGRANDE



China's President Xi Jinping (AFP)

Xi tells Kim China willing to work with North Korea for 'world peace': KCNA

Seoul, South Korea - Chinese President Xi Jinping told North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that Beijing was willing to work with Pyongyang for world peace, North Korean state media said Saturday.

The message from Xi came days after North Korea fired an intercontinental ballistic missile in one of its most powerful tests yet, declaring it would meet perceived US nuclear threats with nukes of its own.

North Korea has conducted a record-breaking blitz of missile launches in recent weeks and fears have grown that it is building up to a seventh nuclear test, its first since 2017.

In his message to Kim, Xi said Beijing was ready to work with the North for 'peace, stability, development and prosperity of the region and the world,' Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

Xi said he was willing to collaborate with Pyongyang as 'changes in the world, times, and history are taking place in unprecedented ways,' KCNA said, quoting from the message it said was received in response to congratulations from Kim after the Chinese Communist Party Congress last month handed Xi a third term.

Days before North Korea's ICBM launch, Xi met on the sidelines of a Group of 20 summit in Bali with US President Joe Biden, who voiced confidence that Beijing does not want to see a further escalation by Pyongyang.

Washington has said it wants China, Pyongyang's most important ally and economic benefactor, to use its influence to help

rein in North Korea.

The November 18 missile launch appeared to be Pyongyang's newest ICBM with the potential range to hit the US mainland.

The UN Security Council convened an open meeting over the launch, with the United States, Britain, France and India among 14 nations to 'strongly condemn'

In his message to Kim Jong Un, Xi Jinping said Beijing was ready to work with the North for peace, stability, development and prosperity of the region and the world

Pyongyang's actions.

But a Western diplomat told AFP that China and Russia had chosen not to put their names to Monday's statement.

Earlier this month, the United States accused Beijing and Moscow of protecting Pyongyang from further punishment. In May, China and Russia vetoed a US-led effort to tighten sanctions on North Korea in response to earlier launches.

Pyongyang is already under multiple sets of international sanctions over its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, and China accounts for more than 90 per cent of the impoverished country's bilateral trade.

AFP

South Korean capital launches self-driving bus experiment

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea's capital launched its first self-driving bus route on Friday, part of an experiment that engineers said aims to make people feel more comfortable with driverless vehicles on the roads.

The new vehicle does not look like a regular bus and has rounded edges as well as large windows that make it appear more like a toy than a technological breakthrough.

This design is intentional, said Jeong Seong-gyun, head of autonomous driving at 42 Dot, the start-up responsible for the self-driving technology that is now owned by auto giant Hyundai.

"This is the future," he told AFP, adding that the bus required 'a considerable new type of design'.

The bus looks a bit 'like Lego' and is made of composite parts to help keep costs down and



The bus with a blue coloured logo, which indicates that autonomous driving is taking place, approaches a stop (AFP)

make it easy to replicate, he said.

It uses cameras and radar to navigate the way instead of expensive sensors, Seong-gyun added.

The company's goal was to make the technology low-cost, safe and easily transferable to many types of vehicles in the future, for example, delivery trucks.

For now - with a safety driver monitoring closely - the bus will drive itself around a small 3.4km (2.1-mile) circuit in downtown Seoul that takes around 20 minutes.

The public can board at two designated stops after booking a free seat through an app.

AFP

NASA Orion spacecraft enters lunar orbit: Officials

Washington, US - NASA's Orion spacecraft was placed in lunar orbit on Friday, officials said, as the much-delayed Moon mission proceeded successfully.

A little over a week after the spacecraft blasted off from Florida bound for the Moon, flight controllers 'successfully performed a burn to insert Orion into a distant retrograde orbit', the US space agency said on its web site.

The spacecraft is to take astronauts to the Moon in the coming years - the first to set foot on its surface since the last Apollo mission in 1972.

This first test flight, without a crew on board, aims to ensure that the vehicle is safe.

"The orbit is distant in that Orion will fly about 40,000 miles above the Moon," NASA said.

While in lunar orbit, flight controllers will monitor key systems and perform check-outs while in the environment of deep space, the agency said.

It will take Orion about a week to complete half an orbit around the Moon. It will then exit the orbit for the return journey home, according to NASA.

On Saturday, the ship is expected to go up to 40,000 miles beyond the Moon, a record for a habitable capsule. The current record is held by the Apollo 13 spacecraft at 248,655 miles (400,171km) from Earth.

It will then begin the journey back to Earth, with a landing in the Pacific Ocean scheduled for December 11, after just over 25 days of flight.

AFP

Chinese-Canadian ex-pop star Kris Wu jailed for rape

Beijing, China - Chinese-Canadian ex-pop star Kris Wu has been jailed for 13 years after being found guilty of rape, a Chinese court said on Friday.

Wu originally shot to fame as a member of the K-pop boyband EXO, before leaving in 2014 to launch a successful solo career as a singer, actor, model and variety show judge.

Nineteen-year-old student Du Meizhu last year accused Wu of date-raping her when she was 17, resulting in a barrage of public criticism and luxury brands dropping deals with him.

Wu was sentenced to '11 years and six months of imprisonment for rape', the court in Beijing's Chaoyang district said on Friday, adding he 'was also sentenced to imprisonment of one year and 10 months for the crime of gathering people to commit adultery'.

"It was found that the defendant Wu Yifan (Kris Wu) had forced sexual relations with three women at his residence from November to December 2020 when they were drunk and did not know or were not able to resist," the court said.

Wu will serve a 13-year term before being deported, it added.

He was also fined 600mn yuan (US\$84mn) for tax evasion,



Chinese-Canadian ex-pop star Kris Wu, also known as Wu Yifan in Chinese, attending an event in Beijing on October 25, 2018 (AFP)

sion, the state news agency Xinhua reported, citing Beijing's tax authorities.

Wu 'used a fake business to convert the nature of his income and falsely declare it, and evaded 95mn yuan of tax by concealing personal income through multiple domestic and overseas affiliated companies', Xinhua reported.

He also 'underpaid 84mn yuan of taxes', the news agency added.

Canada's foreign ministry said

it was 'aware that a decision was rendered' in the case, adding that consular officials had been present for the verdict announcement and were 'providing consular assistance to Mr Wu and his family'.

A spokesperson declined to provide further information 'due to privacy considerations'.

Wu was previously one of China's most bankable stars, but brands including Louis Vuitton, Bulgari, L'Oreal Men and Porsche suspended their partnerships

with him over the case.

And more victims spoke out online in the wake of the initial claims, accusing Wu's staff of predatory behaviour including inviting them to boozy karaoke parties.

The hashtags 'girls help girls', 'girls helping girls' and 'girls help girls time' - where women expressed solidarity with Du - were censored from Chinese social media in the wake of the scandal.

The Weibo trending hashtag 'the law is the lowest standard of morals' also racked up 830mn views, as users complained about the high legal threshold required for victims to prove sexual assault in court.

MeToo fallout

The saga around Wu evoked China's embattled #MeToo movement, which saw a wave of women come forward in 2018 voicing experiences of sexual harassment - sometimes involving powerful public figures.

Beijing moved decisively to suppress the feminist movement, arresting dozens of student activists in a show of its zero-tolerance approach to those deemed potential threats to its control.

A landmark case brought by screenwriter Zhou Xiaoxuan

against high-profile TV presenter Zhu Jun was dismissed last year, with a Beijing court also throwing out an appeal this August.

And while tennis star Peng Shuai's allegations of sexual assault against a senior Communist Party politician sparked an international outcry last year, her claims were swiftly censored within China.

Peng later denied making the accusation.

Celebrity crackdown

Wu's case was at the centre of a sweeping government crackdown on celebrity culture that took hold last summer.

Around the same time as his arrest, top actress Zheng Shuang was hit with a US\$46mn tax evasion fine while references to film star Zhao Wei were wiped from video streaming sites.

Authorities said they were targeting unhealthy values and 'abnormal aesthetics', ordering broadcasters to cut reality talent shows and stop giving airtime to 'sissy' men and 'vulgar influencers'. Critics have argued that the moves also aimed to enhance the Communist Party's ideological control and curb external influences that could pose a threat to its rule.

AFP

INDIA

Shraddha murder case: Court sends Aaftab to judicial custody

New Delhi, India - Delhi's Saket Court has sent Aaftab Amin Poonawalla, accused in the Shraddha Walkar murder case, to judicial custody for 13 days.

Delhi Police is probing the Shraddha Walkar murder case in which she was strangled to death by her live-in partner Aaftab who then allegedly chopped her body into 35 pieces before dumping it in the Chhatarpur area of the national capital. "Police have initiated the legal process for the production of Aaftab for further proceedings in the Polygraph Test," said Sagar Preet Hooda, Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order), Zone II.

Meanwhile, a narco test on Aaftab is likely to be conducted on November 28, sources said on Saturday.

Earlier on Friday, the Delhi Police confirmed that the polygraph test of Aaftab could not be conducted.



Aaftab Poonawalla being taken back from Forensic Science Laboratory where he was brought for a polygraph test, in New Delhi on Thursday (ANI)

Hooda said: "Polygraph test of the accused Aaftab Amin in Mehrauli police station case FIR No 659/22 under section 365/302/201 IPC could not be held today."

Delhi Police has taken DNA samples of Shraddha's father Vikas Walkar on November 16, so that the dumped body parts

and blood sample can be matched. Delhi Police has also confirmed that during the course of the investigation, blood stains were found in the kitchen of accused Aaftab Amin Poonawalla's flat in Delhi's Chhatarpur. The blood samples were sent for examination to ascertain whose blood it was.

The Delhi Police had earlier informed that the DNA test report of the victim's body has not been received by the police. "DNA test report (of victim's body parts) has not been received by the police", said Hooda.

Delhi Police claimed to solve the six-month-old blind murder case and arrested Aaftab Amin Poonawalla on the basis of Shraddha's father's complaint. Delhi Police received a complaint from Shraddha's father and registered an FIR on November 10.

Aaftab and Shraddha met on a dating site and later moved in together at a rented accommodation in Chhatarpur.

Delhi Police interrogation revealed that Aaftab killed Shraddha on May 18 and later started planning for disposing of her body. He told police that he had read about human anatomy so that it could help him in chop-

ping off the body. Police said that Aaftab, after searching in shopping mode Google, cleaned blood stains from the floor with some chemicals and disposed of stained clothes.

The Southern District Police of Delhi had on November 17 contacted their Eastern counterparts in a bid to match the DNA sample of chopped body parts including a human head which the latter had recovered earlier in June.

According to the sources, the East Delhi Police had found a chopped head and hand in the Trilokpuri area of Pandav Nagar police station of the national capital in June this year, which was nearly a month after Shraddha was murdered (on May 18).

Later, the body parts found in East Delhi were sent for a DNA test, and the forensic report is awaited, as per the Delhi Police statement.

ANI



Police personnel with a dog squad check a bag of a passenger during a search operation at CSMT in Mumbai on Friday (ANI)

'Will bring Mumbai attack perpetrators to justice': Jaishankar

New Delhi, India - India is working with several countries whose citizens have lost their lives in the 2008 Mumbai Terror Attack, said External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, adding that it will make sure that real perpetrators do not escape.

"It's an occasion where entire country remembers it. I want to underline how strongly we feel about it and determined we are to complete the process of justice," Jaishankar told ANI on Saturday. "Today is the anniversary of the 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai. Even after so many years, the people who planned and oversaw it have not been punished. They have not been brought to justice. This is something which we give utmost importance to," the External Affairs Minister added. In 2008, 10 Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists (LeT) carried out 12 coordinated shooting and bombing attacks killing at least 166 people and leaving 300 wounded.

ANI

BJP releases manifesto for Gujarat polls, promises to implement UCC

Gandhinagar, India - The Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday released the party's manifesto for the upcoming Gujarat Assembly polls, which are slated to be held in two phases on December 1 and December 5.

The party manifesto, released by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, BJP national president JP Nadda, and state party president CR Paatil, has made at least 40 promises including the complete implementation of the Gujarat Uniform Civil Code Committee's recommendations. "We will ensure the complete implementation of the Gujarat Uniform Civil Code Committee's recommendation and create more than one lakh government jobs for women in the next five years," Nadda said on the release of the manifesto further

promising that if it will come to the power again, the party will create an Anti-Radicalisation Cell to identify and eliminate potential threats and sleeper cells of the terrorist organisations and anti-India forces.

The BJP, which has been in power in the state for more than two decades, promised free-of-cost, and quality education to all the female students here from Kindergarten to Post Graduation and added that it will provide free two-wheelers to the meritorious college-going female students. It further added free bus travel to women senior citizens and promised to provide one lakh government jobs to the women for the next five years. For the tribals in the state, the BJP in its manifesto also promised to enable mobile delivery of ration across all the 56 Tribal Sub Plan Talukas in the



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national president JP Nadda, with Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and party state chief CR Paatil, releases the 'Sankalp Patra' (manifesto) in Gandhinagar on Saturday (ANI)

state and ensured Rs 1 lakh crore under the Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana 2.0 for the all-round socio-economic development of tribals.

Adding further, it read that the Birs Munda Adi Jati Samridhi Corridor between Ambaji and Umergram will spur growth by connecting every tribal district's headquarters with a 4-6 lane state highway, and by constructing a tribal cultural circuit will connect Pal Dadhvaav and the Statue of Unity to Shabari

Dham. The BJP also promised to provide advanced healthcare facilities in tribal areas by setting up eight medical colleges, and ten nursing/para-medical colleges. As many as eight Gujarat Industrial Development Corporations (GIDC) in the tribal belt will generate employment opportunities for tribal youth, it added.

25 Birs Munda Gyan Shakti Residential Schools will also provide the best residential schooling facilities to 75,000 meritorious students from the tribal community.

On the health front, BJP promised to double the cap under Ayushman Bharat from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh per family and ensure free-of-cost medical treatment. Mukhyamantri Free Diagnostic Scheme with a corpus of Rs 110 crore will also be ensured to provide free-of-cost

diagnostic services for EWS households.

It further added to provide Rs 10,000 crore in Maharaja Shri Bhagvatsinhji Swasthya Kosht and mentioned that three Civil Medicines, and two AIIMS-grade institutions will also be structured here. The manifesto then promised to upgrade the infrastructure at Hospitals, Community Health Centres (CHCs), and Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs).

BJP has also promised to provide Rs 10,000 crore under Gujarat Krishi Infrastructure Kosh to develop Khedut Mandis, modern Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMC), sorting and grading units, cold chains, warehouses, primary processing centres, and will also expand irrigation network through various projects.

ANI

Peru's president names fifth PM in 16 months

Lima, Peru - Peruvian President Pedro Castillo on Friday appointed the culture minister as the country's prime minister after her predecessor resigned over a row with parliament.

Betsy Chavez, a 33-year-old lawyer who also did a stint as labour minister, was sworn in as the fifth prime minister since the beleaguered Castillo took office 16 months ago.

The pair reshuffled the cabinet after former premier Anibal Torres quit on Thursday amid an ongoing clash between the leftist Castillo and the conservative-controlled parliament. Castillo, in power since July 2021, has already faced two impeachment attempts in parliament and is under investigation in six corruption cases, including accusations against his family and political entourage. "For the respect to the rule of law and the restitution of the balance and separation of powers, I do swear," said Chavez when she took her oath before Castillo, an allusion to the confrontation between the president and parliament.

Chavez herself is facing a preliminary investigation by

Peru's prosecutor's office into allegations of misuse of power and hiring close associates for public positions. She must request a parliamentary vote of confidence within 30 days before formally taking office.

The new cabinet includes 12 ministers whose portfolios have been confirmed, with Cesar Landa taking over foreign affairs, the interior ministry going to Willy Huerta, Daniel Barragan taking defense and Kurt Burneo handling the economy.

All but Burneo were sworn in at a Friday night ceremony at the Government Palace in Lima. The new minister of economy and finance took part via videoconference as he is isolating after testing positive for COVID-19.

Earlier this month, thousands marched in the capital to demand the removal of former rural school teacher Castillo, who unexpectedly took power from Peru's traditional political elite.

Castillo has denounced the charges against him as politically motivated and enjoys immunity until the end of his term in July 2026.

AFP

EU endorses new migrant plan after France-Italy spat

Brussels, Belgium - European interior ministers welcomed on Friday an EU plan to better coordinate the handling of migrant arrivals, after a furious row over a refugee rescue boat erupted between Italy and France.

France has accused Italy of failing to respect the law of the sea by turning away the NGO vessel earlier this month, triggering crisis talks in Brussels to head off a new EU dispute over the politically fraught issue.

All sides described the meeting as productive, although Czech interior minister Vit Rakusan, whose country holds the EU presidency, later said all participants had agreed that 'more can and must be done' to find a lasting solution.

The ministers will gather again at a pre-planned December 8 meeting to pursue the 'difficult discussion', he said.

European Commission vice-president Margaritis Schinas, the commissioner charged with 'promoting our European way of life', said Europe could no longer settle for just another ad hoc solution. "We cannot continue working event-by-event, ship-by-ship, incident-by-incident, route-by-route," he said, recalling that previous crises had been seized upon by 'populist and europhobe forces'.



Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi (right) talks with European Commission vice-president Margaritis Schinas (left) during the Extraordinary Home Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on Friday (AFP)

Numbers of asylum seekers are still far lower than the levels of 2015 and 2016, but the dispute has already undermined a stop-gap pact to redistribute arrivals more evenly around the 27-nation bloc.

No more 'ad hoc' plans

Brussels has been struggling for years to agree and implement a new policy for sharing responsibility for migrants and asylum seekers but the ugly row has brought the issue to the fore.

Earlier this month, Italy's new government under far-right leader Georgia Meloni refused to allow a Norwegian-flagged NGO ship to dock with 234 migrants rescued from the Mediterranean.

The Ocean Viking eventually continued on to France, where authorities reacted with fury to Rome's stance, suspending an earlier deal to take in 3,500 asylum seekers stranded in Italy.

The row undermined the EU's interim solution and led to Paris calling Friday's extraordinary meeting of interior ministers

from the 27 member states.

"The Ocean Viking crisis was a bit of improvisation," Schinas admitted, defending the new plan from his commission to better coordinate rescues and migrant and refugee arrivals. "We have twenty specific actions, we have an important political agreement, everyone is committed to working so as not to reproduce this kind of situation."

French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said there was no reason for France to accept migrants relocated from Italy if

Rome 'does not take the boats, does not accept the law of the sea'.

Darmanin's Italian opposite number Matteo Piantedosi played down the Ocean Viking incident, saying the meeting was 'not dealing with individual cases or operational management'.

He said he had shaken hands with the French minister and that there was a 'convergence of positions' allowing the ministers to resume discussion at the December 8 meeting.

Belgian counterpart Nicole De Moor called for 'solidarity', saying that Belgium was taking in more than its fair share of migrants leaving its reception facilities overwhelmed.

The previous plan was drawn up after Mediterranean countries closer to North African shores, like Italy and Greece, complained that they were shouldering too much responsibility for migrants.

A dozen EU members agreed to take in 8,000 asylum seekers - with France and Germany accepting 3,500 each - but so far just 117 relocations have actually happened.

On Monday, the European Commission unveiled a new action plan to better regulate arrivals on the central Mediterranean sea route.

AFP



Turkey-backed Syrian fighters man positions on the outskirts of the town of Kuljibrin, in the country's northern Aleppo governorate, on Friday (AFP)

‘Rockets target US Syria base in latest strike’

Beirut, Lebanon - Two rockets targeted a US patrol base in northeastern Syria late on Friday, the third such attack in nine days, US Central Command said.

Centcom did not indicate who fired the rockets but said, in a statement, that they aimed at ‘coalition forces at the US patrol base in Al-Shaddadi, Syria’.

The strike at about 10:30pm (1930 GMT) caused no injuries or damage to the base or coalition property, said Centcom, which covers the Middle East region. The US troops support Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which are the Kurds’ de facto army in the area and led the battle that dislodged the Islamic State group (IS) from the last scraps of their Syrian territory in 2019.

Hundreds of American troops are still in Syria as part of the fight against IS remnants. “Syrian Democratic Forces visited the rocket origin site and found a third unfired rocket,” Centcom added in its latest statement.

On November 17 rockets targeted the coalition’s Green Village base which is in Syria’s largest oil field, Al-Omar, near the

Iraqi border, Centcom said at the time. There were no injuries. A war monitor, the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights which has a wide network of sources in Syria, said that strike came from ‘a base of pro-Iranian militias’. Such groups have significant influence in the Syria-Iraq border region.

In another attack, a Turkish drone strike on Tuesday killed two SDF fighters and posed ‘a risk to US troops’, Centcom told AFP earlier. That strike hit a base north of Hassakeh city, also in Syria’s northeast but farther north.

On November 20 Turkey announced it had carried out a series of air and drone strikes in Iraq and Syria, a week after a bomb attack in Istanbul that killed six people and wounded 81.

Turkey says it is targeting rear bases of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), designated as a terrorist group by the European Union and the United States, and the Syrian Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), which dominate the SDF. AFP

‘We cannot be broken’: Zelensky vows on Holodomor anniversary

Kyiv, Ukraine - President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed on Saturday that Ukraine would continue to resist Russian attacks, as the country marked the 90th anniversary of the Holodomor famine that affected millions of Ukrainians under Soviet leader Joseph Stalin.

Several European leaders travelled to Ukraine to pledge support after weeks of Russian strikes on Ukraine’s energy grid caused widespread power and water cuts as temperatures plunge with the onset of winter.

“Ukrainians went through very terrible things... Once they wanted to destroy us with hunger, now - with darkness and cold,” Zelensky said in a video posted on social media.

“We cannot be broken,” he added.

Leaders from Belgium, Lithuania and Poland were in Kyiv on Saturday to commemorate the victims of the 1932-33 Holodomor - Ukrainian for ‘death by starvation’ - which is regarded by Kyiv as a deliberate act of genocide by Stalin’s regime.

The Polish and Lithuanian prime ministers were in Ukraine for talks that, according to local media, could in particular focus on a possible new wave of migration from Ukraine this winter.

Ukraine’s Border Guard Service said Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki was in Kyiv and ‘honoured the memory of the Holodomor victims’ at a memorial in the Ukrainian capital. Belgium’s Prime Minister Alexander De Croo was also in Kyiv on his first visit since Russia invaded. “Arrived in Kyiv. After



Belgium PM Alexander De Croo (second from left) speaks with Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky (second from right) in Kyiv, on Saturday (AFP)

Ukrainians went through very terrible things... Once they wanted to destroy us with hunger, now - with darkness and cold. We cannot be broken

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

the heavy bombing of recent days, we stand with the people of Ukraine. More than ever before,” he said on Twitter, posting photos of him shaking hands with Zelensky.

According to the Belga news agency, Belgium pledged a further €37.4mn (US\$39mn) of financial aid for Ukraine.

‘History repeating itself’

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron announced in video statements new financial aid packages to support Ukrainian grain exports, which have been disrupted by the war.

“The most vulnerable coun-

tries must not pay the price of a war they did not want,” Macron said in his statement. Lawmakers from Germany are set to recognise the Holodomor as ‘genocide’, according to a draft text of a joint resolution from Germany’s ruling coalition and the opposition seen by AFP.

The German resolution says that up to 3.5mn people are believed to have died that winter alone but historians put the total death toll as high as 10mn.

At the tall candle-shaped Holodomor memorial centre in central Kyiv, a dozen Orthodox priests in black and silver robes

gathered on Saturday for a religious ceremony for the victims of the famine. “It was an artificial genocidal famine... Now when we experience this massive unprovoked war of Russia against Ukraine, we see history repeating itself,” priest Oleksandr Shmurygin, 38, told AFP.

The Holodomor has long been a source of hostility between Russia and Ukraine.

Russian contests the genocide designation, placing the events in the broader context of famines that devastated regions of Central Asia and Russia. AFP

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‘Iran rapper arrested over protests risks death penalty’

Paris, France - The family of an Iranian rapper detained for supporting protests over Mahsa Amini’s death said his life was at risk after he went on trial behind closed doors on Saturday.

Iran has intensified a crackdown on the protests sparked by the September 16 death of Amini after her arrest in Tehran for allegedly breaching the country’s strict dress code for women.

Toomaj Salehi, well known on Iran’s rap scene, was arrested late last month after denouncing the regime and showing support for the protests, human rights groups said.

“Dissident rapper Toomaj Salehi had the first day of his so-called ‘trial’ today in Tehran without a lawyer of his choice,” the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran said on Twitter.

His family tweeted that his ‘life is at serious risk right now’ as he faced charges of ‘enmity against God’ and ‘corruption on earth’ - sharia-related charges that are capital crimes in the Islamic republic.

Salehi had disappeared at the end of October before appearing in a video published on November 2 by Iran’s state-run media.

The video claimed to show the first images of Salehi after his arrest.

It depicted a tattooed man in a sleeveless black T-shirt sitting on the ground, wearing a blindfold and looking bloodied and bruised.

The man says: “I am Toomaj Salehi. I said I made a mistake. I said... that you should run. I didn’t mean you.”

Activists condemned the recording as a forced confession extracted under duress.

Salehi is one of a number of prominent figures to be arrested in a mass crackdown that has seen dozens of journalists, lawyers, civil society and cultural figures arrested. AFP

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Artistic exchange

AFFORDABLE ART FAIR '22

Oman's Affordable Art Fair '22 will be held at Jungle Al Bahja Hall, in Qurum, between December 1 and 2, exhibiting a wide variety of paintings, sculptures, and ceramics by artists in Oman

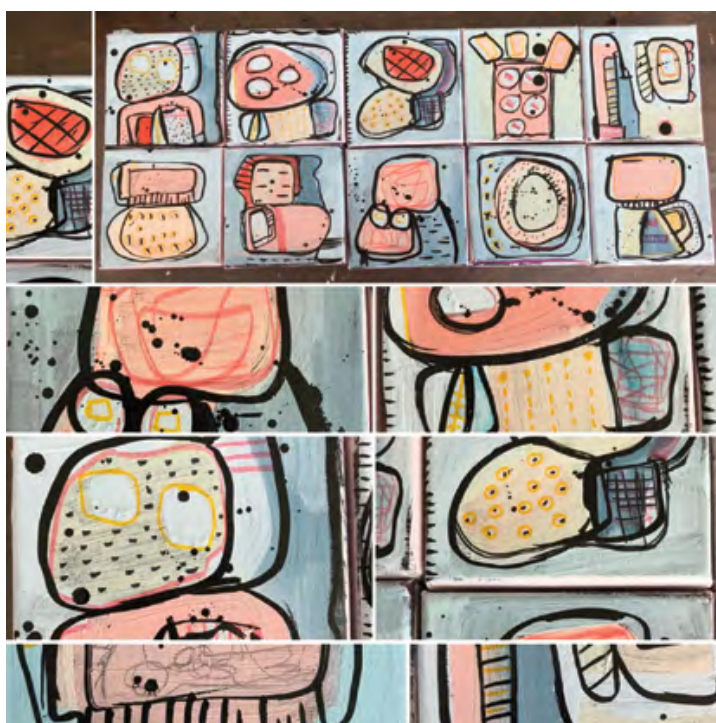
Hubert Vaz

Owning unique artworks created by talented and established artists and sculptors in Oman is no more a far cry if you choose to visit the annual Affordable Art Fair '22. Showcasing the works of local and international artists in Oman, this annual event gives the common man an opportunity to get acquainted as well as fulfill his/her dream of buying art for a song.

Disclosing this, Radhika Hamalai, a senior artist and the brains behind the event, said, "This art fair is one of a kind, exhibiting state-of-art pieces, displaying an amazing collection of paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and everything under the roof. The unique part of this fair is that you can literally own art pieces from celebrated artists at an affordable price. You can expect a colourful vibrant display of creative minds from all ages and cultures. A place where you can immerse yourself into the intellectual, cultural, and enriching world of art."

Radhika has been curating this fair successfully over the past six years, and while it gives people from Oman to own art at affordable prices, it also provides artists in Oman a suitable platform to find buyers from around the world in Oman for their work.

Being a renowned artist herself, Radhika felt the need to present the art community in Oman to the populace in the most innovative manner. What started as a dream to create awareness, has turned into a place where families can come and immerse themselves into the world of



creativity. It is a socially inclusive event wherein visitors can interact with the participant artists face-to-face and be able to understand the meaning and purpose of their art.

About curating the annual event, Radhika said, "It's a place of small payback to the Art community." Art works by 45 prominent artists, local and international will be featured in the fair, all of whom have been hand-picked by an Art Fair committee.

The participating institutions and artists include ABA International School, Alia Abdullah al Shueili, Anjali Babu, Cure8 Art, Debjani Bhardwaj, Elizabeth Davis, Fatma Jaffer al Lawati, Haneen al Moosawi, Harini Kumar, Ibtisam al Said, Iman al Maskari, Julia Jean Davies, Kawthar al Harthi, Khadija al Mamari, Kostis Grivakis, Lupie Lup, Mawada al Sawafi, Mo-

ammed Mehdi, Nuha Abdulrahman al Khusaibi, Pragya Bhatnagar, Prithisha Bhatnagar, Radhika Hamalai, Rashmi Dauria, Raya Saleh al Maskari, Hamed Sulaiman al Jabri, Al Zahraqa Hussain al Ajmi, Dr Shalini Gupta Kumar, Rayan Balkhair, Rebeca Nigrinis, Safiya al Bahlani, Shahrazad al Saie, Shaima al Alawi, Soni Budhia, Tahira Fida, Tarini Agarwal, Makan Studios, Teodora Zrancheva, Mhearts and Scientific College of Design.

On the sidelines, six workshops on art and literature for all age groups will be held. The 90-minute workshops provide attendees with an opportunity to get inspired and watch an art movies, from 6pm onwards on both days.

Here's what some of the participating artists say about the event:

Art works by 45 prominent artists, local and international will be featured in the fair, all of whom have been hand-picked by an Art Fair committee

RADHIKA HAMLAI



Tahira Fida

Affordable Art Fair is something that most people in Muscat await for buying 'arty gifts'. My collection to be displayed in this event is based on Islamic art and the influence of Islamic architecture and ornaments. These ornaments are composed with Quran verses, references to the Almighty and some popular Arabic words such as 'Love'. All the paintings have a mounting and a wooden frame to give it luxurious finish.

Rebecca Nigrinis

This is my third year participating in the Affordable Art Fair and it's been a great experience that I always look forward to. It's a platform where art lovers can come to the show, meet the artists, and buy directly from them at very good deals. This year, I'll be bringing original pieces from my recent collection with more texture and bold colours. I'll also have some high-quality prints ready to hang, besides my home decor collection that includes trays, coasters, decorative boxes, and hand-painted clay pots. I think Oman is developing its art scene and art here is still affordable.

Tarini Agarwal

It's truly exciting to be part of Oman Affordable Art Fair 2022. Exciting things have been brewing in my studio. The outcome is a series that I call 'Lyrical Landscapes'. It comprises abstract landscapes with the form in the shape and design of Arabic calligraphy - it is beautiful in form and design, and I find the flow of the alphabets musical. There will be something for everyone, the choice is wide. This is the season for gifting, and you will find something for your near and dear ones or to add to your collection.

Elizabeth Davis

I think, Affordable Art Fair is a wonderful platform for both, the artists and the art buyers. It's a win-win situation for all concerned, including the organisers. The hall is well lit and the stalls made in a professional manner. This time, I'm presenting copies of my sketchbook 'Kiki goes to Corniche' and also some small artwork 'Poetry in motion' based on Sufi dancers.

Debjeni Bhardwaj

It is my third year of participation in Oman's Art Fair. I dedicate this time of the year to creating small sized, accessible works of art, unlike rest of the year when I am engaged in intense art/making for gallery exhibitions. It also gives me an opportunity to engage directly with audiences who might find the environmental art galleries too formal and intimidating. I am showcasing my handbuilt pottery, hand painted with my illustrations, hand stitched fabric celebrity dolls, intricate paper-cut art, and silk scarves with my drawings. I enjoy the buzz and vibrant energy of the fair.

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Inspirations

RESIN ART

Two talented resin artists in Oman have put up an interesting joint exhibition titled 'Inspirations' to showcase and introduce a new genre of art to artists and art lovers in Oman

Hubert Vaz

They let their creativity flow into new moulds...moulds of innovative designs, patterns and pictures, all of which stay rock solid testimony to their inspiration and experiments with new forms of artistic expression.

When Hawraa al Musawi and Kamla al Rahbi together conceived a joint exhibition 'Inspirations' to showcase their new found love for resin art, they had one sole intention in mind - turning the arc-lights on a new art form in Oman that's still in its infancy. And through the exhibits on display at this exhibition, they present not just their new-pound skill but also a creative journey wherein the end is yet undefined.

The exhibition was inaugurated by H

H Sayyida Basma al Said at Hormuz Grand Muscat on November 20 and will be on till November 29. It comprises interesting artworks created by both artists, involving not just creative expression but also technical skill to maintain clarity and precision in each of the works which need careful handling.

Through this exhibition both artists call upon budding as well as established artists in Oman to examine their own creativity and find new ways of expression, of which resin art is a fast picking up genre. Resin art, they say, has endless possibilities that allow one to take art out of walls and present it in various aspects of modern lifestyles. It can be created on wall and table décor as well as in articles like wall clocks, mirrors, utensils, etc.

Both artists share their own take on this joint initiative:



V K Shafer



H H Sayyida Basma al Said (centre) was the chief guest

Hawraa al Musawi

Who conceived 'Inspirations'?

Kamla al Rahbi came forth with the idea for a joint exhibition and I liked it very much. There is no particular theme for the works on display but we have presented our own techniques of resin art.

What message does this exhibition convey?

We have two messages. The first message is that each artist has his/her own internal inspiration to create beautiful and unique artworks. They have to look for this inspiration within themselves to help them achieve their desired goals - my biggest inspiration was the 'mother nature'. The second message is, young artists shouldn't lose hope if they face any challenges, they should continue to strive for excellence.

Why did you choose to learn resin art?

My artistic career started in 2016 with drawing the nature with oil & acrylic colours. In 2018, by chance, I have found acrylic pouring art on Instagram and experimented with it. Then, I discovered resin art, researched it and was amazed by its huge potential. There were many challenges, from ordering material online and taking up online courses to practising this skill with different items. I also introduced flower preservation in Oman for the first time. Every day is a learning experience with this art form.

What are the main differences in resin art and regular painting?

Resin art is a completely different art. The main medium in resin art is resin (it is a 2 part product - resin and hardener), whereas regular painting involves oil or acrylic colours. In resin, we do not use brushes to draw the style we want, and we add certain materials to cre-



ate our artwork, unlike in painting. Resin is mixed with hardener to produce a glossy solid surface, once it's dry. So, it is very important to be aware of the safety measures.

What difficulties do resin artists face?

Resin artists face many difficulties. Getting the right materials is one - I have been ordering all supplies online as these are not available in Oman. Resin art also needs a special temperature and humidity level - if it is not set up correctly, the work can be ruined. Also, dust is the biggest enemy for a resin artist as a small particle of dust can ruin the whole artwork.

What have you presented in this exhibition?

I have 11 artworks on display - 2 tables, a clock, a mirror and the rest wall artworks.

Kamla al Rahbi

Why did you choose to learn resin art?

Resin art is one of the most modern and beautiful art forms known globally that has imposed itself on the Omani scene only recently. I started my artistic career since 2018, when I started with the art of pouring of colours. Through this, I found an outlet for myself from the daily stress of life. Soon, I was attracted to resin art and got immersed in it. I have tried most of the techniques that can be implemented with this beautiful art genre.

How similar or different is your work from Hawraa's?

Hawraa and I have similarity in taste, choice of colours, and implementation of ideas, but

each of us have our own touch. I am more inclined to make wall clocks, while Hawraa loves to make wall paintings.

What is the best part of creating a resin art and what is the difficult part?

The best part is when you pour the resin and things go as planned. The difficult part is that often the resin tends to harden before one has executed the whole idea.

How did you train yourself with this skill?

I learned this art first through visual feeding and following international artists in this field. Then, I refined my talent by attending many internal and external workshops to learn some difficult techniques. I have also conducted many workshops to teach this art to children and adults.

Have you seen the works of resin artists from other countries?

Yes, I constantly follow everything that is presented in this art by international artists, and I try as much as possible to keep up and simulate new ideas in my own way.

Would you be able to create huge resin art for institutional display - like in ministries or public places like the airport, etc?

Of course, I can carry out any orders for any clients. My ambition is to own a resin gallery and store for selling resin accessories, display resin artworks for sale, and conduct workshops to teach resin to those interested.

What have you presented in this exhibition - any colour fixations?

I have presented 18 different artworks. I like to use colours inspired by nature - green and blue. I also like to give a touch of gold in some.



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FIFA WORLD CUP

Qatar2022



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2022 | MUSCAT DAILY | 13

PENALTY WOES

Salem al Dawsari misses from the spot while Robert Lewandowski breaks World Cup duck as Poland get the better of Saudi Arabia



Poland goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny makes a save to deny Saudi Arabia's Salem Al Dawsari from the spot during their Group C match on Saturday (AFP)

Doha, Qatar - Salem al Dawsari saw his penalty saved brilliantly by Wojciech Szczesny while Robert Lewandowski scored the first World Cup goal of his prolific career on Saturday as Poland defeated Saudi Arabia 2-0, bursting the Asian side's bubble following their giant-killing act against Argentina.

Lewandowski made sure Poland took a big step towards the last 16 in Qatar when he rolled home in the 82nd minute after being gifted the ball by Abdulrahman al Malki.

However, it was a battle for Czeslaw Michniewicz's side, who were leading at that point thanks to Piotr Zielinski's roofed finish and an incredible double save from Szczesny including Al Dawsari's penalty late in the first half.

GROUP C	
	POLAND
	SAUDI ARABIA
	2
	0

Poland leapfrogged the Saudis into first place in Group C, with Lionel Messi's Argentina facing Mexico later on Saturday.

Egged on by a vocal crowd, Herve Renard's Saudi team came out with the bit between their teeth and the Poles frequently struggled to handle their aggressive press.

Poland were shown three early yellow cards.

Mohamed Kanno had the game's first decent effort on goal, tipped over by Szczesny in the 13th minute.

Lewandowski initially found it hard to get into the game as he was immediately surrounded by a gang of defenders led by Ali al Bulayhi, who at one point looked to be heading out of the game after being accidentally studded by the Barca star.

Super Szczesny

Lewandowski played a key role in Poland's opener against the run of play in the 39th minute, pulling back for Zielinski to finish after nearly clipping home his first World Cup goal.

Szczesny then stepped up to save his team minutes later after referee Wilton Sampaio awarded a soft penalty, when Saleh al Shehri went down heavily under pressure

from Krystian Bielik. The Juventus goalkeeper did well to bat away Al Dawsari's nervy spot-kick but the ball fell to Mohammed al Burayk, who was denied on the rebound by a sensational stop.

Szczesny was again Poland's saviour nine minutes after the break when he charged off his line to keep out Al Dawsari following a chaotic passage of play that ended with the ball being ballooned over the bar.

Poland were again close to buckling under intense Saudi pressure but should have been further ahead midway in through the second half when Arkadiusz Milik and Lewandowski both struck the woodwork in the space of three minutes.

AFP



France's Kylian Mbappe celebrates after scoring against Denmark in their Group D match at Stadium 974 in Doha on Saturday (AFP)

Mbappe double takes holders France into the knockout round

Doha, Qatar - Kylian Mbappe scored twice, including a late winner, as holders France edged Denmark 2-1 on Saturday to become the first team to reach the last 16 of the World Cup.

A potent French side knew a second victory in as many Group D outings would take them through to the knockout phase and they were well worth the lead that Mbappe gave them when he opened the scoring at Stadium 974 just after the hour mark.

However, Andreas Christensen soon equalised for the Danes and Les Bleus needed Mbappe to deliver again in the 86th minute as he turned in Antoine Griezmann's cross to puncture the Danish resistance once and for all.

Having scored four during France's victorious 2018 campaign and one against Australia, Mbappe now has seven goals in nine World Cup appearances.

Didier Deschamps's side now have the luxury of going into their final group game against Tunisia knowing a draw

GROUP D	
	FRANCE
	DENMARK
	2
	1

will guarantee them top spot, and even a defeat may not prevent them finishing first.

Having come roaring back to batter Australia 4-1 in their opening match in Qatar, France were more wasteful in front of goal on this occasion but at least they did not come unstuck against opponents who have caused them problems before.

They were reigning champions when a defeat to the Danes knocked them out of the 2002 World Cup, while the sides played out the only goalless draw in 2018.

More recently Kasper Hjulmand's side beat France home and away in this year's Nations League, and it seemed that Deschamps had learned lessons from those two encounters.

AFP

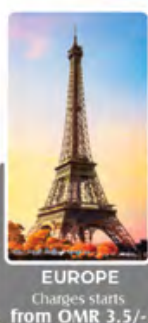


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World Cup 0-0 draws due to fear of losing: FIFA experts

Doha, Qatar - The high number of goalless draws at the World Cup has been due to teams' fear of suffering an early setback, FIFA's technical study group said on Saturday.

There were five goalless matches in the first 20 matches in Qatar, already just two short of matching the record amount in a World Cup.

There was only one 0-0 stalemate at the 2018 tournament - between eventual winners France and Denmark.

"It's because teams don't want to take too much risk at the beginning," said former Nigeria international Sunday Oliseh.

"Past data shows about 70 per-

Past data shows about 70 percent of teams who lose their first game go out in the group stage and they're all aware of that

SUNDAY OLISEH

cent of teams who lose their first game go out in the group stage and they're all aware of that."

Uruguay's match with South Korea on Thursday was the first World Cup game to not even see a shot on target in the 21st century.

"Many teams are relying on a cautious approach," said veteran Italian coach Alberto Zaccheroni.

"Lots of teams fielded five de-

fenders and played very tight and compact. They wanted to assure at least a point from their first game and if a chance came along, try and grab it to win the game."

Despite England's 6-2 rout of Iran and Spain's 7-0 thrashing of Costa Rica, there have been fewer goals per game so far in Qatar than in Russia or in Brazil in 2014.

AFP



Uruguay's Luis Suarez fights for the ball with South Korea's Lee Jae-sung (L) and Kim Min-jae in their Group H match on Thursday. It was the first World Cup game in the 21st century to not even see a shot on target (AFP)

STAYING ALIVE

Gutsy Australia squeeze past Tunisia to revive World Cup hopes

Doha, Qatar - Australia won a World Cup game for only the third time in their history with a dogged 1-0 victory over Tunisia on Saturday to revive their last-16 hopes.

Striker Mitch Duke scored the only goal of a tight game with a clever header in the first half and Australia then desperately held on to silence Tunisia's vociferous fans.

Australia sit second in Group D with three points from two games, having been well-beaten 4-1 by holders France in their tournament opener.

The Socceroos face Denmark in their final group game and the knock-out round is in sight.

Their best World Cup performance came in 2006 when they also reached the last 16, in the days of Tim Cahill, Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka.

Graham Arnold's Australia don't have players of that ilk but they have lots of heart and kicked off to deafening whistles in front of 42,000 at Al Janoub Stadium, where their fans were heavily outnumbered.

Each Australia touch was met with whistles from the throbbing ranks of



Australia's Mitchell Duke (L) scores against Tunisia in their Group D match at the Al Janoub Stadium on Saturday (AFP)

Tunisia's bouncing, bellowing and flag-waving supporters.

Australia had only ever won two matches at the World Cup before this and squeezed into this edition via a playoff. But they started the better against a Tunisia team who held Denmark 0-0 in their opener and are looking to reach the knockout stage for the first time.

The match was being shown on primetime Saturday night television in Australia and viewers saw their gritty side dominate the first 15 minutes, without mustering a shot. Tunisia had the first sniff of goal in the 19th

minute but skipper Youssef Msakni was squeezed out, and then defender Mohamed Drager blazed over.

In the 23rd minute, Australia took the lead their possession deserved.

Craig Goodwin, who scored the opener in the loss to France, crossed from the left and the ball ricocheted for Duke to glance his header back over his own shoulder and into the net.

The Japan-based centre-forward, 31, exchanged angry words with the Tunisian bench when he was bundled over on the half-hour mark.

The skirmish ended in a shake of the hand with substitute Hannibal Mejbri,

the Manchester United teenager.

Another English-based player, defender Harry Souttar of Stoke City, made a heroic last-ditch block from the dangerous Msakni as half-time approached.

Tunisia's fans had their heads in their hands in injury time when Msakni finally escaped Souttar, only to side-foot wide from close range.

Coach Jalel Kadri brought off Drager at the break and replaced him with a midfielder, Ferjani Sassi, and a match that had simmered up to that point threatened to boil over.

AFP



The best moment of my life and my football career, there are no words. Just so happy and proud of the boys. We made so many sacrifices to get here. It is the best feeling in the world.

MITCH DUKE

MOMENT IN TIME



HEARTBREAK: A Tunisian fan looks emotional as she watches her team play



Kylian Mbappe takes a shot at goal during a training session in Doha on Saturday

Sluggish England frustrated in draw against the US

Al Khor, Qatar - England missed a chance to book their place in the World Cup last 16 as Gareth Southgate's side produced a limp display in their 0-0 draw against the United States on Friday.

Southgate's men would have been guaranteed to advance from Group B with a victory in their second game of the tournament, but they rarely troubled a determined US team.

Having thrashed Iran 6-2 on Monday, England lacked the urgency they showed in their opening game and were booed off at full-time.

They managed just one shot on target and could easily have conceded in the first half when the US were in control for long periods at the Al Bayt Stadium. For the third time in three World Cup meetings with the US, England

failed to live up to their status as favourites.

After a shocking defeat in the 1950 tournament and a 1-1 draw in 2010, this was another defiant American effort against England, cooling some of the hype around the Three Lions following the Iran rout.

"I knew after such a high (in the Iran game) it would be difficult to replicate that performance," Southgate said.

"We didn't quite have that same zip but that's going to happen. We're not going to roll through a tournament and sweep through everybody. Sometimes you have to show different qualities to get the result.

"Today puts us in a really strong position in terms of qualification."

AFP

Red alert: Fired-up Nagatomo fuels Japan at World Cup

Doha, Qatar - Mellowing with age is not part of the plan for Japan veteran Yuto Nagatomo, whose flame-red hair and wild celebrations are helping to fuel the Blue Samurai's fire in Qatar.

The 36-year-old full-back has been in an irrepressible mood at his fourth World Cup - a record for a Japanese outfield player - and is fully embracing his role as the team's elder statesman.

Nogatomo played nearly an hour of Japan's stunning 2-1 opening win over Germany but his involvement was not over when he left the pitch.

He spent the rest of the match encouraging his teammates from the sidelines and racing off the bench to congratulate goal scorers Ritsu Doan and Takuma Asano.

He then carried his exuberant mood over into his post-match interviews, screaming "Bravo!" into a TV camera in a clip that went viral around the world.

It was nothing out of the ordinary for a player who has dyed his hair red for the tournament to fire up his teammates.

"The idea was that it's the red of the Japanese flag, and it also shows the passion of our players," Nagatomo explained. "I wanted to express that. I asked people what colour I should dye it and a lot said red. I had thought that as well so it felt like it best represented my attitude towards the World Cup."

Nogatomo said his wife, a TV personality in Japan, had even dyed her hair a red tinge in "a gesture of



Japan's Yuto Nagatomo battles with Germany's Serge Gnabry for the ball during their Group E match on Wednesday (AFP)

unity".

The defender was never likely to do things by half at a World Cup in which he is determined to have a positive impact.

Japan's squad contains 19 players making their World Cup debuts and only a handful of veterans.

Defender Maya Yoshida and reserve goalkeeper Eiji Kawashima are still around but most of the generation who led Japan at the previous three World Cups - Keisuke Honda, Shinji Kagawa, Shinji Okazaki and

Makoto Hasebe - have moved on.

Vocal presence

Nogatomo is taking a hands-on leadership role, always at the front of the group when the players warm up and a constant vocal presence in training sessions.

"We have a lot of players who are playing at their first World Cup and they have confidence from playing at European clubs. We don't have so many veterans this time," he said.

"The veteran players are the base

of the team, and then the confidence of the players comes together to form one whole like a puzzle."

Nogatomo is approaching the end of a career that few in the history of Japanese football can match. After making his World Cup debut in 2010, he moved to Italy and made 170 league appearances for Inter Milan.

He also played for Galatasaray and Marseille before returning to FC Tokyo in the J-League last year.

AFP

TODAYS MATCHES


JAPAN
VS
COSTA RICA
2 PM


BELGIUM
VS
MOROCCO
5 PM


CROATIA
VS
CANADA
8 PM


SPAIN
VS
GERMANY
11 PM



play Australia at the Al Janoub Stadium on Saturday (AFP)



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo draws a challenge from Ghana's Mohammed Salisu inside the area to win a penalty on Thursday (AFP)

Ronaldo's 'total genius' won World Cup penalty: Oliseh

Doha, Qatar - Cristiano Ronaldo showed "total genius" by winning a controversial penalty in Portugal's World Cup win over Ghana, FIFA technical study group member Sunday Oliseh said on Saturday.

The veteran striker went down after a tackle by Mohammed Salisu on Thursday before scoring the resulting spot-kick to become the first man to net at five World Cups.

Ghana coach Otto Addo described the penalty decision as a "gift" to Ronaldo and said it was a "really wrong decision".

"Maybe the strikers are getting smarter," former Nigeria international Oliseh told a press conference when asked why more penalties were being awarded at the tournament so far than in previous years.

"If you look at the penalty Ronaldo got, let's face it, people can say what they want about this man, but the genius thought to just be patient and put my foot to touch the ball first before you, continue my leg so that you make contact with my leg - that is total genius.

"Let's give the strikers the compliment for getting smarter."

Nine penalties were awarded in the first round of group-stage matches.

"VAR is also a major reason why this (more penalties being awarded) is happening because the referees can now look at it three or four times and decide," added Oliseh.

Portugal take on Uruguay in their second match on Monday before finishing their Group H campaign against South Korea four days later.

AFP

Qatar football will survive World Cup exit, says Sanchez

Doha, Qatar - Qatar's early World Cup exit will not be fatal for the country's football development, manager Felix Sanchez said Friday, after the hosts became the first team to be eliminated.

A 1-1 draw between Ecuador and the Netherlands sent Qatar crashing out of the tournament just hours after a 3-1 defeat to Senegal had left them on the brink.

Qatar became only the second host nation to go out in the first round following South Africa in 2010, and the first to be eliminated after two games. But Sanchez believes football will continue to develop in the tiny Gulf state despite the disappointment and targeted a return to the world's biggest stage.

"The World Cup will finish but football will continue here," said the Spaniard, who led Qatar to the 2019 Asian Cup title. "It's a football country and they want to keep developing young talent so they can reach the senior team. We can keep on competing within our limitations in Asia.

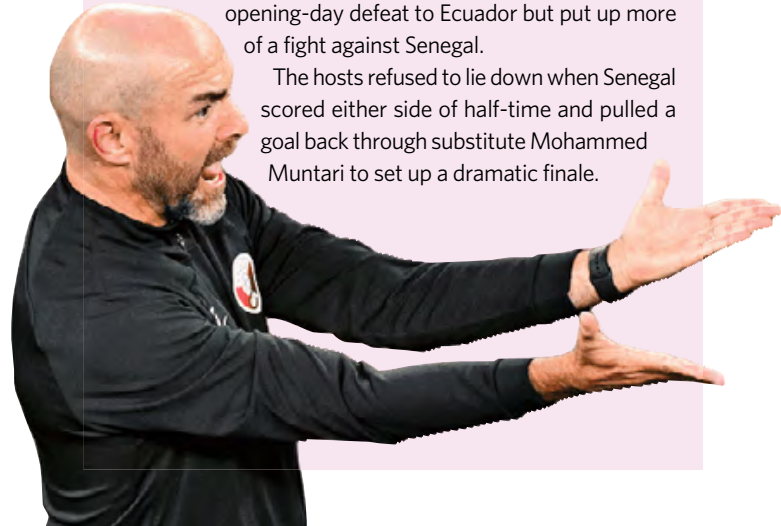
"By doing that, we'll get more experience and we'll be able to play in more competitions like this."

Qatar made a nervy start to the tournament in an opening-day defeat to Ecuador but put up more of a fight against Senegal.

The hosts refused to lie down when Senegal scored either side of half-time and pulled a goal back through substitute Mohammed Muntari to set up a dramatic finale.

The World Cup will finish but football will continue here

FELIX SANCHEZ



BELGIUM'S 'GOLDEN GENERATION' PAST BEST, ADMITS EDEN HAZARD

Doha, Qatar - Eden Hazard admitted Saturday that Belgium's best chance to win the World Cup had come and gone but said they still have the quality and experience to lift the trophy in Qatar.

Belgium, who finished third at the tournament in Russia in 2018, are still ranked second in the world but many of the much-vaunted "Golden Generation" are now in their 30s.

"To be fair I think we had a better chance to win four years ago," admitted 31-year-old Hazard, speaking on the eve of Sunday's match against Morocco.

"The team was better four years ago but still we have the quality to win games and to win the competition. We have a few guys, they are a bit older now but we have experience and the best goalkeeper in the world (Thibaut Courtois).

"We have one of the best midfields in the world, right now. We have good strikers. We have the team and I think it's just the desire to want to win, and the mentality."

He added: "Belgium can win the World Cup if we are in form. If we are not it will be tough."

The Real Madrid forward said he was not over-worried by Belgium's struggles in their opening Group F match against Canada, which they won 1-0, but he urged the team to play

without fear.

No fear

"The first match you always have a bit of fear, you don't always want the ball," he said. "Now we need to get over that. We need to not be afraid to dribble, to play the killer pass. That's what was missing in the first match."

Hazard has struggled to repeat the form he showed at Chelsea since he moved to Spain in 2019 but he said he was able to brush off criticism over his performances.

"There has always been criticism," he said. "Even when you play well you get criticised. I just try to focus on playing the best I can for my country and I'll give everything I can."

Belgium coach Roberto Martinez was relaxed about his side's form, highlighting the lack of preparation time before the tournament in Qatar.

"Slowly you're going to see teams getting ready after three games in the tournament," he said.

"So rather than having that preparation for a World Cup, for a major tournament where you have three friendlies and you have four weeks to get everybody in the optimal condition, the teams need to get ready while they are in the tournament and that's dangerous because it can cost you points."

AFP



Belgium's Eden Hazard takes part in a training session at the Salwa Training site on Friday (AFP)



Sailors in action on the third day of RS Venture Connect World Championships

Teams battle for final fleet positions at RS Venture Connect World Championships

Muscat - The third day of racing at the 2022 RS Venture Connect World Championships organised by Oman Sail saw exceptional sailing and plenty of surprises.

Oman's Sultan al Wahaibi and Ahmed al Balushi lead the Open category, after registering a win and a second-place finish. They lead Genevieve Wickham and Grant Alderson of Australia by a point and are three ahead of Clementine Gorisse and Lucien Bermont of France.

Piotr Cichocki and Olga Gornas-Grudzien of Poland also shone on day three, scoring a win and a second place to lead the

Para category by seven points from Sweden's Fia Fjeldahl and Patric Rosenberg.

Ange Margaron and Olivier Ducruix of France are in third, just one point back from second, and fourth to 10th are separated by just five points in a close fleet.

Malik al Qartobi and Ghalya al Jabri currently sit in joint 12th position, seven points behind the medal placings. Zaher al Atbi and Ali al Ghasaini are in 18th place after struggling with a disqualification earlier in the week, while Hassan al Lawati and Sami al Sulaimi are two points back in 20th. Rayyan al Mujaini and Hamed al

Subhi also encountered problems following a premature start, ending the fleet racing on 22nd.

Dan Jaspers, International Business Development at RS Sailing, said, "This is the first time we have held an RS Venture Connect event outside of Europe, and this decision has paid off with an increase in participating teams. As a venue, as a destination, the Barceló Mussanah Resort has proved very popular with sailors.

"Having everything so close in one venue is amazing for the competition and the feedback has been excellent. The dedicated team at Oman Sail has

been incredible and very helpful in managing the event."

"There is a great legacy to this event and the SailFree program is a real credit to Oman Sail, bp Oman and the Oman Paralympic Committee.

"The performance of the sailors so far this week is something the whole of Oman should be very proud of.

"Oman is a key location for the RS class and we see this as a hub for growing inclusive sailing across Asia, especially with the #BacktheBid and #SailtoLA campaign from World Sailing to reinstate sailing to the Paralympics."

DOUBLES DELIGHT

Purcell and Thompson win crucial doubles as Australia reach first Davis Cup final since 2003

Málaga, Spain - Australia reached their first Davis Cup final since 2003 on Friday when they battled back to beat last year's runners-up Croatia 2-1.

Max Purcell and Jordan Thompson stunned 2021 Wimbledon champions Nikola Mektić and Mate Pavić 6-7 (3/7), 7-5, 6-4 in the decisive doubles to hand Australia a final clash against either Canada or Italy on Sunday.

The victory was reward for the decision by Australia skipper Lleyton Hewitt - who played in the 2003 title-winning team - to pair Thompson with Purcell.

Matthew Ebden, who had partnered Purcell to this year's Wimbledon title, had been scheduled to feature in the deciding rubber before the late switch.

"It's been a long time," said Hewitt. "We're a very proud Davis Cup nation and I'm very proud of these guys. They deserve to be in the final and in with a chance of winning this thing."

Hewitt admitted there had been a "slight injury concern" over Ebden.

"But I had no concerns about the chemistry of these two (Purcell and Thompson)."

After Mektić and Pavić claimed the 53-minute opening set in the tiebreak to nudge Croatia closer to a fourth Davis Cup final in six years, the Australian pair hit back.

They broke in the 11th game of the second set to level before breaking again in the seventh game of the decider on their way to victory after two hours and 14 minutes.

Earlier, Alex de Minaur beat former US Open champion Marin Čilić 6-2, 6-2 to pull 28-time champions Australia level after Borna Ćorić had given Croatia the lead in the semi-final with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Thanasi Kokkinakis.

Čilić, ranked 17 in the world, was undone by 23 unforced errors as De Minaur, the world number 24, avenged a loss to the



Australia's Jordan Thompson (L) and Max Purcell celebrate their victory against Croatia in the Davis Cup doubles semi-final on Friday (AFP)

Croatian when the two countries met in last year's tournament.

'Intensity'

"Marin's a hell of a competitor, a veteran player of our sport that has accomplished amazing things. I knew what to expect, so I knew it was never going to be easy," said De Minaur.

"I knew I had to bring all the intensity I could, be as solid as I could, and try to be solid but aggressive at the same time."

World number 26 Ćorić triumphed over 95th-ranked Kokkinakis in 92 minutes on the back of six aces and 18 winners as the two-time champions set their sights on a return to the final having lost to Russia in the 2021 title match.

"This means a lot to me," said Ćorić, who has resurrected his career in 2022 having not played for 12 months until March this year after undergoing right shoulder surgery.

"I was watching the guys playing Davis Cup when I was injured and doing my rehab. To play for Croatia is an amazing feeling for me."

Canada and Italy meet on Saturday in the second semi-final.

AFP

China's former football coach Li Tie under investigation

Beijing, China - Chinese authorities said Saturday they have launched an investigation into former national men's football coach Li Tie, with the ex-Premier League player suspected of "serious violations of the law".

A statement on the website of a provincial government in central China said Li was being probed by a disciplinary arm within the General Administration of Sport, but did not specify his alleged offences. One of China's most recognisable footballers, the 45-year-old played for Premier League side Everton between 2002 and 2006 and made more than 90 appearances for his country.

Li took charge as the national team's head coach in 2020 but stepped down last year during a poor qualifying campaign that eventually saw China fail to reach the Qatar World Cup.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has targeted official corruption since coming to power a decade ago, waging a sweeping crackdown that critics say also serves as a way to



Li Tie

Li was being probed by a disciplinary arm within the General Administration of Sport, but did not specify his alleged offences.

oust political rivals.

Xi has described himself as a football fan and said he dreams of China hosting and winning a World Cup one day.

But that ambition has faded as stringent zero-Covid curbs have forced Beijing to pull out of hosting major sports events such as the Asian Cup.

AFP

Lakers down Spurs in James's return, Antetokounmpo shines as Bucks win

Los Angeles, United States - LeBron James returned from a five-game injury absence to score 21 points on Friday as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Spurs 105-94 in San Antonio for their first road win of the NBA season.

James pulled down eight rebounds and handed out five assists with three steals and a blocked shot in 33 minutes on the floor, with Lakers coach Darvin Ham saying the four-time NBA champion looked "phenomenal" after missing five games with a groin injury.

The Boston Celtics, led by 30 points from Jayson Tatum, downed the red-hot Sacramento Kings 122-104 to improve their league-leading record to 15-4.

On a busy night in the NBA after a day off for the US Thanksgiving holiday, the Milwaukee Bucks rallied for a 117-102 win over the Cleveland Cavaliers in a battle for second place in the Eastern Conference.

In San Antonio, all eyes were on James, who is on track -- if he stays healthy -- to surpass Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the league's all-time leading scorer as early as February.

He scored the first basket of the contest as the Lakers quickly powered to a double-digit lead.



LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers drives to the basket during their game against the San Antonio Spurs at the AT&T Center in San Antonio, Texas, on Friday (AFP)

They led 59-41 at halftime, but the young Spurs team had sliced the deficit to 81-78 by early in the fourth. The Lakers responded, James's dunk taking the lead back to 10 points.

"I felt pretty good," James said. "I've been non-stop around the clock (getting treatment) for the last couple of weeks to get back on the floor."

Anthony Davis scored 11 of his

25 points in the final period, finishing with a double-double that also included 15 rebounds.

Ham was delighted with what he saw from his superstar, James's nine turnovers notwithstanding.

standing.

In Boston, the Celtics survived a sloppy third quarter to down the Kings, whose eight wins in November included a seven-game winning streak that ended with a loss to Atlanta on Wednesday.

Boston led by as many as 16 early in the second quarter, but the Kings used a 40-point second period to cut the deficit to two points at halftime.

The Kings kept pushing in a third quarter that featured four lead changes. The game was tied 84-84 when Boston reserve Payton Pritchard drained a three-pointer and Tatum fed Luke Kornet for an alley-oop dunk. Tatum then came up with a steal and a basket, followed by a rebound and a three-pointer to give the Celtics a 94-84 lead going into the fourth.

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 38 points to take the Bucks past the Cavaliers, who led by 16 in the first half but were out-scored 35-10 in the third quarter as the hosts turned things around.

The Phoenix Suns maintained their slim lead in the Western Conference with a 108-102 victory over the Detroit Pistons.

AFP