



انتخابات أعضاء
المجالس البلدية
الفترة الثالثة ٢٠٢٢ م

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
THIRD TERM - 2022



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RONALDO WON'T MAKE 'HEAT OF MOMENT' DECISION AFTER PORTUGAL EXIT



MUSCAT

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATED

The Oman Human Rights Commission celebrated Human Rights Day under the auspices of HS Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said. Shaikh Abdullah bin Shuwain al Hosni, Chairman OHRC, said “In the celebration of the International Human Rights Day, which falls on December 10, attention and appreciation is drawn to the foundations, principles and goals set by the United Nations to care for and preserve human rights all over the world.” **SEE P4**

GEMINID METEOR SHOWER IN OMAN

The sky of the Sultanate of Oman is witnessing the Geminid meteor shower - which was named after its launch from the constellation of the Twins (Gemini) - and will reach its climax between Tuesday night and Wednesday morning.

“The Geminids are considered to be one of the most spectacular meteor showers of the year, with the possibility of sighting about 120 meteors per hour at its peak,” the astronomy group said.

In 2020, members of the Omani Astronomical Society observed 1,063 meteors, according to Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Astronomical Society. **SEE P4**



OMAN OBSERVER
FIRST DEDICATED ENGLISH NEWS APP IN OMAN



CHINA WRESTLES WITH COVID SURGE

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CHALLENGES FOR JEFFRIES AS PELOSI'S SUCCESSOR

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HM CONFERS MEDALS ON SAF PERSONNEL



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has conferred the medals of Excellent Service and Royal Commendation on a number of commissioned, non-commissioned officers and personnel of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and other departments at the Ministry of Defence and Royal Guard of Oman (RGO). HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, presented the medals to officers and civil personnel. **SEE ALSO P2**

Boost to start-ups in line with Vision 2040

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahbalushia

Start-ups in Oman are growing at a rate of 10 per cent every year, according to a top official.

Speaking at the first-of-its-kind Investment and Start-Up Summit in Muscat on Monday, Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah, Chairperson of Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises, said, “The forum, one of the initiatives of the Rising Omani Start-up Programme, is a true translation of Oman Vision 2040’s priorities of economic diversification and financial sustainability. It is also a reflection of the keenness of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to build a vibrant and prosperous economy by providing a stimulating environment for entrepreneurs and start-ups, supporting them at all stages of their projects with all capabilities, and strengthening their presence



Start-ups in Oman are growing at a rate of 10 per cent every year

regionally and internationally.”

His Highness Sayyid Belarab bin Haitham al Said (pictured), Honorary President of the Rising Omani Start-up Programme, presided over Investment and Start-up Summit, organised by the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (ASMED) at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, with the participa-

tion of more than 50 start-ups in technology and innovation.

The forum brings international experts, investors and fastest growing start-ups.

Company promoters will interact with international experts on guidance on global expansion and investment opportunities.

Several international experts and companies presented the state of the global start-up ecosystem and strategies for accelerated development. More than 3,000 startups are emerging globally, producing global business models that promote global reach.

Philipp Lemmerz, a partner in PwC, spoke about the importance of entrepreneurship and innovation for the regional ecosystem. Andrew Roughan, Chief Executive Officer of Plexal, spoke about Oman’s start-up landscape and future growth potential. **TURN TO P3**

His Majesty issues Royal Decree on finance ministry

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued Royal decree No. (91/2022) on defining the specialisations of the Ministry of Finance and endorsing its organisational structure.

Article (1) defines the specialisations of the Ministry of Finance in accordance with annex (1) attached to this decree. Article (2) endorses the organisational structure of the Ministry of Finance in accordance with annex (2) attached to this decree. Article (3) cancels Royal decree No. (39/96) on defining the specialisations of the Ministry of Finance and endorsing its organisational structure.

It also cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions. Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of publishing. — **ONA**

ASAAD RECEIVES ITALIAN ENVOY



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received in his office on Monday Federica Favi, Ambassador of the Italian Republic to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty. **SEE ALSO P3**

One more woman killed

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

A young Omani woman was stabbed to death by a citizen in Ibri, Al Dhahirah Governorate, the second such incident in less than a week.

While Royal Oman Police confirmed the suspect’s arrest, it did not reveal the details or the possible motive behind the incident.

Last week, a citizen was arrested on charges of assaulting a woman with a white weapon in the Wilayat of Al Seeb because of a family dispute between them.

Commenting on the cases, Dr Hamed al Sinawi, a consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, said, “Crime is a complex behaviour that is often caused by social, psychological, and political factors.

“Some people jump to the assumption that people who commit crimes have some form of a mental illness which is not always the case.” **TURN TO P3**

Radical gene therapy offers hope for untreatable cancers

LONDON: Scientists in the UK have used a revolutionary new type of gene therapy to treat a young patient with T-cell leukaemia. The administration of the technique - a world first - has raised hopes it could soon help to tackle other childhood cancers and serious diseases.

Alyssa (pictured), from Leicester, had undergone chemotherapy and a bone marrow

transplant in a bid to alleviate her leukaemia, without success. With no further treatments available, prospects for the 13-year-old were grim. However, after receiving an infusion of donated T-cells, altered using a new technology known as base editing, Alyssa is recovering and has been in remission for six months. Now the team at London’s Great Ormond Street hospital (Gosh) who treated

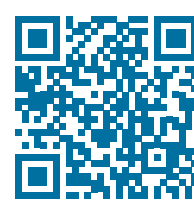


Alyssa are preparing to recruit another 10 T-cell leukaemia patients, who have also exhausted all conventional treatments, for further trials.

If these are successful, it is hoped base-edited cells could be given to patients affected by other types of leukaemia and other diseases. The 13-year-old girl was diagnosed with T-cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in 2021.

Robert Chiesa, a GOSH consultant, said her turnaround had been “quite remarkable”, although the results still needed to be monitored and confirmed in the next few months.

Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia is the most common kind of cancer in children and affects cells in the immune system, known as B cells and T cells, which fight and protect against viruses. — **Agencies**



Deputy PM for Defence Affairs receives UAE envoy

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received Mohammed Sultan al Suwaidi, Ambassador of the United Arab

Emirates (UAE) to the Sultanate of Oman, in Muscat on Monday to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. The ambassador lauded the advanced relations between Oman and the UAE. He also expressed his appreciation for

the cooperation extended to him during his tour of duty. On his turn, HH Sayyid Shihab expressed his thanks to the ambassador for the efforts he exerted in boosting bilateral relations, wishing him success. — ONA

SQU conference discusses means of promoting innovative industries

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) on Monday organised the second international conference on economics and business administration themed “Promoting Innovative Industries for Sustainable Growth and Development”.

The opening ceremony was held under the patronage of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

The two-day conference discusses important business



issues from a global and local perspective. It also touches on challenges facing the business sector locally.

The conference seeks to present a platform for developing relations between the academic sector and the business sector to keep pace with the latest developments and the most prominent innovative solutions in the business world and in related areas of research.

The event covers a spectrum of topics, namely management, marketing, accounting, finance, economy, tourism, sustainability and political economy, among other topics. — ONA

HM confers royal commendation medals on SAF personnel

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has conferred the medals of Excellent Service and Royal Commendation on a number of commissioned, non-commissioned officers and personnel of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and other departments at the Ministry of Defence and Royal Guard of Oman (RGO).

HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, pinned the medals on the meritorious military officers and civil personnel in recognition for their loyalty in serving the nation and performing the sacred duty.

The felicitation ceremony, held at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday, was attended by Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence, Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the



Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), Maj Gen Salim bin Ali al Hosani, Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), Air Vice Marshal Eng Saleh bin Yahya al Maskari, Head of the Academy

for Strategic and Defence Studies and Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Commandant of the National Defence College at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies. — ONA



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Oman, Tanzania plan to set up direct shipping lines



MUSCAT: Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, received in his office on Monday, Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

The meeting reviewed areas of cooperation between the two countries in commerce and investment sectors. It also touched on means of boosting the bilateral relations and augmenting volume of trade exchange.

The two sides also discussed the potential of establishing

direct shipping lines between the ports of the two countries to import agricultural and animal products from Tanzania, as well as exporting iron and aluminium products from Oman.

The meeting was attended by Pankaj Khimji, External Trade and International Cooperation

Adviser at Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Saud bin Hilal al Shaithani, Ambassador of Oman to Tanzania, Abdullah Kilima, Ambassador of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman and a number of officials from both the sides. — ONA

PDO supports establishing local manufacturing facilities

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) signed on Monday a Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) with Borets company to establish local manufacturing facilities in Oman to produce Permanent Magnet Motors (PMM) and industrial power cables, including electric submersible pump (ESP)

cables, which is a first in the region.

The two manufacturing facilities are expected to operate with an annual capacity of 3,000 km of power cables and 2,400 PMMs.

PDO External Affairs and Value Creation Director Eng Abdul-Amir al Ajmi, who signed the agreements on behalf

of PDO, said: “The signing of this agreement strengthens PDO's commitment to driving ICV in well engineering, and it marks another milestone in expanding local capabilities in this key industry.

“The facilities are expected to enhance supply chain value, serve local and regional demand for industrial power

cable and PMMs. and they also provide a great opportunity in terms of technology transfer and creation of employment.”

Borets CEO Vlad Kondratiev said: “Borets is excited to be part of this promising initiative and looks forward to manufacturing its top quality products in Oman.” — ONA



Asaad receives Italian envoy

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received in his office on Monday Federica Favi, Ambassador of the Italian Republic to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty.

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

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

On his turn, HH Sayyid Asaad expressed his appreciation to the ambassador for the efforts she exerted in serving the relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Italy. He also wished her success and the Italian people further progress and prosperity.

— ONA



Boost to start-ups in line with Vision 2040

FROM PAGE 1

Gulf expert Nayef bin Saleh al Athel talked about investing in start-ups and why SMEs and start-ups should look at the capital markets and international listing venues to help fund their growth.

Tariq al Harbi, CEO

of Zamili, said his portal allows small and medium enterprises to access youth skills and services related to social media channels including creative skills such as designing, photography, and digital marketing. He also added that the participation in the summit introduced

government agencies and investors to the platform and its mechanism.

Fatima al Barashdi, a translator and sign language trainer at the Omani Sign Translation Application ‘SignBook’, said: “The application is for people with hearing disabilities. The company

seeks to facilitate the method of communication between such people in an interactive environment that integrates them into society. It helps people with hearing disabilities who are present in the forum to connect with investors using sign language.”

Second woman killed in less than a week

FROM PAGE 1

Al Sinawi said, “Several international studies have been conducted on this matter and as per one study, up to 80 per cent of people who have committed the crime have reported no mental illness.”

If we analyse motives behind committing such crimes in general, reasons can be related to stress, jealousy, and general feelings of frustration, he said.

He added, “We should not analyse the incident without having details, but as per social media reports, the victims and the perpetrators of the Crime were connected. The killing was either planned or pre-meditated, possibly under the influence of extreme anger.”

The fact that incidents took place in the presence of others in broad daylight might suggest the accused had poor impulse control or was unable to control anger which led to the killings. “This does not necessarily mean that the perpetrators of the crime were suffering from any kind of mental illness.”

Al Sinawi said that in similar cases reported in other countries, the common reasons are that the victim rejected the marriage proposal from the killer, who felt humiliated, which led him to lose control of his thought process.

“In some cases, people commit the Crime under the use of substances or alcohol, which can impair the judgment process.

He feared random posting of such incidents on social media might lead the crime to be repeated by others who harbour or have similar intentions.

Crime is often the outcome of strong emotions linked to events such as jealousy, cheating on the partner, love, and hate, among others.

Such crimes may also be an outcome of a long period of domestic violence in which a person has been physically and emotionally abused by the partner. It may be noted that 3,837 divorces were registered in 2021 in the Sultanate of Oman, compared to 19,294 marriages.

Study to set up national award for technology innovation



MUSCAT: The State Council office on Monday held its first meeting of the fourth annual sitting for 7th term under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khaili, Chairman of the State Council.

The meeting discussed a study on establishing a national award for technological innovation in

governorates themed ‘Towards Smart Cities’.

The move aims to encourage governorates to incorporate modern technology in various aspects of life. It also targets motivating individuals, companies and startups in the technological innovations field and to transport those innovations into products and services.

The study highlights the most prominent projects that contribute to achieving sustainable national development and realising the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The meeting also touched on the report of the expanded economic committee on the State Budget for the financial year 2023. — ONA

Post-paid mobile subscriptions up 25.5 per cent by October 2022

MUSCAT: The total number of post-paid mobile phone subscriptions increased by 25.5 per cent at the end of October 2022 to stand at 1,546,812 subscriptions compared to the corresponding period in 2021, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Pre-paid mobile phone subscriptions rose by 11.2 per cent to stand at 5,278,389 subscriptions, of those 4,137,164 were through service providers, while 1,141,225 through reselling. The total mobile phone subscriptions went up by 14.2 per cent by the end of October 2022 compared to the corresponding period in 2021



to stand at 6,825,201 subscribers (post-paid and pre-paid).

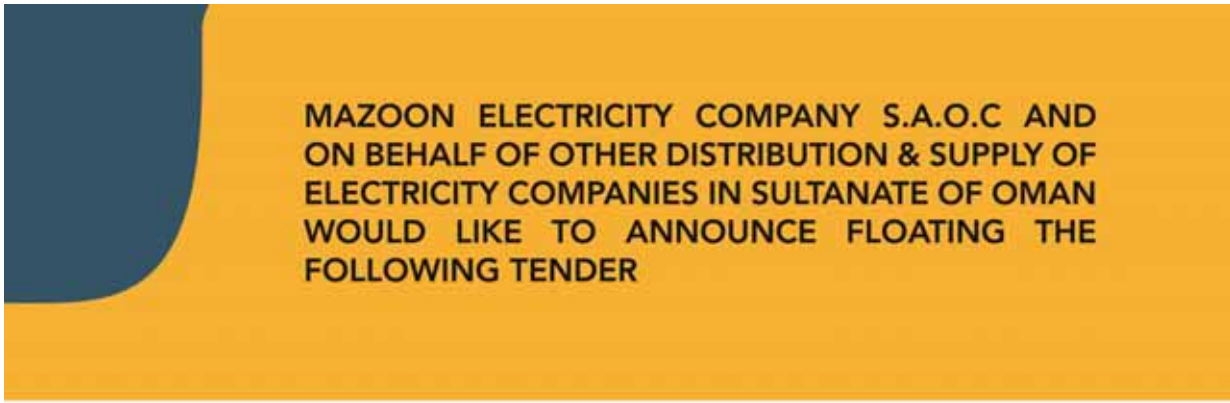
The number of active mobile broadband subscriptions increased by 9.8 per cent at the end of October 2022 compared to October 2021. Subscriptions to the fixed internet service registered a rise at the end of October 2022 by 2.9 per cent to reach 539,664

compared to the same period in 2021.

Total fixed broadband subscriptions (over 256 Kilobyte/sec) stood at 537,936 by the end of October 2022, constituting a rise by 3 per cent compared to October 2021, while lower-speed internet subscriptions (lower than 256 Kilobyte/sec), including mobile connection and leased internet lines, stood at 1,728 subscriptions, comprising a drop by 15.3 per cent.

The number of fixed telephone subscriptions declined by 3.8 per cent at the end of October 2022 to reach 561,217 compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

— ONA



TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION	LAST DATE OF PURCHASING	LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION	DCRP GRADE	TENDER BOARD GRADE	TYPE OF PARTICIPATION	TENDER PRICE R.O
MZEC/2022/T25	ADVANCED METERING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SMART METERS (BOOT MODEL)	15/12/2022	17/01/2023	(C) & ABOVE	SPECIALISED COMPANIES	OPEN TENDER (LOCAL & INTERNATIONAL)	OMR 2,500/-

- Specialized companies registered with the Distribution Code Review Panel and Tender Board Registration Certificate and their valid registration can apply to purchase the tender document via e-mail: SCM.TENDERS@MZEC.NAMA.OM Registration requires attaching valid documents of the Commercial Registration, Municipality Authorization, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Tax card.
- The sale of the Tender Document shall start from 27th November 2022.
- International companies & organizations which are not registered in the Sultanate of Oman may participate and obtain tenders documents provided that they shall register in accordance with the rules in force in the Sultanate of Oman within thirty (30) working days from the date on which they are notified of the success of their bids.
- Every company or specialized institution wishing to participate in this tender must attach with its bid a Bid Bond in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman, with amount of 1% of the bid value, addressed to the name of the Chairman of the Minor Tender Committee and valid for a period of (180) days from Bid submission date. Any bid that does not contain the Bid Bond will be disqualified.
- The original guarantee must be submitted in an envelope sealed with red wax and addressed to the name of the Chairman of the Minor Tender Committee and written on outside the project name, the tender number and the name of the owner of the guarantee, and it should be placed in the tender box in the main building of the Mazon Electricity Company SAOC in Bidbid / Al-Saih Al-Ahmar before 10:00 AM of the last day for submitting bids.
- The Tenderer shall submit the Technical Offer (separate) and the Financial Offer (separate) as hard copy and two copies as soft copies in the tender box in the main building of the Mazon Electricity Company S.A.O.C
- The offers shall be valid for a period of (180) days from the date of bid submission.
- Bids must be submitted before 10:00 AM of the last day for bid submission.
- All Clarifications should be directed to the e-mail: MZEC-Clarification@mzec.nama.om based on the clarification form attached with the tender documents. The deadline for submitting inquiries for Tender MZEC/2022/T25 is on 10th January 2023.
- Mazon Electricity Company S.A.O.C. is not bound to accept the lowest tender.
- We would like to inform you that above documents prices not include VAT 5% and it will be charged if purchase invoice issued.

Note: Local companies that are not registered with the Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) are allowed to purchase the tender document by submitting undertaking letter to register in the DCRP or confirmation from DCRP declaring the application is in the approval stage.



OHRC celebrates Human Rights Day



ZAINAB AL NASSRI
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The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC), celebrated Human Rights Day under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Secretary-General of the General-Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers, at the Civil Aviation Authority hall in Al Seeb, Muscat.

Shaikh Abdullah bin Shuwain al Hosni, Chairman OHRC, said “In the celebration of the International Human Rights Day, which falls on December 10, attention and appreciation is drawn to the foundations, principles and goals set by the United Nations to care for and preserve human rights all over the world. On this occasion, the OHRC renews its commitment and keenness to work with those international principles and mechanisms based on the provisions of our religion and the foundations of local legislation and laws that protect human rights and safeguard their interests in our homeland”.

Al Hosni added that this year witnessed the most important event for the Oman Human

Rights Commissions, which was the issuance of Royal Decree No. (57/2022), granting the commission broader powers and responsibilities that were summed up in the complete independence of the commission in carrying out its work and responsibilities, adapting the election process instead of appointment for the positions of the president and his deputy, and preventing eligibility of members representing government agencies in the committee from voting on its decisions.

“The commission may establish branches in the governorates. The term of membership is four years, coinciding with the term of the Council of Oman, renewable for one term,” he indicated.

He also said, “During this year, the OHRC committee held many activities locally and abroad. It received more than 272 humanitarian issues from citizens and residents where it provided its legal opinion. It directed them to the authorities concerned to take the necessary action in his regard. It also received and monitored 74 reports as it intervened with the competent authorities to find appropriate solutions. More than 15 lectures were delivered to introduce the commission, its

goals and responsibilities”.

Al Hosni noted that the commission organised, last June, a symposium on the role of national mechanisms in promoting and protecting human rights in order to enhance cooperation and coordination with the concerned authorities in the government and in society in general. In addition, it organised a workshop in September on international conventions related to combating torture and protection from enforced disappearance, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The event was attended and lectured by a delegation from the United Nations High Commissioner headed by Mohammed Ensour, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Division.

On the external level, more than seven international reports were answered by governmental and non-governmental organisations, through which the commission clarified all the facts and topics that were raised about human rights issues and issues in the Sultanate of Oman.

On issues of neglect and abuse against children, al Hosni said:

“through reports or means of monitoring during the last period, OHRC has followed up the issue of neglect in general and towards children in particular, which we fear that these unfortunate practices will turn into a phenomenon with unimaginable consequences. In this regard, the commission viewed statistics and figures issued by the competent authorities. It found out that the number of deaths due to child neglect during the past three years reached more than 77 deaths, including drowning cases, forgetfulness in a bus or car, or bypassing valleys during their flow, which led to the loss of precious human lives”.

During the ceremony, a film about the efforts of government agencies, civil society institutions, and the OHRC to promote children’s rights in the Sultanate of Oman was shown. Also, a theatrical show discussing the problem of neglect towards children was presented through examples of unfortunate practices of neglect.

The patron of the event awarded six human initiatives at the level of the country, those of which contributed to serving human rights in general and children’s rights in particular.

Winter charm is back with cruise tourism

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Cruise tourism is back with a vengeance, and there is one ship for another calling the main ports of the Sultanate of Oman, mainly the Port Sultan Qaboos (PSQ) in Muscat and the Port of Salalah.

At the start of cruise season this year, Port Sultan Qaboos received *AIDAcosma*, which is visiting the region for the first time, with more than 5,800 tourists from different countries of the world.

With November-December being one of the peak months, there have been days when we had two or more ships docked at the port simultaneously, sources associated with the local cruise sector said.

Businesses at Muttrah Souq are thrilled with the return of the cruise ships to the city. “It is a fact that they spend less, but we must consider that local tour operators like me also benefit sometimes. Some visitors are not sure they will ever take a cruise again in life, so they want to enjoy the maximum and explore every port city where the ships call during their journey,” said Riyadh, a taxi operator who also doubles as a tour guide.

“As there is a chance that these visitors may return to

the city to spend more time in the future, the return of cruise ships to the country is very encouraging because Muscat is a gateway to the Arabian Gulf and what we offer them here is the first impression of the region,” said an antique shop manager.

Omani ports will receive, during this season, more than 200 cruise ships and yachts from different countries at Port Sultan Qaboos, Khasab Port and Salalah Port.

Ships such as *Costa Toscana*, *Mein Schiff 6*, *Silver Spirit*, *AidaCosma*, *LeChamplin* and *Artania* have been scheduled to visit the capital this month.

Over the years, the Ministry of Heritage of Tourism (MoHT) has been working on marketing plans for the cruise ships and yachts sector in coordination with government authorities, private tour operators, and shipping agents.

While cruise passengers come with full onboard packages, they also try to enjoy local food and culture during the ship’s port of call, which helps boost businesses of tour companies, restaurants, taxi operators and retailers selling local products.

In the pre-Covid era, the Sultanate of Oman received 283,000 visitors in the 2018-2019 period.



Oman skies to witness Geminid meteor shower this week

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 12

The sky of the Sultanate of Oman is witnessing the Geminid meteor shower — which was named after its launch from the constellation of the Twins (Gemini) — and will reach its climax between Tuesday night and Wednesday morning.

“The Geminids are considered to be one of the most spectacular meteor showers of the year, with the possibility of sighting about 120 meteors per hour at its peak,” the astronomy group said.

In 2020, members of the Omani Astronomical Society observed 1,063 meteors, according to Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Astronomical Society.

He said that the Geminid meteor showers are produced from the wreckage of the asteroid known as Phaethon, which was discovered in 1982, unlike the rest of the meteors, whose source



The meteors are slow moving which can be seen in December usually peaks around December 4–16, with the date of highest intensity being the morning of December 14

is comets.

The Geminids are a prolific meteor shower caused by the object 3200 Phaethon, which is thought to be a Pallasian asteroid with a rock comet orbit. This would make the Geminids, together with the Quadrantids, the only major meteor showers not originating from a comet.

The meteors from this shower are slow moving, can be seen in December, and usually peak

around December 4–16, with the date of highest intensity being the morning of December 14.

The shower is thought to be intensifying every year, and recent showers have seen 120–160 meteors per hour under optimal conditions, generally around 2 and 3 am local time. Geminids were first observed in 1862.

Regarding the possibility of observing the phenomenon, Al Mahrouqi said, “The observation should be from a dark location, away from sources of light pollution or an obstacle such as tall trees. This is an opportunity for amateurs to take pictures decorated with Geminid meteors and some astronomical bodies that appear in the sky during this period.”

He explained that this phenomenon is one of the astronomical phenomena that can be seen with the naked eye without the need to use special monitoring devices.”



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TUESDAY | DECEMBER 13 | 2022

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In brief

■ ATHENS



GREECE FREEZES DETAINED MEP'S ASSETS

Greece has frozen property in the country belonging to European Parliament vice president Eva Kaili in light of an investigation launched by Belgian authorities into money laundering and corruption at the parliament, a local source told Reuters on Monday.

Four people were arrested and charged with "participation in a criminal organisation, money laundering and corruption," prosecutors said in a statement on Sunday.

They did not name the suspects, but a source close to the case said the Greek socialist Kaili was among those charged.

Her office did not respond to a request for a comment.

■ TOKYO



SAKAMOTO, FIGHTING CANCER, LIVESTREAMS FINAL CONCERT

Japan's Ryuichi Sakamoto, known for his electronic music, including the score for "The Last Emperor," on Monday finished streaming a concert that may be the last for the Academy-award winning composer, who is fighting stage 4 cancer.

Sakamoto, 70, said in an online message in December that the unorthodox performance - broadcast to more than two dozen nations around the world - came about because he could no longer complete a regular concert.

"My strength has really fallen, so a normal concert of about an hour to ninety minutes would be very difficult," he said.

■ CONAKRY



GUINEA'S EX-MILITARY LEADER DENIES ROLE IN MASSACRE

Guinea's ex-military leader Moussa Dadis Camara on Monday denied charges that he was responsible for a 2009 stadium massacre, as he took the stand for the first time in a long-awaited trial.

Camara was the ruler of Guinea when more than 150 people were killed during a pro-democracy rally on September 28, 2009. Tens of thousands of people had gathered at a stadium in Conakry to press him not to stand in a presidential election the following year.

Many were shot, stabbed, beaten or crushed in a stampede as security forces fired teargas and charged the stadium.

TOP VIRUS EXPERT SAYS PEAK MAY COME IN A MONTH

China wrestles with Covid surge

BEIJING/HONG KONG: People queued outside fever clinics at Chinese hospitals for Covid-19 checks on Monday, a new sign of the rapid spread of symptoms after authorities began dismantling an apparatus they used to surveil residents and curtail movement.

Three years into the pandemic, China is acting to align with a world that has largely reopened to live with Covid, making a major policy change last Wednesday after unprecedented protests.

It has dropped mandatory testing prior to many public activities, reined in quarantine and by early Tuesday will have deactivated a state-mandated mobile app used to track the travel histories of a population of 1.4 billion people.

The app that identified travellers to Covid-stricken areas will shut down at midnight on Monday, according to a notice on its official WeChat account.

The app has collected a huge amount of personal and sensitive information and the data should be deleted in a timely manner, Liu Xingliang, a researcher at the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, was quoted by state radio as saying.



A woman pushes an old man in wheelchair to cross a street on Monday as Covid-19 outbreaks continue in Shanghai. — Reuters

When such apps were launched three years ago, critics expressed concern that they could be used to for mass surveillance and social control.

In Shanghai, China's largest city which endured a two-month lockdown earlier this year, authorities said that from Tuesday none of its districts would be considered high-risk, meaning the end for now of measures that trapped people inside their homes.

Nationwide, authorities continue to recommend mask-wearing and vaccinations, particularly for the elderly.

But with little exposure to a disease kept largely in check until now, China is ill-prepared, analysts say, for a wave in infections that could heap pressure on its fragile health system and grind businesses to a halt.

Lily Li, who works at a toy company in the southern

manufacturing hub of Guangzhou, said several employees, as well as staff at suppliers and distributors, had been infected and were at home isolating.

"Basically everybody is now simultaneously rushing to buy rapid antigen test kits but have also somewhat given up on the hope that COVID can be contained," she said. "We have accepted that we will have to get Covid at some point anyway." — Reuters

Orion splashes down after lunar voyage

Washington: Nasa's Orion space capsule splashed down safely in the Pacific on Sunday, completing the Artemis 1 mission — a more than 25-day journey around the Moon with an eye to returning humans there in just a few years.

After racing through the Earth's atmosphere at a speed of 25,000 miles (40,000 kilometres) per hour, the uncrewed capsule floated down to the sea with the help of three large orange and white parachutes, as seen on Nasa TV.

"I don't think any one of us could have imagined the mission this successful," said Artemis Mission Manager Mike Sarafin in a press conference.

"We now have a foundational deep space transportation system." During the trip around Earth's orbiting satellite and back,



Nasa's unmanned Orion spaceship splashes down in the Pacific Ocean off Baja California, Mexico, on Sunday. — AFP

Orion logged well over a million miles and went farther from Earth than any previous habitable spacecraft.

"For years, thousands

of individuals have poured themselves into this mission, which is inspiring the world to work together to reach untouched cosmic shores," said Nasa

Administrator Bill Nelson.

"Today is a huge win for Nasa, the United States, our international partners, and all of humanity," he added.

After touchdown, helicopters flew over the floating spacecraft, which showed no evidence of damage. Orion was recovered by a prepositioned US Navy ship off the coast of Mexico's Baja California after some initial tests were run.

As it reentered the Earth's atmosphere, the gumdrop-shaped capsule had to withstand a temperature of 2,800 degrees Centigrade (5,000 Fahrenheit) — about half that of the surface of the Sun.

The main goal of this mission was to test Orion's heat shield — for the day when it carries astronauts. — AFP

3 boys die after falling into frozen lake in UK

London: Three boys aged eight, 10 and 11 have died and another boy remains in critical condition after they fell into an icy lake near Birmingham, central England, police said on Monday.

"Three boys have tragically died after falling into the lake at Babbs Mill Park in Solihull yesterday afternoon," West Midlands Police said in a statement.

The boys suffered a cardiac arrest and were rushed to hospital after being pulled from the water.

"Sadly, they could not be revived and our thoughts are with their family and friends at this deeply devastating time," said police.

"A fourth boy, aged



People enjoy the snow as cold weather continues in London on Monday. — Reuters

six, remains in a critical condition in hospital."

Witnesses reported seeing other children on the lake, which froze

during a cold snap that has hit swathes of Britain, but police have not reported anyone else missing.

Emergency services

were quickly on the scene, with fire and police officers wading into the frozen water in their uniforms, Solihull Superintendent

Richard Harris said in a news conference. One officer attempted to punch through the ice to get to the boys, he added.

Harris said the families were "absolutely devastated" and the fact it occurred during the Christmas period "adds to the tragedy".

Identities of the victims will not be released until the families agree to do so, he added.

The tragedy came as the UK was hit by heavy snow and freezing conditions, causing major travel disruption, on the eve of a national rail strike Tuesday that was already expected to bring the country to a grinding halt.

The UK has been experiencing a cold snap for several days, with

temperatures dropping to -10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit) in some areas, although the Met Office said the temperatures were "not unusual for this time of year". The service has issued yellow alerts for snow, fog and frost in several areas, including southeast and southwest England, and the north of Scotland.

London Stansted airport warned of disruption.

"Our runway is temporarily closed whilst we undertake snow clearing," it said late Sunday, with many flights cancelled early Monday.

The airport later said that the runway was open and fully operational, but that travellers should still brace for delays. — AFP

2 killed, 5 injured after Russian shelling in Ukraine

KYIV: Two people were killed and another five wounded after Russian troops shelled the southern Ukrainian region of Kherson, the governor said on Sunday.

The city of Kherson was in November recaptured by Ukrainian forces during a Kyiv counter-offensive.

"The enemy again attacked the residential quarters of Kherson," the governor, Yaroslav Yanushevich, said on messaging app Telegram, adding the Russian forces hit a maternity ward, a cafe and apartment buildings on Saturday.

"Last night, two people were killed due to Russian shelling," Yanushevich said, adding that five others had been wounded.

He said the region was attacked with artillery, multiple launch rocket systems, tanks and mortars.

Before their retreat in November Russian forces destroyed the city's basic utilities infrastructure, and have since repeatedly shelled Kherson.

In the Black Sea city of Odessa, emergency shutdowns were continuing following Russian drone attacks, Sergiy Bratchuk, spokesman for the regional administration, said on Sunday.

On Saturday evening, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that more than 1.5 million people were left without power in the region of Odessa after Russia used Iranian drones to strike the city and surrounding territory.

On Sunday, regional governor Maksym Marchenko said power was "gradually" returning to Odessa and that 300,000 people had no electricity.

Authorities also said that "interruptions of water supply" had taken place due to power outages.

Odessa was a favourite holiday destination for many Ukrainians and Russians before President Vladimir Putin sent troops to pro-Western Ukraine on February 24. — AFP

Takeaways from the World Cup

The unexpected results pouring in from the World Cup football tournament in Doha provide rich lessons in motivation, hope and perseverance. Ranging from leadership and unity of purpose, to plain belief in the task ahead, this year’s World Cup has given life lessons like no other.

More than any other time, Qatar’s World Cup has broken old myths of untouchable teams and even individuals. With the rise of unlikely victories like those of South Korea, Saudi Arabia and of course, Morocco’s advance to the semi-finals, the only takeaway seems to be that anything is possible.

Of course, dreamy results do not just come our way without hard work. But without the dream, or at least a clear goal in mind, and an even clearer path towards it, it is difficult to plan the endgame adequately.

Working hard is a cliché, but it is the only path to success.

Leadership and teamwork are two sides of the same coin. While a leader, in this case the captain or the coach, provide the overarching vision and strategy, none of that would be worth much without everybody in the team working together towards the agreed strategy.

Working together means more than finishing a project together – it means pulling each other up in times of crises, appreciating others’ qualities and even being prepared to give others a chance to shine.

Communication is key to a good team, as seen in so many matches. This takes the form of overt exchange of



Sandhya Rao Mehta

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OF COURSE, DREAMY RESULTS DO NOT JUST COME OUR WAY WITHOUT HARD WORK. BUT WITHOUT THE DREAM, OR AT LEAST A CLEAR GOAL IN MIND, AND AN EVEN CLEARER PATH TOWARDS IT, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PLAN THE ENDGAME ADEQUATELY.

ideas but also creating conditions that make overt conversations unnecessary.

A shared project is completed only when everyone understands its vision, preferably after sustained discussion, debate and vigorous analysis.

Listening to others, accommodating opposing points of view and compromising for the larger good are all features of a good team. Perhaps the biggest takeaway this time is perseverance.

While various countries will go back to the drawing board to discuss what went wrong in their respective losses, the winners are those to have stayed with the game in spite of successive losses, near misses or downright defeats.

Being able to pull oneself up after defeat, learning from mistakes and rising wiser and more motivated is the only way to succeed in life, or in football.

Above all, there is always an element of luck in football, as much as there is in life.

No one knows this better than all the giants who have come crashing down in this year’s edition of the World Cup.

Success lasts only until the next season, but what does remain are the qualities of perseverance, commitment, energy and purpose.

But more than that, kindness, sportsmanship, humility and pride are all qualities that define a good player as well as a good human being.

These are life’s takeaways.

‘Keep an eye on the ball,’ is an apt reference to football, but it is even more a lesson on life – one that teaches us to focus, not only on the game, but also on what it makes us human.

SANTA’S DAY OUT



Three hundred plus skiers and snowboarders dressed as Santa Clause, and some other holiday characters, take off from the top of the mountain as they take part in the “Santa Sunday” event at Sunday River Resort in Newry, Maine on Sunday. Money raised by the the event goes towards the River Fund Maine charity. – AFP

Challenges for Jeffries as Pelosi’s successor

For the very first time in any American political party’s history, the top tier is devoid of white men.

With the advent of Hakeem Jefferies as the first black American to head the Democratic caucus along with representative Katherine Clark of Massachusetts and Pete Aguilar of California as whip and chairman of the caucus respectively, the fabric of Democratic party is certainly passing through a kind of paradigm shift – but only at the top.

For the last two decades, octogenarian group, under the leadership of Nancy Pelosi, was dominating the caucus for almost 20 years. The new batch of caucus is much younger - in their 50s or even less. But will there be any shift in the outlook of the Democratic party under the young leadership?

The answer to this question is quite tricky one – neither solid yes nor weak no. Yes, there is a change of guards at the top as far as the Democratic leadership in the Congress is concerned, but it is more of cosmetic in nature.

The octogenarian group is still very much dominant on the ideological and operational fabric of the Democratic Party. Regardless of the fact that he has been a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), many of his detractors on the left have labelled



Dr Imran Khalid

The writer is freelance columnist on international affairs

YES, THERE IS A CHANGE OF GUARDS AT THE TOP AS FAR AS THE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP IN THE CONGRESS IS CONCERNED, BUT IT IS MORE OF COSMETIC IN NATURE.

him just another “corporate Democrat”.

Similarly, it does not come as surprise to see him boasting about his identity as a “black progressive Democrat”.

A new younger face was needed - and yes, a Black one from a big city – to offset the simmering pressure on the old bureaucracy of the Democratic Party.

The arrival of new cohort of younger leadership is not expected to make any major change in the outlook of the party.

However, Jefferies’ rise as the head of the caucus reflects the ascendancy of the moderates at the moment, with a hefty package of Biden’s legislative successes in their bag from these past two years: The American Rescue plan, infrastructure measures and even a modest gun control law.

At the same time, these moderates are now overconfident about their strength after snubbing the emergence of much-hyped red wave in the recent midterm polls despite an incumbent president whose popularity ratings have been trapped in the very low 40s.

Though he has promised to reach across the aisle whenever

possible and to resist extremism, when necessary, but the success or otherwise of the new team will lie in its ability to exploit and manoeuvre the tissue paper-thin majority of the Republicans and to muffle the promised investigations by Republicans



Hakeem Jefferies

into Joe Biden’s record. The single digit majority Republicans in the 118th congress is still a big – but expected - challenge for Jeffries and his team.

With the possibility of winning speakership within two years, the pressure is indubitably on Jeffries

to get his party into a position where it can take back the House in 2024. However, the biggest challenge to Jeffries will be how to outdo the huge influence of Nancy Pelosi on the party.

During her tenure as the House Speaker, Pelosi became one of the country’s most powerful political figures, carving a reputation as a skilled leader capable of steering the party caucus together during important votes. Pelosi has the strongest network – much stronger than President Joe Biden – within the Democratic Party, and it is expected that she will keep pulling the strings as per her whims to maintain her clout within the party. There will be surely a discrete tug of war between Jeffries and Pelosi to take the control of part’s hull. With Nancy Pelosi physically sitting in the House, it will be and gruelling task for Jeffries to outshine her glamorous persona.

Jefferies is still relatively a ‘less-connected’ figure within the caucus and he may find it hard to rally the Democratic Representatives to drift away from Pelosi’s aura and genuinely accept him as their leader in the House.



MODEST FASHION SHOW IN RIYADH

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Marking a great milestone in the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the first fashion show, titled 'Modest Fashion Weeks' (MFW), a series founded by Think Fashion, will be held in Riyadh on December 15, 16, and 17 at the Al Faisaliah Hotel and, the Sultanate of Oman is represented in the one of its kind event.

Highlighted as the most prestigious and global platform that is dedicated to modest fashion industry, Modest Fashion Weeks vision is to bring all the industry talents together from designers to buyers, from influencers to media and celebrate the diversity of modest fashion while aiming to be the most effective platform for global, sustainable businesses.

Piya Prakash Pawani, who wears many hats from a social media Influencer to a model and from an actress to a champion of animal protection, will be attending the show as an influencer and guest representing Oman.

Riyadh Modest Fashion Show 22 will be the 8th edition of global MFW series with exclusively selected fashion shows, exhibition booths, talkshows, many other attractions for industry experts and modest fashion lovers.

Besides the fashion shows, there will be talk shows each day focusing on topics such as modesty and elegance, fashion tips, global buying trends, the Future of fashion and sustainability, the heritage of Saudi fashion among many other topics in focus.

Piya Pawani will be a part of the talk show "the importance of women empowerment in fashion" and will share her views and thoughts on the same.

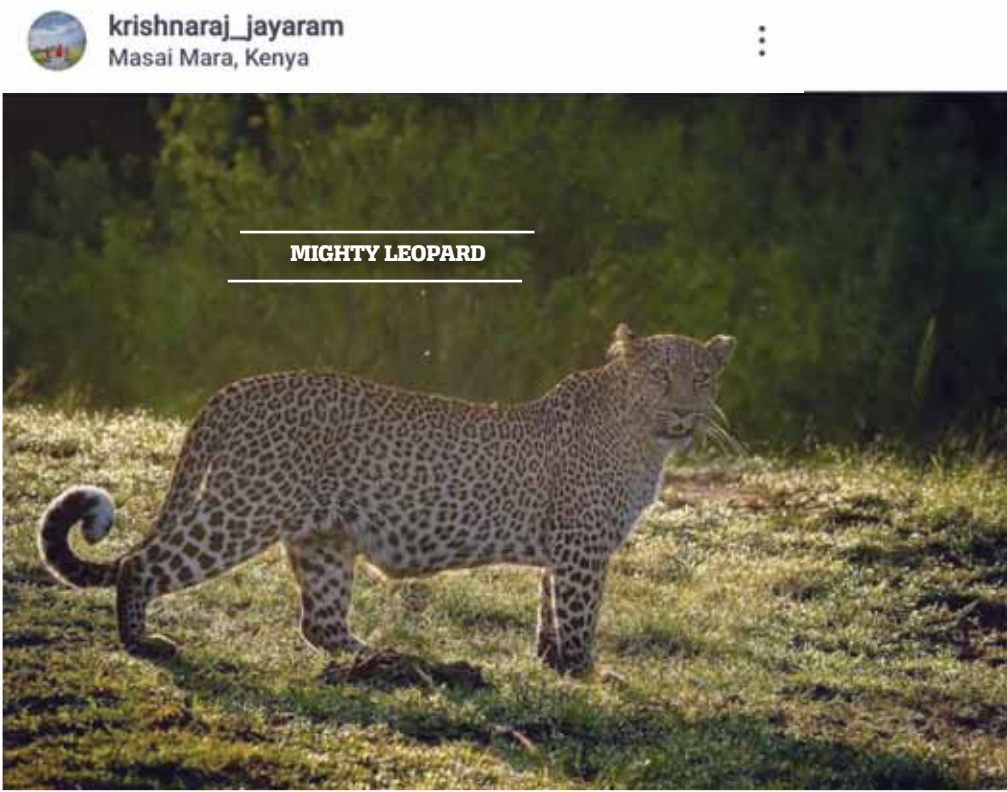
Travel point is the sole travel partner and sponsor of Oman's representation at such a global event.

Piya's looks and fashion style are supported by many local designers and artists such as Faiza al Balushi (Chiffon Style), Hiba al Lawati (Coquette Oman), Riham al Samad (Make-up artist), and MellowJ (Modest clothing app).





INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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AROUND THE WORLD

MUSIC

Baaba Maal back with new music, ‘Glastonbury of Africa’ festival hopes



WHEN BAABA MAAL released his last album “The Traveller” in 2016, the Senegalese singer and guitarist wasn’t sure he would put out another record. Six years on, he is back with a new single celebrating the fishermen of his local community in northern Senegal, the first track released from the new album coming out in 2023. “I thought...I did so many albums and I’m going make a break and just focus on all the engagements with my family and then suddenly, my body, my soul, my heart, my spirit, everything did remind me that I’m an artist,” he said in an interview. “I want to write songs.” The 69-year-old last week announced his new album “Being”, out in March. The seven-track record, mixing traditional African instruments with electronic touches, addresses themes like technology and the environment. The uptempo song “Yerimayo Celebration”, released last week, salutes the cultures of fishermen, the profession of Maal’s father. “It’s music not just to listen to but to think about all the engagements that we have right now in the world and especially in Africa, like climate change, like protecting the environment,” Maal said. One song, featuring new singer Rougi, is about migration. “All these young people who take the boats, they have to go because there is sometimes no opportunity for them here.” In 2005, Maal founded the Blues Du Fleuve Festival in his hometown of Podor on the Senegal River. The annual event has grown into a hugely popular gathering providing music and cultural offerings as well as forums for discussing topical issues like climate change and its impact on local communities. This year’s edition begins on Friday and features a packed agenda, including Maal unveiling a new solar irrigation project via his NANN-K Trust charity. “I wanted just to bring back something home... But I never expected it to become so big and so popular now,” Maal said. “Sometimes I joked with my friends (saying) ‘I want this festival to be like the Glastonbury of Africa’. I don’t know if it’s possible, maybe, let’s hope.” Maal has also lent his vocals to the “Black Panther” movie soundtracks, becoming the “voice of Wakanda”, the fictional African nation in which the films are set in. “Wakanda, if ever it existed, it might be Africa... and to be the voice of Africa, it’s great for me. It’s a very positive Africa.” —Reuters

TRAVEL

Going Local on the Island of St. Lucia



ST. LUCIA USUALLY draws what locals call the “sea, sand and sun” tourist: those looking for not much more than a gorgeous beach from which to admire the breathtaking scenery. For decades, the island’s culture was just an afterthought. An all-inclusive resort might ask local dancers and musicians to perform or invite artisans to sell their crafts or prepare a “Creole Cuisine” night, but the focus was on exposing the guest to a somewhat diluted version of St. Lucian culture instead of inviting visitors to get out and experience the community firsthand. It was a trend that local business owners, with mounting cynicism, noticed. A holistic approach to tourism that combines both the island’s environmental wonders and Creole culture seemed to be the only solution, and these days, a new tourism minister is leading the charge. Ernest Hilaire, 54, appointed minister for tourism, investment, creative industries, culture and information in August 2021, thinks that the tourism industry has to be redesigned with the St. Lucian people at the centre. “We believe more St Lucians should participate in the industry and own it,” Hilaire said. “The notion that so much of our tourism industry is not actually owned by locals but by foreign interests is not very encouraging for us.” The focus under his leadership is community tourism: authentic local experiences that showcase the attractions, cuisine, traditional values and

heritage of the St. Lucian people. Instead of a tourist purchasing a handwoven basket at the market or on the beach, the government will financially support local artisans through loans and grants to open a workshop where guests can see how the basket is made and maybe even learn to make their own. “People are no longer satisfied to travel thousands of miles and pay thousands of dollars to come and just stay in a resort with a limited engagement of the outside,” Hilaire said. I knew I wanted to have as much of a St. Lucian-owned-and-operated experience as possible. Although I’ve visited many other Caribbean nations, St. Lucia, known for its luxury resorts, was never on my list. It was too expensive, I thought, and frankly not a destination that seemed to market itself to African American visitors. As a traveller who likes to explore the various cultures of the African diaspora, I thought that St. Lucia probably wasn’t a good fit for a visitor like myself. I could not have been more wrong.

culminates in Jounen Kwéyòl Day, with celebrations in communities large and small, where you’re more likely to hear the widely spoken Kwéyòl language, also known as Patwa, instead of English. But you don’t have to go in October to experience these things. Most of them are there for the taking, year round. Opting for a locally owned property, I stayed at Fond Doux Eco Resort, near the town of Soufrière. Situated on a 250-year-old cocoa plantation, the 16-cottage resort was acquired in 1980 by Lyton and Eroline Lamontagne. The estate, which grows organic cacao, is deep in the heart of a mostly undisturbed forest. You may spot the occasional rooster strolling by like he owns the place and tree frogs provide a soundtrack each night (soothing, perhaps, but loud; you may want to pack earplugs). On the first day at Fond Doux, I made my way from my cottage, descending stone stairs carved into the mountain, and found my Chocolate Heritage Tour guides, Clinton Jean, 29, and Whitney Haynes, 17, waiting for me. Held daily, the two-hour tour is available to both on- and off-property guests. We strolled to a cocoa tree, where Jean snagged a ripe pod and broke it open. Inside were the cocoa beans: nodules wrapped in a sweet, slimy white pulp known as mucilage. We plucked out the beans (which islanders called “jungle M&Ms”) and sucked the citrusy mucilage, tossing the bitter bean. — NYT

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
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An Army Man But in a Different Form

THE FOLLOWING IS my English translation of excerpts from “A Soldier from Oman, Memory’s Nectar” by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid al Kalbani. From a different site an altogether different experience started. With the same enthusiasm and energy, I chose for myself a different place, a place that would, nonetheless, set me on the same military path that I had dreamt of in my first young days. It was September 15, 1968, a day I shall never forget, another step in my career, another step in my life, the day on which I started work in the police force, in the Wadi Al Arsh based “Oman Jandramat”. When I arrived at the centre of the Oman Coastal Regiment at ten o’clock in the morning, I asked the gateman about Warrant Officer Salim al Sobhi. Following the directions he gave me, I went to Al Sobhi, who later took me to the office of Maj. Hockett. Upon meeting the major, I was transferred officially to the “Capital Police”, with number 82 to replace my previous army number, 4973. I remember meeting, in addition to Salim al Sobhi, Private Abdullah al Amri and Private Saif al Qayyoudhi who joined us later. With him the number of those joining the police from the army was seven. We stayed in Wadi Al Arsh for about a month, attending lectures on police principles. The lectures were given in English by Maj. Hockett and then translated into Arabic by Sayyid Saif bin Sultan al Busaïdy. The goal was to prepare us

as trainers. (Maj. Hockett was an army man with police experience from his time in Tanganyika. I shall later provide more biographical information about him). We were trained to carry out roles related to driving licences, traffic, fastening and unfastening law breakers’ chains, putting the accused in jail, preserving their personal possessions and recording their statements in the accusation page and the daily sheet, controlling riots, announcing night curfew, carrying lanterns in Muscat to ensure that nobody was outside in the street, closing the three Gates, and guarding the barza and the courts. From Wadi Al Arsh we moved to the training centre in Ghala. We saw there a platoon of policemen coming from the army. We began to train them in the manner we were trained in Al Seeb, where the instructions, the programs and the daily duties were on a sheet written by Maj. Hockett and translated into Arabic by the teacher Ahmad bin Abdul Aziz Al Raisi. We were joined later by two Omanis who were working in the Bahraini police force: Corp. Abideen bin Shambeh al Balushi, a specialist in field training and controlling riots and Private Ali bin Abdulkarim al Houti, a specialist in traffic. Then others joined as trainers, some of whom came from the army such as Lieut. Hassan Allah Dad al Balushi, Corp. Masaud bin Obaid al Hosni and Srg. Ahmad bin Saleh al Balushi, who subsequently became a quartermaster.

business

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The world needs affordable energy: Aufi

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 12

Amid the global transition to greener and sustainable alternatives, affordability of energy supplies must remain a key imperative, Oman's Minister of Energy and Minerals has stressed.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi (pictured) made the observation in remarks to an exclusive gathering of energy ministers, CEOs of international energy companies, and representatives of international energy think-tanks.

The gathering, dubbed 'Energy Executives Circle', took place on the eve of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2022 Conference & Exhibition, which concluded in Muscat last week.

Speaking at the forum, Al Aufi said the world needs to strike a balance between three competing pillars: energy affordability, sustainability of energy supplies, and climate-friendly resources.

In fact, the decision of some countries in Europe and Asia to turn to coal production, amid soaring energy costs triggered by the Ukraine War, serves to underscore the need for energy supplies to be affordable, he said.

"So energy needs to be affordable, it needs to be sustainable, and it needs to be clean — and it needs to be in that

order, because without providing affordable energy, whether it's in the short term or the long term, the solution would be (for some countries) to go for alternative options that they not necessarily sustainable," Al Aufi stated.

For its part, the Sultanate of Oman is moving "extremely fast" to help cater to the global need for clean energy, notably in the form of green hydrogen, the minister said.

"We are working very hard towards achieving that commitment, with at least one million tonnes of hydrogen to be produced by 2030. I think we are pretty much going to be meeting that target, but we are actually working harder to try and exceed it," he said, adding that Oman is looking to be a major and reliable supplier of clean energy to Europe.

Oman is eyeing around \$20 billion worth of investments in new green hydrogen and green ammonia projects to help achieve its targeted output of 1 million tonnes of green energy per annum by 2030.

While part of this output will come from developers bidding for acreage to build their projects, the rest will be contributed by so-called 'Legacy Initiatives' — project proposals that were announced before the launch of Oman's National Hydrogen Strategy on October 23, 2022.

Forum highlights role of innovative industries in driving growth

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, DEC 12

The 2nd International Conference on Economics and Business Administration, focusing on the theme, "To Promote Innovative Industries for Sustainable Growth and Development", began on Monday, December 22, 2022, under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President — Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

The two-day event, which is taking place at Hormuz Grand Hotel, is being attended by a number of local and international dignitaries. The second edition seeks to discuss a number of prominent business issues from a global and local perspective, as well as highlight the local and international practical challenges in the business sector.

Topics that will be covered during the conference include: management, marketing, accounting, finance and economics, in addition to operations management and information systems, tourism, sustainability, political economy, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation.

The conference also provides

THE CONFERENCE ALSO PROVIDES A PLATFORM TO STRENGTHEN LINKS BETWEEN THE ACADEMIC SECTOR AND THE BUSINESS SECTOR TO DISCUSS THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS, REVIEW THE MOST INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS IN THE BUSINESS WORLD, AND IDENTIFY PRIORITY AREAS FOR RESEARCH BY BENEFITTING FROM THE INSIGHTS OF POLICY MAKERS AND EXECUTIVES

a platform to strengthen links between the academic sector and the business sector to discuss the latest developments, review the most innovative solutions in the business world, and identify priority areas for research by benefiting from the insights of policy makers and executives.

In addition, the conference aims to bridge the gaps between academics and practitioners by creating collaborative links between scientific research and industry, while identifying new areas of research, facilitating cooperation and providing networking opportunities in various business fields, as well as providing a platform for researchers to develop their

research further with insights from experts and practitioners.

A total of 53 working papers will be presented by local and international experts across 13 different sessions. On the first day, Dr Hatim bin Bakhit al Shanfari — Assistant Professor, Department of Economics and Finance, College of Economics and Political Science at SQU, moderated a panel discussion featuring Abdullah bin Salem al Salmi, Executive President — Capital Market Authority, Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Executive President, Central Bank of Oman, and Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism.

Al Mukhtar bin Saif al Abri, Dean of the College of Economics and Political Sciences, said: "There is no doubt that all countries of the world are undergoing political, economic and social transformations imposed by several factors, the most important of which are: the direct effects of the pandemic and the repercussions resulting from the policies to contain the pandemic, the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and the acceleration in

digital transformation and the employment of modern technologies in various sectors, the transformation in the global financial system, and the momentum towards clean energy use.

These factors force changes at the macroeconomic and public policy levels as well as at the business model level. This multidisciplinary conference in economics and business administration comes to discuss the most prominent of these local and international practical challenges in the business sector and to review ways to promote growth in various sectors and through innovation in financing models and products and business projects to achieve sustainability in economic growth and improve sustainable development indicators.

The conference provides a platform to strengthen links between the academic sector and the business sector to exchange views and experiences to discuss the latest developments, review the most innovative solutions in the business world, and identify priority areas for research by benefiting from the insights of policy makers and executives," he added.

GFW signs agreement on governance framework

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 12

The General Federation of Omani Workers (GFW) of the Sultanate of Oman signed an agreement with the Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability on Monday, December 12, 2022. It was signed by Nabhan bin Ahmed al Battashi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Federation, and Hamid bin Sultan al Busaidy, Executive Director of the Centre.

The agreement will enable the General Federation to provide better services to members in

various trade unions as well as to private sector workers in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

As part of the agreement, the Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability will draft a charter for the governance of the General Federation, in addition to monitoring governance practices, and examining them with the aim of analysing procedural gaps, if any.

The Centre will also conduct field visits to the headquarters of the General Federation, and hold meetings with members of the Board of Directors and Executive

Management.

Nabhan bin Ahmed al Battashi, Chairman of the

Board of Directors of the General Federation of Omani Workers, said: "The trade union

work system has gone through different stages, and we in the General Federation focus on improving the system, and moving it from individual effort to organised institutional effort by clarifying the roles required from all parties.

The relevant interest in accordance with the principles of governance and sustainability, in order to ensure the ability of the institution and its continuity in performing its tasks, and achieving its objectives according to what the workers in the private sector hope for."

Sayyid Hamid bin Sultan al

Busaidy, Executive Director of the Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability, added: "The governance guide aims to consolidate the principles of governance in the work environment of the union, and to enhance the principles of accountability and transparency integrity.

The agreement includes the preparation of an effective and effective governance framework that contributes to the development of the services provided by the federation to its members of the trade union structures and workers in the private sector."

Sohar Islamic signs MoU with Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning

MUSCAT: Contributing towards the development of the Omani real estate sector, Sohar Islamic signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Housing & Urban Planning with the purpose of enabling Omanis to own a home.

The scope of the memorandum includes financing the beneficiaries of the Naseem neighbourhood, the first community neighbourhood of the Souruh Initiative launched by the ministry, and similar projects.

Signing the agreement on behalf of Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning was Eng Hamad bin Ali bin Sulaiman al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing with Sohar Islamic represented by Fahad al Zadjali, Head of Retail Banking and Branches at Sohar Islamic.

The signing ceremony took place at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and witnessed the presence of senior officials from the bank as well as the Ministry. As per the terms of the MoU,



Sohar Islamic customers can now obtain quick, easy, and convenient property financing solutions from the bank to purchase properties that are either under construction or fully completed, and that fall under the Ministry's Souruh initiative.

Commenting on the signing of the MoU, Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at Sohar International said, "As a progressive, agile, and dynamic bank, Sohar Islamic is in

line with the government's efforts to enhance the pace of real estate development and achieve the objectives of the comprehensive urban strategy in the Sultanate of Oman.

Our partnership with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning will not only give an impetus to the real estate sector but will also contribute to meeting the growing demand for Sharia-compliant financing solutions in the sector."

Launched in 2019, the Sorouh initiative is a key national endeavour that was conceptualised to support the existing housing policies, provide eligible citizens with comfortable and affordable housing alternatives, and reduce the demand for land by citizens.

The initiatives includes provision of integrated residential complex with modern specifications to provide stability for citizens.

With the MoU in place, Sohar Islamic will provide the needed support to citizens to conveniently acquire a property of their choice in one of the many housing projects under the Sorouh initiative.

Abdulwahid al Murshidi added saying, "With an expansive suite of innovative financing instruments that adhere to the norms of Islamic finance, the bank seeks to provide customised, end-to-end services that add value to the lives of its customers.

Sohar Islamic will continue to remain vigilant of the changes in the economic landscape, leverage

budding opportunities, and focus on initiatives that have a sustainable impact on society."

The Sorouh integrated residential neighbourhood projects have been planned in the governorates of Musandam, Dhofar, South Al Sharqiyah, North Al Sharqiyah, South Al Batinah, and North Al Batinah. It features modern living amenities, green spaces, large public parks, sports grounds, mosques, healthcare facilities, and commercial centres.

Committed to the socio-economic progress of the nation. Sohar Islamic has been at the forefront of spearheading innovative propositions to cater to the evolving needs of the market while continuously advocating the benefits of Sharia-compliant financing.

Through meaningful partnerships that drive value, result-oriented initiatives, and a customer-centric approach, Sohar Islamic has established itself as a trusted Islamic finance partner in the Sultanate of Oman.

Vistara launches daily non-stop flights to Muscat



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 12

Vistara, Indian full-service carrier, has inaugurated daily, non-stop flights between Mumbai (India) and Muscat, its fourth destination in the Gulf region.

Muscat is the third Gulf city that Vistara has added to its network in the last four months. The inaugural flight departs from Mumbai at 2000 hours (IST) and arrives in Muscat at 2135 hours (GST).

With this, Vistara becomes the only carrier to offer the choice of Premium Economy class on the route, in addition to Business and Economy class.

Vinod Kannan, Chief Executive Officer, Vistara, said, "The launch of operations to Muscat is in line with our goal to steadily enhance our footprint in the Middle East.

The firm bilateral relationship and robust cultural and economic ties between India and states in the Gulf region have given great impetus to our growth plans, and our successful business on the other Middle Eastern routes is a testament to that.

We are excited to bring India's finest full-service carrier to Muscat with daily connectivity from Mumbai and are confident that Vistara with its award-winning product and services will be a much-preferred carrier on this route as well."

Toyota's popular 'Oubess' campaign ending soon

MUSCAT: Toyota fans looking forward to owning a brand new Toyota can visit any Toyota showroom and make the most the Toyota Oubess campaign before it ends on December 21, 2022.

The benefits include service from 2 years/20,000 kms up to 4 years / 40,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and insurance 1 year or cash gift in lieu of insurance RO 125 to RO 450. Customers owning any Toyota during the campaign get a chance to Scratch & Win prizes like iPhone13, Dell Laptop and Fuel Cards. Apart from this Walk-in to any Toyota showroom and get a chance to win prizes like JBL Sound Bar and Samsung Galaxy Watch 5. Social Media fans who follow Toyota Oman on Instagram can get a chance to win one out of 5 Apple AirPods.

The campaign is valid until December 21, 2022. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms



& Conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details.) Customers can choose from a fascinating range of vehicles that includes the Land Cruiser, Hilux Adventure, All-New Yaris, Camry and more.

The pride of the land – the Land Cruiser is a symbol of strength, durability and reliability. Rugged yet luxurious, the Land Cruiser delivers high-end performance and advanced off-roading capabilities and safety features. The Land Cruiser is equipped with a choice of two powertrain

options. The V6 twin-turbo 3.5-litre petrol engine achieves class-leading performance that surpasses that of a conventional V8, producing 409 hp and up to 650 nm. This is paired to a 10-speed automatic transmission.

Also available is a naturally aspirated 4.0-litre V6 petrol engine that produces 271 hp and up to 385 nm paired to a 6-Speed automatic transmission. Every Toyota Hilux Adventure comes with high-end features that start with the mighty 4.0-litre V6 Engine packing a mighty

punch with 235 HP & 38.3 Kg-m Torque. It has an Auto Disconnect Differential to keep the tempo going.

Equal importance has been provided to the technical superiority and safety features of the Hilux 4x4. The noteworthy features include a 2.7 Litre Petrol Engine that is available in 5-speed Manual Transmission and 6-Speed Automatic Transmission, outputting 164 HP.

The all new Toyota Yaris promises a dynamic driving experience thanks to its four-

cylinder engine that is equipped with 16-valve DOCH and dual VVT-I.

The vehicle is available with 1.5-litre capacity engine, producing 105 horsepower and 138 Nm of torque with fuel consumption of 20.5 km/l.

The stylish Camry is available in two engine options. The 2.5-litre engine delivers 204 HP & 243 Nm torque & 3.5-litre engine delivers 298 HP & 356 Nm torque. Camry is also available in the 3.5-litre sports edition that adds to the thrill. The Camry's interior is stylish and impressive. The dash design has a sporty, cockpit-like feel, while treating both the driver and the front passenger to wider visibility.

For the latest Press Releases, Test Drive requests and more, please visit www.toyotaoman.com, www.youtube.com/toyotaoman, www.facebook.com/toyotaoman, and www.instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/. For any further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota Showroom.

NLGIC Group financial strength rating upgraded

MUSCAT: National Life & General Insurance Co. Group (NLGIC Group) yesterday announced that its financial strength rating has been upgraded from B++ (Good) to A- (Excellent) by the global credit rating agency AM Best.

The move also saw NLGIC Group's Long-Term Issuer Credit Rating revised upwards to 'A-' (Excellent) from 'BBB+' and its outlook revised to stable, indicating superior financial health.

The key drivers for the revised outlook, according to the AM Best report, are NLGIC Group's balance sheet strength, as well as its strong operating performance, neutral business profile and appropriate enterprise risk management. The

report also confirms that NLGIC's recent purchase of RSA Middle East BSC (c) has been a central reason for the strengthening of NLGIC Group's business profile, providing both product and geographical diversification and consolidating NLGIC Group's position in its existing markets.

Notably, AM Best reported that the company has a track record of strong operating profitability, demonstrated by a five-year (2017-2021) weighted average return-on-equity ratio of 17.7 per cent.

This historical operating profitability has been driven by strong underwriting results from the company's non-life portfolio, evidenced by a five-year (2017-



2021) weighted average combined ratio of 92.6 per cent.

Commenting on the rating, Martin Rueegg, Group CEO of

NLGIC group, said: "The revisions to NLGIC's outlook reaffirms the success of the purchase of RSA Middle East, which resulted in the formation of NLGIC Group. This newly formed entity has created a leading multi-line insurer with a wide geographical footprint and strong in-country operations that leave the company exceptionally well-positioned for stability over economic cycles.

The AM Best upgrade also confirms that the integration of RSA Middle East is fully aligned with our growth strategy, our plans to strengthen our market position in the GCC and our ability to widen our customer base."

"As we gear up for next year, this

credit rating sends strong signals on how we should proceed in the future as we expand our portfolio and position ourselves as a leading multi-line insurer in the region.

With our solid financial footing, we are confident in our abilities to deliver strong results in the coming year."

AM Best further stated that the purchase of RSA Middle East leads NLGIC Group towards a well-diversified profile by product and geography. The business profile assessment factored in the company's leading market position in Oman, its firm presence in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, and its ongoing expansion into Kuwait and Qatar.

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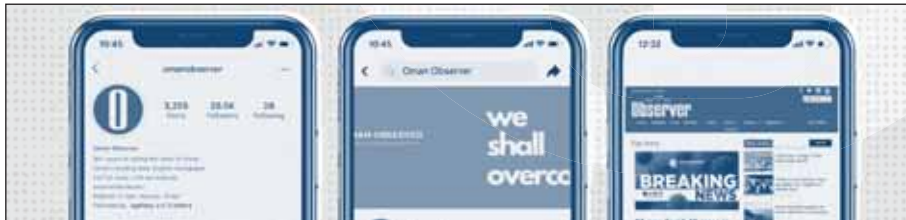
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5.7 million cyber security threats blocked in Oman



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 12

Trend Micro Incorporated, a leader in cybersecurity solutions, said that ransomware groups will increasingly target Linux servers and embedded systems over the coming years. The latest Trend Micro 2022 Midyear Roundup Report recorded a double-digit year-on-year (YoY) increase in attacks on these systems in H1 2022.

Detection of attacks from ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) surged in the first half of 2022. Major players like LockBit and Conti were detected with a 500% YoY increase and nearly doubled the number of detections in six months respectively.

The RaaS model has generated significant profits for ransomware developers and their affiliates. According to the data, Trend Micro blocked 63 billion threats in H1 2022, there were 52% more threats in the first half of the year than in the same period in 2021, while government, manufacturing, and healthcare were among the top three sectors targeted with malware.

In Oman, Trend Micro solutions blocked more than 5.7 million cyber security threats. It detected and blocked over 1.8 million email threats, prevented more than 1.47 million malicious URL victim attacks, and 10,914 URL hosts. In addition, over 1.4 million malware attacks were identified and stopped.

The report also highlights the ongoing risks of remote and hybrid work and learning environments. Backed by Trend Micro's Smart Home Network (SHN) solutions,

Oman blocked a total of 67,258 SHN inbound and outbound attacks and prevented 19,373 SHN events for hackers to target or control home devices from executing malware, obtaining sensitive information, intercepting communications, or launching external attacks.

"Omani enterprises have valiantly fought against a rapidly evolving threat landscape, yet challenges remain in protecting the expanding attack surface," said Assad Arabi, Managing Director Gulf Cluster, Trend Micro.

"To safeguard digital environments, it is essential to implement multilayered cyber security. The most recent midyear report is a crucial resource for guiding organisations towards a smarter and more powerful approach against future security challenges in the digital sphere."

There are new ransomware groups emerging every day. In the first half of 2022, Black Basta was the most notable. Even though SMBs are a more popular target, many threat actors tend to go for large corporations. Vulnerability exploitation is a common ransomware attack vector. Unpatched vulnerabilities contribute to a growing digital attack surface that many organisations are struggling to secure as hybrid workplaces expand their IT environment. More than two-fifths of global organisations (43%) believe it is "spiraling out of control."

Furthermore, cloud visibility is crucial given the persistent risk posed by third parties using methods like cloud-based crypto mining and cloud tunnelling to exploit misconfigured environments.

Oman hosts Arab Administrative Sustainability Conference

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, DEC 12

The annual Arab Administrative Development conference commenced on Monday under the auspices of the Governor of Muscat, Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy. The conference is a result of a collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and the Arab Administrative Development Organisation of the League of Arab States.

The two-day event will focus on sustainability in the administrative field. The 21st edition of the conference is titled "sustainability of resources in light of climate change and ways to minimise impact." The Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development, Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, reaffirmed the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to sustainability.

"The idea of sustainability constitutes a governing framework for all development plans and programmes in the Sultanate of Oman," he shared.

Al Busaidy listed some of the challenges facing human capital. "Climate change, technical progress and digital transformation are among the key challenges facing human capital, leading to the loss of various jobs. However, it will create other jobs



THE MATTER REQUIRES THE EXISTENCE OF EFFECTIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIONS THAT WILL BE ABLE TO MANAGE THE AVAILABLE RESOURCES IN A SUSTAINABLE MANNER, IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE THEM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

in response to current and future changes."

"In view of these challenges, Oman seeks to establish an effective national system that stimulates scientific research, innovation and creativity to build a science and knowledge-based economy and society, and to develop national talents with competitive capabilities and skills at the local and international levels. With continued emphasis on strengthening the focus of the labour market by building a skilled and productive workforce, with a positive working culture," he added.

In his keynote speech, Secretary-General of the League

of Arab States, Ahmed Aboul Gheit (**pictured**), explained the importance of competent administrations combating climate change.

"Achieving gains at an international level in combating the causes of climate change is important yet not sufficient in bringing about change at a national one. The matter requires the existence of effective and representative national government administrations that will be able to manage the available resources in a sustainable manner, in order to guarantee them for future generations."

"We need to not look at climate change at a surface level. Which

leads us in the wrong direction that holds one ministry responsible for protecting the environment. Instead, we need to develop comprehensive approaches and national strategies that will incorporate different sectors in their implementation," elaborated Aboul Gheit.

The two-day symposium will focus on highlighting the significance of building an integrated approach to development management that ensures the sustainability of resources in the context of climate change in the Arab region by international protocols and conventions.

The Ministry of Labour recently announced the creation of the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development under instructions of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The programme will target the development of the financial sector through the development of initiatives and projects aimed at developing and strengthening the role of the banking sector and financing solutions.

The first phase of the programme is set to start in the January of 2023 and aims to analyse the financial sector's current state, identify its main problems, and suggest solutions to the identified problems.

ODP receives Data Management Award

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 12

Oman Data Park (ODP), the country's first IT-managed and cloud services provider, has received the Data Management Award at the 2nd Big Data & Analytics Meet 2022 organised recently by COMEX Series.

The Forum was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology with the support of the Oman Information Technology Society.

Oman Data Park was recognised for its exceptional practices and achievements in hosting big data and analytics services, as well as for its distinction in promoting the digital transformation process in the Sultanate of Oman.

The company was cited for its



lead role in data management and hosting services in the Sultanate of Oman, encompassing cloud services, data storage services, cyber security services and data hosting in-country, and optimising use of information technologies in the country.

As Platinum Sponsor of the Big Data & Analytics Meet, ODP showcased a number of innovative services provided by the company in its fields of specialisation. In addition, the company hosted a session entitled: Roadmap for Cloud Empowering Data Analysis

& AI. Hassan Abdul al Ali, GM of Business Development, ODP, spoke during the session.

Commenting on this event, Eng Maqbool al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park stated: "Our support for Oman's 2nd Big Data & Analytics Meet 2022 as a platinum sponsor stems from our leading position in the field of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence.

The Data Management Award is a testament to our pioneering achievements in this field, since ODP has made huge strides across its services.

ODP also operates the only virtual data centre — Nebula — in the Sultanate of Oman, and also owns a specialised cyber security centre, which known as Cyber Security Park run by highly qualified Omani staff who provide secure operations and services around the clock."

Sohar Aluminium to fund several health projects

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 12

A ceremony was held on Monday in the Wilayat of Suhar where four Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between the Ministry of Health and Sohar Aluminium to finance projects that serve the health sector in the governorates of North Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, in the presence of Eng Ahmed bin Said al Amery, Member of the Board of Directors and Chairman of the

Corporate Social Responsibility Committee of Sohar Aluminium, and other dignitaries.

The MoUs cover funding the establishment of a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training centre, and a breast cancer screening unit, as well as funding ultrasound equipment and CPR training equipment.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Kharusi, General Manager of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs at Sohar Aluminium, stated Sohar Aluminium's commitment to its responsibilities towards supporting the community and contributing to local development



in various fields, especially the health sector, by implementing

sustainable social projects in collaboration with the concerned

entities.

Dr Khalid bin Said al Saadi, Director General of Health Services in North Al Batinah, also emphasised the importance of the partnership between the government and private sectors in supporting health projects that enhance the efficiency of health institutions and contributes to serving a large segment of the community.

The signed projects include financing the establishment of a CPR training centre in Sohar Hospital, procuring ultrasound equipment for Sohar Hospital and Falaj Al Qabail Health Centre in

North Al Batinah Governorate, financing a breast cancer unit for Ibri Hospital, and CPR training equipment for the General Directorate of Health Services in Al Dhahirah.

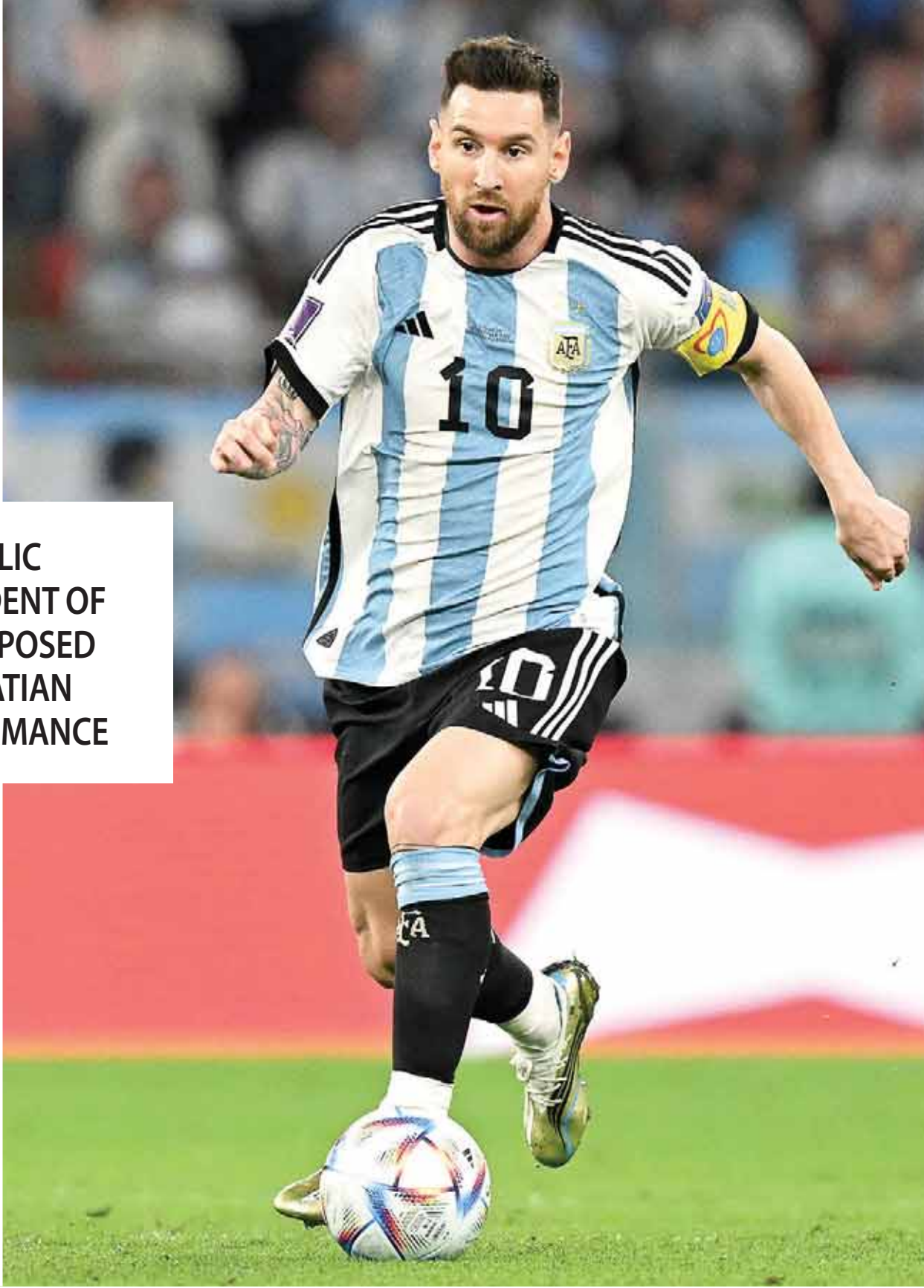
The Memorandums of Understanding were signed by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Kharusi, General Manager of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs at Sohar Aluminium, Dr Khalid bin Said al Saadi, General Manager of Health Services in North Al Batinah, and Dr Ahmed bin Said al Kalbani, General Manager of Health Services in Al Dhahirah.



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SCALONI EXPECTING ANOTHER MESSI MASTERCLASS

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 12

ARGENTINA coach Lionel Scaloni exuded confidence that Messi and company will deliver another scintillating performance against Croatia to reach one step closer to lifting the World Cup 2022.

“We are all set for another epic battle. It will be tough against a Croatian side full of top quality players,” Scaloni told a pre-match press conference at the Qatar National Convention Centre. Argentina overcame a tense battle against the Netherlands to reach the semifinals. After going ahead by two goals late into the second half, Argentina were stunned by substitute Wout Weghorst, who slotted in two goals to make the score level.

La Albiceleste moved into the last four with a 4-3 score in the penalties.

“We have analysed how Croatia performed in their knockout matches. It is going to be a great challenge for us. But we are ready for it,” Scaloni said.

The Argentina manager said Angel Di Maria and Rodrigo De Paul are both ready to play.

They will miss the service of suspended Marcos Acuna and Gonzalo Montiel in the semifinal.

“We have our style of play and system. We will follow that in every match unless some changes are forced by the match situation.”

Scaloni rejected the criticism regarding Argentine players’ behaviour after the Netherlands match.

“Sometimes football is played with a lot of intensity and emotions. It was just one of those days.” He said Messi’s inspirational leadership and the quality of his players are a crucial factor in the semifinal against Croatia at the Lusail Stadium with kick-off at 11 pm (Oman Time).

“Messi is a great inspiration to the squad. We have a bunch of quality players. In this World Cup, we showed our capability of fighting back from adverse situations and living the pressure moments.”

“In the semifinal, we are set for a tough game. We are focused on our strengths to go past Croatia,” Scaloni added.

On a query on Luka Modric, Scaloni said his team is aware of the threat posed by Modric and other top players of Croatia.

“Modric is a phenomenal player. He is a great character on and off the field. We are prepared for the top players of Croatia. We



LIONEL SCALONI



DALIC CALM

have a job in hand.”

Argentine player Nicolas Tagliafico said that the squad is all pumped up after their tense win against the Netherlands.

“It was an emotional win for us especially after their late comeback. We withstood the pressure in the penalty shoot-out as well,” Tagliafico said.

“Our squad is ready for any situation in the semifinal also. We hope for a best outcome for Argentina,” the Argentina left back added.

DALIC CALM AHEAD OF STORM

Croatian head coach Zlatko Dalic looked calm at the press conference ahead of their crunch last-four clash against Argentina.

“We are taking each match at a time and now it is time for the big match against Argentina. We know the capabilities of Argentina. Our team has prepared well,” Dalic said. Croatia have thoroughly reviewed the challenges awaiting them, said Dalic.

“We were mentally strong to emerge victors in some tense knockout matches. So our squad is essentially ready for the semifinal.”

“We have become one of the top four teams in the world. So, we want to go further and

dream like any of the sides in the tournament.”

“We are calm and composed and will put in all our efforts to reach the final,” he added.

KEY FACTS

The first Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 semifinal brings together two teams that reached the last four with dramatic penalty shoot-out victories, Croatia overcoming Brazil before Argentina knocked out the Netherlands.

The teams are evenly matched historically, both in terms of matches overall, with two wins apiece and one draw, and at the World Cup, with one group-stage victory each. Argentina prevailed 1-0 in 1998 while Croatia claimed a 3-0 success over Lionel Messi and Co in 2018, with Luka Modric among the scorers. The nations have not met since that match in Nizhny Novgorod.

Whereas Croatia lost their first World Cup semifinal, 2-1 to France in 1998, and won the second, 2-1 after extra time against England in 2018, Argentina have emerged victorious from all four of their previous semifinals – against the US in 1930 (6-1), Belgium in 1986 (2-0), Italy in 1990 (1-1, 4-3 on penalties) and the Netherlands in 2014 (0-0, 4-2 on penalties).



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2 - 1 Denmark	1/4
1 - 0 Tunisia	1 - 2 England

WORLD CUP 2022

(3 - 0 penalty shootout)

Last 16	Group stage
Spain 0 - 0	Croatia 0 - 0
1/4	Belgium 0 - 2
Portugal 1 - 0	Canada 1 - 2

FIFA RANKING

FRANCE 4

MOROCCO 22

TEAM'S AVERAGE AGE

27

BEST WORLD CUP PERFORMANCE

Winner

Finalist

1/2

1/4

Last 16

Group stage

1st participation

Source: FIFA

AFP Photos

AFP

DOHA: France are fully aware that Morocco are much more than a strictly defensive team as they prepare for their unexpected World Cup semi-final clash on Wednesday.

Morocco reached the last four by beating Spain and Portugal in the knockout stages and have conceded only one goal in the tournament.

Their quick transitions and comfort in possession of the ball have been highly impressive in Qatar and there is no chance the defending champions will take anything for granted at the Al Bayt stadium.

"We have enough experience to avoid falling into this trap (of being over confident). They've reached that stage for a reason," centre back Raphael Varane, France's vice-captain, told a news conference on Monday.

"They defend very well, it will be extremely difficult. We, the leaders of the team, have to prepare all the players for another battle. It's a World Cup semi-final, you need to give everything until the end if you want to deserve your place in the final."

Varane knows that Walid Regragui's team will be full of confidence.

"They're writing Moroccan football history, they have a collective force with performances that give them a lot of confidence," he said.

"They're physically very fit, they're dangerous on counter attacks and set pieces, too."

Right back Jules Kounde, who will be tasked with containing Sofiane Boufal on the flank, does not need to be reminded of Morocco's qualities.

"I'm not worried but we know they beat big teams to get there and we're going to take it seriously. It's not a surprise to see them here

anymore. They deserve to be here," he said.

"They're very compact. They give very little time to the player who has the ball to get organised. You have to play fast and try to break their balance," said Kounde.

"We're well aware of their qualities. They're very efficient with the ball, they combine very quickly to find their two wingers.

"What they have done is remarkable, only conceding an own goal, especially when you see the teams they played. We're going to have to be very precise to score."

The winners will face either Argentina or Croatia, who meet on Tuesday, in Sunday's final at the Lusail stadium. — Reuters

BOUNOU TAKES LONG AND WINDING ROAD TO MOROCCO STARDOM

YASSINE BOUNOU has learned to be patient in his career, but the Morocco goalkeeper with a show-stopping nickname is proving he more than belongs on the big stage at this World Cup.

An unused squad member at the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations and the 2018 World Cup in Russia, Bounou — or “Bono” as the name on his shirt reads — has played a fundamental part in helping Morocco set a new benchmark for African football in Qatar.

With 14 foreign-born players in the squad, it has been a case of unity in diversity for Morocco -- there is no better example of that solidarity than a defence which has conceded just once in five matches here.

Bounou kept 2018 runners-up Croatia at bay in their tournament opener. He suddenly disappeared just before kick-off in a 2-0 win over Belgium, having lined up with the team for the national anthems.

Replaced by Munir El Kajoui, coach Walid Regragui later cleared up the mystery by explaining Bounou had felt unwell after sustaining a knock against Croatia.

The 31-year-old Bounou hasn't put a foot wrong since his return against Canada, the country of his birth. Despite Nayef Aguerd's own goal, a 2-1 victory sent Morocco through as the surprising Group F winners.

Remarkably, no opposing player has scored against Morocco at this World Cup -- and that remains true despite the North Africans needing penalties to see off Spain in the last 16.

After Pablo Sarabia smacked the post with Spain's first kick, Bounou saved from Carlos Soler and Sergio Busquets as Morocco won 3-0 in the shootout to reach the quarterfinals for the very first time. He was again man of the match in a 1-0 victory over Portugal, ending Cristiano Ronaldo's World Cup dreams by denying the five-time Ballon d'Or winner in stoppage time.

“These kinds of moments are difficult to believe,” said Bounou, “but we've come to change the mentality, our insecurity. Moroccan players can compete against anyone in the world.”

“I think the most important thing, except the semifinal and that, is that we've changed that

mentality and the generation after us will know that Moroccan players can do all this.”

LONG ROUTE TO TOP

Bounou's success is a prime example of persistence paying off.

Born in Montreal, Bounou and his family returned to Morocco when he was seven. He joined the Wydad Casablanca academy and broke into the first team aged 19, appearing in the 2011 CAF Champions League final.

He signed for Atletico Madrid the following year, spending two seasons with the reserves, before moving on loan to Real Zaragoza in the second division.

With opportunities limited at Atletico, he left the club permanently for Girona in 2016 and helped them immediately win promotion to the Spanish top flight.

Herve Renard selected Munir as his first-choice 'keeper at the 2018 World Cup, a campaign which ended in the group stage, but Bounou has since made the number one shirt his own.

After Girona's relegation, Bounou joined Sevilla on loan for the 2019-20 season and starred as the Spanish club won a record-extending sixth Europa League title.

He soon dislodged Czech international Tomas Vaclik, signing a long-term deal with Sevilla, and earned the Zamora award last term as the 'keeper with the lowest ratio of goals conceded per game in La Liga.

“When you have one of the best goalkeepers in the world, it gives you confidence, and Yassine gives us that,” said Regragui after his side knocked out Portugal.

“He's not someone who thinks he's someone else. So he helped us a lot. And when Yassine makes that kind of save (against Ronaldo) and gets into the game, we're virtually unstoppable.”

Already the first African team to reach the World Cup semifinals, Morocco have no intention of slowing down ahead of a monumental clash with holders France.

“When you are part of the story, you don't grasp what's happening very quickly. Everything's good, we'll stay focused. We're happy about what we've done so far. But with time, we'll realise,” said Bounou.

— AFP



RONALDO WON'T MAKE 'HEAT OF MOMENT' DECISION AFTER PORTUGAL EXIT

CRISTIANO RONALDO said on Sunday "there's no point in reacting in the heat of the moment," as he responded to Portugal's World Cup elimination.

Ronaldo stayed in Qatar as many of the Portugal squad returned home and landed in Lisbon on Sunday afternoon.

"To win a World Cup for Portugal was the biggest and most ambitious dream of my career. Fortunately, I won many titles of international dimension, including for Portugal," Ronaldo wrote on Instagram.

His post did not talk about international retirement but he started Portugal's last two matches in Qatar on the bench, a decision which provoked debate in Portugal and across the football world.

"Let's hope that time will be a good counsellor and allow everyone to draw their own conclusions," he wrote.

The Instagram post was accompanied by a photo showing Ronaldo, head down, trudging off the field in Doha after the 1-0 quarter-final loss to Morocco on Saturday.

At 37, Ronaldo was playing his fifth World Cup. As soon as the final whistle blew he headed down the tunnel with tears streaming down his face.

Ronaldo is without a club after a bitter divorce with Manchester United.

According to the Portuguese press, Ronaldo threatened to leave the squad after he was dropped from the starting lineup, but that was denied by coach Fernando Santos, who will soon meet with the Portuguese Football Association to discuss his own future.

"I just want everyone to know that a lot was said, a lot was written, a lot was speculated, but my dedication to Portugal didn't change for an instant," Ronaldo added.

"I was always one more player fighting for everyone's goal and I would never turn my back on my teammates and my country."

"In the five World Cups I played, always alongside great players and supported by millions of Portuguese, I gave it my all. I left everything on the field. I never turned my back on the fight and I never gave up on this dream.

"Unfortunately, yesterday the dream ended. The dream was beautiful while it lasted."

Portugal central defender Pepe was asked about his former Real Madrid club mate, as he returned on Sunday. He said Ronaldo was "fine".

"I want to thank him, as well as all my teammates who gave their best," said Pepe. — AFP

TO WIN A WORLD CUP FOR PORTUGAL WAS THE BIGGEST AND MOST AMBITIOUS DREAM OF MY CAREER. FORTUNATELY, I WON MANY TITLES OF INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION, INCLUDING FOR PORTUGAL



OMAN SAIL CONCLUDES 44CUP AT AL MOUJ MARINA



MUSCAT: The 44Cup Oman, the final event of the 2022 44Cup Tour, concluded in Muscat with three races held further out to sea due to light winds. Team Nika won the second race of the day to claim the event trophy, but Charisma won the final race to bring a successful season to a fitting close. Having won three events back-to-back, including the class World Championship in Portorož in October, that win allows Charisma to move from fifth place to third and finish the season as overall 2022 44Cup winners by a margin of seven points.

After ten races across the weekend, Team Nika of Monaco finished in first place on 31 points with Sweden's Artemis Racing three points behind in second. Tour winners Charisma also of Monaco finished third on 38.

The result kept Charisma ahead of the fleet in the season standings on 6 points. Slovakian team Ceeref powered by Hrastnik 1860 had a weekend to forget, finishing in eighth, held on to second spot overall, level on points with Team Nika.

The prize-giving was held in the square by the Al Mouj Marina and attended by guest of honour, His Excellency Abdulsalam al Murshidi, Executive President of the Oman Investment Authority, alongside Basil bin Ahmed al Rowas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, and representatives from event sponsors.

Speaking at the prize-giving ceremony, RC44 Class President Chris Bake concluded, "It has been an incredible year for the 44Cup and we look forward to coming back to Oman for the start for our 2023 season."

Oman Sail's Team Asyad Shipping, making their first ever appearance in the RC44 class event, had won the respect of the full-time fleet with a series of promising performances and by showing determination to keep learning in an entirely new discipline.

Team Aqua owner and RC44 Class President Chris Bake thanked the hosts and complemented Oman Sail's own crew, Team Asyad Shipping which competed here. He said, "It is a real pleasure having Oman Sail sail with us - it is an ambitious programme and their team has done an incredible job."

The 44Cup Oman was organised by Oman Sail and also supported by official event partners Oman Air, Al Mouj Muscat, Kempinski Hotel Muscat, Tanuf Water, Transom Catering, environmental partners Environment Society of Oman (ESO) and UN Clean Seas, Mercedes-EQ.



Oman U-20 team to take on Iran in friendly today

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 12

The Oman U-20 football team will take on Iran in another friendly match on Tuesday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The match will kick off at 16:40.

The match is part of the ongoing domestic warm-up gathering for the team for the top assignment in AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023. Oman boys suffered a 1-0 loss against Iran in the opening friendly match on Sunday at the same venue.

Despite the defeat, Oman U-20 head coach David Gordo tested different players in the match and stood by their current technical performance. Moreover, the match gave an indication for the team's

level to compete with the strong Asian teams including Iran and to enter the players in the top international match standard.

After the second preparatory Iran match, the U-20 team will conclude the 10-day internal camp in Muscat. Coach Gordo has opted 24 players to shape them for the forthcoming presence in the AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023. The Asian Cup is scheduled to take place in Tashkent from March 1 to 18, 2023.

Ahead of the local camp, the Oman team boys had concluded their abroad camp in Dubai on November 20 on a bright note. Coach David Gordo's boys had played two friendly games against the UAE team. The opening warm-up game ended in favour of Oman



by 2-1 as Al Mutaism Ghanim and Abdullah al Rajhi netted the winning goals. In the following match, Oman boys repeated their victory against the hosts 1-0 after Abdul Majeed al Balushi scored the all-important goal in the 22nd minute. Dubai camp was within the team's technical plan for gearing up for the Asian event.

Oman will take part in the Asian event in Group C besides Korea Republic, Tajikistan and Jordan. The hosts Uzbekistan will compete for the title as they will face Indonesia, Iraq and Syria in Group A while Qatar will try to secure a berth in quarterfinals as they will meet Australia, Vietnam and Islamic Republic of Iran in Group B. Defending champions Saudi Arabia, Japan, China PR and

Kyrgyz Republic will compete in Group D.

The top four teams in the Asian finals will confirm their presence in the FIFA U20 World Cup 2023, which will return to Asia in Indonesia from May 20 to June 11.

Oman Squad: Turki Abdullah, Al Muhatadi al Abri, Mohammed al Oufi, Abdullah al Rajhi, Al Muntasir al Mawali, Salim al Shamakhi, Momin al Souli, Mulhim al Hadharami, Osama al Rawahi, Salim al Abdali, Abdullah al Anboursi, Said al Ghanbousi, Al Harith al Mukhaini, Mosab al Shamsi, Abdul Aleem al Rawahi, Ahed al Mashakhei, Mazin Saleh, Al Muhannad al Habsi, Abdulmajeed al Balushi, Ali al Balushi, Salah al Jadeedi, Ayman al Nabhani and Mohammed Abdulhakim.



MUSCAT TO HOST KARTING CHAMPIONSHIP TOMORROW

MUSCAT: The Middle East and North African Karting Championship Nations Cup 2022 will begin on Tuesday and run till December 17 at the Muscat Speedway Circuit at Oman Automobile Association.

This year, registrations have been opened up to the international candidates, who will take part in most of the racing categories. This has led to 138 qualified drivers entering the competition from 15 different countries around the world. OAA Managing Director,

Sulaiman al Rawahi said: “I have to say, it has been a pleasure hosting this competition for the past three years and this year we hope it to be one of the best.

“The drivers who have come here to compete have shown us all the potential they hold, and with each year, you see them better than before. The stakes are high and the competition gets tough, and in this kind of championship it is difficult to say who will take home the winning cup.” There will be eight karting categories in which

the drivers will be separated into: DD1, DD2 Master, RD1 Sprint, RD1 Endurance, Junior Max, Mini Max and Max.

Team Oman Racer, Mohamed Issa Al Balushi, 36, said: “I feel proud that such a big event has continued to be arranged and hosted for the third time in Oman. It is a golden opportunity for all local and regional kart drivers, mechanics and team managers to meet and share their experience and compete against each other in a fair manner,

under the umbrella of the FIA and showcase their driving skills to the expected level to achieve a win.”

This year is Mohammed’s second year to participate in this championship series and has been racing at a professional standard for the last three years. “Last time I was so close in securing the DD2 Master Class category, but due to a mechanical problem I had to complete the race with half the speed which costed me the title.” Also representing Oman,

16-year-old Chris Sutton said: “MENA karting championship will be my biggest race so far. This will be my first time participating in the championship and I am looking forward to getting out on track with the other drivers.”

Chris began go-karting six months ago, and ever since then, he had gotten in the rhythm of racing by participating in a couple of the Oman and UAE Rotax Max Challenge tournaments. He added: “I hope to carry this momentum into MENA.”

Ex Formula One French racer, Erik Comas will be participating in the RD1 Elite Endurance category and will be representing Oman along with his racing partner Luca Blasio. Muscat Speedway Karting Manager, Sanad al Rawahi said: “We are looking forward to what this competition will bring with famous drivers participating including last year’s world Champion finalist for Mini Max, Christopher Feghali from Lebanon.

Al Zubair, Schiller and Stolz finish fourth at Gulf 12 hours

ABU DHABI: Oman’s Al Faisal al Zubair and German team-mates, Luca Stolz and Fabian Schiller, finished fourth overall after 335 laps and around 1,770 kilometres of racing at the Gulf 12 Hours at Abu Dhabi’s Yas Marina circuit on Sunday evening.

Driving their Mercedes-AMG GT3 run by Al Manar Racing by GetSpeed, the trio were fighting for the lead for much of a close race where victory eventually fell to the #71 AF Corse Francorchamps Motors Ferrari 488 GT3 of Antonio Fouco, James Calado and Alessandro Pier Guidi.

They finished 14.388 seconds in front of AF Corse Ferrari team-mates, Nicklas Nielsen, Davide Rigon and Alessio Rovera. The Audi Sport Team Santeloc crew of Patrik Niederhauser, Christopher Haase and Erwan Bastard rounded off the podium places with Al Zubair, Schiller and Stolz just 29.779 seconds off the winning car and Stolz narrowly missing out on the Intercontinental GT Challenge title as a result of not claiming outright victory.

Al Zubair said: “It was not the best. We were fighting for the lead until the last pit stop. The

pace was quite good and we were really strong in some places. We had a bit of wet as well which was really odd for Abu Dhabi. The rain came down in my stint and it was quite difficult on slicks. We kept it on track and we were fighting with the factory Ferrari for the lead.

“Honestly, for a line up like this we should be very proud to be competitive against all the factory boys. Yes, we lost the chance to win at the last pit stop with penalties as well. One of our drivers got a penalty for track limits and 10 seconds of penalties in total. We also lost 15 seconds

because of a mistake with one of the mechanics.

“We had a bit of an unfortunate incident with a few cars. One of the Audis was blocking us in an attempt to have a team-mate

win the race. There’s racing and there’s this. Some pushing is a bit too dirty. It was very unfortunate for that. I gained a lot of experience. Overall, I was on a similar pace to Luca and

Fabi. Both are factory drivers, so I am happy with that.”

The Al Manar Racing Team started in a positive way and was in contention from the green lights all through the first half of the race

held in largely dry conditions in Abu Dhabi.

With 6hrs 30mins to run and the track under a full course yellow, Schiller was at the wheel of the Al Manar Racing by GetSpeed Mercedes and was holding fifth place just one lap off a lead held by the #71 AF Corse Francorchamps Motors Ferrari 488 GT3.

The Al Manar Racing Team had started the race from sixth on the grid with pole position falling to the #98 Mercedes AMG of Lucas Auer, Maro Engel and Maximilian Goetz, but the poll winners returned to the pits after completing just 24 laps and plummeted to the bottom of the leader board.

With eight hours of the race completed and 221 laps on the board for the leading Ferrari in the hands of Pier Guidi, the Al Manar Racing Team Mercedes had slipped back to seventh place. Stolz was running only 42 seconds behind the leader and the top eight cars were on the same lap.

But the crew climbed as high as second place in the last three hours and eventually settled into fourth place, a position they held to the finish.



Al Zubair, Schiller and Stolz



The Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes in Abu Dhabi.



Embiid scores 53 to lead 76ers’ NBA romp as Pelicans dim Suns

NEW YORK: Joel Embiid unleashed a spectacular 53-point performance on Sunday to power the Philadelphia 76ers over Charlotte 131-113, becoming the first NBA player with multiple 50-point games this season.

The 28-year-old Cameroonian 7-footer (2.13 metres) made 20-of-32 shots from the floor, including 2-of-3 from 3-point range, and 11-of-11 from the free throw line and grabbed 12 rebounds.

“He made scoring look easy tonight,” said three-time NBA scoring champion James Harden, who had 19 points, 16 assists and nine rebounds.

“He was in attack mode the

entire game... His jump shot was falling. He had an aggressive night.”

Embiid, who scored a career-high 59 points last month in a victory over Utah, became only the third 76ers player to achieve multiple 50-point games in a season, joining Allen Iverson and Wilt Chamberlain.

“I’m just happy I’m contributing when we’re winning,” Embiid said.

It was left for team-mates to put his feats in perspective for the 76ers (14-12).

“It has been amazing to watch,” said Montrezl Harrell.

“He’s a skilled player. He does so many things for our team on

the offensive end of the floor and defensively as well,” he added.

“For him to come out and have a dominant game on both ends of the floor just shows you how great a player he is.”

Zion Williamson scored 35 points to lead the New Orleans Pelicans to their seventh consecutive triumph, defeating Phoenix 129-124 in overtime to stay atop the Western Conference.

C.J. McCollum added 29 points for New Orleans (18-8), while Deandre Ayton led the Suns (16-11) with 28 points and 12 rebounds. Phoenix’s Chris Paul made a jumper with four seconds remaining in the fourth quarter to

pull the Suns level at 117-117 and force extra time. But McCollum had four points in a 10-2 Pelicans’ overtime run to grab the victory.

LeBron James had 35 points, five rebounds and five assists, while Anthony Davis contributed 34 points 15 rebounds and seven assists to power the Los Angeles Lakers over host Detroit 124-117.

“It was a must win for us. We knew that,” Davis said. “We stayed resilient and kept fighting.”

Bojan Bogdanovic had a game-high 38 points for the NBA-worst Pistons (7-22).

HAWKS WIN AT BUZZER
The night’s most incredible finish

came in Atlanta, where 19-year-old rookie A.J. Griffin caught an inbounds pass from Jalen Johnson, twisted his body, shot the ball from the paint and made the game-winning basket at the buzzer in overtime to deliver the Hawks a 123-122 victory over Chicago.

“Coach drew up a great play and JJ, that was a great pass,” Griffin said.

Bogdan Bogdanovic came off the bench to lead Atlanta with 28 points, while Trae Young added 19 points and 14 assists and Griffin had 17 points. DeMar DeRozan led the Bulls with 34 points and 13 rebounds. — AFP



Hoge and hurting Theegala rally to win Shootout crown

MIAMI: Americans Sahith Theegala and Tom Hoge won the QBE Shootout, combining for a 10-under par 62 in Sunday’s four-ball format to become the first rookie champions in 11 years.

Theegala, who pulled a muscle on the opening hole of the final round, sank a 20-foot birdie putt on the last hole for the victory in the 54-hole exhibition event at Tiburón in Naples, Florida.

Hoge and Theegala were deadlocked for the lead with countrymen Ryan Palmer and Charley Hoffman on the final green. After Theegala, a son of Indian immigrants, made his dramatic putt, Palmer missed a 15-foot birdie putt and Hoffman missed from 12 feet to give Hoge and Theegala the triumph.

“It’s nice to get a little taste of competition and taste of victory because it’s so hard out here, so many great players,” Theegala said. “Feels really, really good.”

Hoge and Theegala finished on 34-under 182 with Palmer and Hoffman on 183 and US three-time Shootout winners Matt Kuchar and Harris English third on 184.

Theegala, 25, matched his best US PGA Tour finish with a share of second at last month’s RSM Classic. Hoge, 33, won his only PGA title last February at Pebble Beach.

Theegala and Hoge, who began the day two back of Palmer and Hoffman combined to birdie eight of the last 11 holes after a slow start. — AFP

England win Multan thriller to clinch series in Pakistan

MULTAN, Pakistan: England pulled off a series-clinching 26-run victory against Pakistan in the dramatic second test in Multan on Monday in a fresh vindication of their highly entertaining brand of cricket.

A week after pulling off a memorable victory in the series opener in Rawalpindi, Ben Stokes and his men prevailed in yet another thriller to register, with a match to spare, England’s first series win in Pakistan since 2000-01.

The hosts, set a daunting victory target of 355, added to the drama with their spirited rearguard before being all out for 328 in the second session on the penultimate day of the contest.

England had won only two away tests against Pakistan prior to the start of this series.

“It was another fantastic game to be a part of, going down to the wire yet again,” England captain Ben Stokes said at the presentation ceremony.

“There are some seriously tired bodies up there and everybody has flew into this and we have achieved something really special

this week as the England cricket team.”

Under Stokes, England have now won eight of the nine test matches playing a positive and result-oriented cricket that has endeared them to the fans.

Day four began with Pakistan needing 157 runs to level the series, and England requiring six wickets to clinch it.

Part-time spinner Joe Root dismissed overnight batsman Faheem Ashraf to claim his 50th test wicket but Pakistan clawed back into the contest riding Saud Shakeel’s 80-run stand with Mohammad Nawaz (45).

Saud (94) held the fort while Nawaz counter-attacked to transfer the pressure back on England until Mark Wood (4-65) intervened.

The paceman strangled Nawaz down the leg side and then ended Saud’s gallant knock via a debatable dismissal.

The soft caught-behind signal against Saud was upheld though replays suggested the ball in Ollie Pope’s gloves may have grazed the turf.

With only 64 runs separating



them from victory with three wickets in hand, Pakistan refused to throw in the towel.

Abrar Ahmed, who had claimed 11 wickets in his debut test, smashed four fours injecting

fresh drama into the contest.

England could not be denied their victory though and Ollie

Robinson sealed it when he had Mohammad Ali caught behind for a duck. — Reuters



SEMI-FINALS



TUESDAY, 13 DEC



11:00 PM



ARGENTINA

“Albiceleste”

World Cup
WINNER

★ | ★

1986 | 1978

3rd

FIFA ranking

6th Semi- Finals



CROATIA

“Vatreni”

World Cup
WINNER

★

0

12th

FIFA ranking

2nd Semi- Finals



(Oman Time)



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