



SPECIAL
4-PAGE
SUPPLEMENT
ON 59TH
ANNIVERSARY
OF KENYA



P5

TUNISIANS
VOTE TO
ELECT NEW
PARLIAMENT



P9

DUQM
REFINERY
PROJECT
96% COMPLETE



P15

ARGENTINA AND
FRANCE SEEK
THIRD WORLD
CUP TROPHY



■ MUSCAT

HIS MAJESTY GREET'S PRESIDENT OF NIGER

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Mohamed Bazoum of Niger on the occasion of his country's National Day.

His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the president and the friendly people of Niger. — ONA

WALKATHON FOR ORGAN DONATION

The first annual walkathon to raise awareness about organ donation will be held at the Al Mouj Muscat on December 22 with the theme of 'You're Giving them Life'.

"Organ transplantation is one of the most important achievements in modern medicine. It is the only treatment for the failure of organs like the heart, liver, kidneys, etc," said Dr Neven bint Ibrahim al Kalbaniyah.

Explaining who can donate, she said, "Any living person can safely donate a kidney or lobe of the liver to save lives and give patients hope, and this walkathon would be an awakening call to many who are willing to donate."



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■ IT'S BRONZE FOR CROATIA



Croatians supporters celebrate after the second Croatian goal. 2018 Russia runners-up Croatia claimed the third place in the Fifa Qatar 2022 World Cup after edging a fighting Morocco 2-1 in the third-place match on Saturday night. — AFP

Detail on P13

Municipal polls: Voting begins for Omanis abroad

STAFF REPORTER
Muscat, Dec 17

Omani voters who are outside the Sultanate of Oman will cast their votes on Sunday in the municipal council elections for the third term, through the "Intakhib vote" application that is available in electronic stores for smartphones, from eight in the morning until seven in the evening, which allows voters in various countries of the world to cast their vote from anywhere via this app.



انتخابات أعضاء
المجالس البلدية
الفترة الثالثة ٢٠٢٢ م

A number of experts and citizens commended the efforts taken by the Ministry of Interior in the municipal council elections and its keenness on the utilisation of the advanced technology in the electoral process. Specialists affirmed that Intakhib mobile application would ensure the participation of a large number of eligible voters. The app, they said, will enable citizens to vote at times of their choosing on December 18 for Omanis residing abroad and December 25 for citizens inside the Sultanate of Oman.

They expressed their optimism over the technological developments that were introduced in the electoral process.

SEE P2

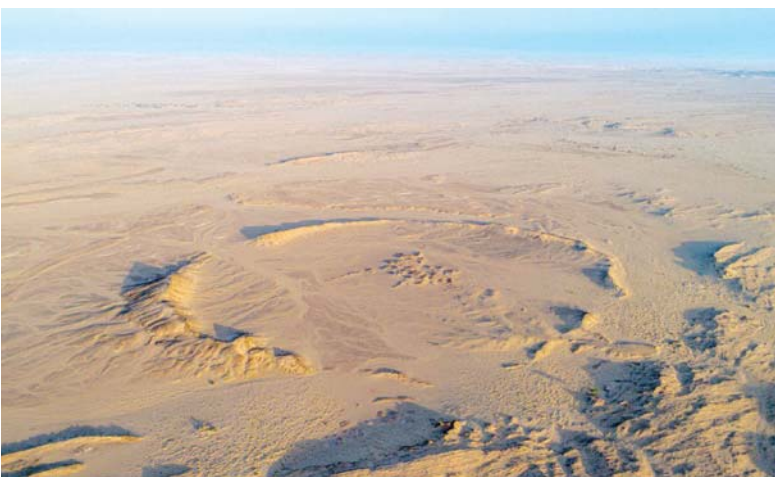
60 million-year-old meteorite crater discovered in Mahout

MAHOUT: Sultan Qaboos University, represented by the Department of Earth Sciences at the College of Science, has announced the discovery of a huge meteorite crater with a diameter of one kilometre in the Wilayat of Mahout.

Prof Sobhi Jaber Nasr, a professor at the Department of Earth Sciences, said that it is 60 million years old and that the diameter of the meteorite that caused the appearance of this crater ranges between 50 and 60 metres, making it one of the largest impact craters in the Middle East.

This unique discovery provides a rare scientific site to study the effects of impacts on the ground that was not possible before, which makes the Sultanate of Oman present a second site for its distinction and geological heritage, where the ophiolite rocks are the first and unique example of revealing the crust rocks on its surface.

These rocks absorb an estimated



100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, which will help combat global warming naturally. Rock fragments at the site of the discovered crater show signs of melting and recrystallisation during the collision, as the sandstone quickly heats up to more than 1,200 degrees.

Rock analyses of unmelted rock masses show the presence of impact minerals such as quartz crystals with a distinctive pattern of parallel, flat cracks, as a result of shock waves travelling through the

bedrock, and the presence of the calcite mineral, in addition to that, indicates the major collision with the asteroid that hit the region. On the other hand, the results of the analysis showed teardrop-shaped glass fragments, and pieces of glass perforated with small holes resulting from gas bubbles.

These two features also indicate the occurrence of a high-intensity collision there, and geophysical surveys indicated the distinctive vascular layered shape of the impact craters.



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Omanis abroad to vote in MC polls today



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Ismail bin Shihab al Balushi



Dr Ali bin Said al Riyami



Ali bin Rashid al Matani



Shahm bin Rashid al Shahoumi



Salma bint Naseeb al Farsiyyah



Amal bint Khalfan al Yahiyaiyah

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The app, they said, will enable citizens to vote at times of their choosing on December 18 for Omanis residing abroad and December 25 for citizens inside the Sultanate of Oman.

They expressed their optimism over the technological developments that were introduced in the electoral process in line with the decentralisation and the transfer of decision-making to the governorates in accordance with the Oman Vision 2040 in a bid to improve development and services in the governorates.

Shaikh Mansoor bin Harith al Amri, State Council member, said that the System of Governorates enhances the role of the municipal

Specialists, citizens hail efforts by the Ministry of Interior on the utilisation of the advanced technology in the electoral process. They also affirm that Intakhib mobile application will ensure participation of a large number of eligible voters

councils.

He added that the governorates system which was approved by the government is considered a quantum leap as it boosts comprehensive development and augments the role of the governorates including that of the government institutions, the municipal councils and the assisting committees.

The citizens are hopeful that the official system will simplify the electoral procedures.



The voters should choose the suitable candidates who are able to carry out their duties under the renewed Renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Dr Ali bin Said al Riyami, Head of History Department at the College of Arts and Social Sciences, said that the upcoming period requires more efforts to confirm the role of the municipal

councils as a key partner in achieving sustainable development on the level of governorates and wilayats especially after a decade has passed since the establishment of the municipal councils.

The municipal councils are expected to be more powerful during the third term after the introduction of the decentralisation system, a strategic trend of Oman

Vision 2040 for the development of governorates and sustainable cities.

Amal bint Khalfan al Yahiyaiyah, lawyer, said that the System of Governorates achieves the aspirations of the citizens because it is keeping pace with modern administration, i.e the adoption of decentralisation which enables the inflow of information from the lower to the upper level and allows for what is known as comprehensive quality management while expedites decision-taking.

Besides, the System of Governorates emphasises the role of the governors in developing the governorates' resources.

Ali bin Rashid al Matani, writer, said that the newly introduced System of Governorates aims at fostering decentralisation in decision-taking particularly the decisions that boost investments and economic growth through benefiting from the advantages granted to each governorate.

Shahm bin Rashid al Shahoumi, former member of

Majlis Ashishura, said that the municipal councils aim to reduce centralisation in decision-taking in the governorates.

The Royal Decree 36/2022 which detached the System of Governorates and the local administration represented a milestone and the beginning of a new administration and municipal work. Consequently, the governors have acquired new powers that enable them to manage their governorates more effectively.

Ismail bin Shihab al Balushi said that the System of Governorates will prove successful due to the ambitions of the officials in charge. The election of the members of the municipal councils should be based on the public interest.

The aim of the System of the Governorates is to achieve positive results in municipal work.

Salma bint Naseeb al Farsiyyah said that the upcoming period requires the voters to choose the suitable candidates who are able to meet the challenges associated with the development of the governorates.

Traditional camel festival concludes



IBRI: The eighth edition of Hamraa Al Doru Camel Festival wrapped up on Saturday.

The festival included Ardha running, camel beauty contests, camel races and traditional camel shows. It was aimed to improve traditional camel sports and shows.

The Hamraa Al Doru Camel Festival is an

annual destination for the enthusiasts of camel sports and traditional camel heritage from all over the country and the GCC countries.

The festival comprises a multitude of activities associated with traditional camel shows and heritage and Bedouin life. The festival included a heritage village, souq, in addition to



70 stalls that displayed lots of traditional items and handicrafts.

Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Mashani, Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court, presided over the closing ceremony which was attended by Najee bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah. — ONA



ROYAL CAMEL CORPS AT SAUDI CAMEL FESTIVAL



The Royal Court Affairs, represented by the Royal Camel Corps, took part in the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival's seventh edition. The festival is being held 130 km north of Riyadh, and features entertainment, including cultural and heritage shows and popular markets.



Tender for construction of Muttrah Square project floated

VINOD NAIR
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Muscat Municipality has invited dedicated companies to compete in the tender for the construction of the Muttrah Square project, which will be established as of the innovative landmarks in the Muscat Governorate. The last date to collect the tender documents is January 15, 2023, and the last date to return the tender is February 15, 2023.

The tender fee is RO 155. As per Royal Directives to assign Muscat Municipality to implement the Muttrah Square project, Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat, signed an agreement to complete the project in September this year.

It may be noted that the Muttrah Square project got first place in the Belarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design, which was announced early this year. The project was prepared by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Ghadhami, Omaina bint Mahmoud al Hinaï, and Abdullah bin Saleh al Bahri.

Speaking to the Observer, local businesses said they were hoping for the completion of this project at the earliest. “A facelift with modern facilities is essential to get more tourists from all over the world to this iconic tourist destination. It is already the main destination for cruise tourists as they come in thousands of thousands every year,” said the manager of a popular restaurant in the area.

The Muttrah Square project is expected to raise the value of Muttrah with a unique landmark,

The Muttrah Square project is expected to raise the value of Muttrah with a unique landmark, where an iconic bridge in the middle of the square is designed in the form of a bird over the sea



where an iconic bridge in the middle of the square is designed in the form of a bird over the sea.

The bridge captures the famous landmarks of Muttrah in one frame and will be surrounded by a mixed-use plaza that includes a dancing fountain, retail stores, and cafes, with lights that blend with the waves of the sea.

The aim of the competition was to invite designers and architects to propose a unique landmark for the area, taking into the 50 years of the Sultanate of Oman's Renaissance and the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The organisers received a total of 356 projects that met the competition's requirements in the opening stage, and the theme revolved around the development of the Al Mina Waterfront area in the Wilayat of Muttrah.



Of these, ten projects were designed by 19 young Omanis (including five individual participations and five group projects) and were shortlisted for the final stage of the award.

The award targeted young Omanis who specialised in the fields of architecture, design, and urban planning can participate in the announced competition and are no more than 35 years of age.

Meanwhile, the second edition of the Belarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design

(BHA) has received 149 entries to design the Maritime History Museum in the Wilayat of Sur in the Governorate of South al Sharqiyah.

From among entries that met the conditions set previously for the contest, 84 were submitted by individuals and 65 by groups.

The award jury is studying and sorting the entries with a view to picking up the top 30 project designs, which will later be shortlisted into ten qualifiers to contest the final stage.

CAS Nizwa, Dept of Heritage and Tourism sign MoC



AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, DEC 17

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Nizwa branch, and the Department of Heritage and Tourism in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, signed a memorandum of cooperation at the headquarters of UTAS, Nizwa branch.

The memorandum was signed by Dr Mohammed bin Juma al Kharousi, dean of the university branch in Nizwa, and Ali bin Saif al Shukaili, Assistant Director of the Department of Heritage and Tourism in the governorate.

The agreement includes exchanging experiences, training and supporting student activities and projects. It aims to build capabilities, strengthen cooperation between the two institutions, exchange training, practical, scientific and research experiences, and encourage and support research and student talents.

The collaboration between the two sides provides various statistics and data related to tourism programmes and plans. The agreement also deals with cooperation in multiple initiatives, tourism promotion, and organisation of seminars and conferences.

The memorandum stipulates organising trips and joint student

activities to tourist and heritage sites in the governorate.

There will also be cooperation in organising local and international festivals and celebrations.

The Department of Heritage and Tourism will also look into training students and supporting field training for tourism students at the university.

The memorandum also provides cooperation in research projects and community services related to tourism.

Dr Mohammed bin Juma al Kharousi, dean of the university branch in Nizwa, said: “The signing of memorandum comes within the framework of the efforts made by the university branch in Nizwa as a translation of the university's strategic plan of strengthening partnership with the public and private sectors.”

He further added: “This agreement will also pay attention to two important aspects in the life of a university student. Harnessing the potential to achieve sustainable development to prepare a qualified Omani with skills and capabilities capable of creativity and competition locally, regionally and internationally.”

UTAS, Nizwa branch, has signed several memorandums of cooperation with various governmental and private institutions.

WORKSHOP ON DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT



The Ministry of Health's (MoH) Department of Quality Document Development and Control organised a workshop on the second version of 'Guidelines for the development of document' in the Directorate-General of Health Services, Muscat Governorate. Dr Qamra bint Said al Sariri, Director-General of the Quality Assurance Centre, attended the event with the participation of doctors, nurses and focal points from all the Sultanate of Oman's Governorates and MoH central directorates. The workshop aimed to train the participants on the second version of the document development guidelines.

ISG students attend social service project in India



MUSCAT: A delegation consisting of seven students from Indian School Al Ghubra, Simran Kawatra, Chitrangada Chaturvedi, Diya Nibukumar Nair, Ananthakrishnan Unnikrishnan, Bhavesh Shabu Nair, Diya Krishna, Niranjan Sunil, accompanied by their teacher Noella Vaz attended the Mayo International Social Service Project hosted by the prestigious Mayo College, Ajmer, in collaboration with Rajasthan Mahila Kalyan Mandal and Minu Manovikas Mandir Inclusive School at Ajmer from November 28 to December 5. The project aims to increase opportunities for inclusive students to develop and showcase their talents in the field of their choice. For example Minu Manovikas Mandir had students who were selected for the state-level shot put.

Organ donation walkathon on Dec 22

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The first annual walkathon to raise awareness about organ donation will be held at the Almouj Muscat on December 22 with the theme of 'You're Giving them Life'.

“Organ transplantation is one of the most important achievements in modern medicine. It is the only treatment for the failure of organs like the heart, liver, kidneys, etc.,” said Dr Neven bint Ibrahim al Kalbaniyah, Head of the Organ Transplant Department at the Royal Hospital and member of the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation.

Explaining who can donate, she said, “Any living person can safely donate a kidney or lobe of the liver to save lives and give patients hope, and this walkathon would be an awakening call to many who are willing to donate and to feel for those who need them.

“It is a less known fact that a brain-dead donor can save the lives of eight people by donating the heart, kidneys, pancreas, liver, lungs and small intestine besides tissues, such as corneas and heart valves, and improve the quality of life for more than fifty people. The Omani Association for Organ Transplantation is seeking to support the national efforts aimed at establishing a national programme for organ transplantation, which came within the framework of the Royal blessing,” she said, adding there are many initiatives planned to



spread the hope of life to many patients with organ failure through educational awareness campaigns, and also to contribute to supporting donors and recipients of organs and their families.

Several events are planned as part of the walkathon. There will be a speech by the sponsor of the president of the Omani Association for Organ Transplantation, besides sharing the experience of a donor and recipient, followed by a video about organ donation.

An educational and awareness corner of organ donation, an illustration of the registration process as an organ donor through the Shifa application, a corner to measure parameters such as pressure, sugar and cholesterol and how to avoid organic failure of organs, an entertaining and educational corner for children



and other fun and informative activities.

Earlier, the Ministry of Health, represented by the Royal Hospital with the support of the Sohar Aluminium Company, had launched an Awareness Application for Body Organs Donation in March to promote the culture of organ donation and raise awareness by providing them

with information, data and expert opinion.

People, in general, have been urged to familiarise themselves with the application and register in the “Shifa” application. This is a rare move in the Sultanate of Oman and the Arab world.

The application aims to define the organ donation mechanism, correct post-mortem organ donation misperceptions, and confirm relatives' donation conditions.

It further provides the community with all medical information on liver and kidney transplantation and answers recurring inquiries related to children, adolescents, and pregnant and nursing mothers, besides highlighting the consequences of trade in human organs.



Carbon capture project gains further momentum

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttvyp

With the prestigious Earthshot Prize, the Omani start-up 44.01 gained further momentum and hopes to take its carbon-capture technology global.

For Peter Kelemen, a geologist at the Earth Institute and Columbia Climate School, who is also the chief of the Scientific Committee at 44.01, the goal is to harness and speed up the study to remove carbon on an industrial scale.

In an interview with Science News at the Earth Institute and Columbia Climate School, Kelemen said that the company is now planning two much larger pilot projects, both expected to take place in 2023.

“We’ve obtained government permits and run some small pilot projects at a former scientific drilling site. We are now planning two much larger pilot projects, both expected to take place in 2023. Ideally, we would achieve substantial results before the COP28 meeting in the UAE, in 2023,” Kelemen said in the interview with Kevin Krajick of

Kelemen has been working in Oman desert for over 15 years to study natural chemical reactions within rare deep-earth rocks that pull carbon from the air and lock it into solid mineral form

Earth Institute, Columbia.

Kelemen has been working in the desert of Oman for more than 15 years to study natural chemical reactions within rare deep-earth rocks that pull carbon from the air and lock it into solid mineral form.

Based in large part on his research, Omani entrepreneurs formed 44.01, a company working to scale up and commercialise the processes. The company was just awarded a \$1.2-million Earthshot Prize by Prince William, in a televised ceremony in Boston.

Talal Hasan, founder of 44.01, had earlier said winning the Earthshot Prize was “a proud moment” for his team. Named after the molecular mass of CO₂, 44.01 promises to turn carbon



Peter Kelemen. (Picture by Kevin Krajick/Earth Institute)

dioxide into peridotite, a rock that is found in abundance both in Oman and globally, including the US, Europe and Asia.

“Eventually, we hope, some government or group of governments would pay them to lock up the carbon, at a rate of maybe \$30 a tonne. Globally, such costs end up being a few percent of GDP, comparable to the current

costs of solid waste management,” he said.

To a question as to what difficulties the project might face, Kelemen said that the main concern is that the rocks are not very porous. That leads to two difficulties. One, it can be difficult to get fluids to circulate rapidly through the rocks, and two, the pore space might eventually clog

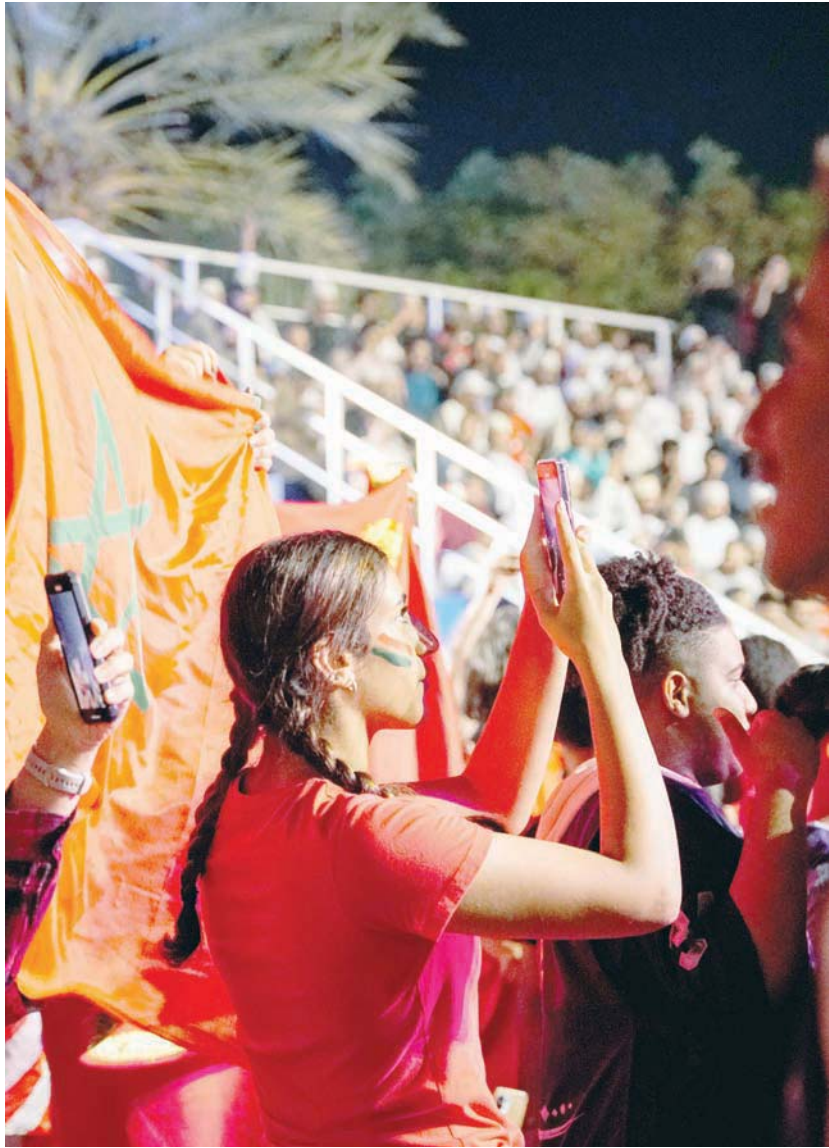
up with newly formed carbonate minerals.

However, the geologist said, “We are inspired by the fact that in some places the rocks have naturally become fully carbonated. That is, every magnesium and calcium atom in them has combined with CO₂ to create solid minerals. So we know this can happen, and we have ideas about how it works.”

The company has done theoretical calculations and conducted experiments at the laboratory scale. “But in the end, only field scale experiments will allow us to refine methods to do this at a reasonable cost,” he said.

In addition to forming solid carbonate minerals, the reaction of surface waters with mantle rocks can form free hydrogen gas. It is widely viewed as a potential replacement for fossil fuels, specifically natural gas and oil, for transportation and home heating. And if derived at a low cost from natural sources, it could also be used to generate electricity.

To another question whether he would continue research in Oman or elsewhere, Kelemen said, “We are continuing academic research on the rate of hydrogen formation, and studying ways that could be accelerated. In the United States and Canada, we are also investigating how some mining ores could not only lock up carbon but help with the extraction of nickel and cobalt — essential ingredients that will be used extensively in electric vehicles and renewable energy generation in the next few decades.”



Fan Festival organisers claim huge success

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

As the curtains come down on Football Fan Festival with the final match between Argentina and France on Sunday, the mega-event exceeded expectations.

Speaking exclusively to the Observer, Lyutha al Habsi (pictured), adviser, brand and marketing, Omran, said, “The festival exceeded all expectations, and I am proud that the Oman World Cup Programme managed to pull out an event of this calibre for the people of the Sultanate.”

She said, “At the end of the semis, we had a footfall of around 80,000 (estimated from only ticket receipts), and there was a major demand in the purchase of tickets as the World Cup moved into the knock-out or the do-or-die stages.”

Tickets for the final have already been sold out, and with matches starting early, we can expect more families at the venue.

The biggest night was the



Morocco-Spain match, and Lyutha agreed that Morocco was the crowd-puller at the Fan Festival.

“We have a sizeable Moroccan population in the Sultanate, and they were organised, bringing the African and Arab brand of celebrations in costumes, musical and celebrations to the festival.”

She added, “We expected that fans would come for a match and then leave during the break. But to our surprise, they would stay for the night match, which helped the F&B businesses as they took advantage of various activities at



the venue.”

“I am so proud of what has been put together, raising the bar for events to be held in Muscat. 300 Omani volunteers were getting hands-on experience in dealing with staging and managing events of this kind in the future.”

The Fan Festival offered opportunities to organise more events for the country to celebrate, keeping in mind the mood of the market and the viability of the private sector. “Most important challenge while organising a mega event that runs for a long period

is to keep the visitors engaged and interested so that they make a return visit.” She said the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre is a strategic location, and “I could not have asked for a better venue, plus they have expertise in organising events.”

The Football Fan Festival offers a wide variety of activities, competitions, food stalls, and more that the visitors were entertained for the remainder of the festival.

There is a daily prize draw for visitors until the tournament concludes on Sunday.

As winter begins, bee-eaters take flight over parks, farms

YAHYA ALSALMANI
MUSCAT, DEC 17

The bee-eater birds become active as soon as the weather changes and the cold winter breeze begins. They can be seen in the farms, gardens and valleys during the season.

The bird got its name from its eating habit of honey-making bees. They are classified as small-to medium-sized birds known for their activity and vitality. They are social birds with long, thin, carved beaks and are erect and alert when standing.

They are among the birds with coloured feathers. They are spread around the world by 24 different species, of which experts recognise 22. They are abundant in savannah areas, open woodlands and desert forests.

Bee-eaters are considered a family of medium-sized birds with beautiful colours and acrobatic

Bee-eaters are considered a family of medium-sized birds with beautiful colours and acrobatic movements that they use to pounce on their prey

movements that they use to pounce on their prey.

All types of bee-eaters share some characteristics, such as the shape of their strong, long and pointed beaks. They also share the shape of the foot structure in which the three fingers are the forelimbs partially fused with each other. Most species of bee-eaters have the same shape, even with different sexes.

To the extent that the similarity reaches the extent of matching, with differences that distinguish



each species from the other.

Bee-eaters of all kinds are distributed in a number of places around the world, and they prefer to live in open spaces, such as forest lands and shrub areas that are close to natural water sources, and avoid living in open desert areas.

Studies conducted on more than 15 species of Bee-eaters showed

that 60 to 80 per cent of the bee-eater’s diet consists of honey bees and ants in addition to other types of insects, and there are a few other bee-eaters that eat large insects and small lizards.

Some of them eat fish, and they can distinguish between insects with poisonous stings that may be dangerous according to typical

behaviours that they possess, and these behaviours are represented by repeatedly hitting the insect on the head and then waving it using their sharp beaks.

Bee-eaters are distinguished from other birds by a set of behaviours, as they can be considered resident birds; that is, they spend most of their lives in the same spatial boundaries in which they originated.

Members of the same family also interact with each other during the foraging period, but each pair of birds has different foraging ranges and may overlap.

When a bird and a bee-eater from the same family meet in the area of foraging, they communicate with each other with enthusiasm, and that is by shaking each bird for its tail, and rarely does one bird forcefully remove the other as a form of hostility.

Studies indicate that bee-eaters’

nests are spread throughout the colony while maintaining a distance between each nest and the other, with no one from outside the colony allowed to enter the nest.

When a warbler uses its beak to wrestle with circling on the ground or on the surface of the water, this may be a defence of the family’s foraging territory. Male bee-eaters guard their females during the marriage period, but one of them may mate with another bird.

Those who are passionate about the hobby of bird-watching in the Sultanate of Oman assert that the natural diet system and the direction of the official authorities in expanding the green area through cultivation and establishing gardens have greatly contributed to preserving this beautiful bird and providing a healthy environment for its breeding.

(Picture by the author)



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SUNDAY | DECEMBER 18 | 2022

5

In brief

■ ANKARA



ERDOGAN SAYS NO ROLE IN MAYOR CONVICTION

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday he had “nothing to do” with the jailing of Istanbul’s popular opposition mayor — an outcome set to prevent the latter from standing in next June’s presidential election.

Ekrem Imamoglu’s sentence following a politically charged defamation trial has caused an international storm.

He was sent down for “insulting a public official” after dubbing city election officials “idiots” during a controversial 2019 mayoral race.

But Erdogan insisted he had no hand in the verdict. — AFP

■ TUNIS



UN LIBYA ENVOY WARNS OF POLITICAL STALEMATE

The United Nations Envoy to Libya said alternative mechanisms might have to be used if rival sides cannot find a solution to the country’s political crisis.

In his report to the United Nations Security Council, Abdoulaye Bathily detailed the political stalemate over control of an interim government and a constitutional way to hold elections, attributing the conflict to the heads of Libya’s two legislative bodies, House of Representatives (HoR) and the High State Council (HSC).

“The continued disagreement between two individual men, the speaker of the HoR and the president of the HSC... can no longer serve as a justification to hold an entire country hostage,” Bathily said.

■ KABUL



MAGNITUDE 4.3 EARTHQUAKE SHAKES AFGHANISTAN

A 4.3 magnitude quake shook southeastern Afghanistan on Friday evening, according to neighbouring Pakistan’s seismic recording agency.

Strong shaking was felt by witnesses in the Afghan capital, Kabul.

The quake was recorded at a depth of 120 kilometres by the National Seismic Monitoring Centre of Pakistan’s meteorological department in Islamabad.

It was not immediately clear whether it had caused any casualties or damage.

Afghanistan is in an earthquake-prone region and a 5.9 magnitude tremor in the east of the country killed over 1,000 people in June.

Tunisians vote to elect new parliament

TUNIS: Tunisians began voting on Saturday to elect a new parliament in polls dismissed as a sham by the opposition.

Polling stations in the North African country opened at 8 am and will close at 6 pm.

Voting was sluggish in the morning at some polls visited by reporters.

But, head of a commission in charge of election, Farouk Bouasker, expected balloting to gradually pick up in the coming hours.

The election comes after months of political turmoil and economic hardships in Tunisia.

In March, President Kais Saied dissolved parliament, part of a string of measures that the opposition decried as a “coup.”

Last year, Saied, an ex-law professor, unseated the government and suspended parts of a 2014 constitution that curtailed the president’s powers in favour of parliament and the prime minister.

In July this year, a controversial



A Tunisian voter casts her ballot at a polling station in Ben Arous region near Tunis. — AFP

new constitution granting Saied wider powers was approved in a referendum. Around 30% of some 9.2 million eligible voters participated in the vote.

Saied on Saturday called the parliamentary vote a “historic day” and urged Tunisians to cast their

ballots.

“It is a historic day by all standards. It was determined and respected despite all obstacles,” he said after voting at a polling station in the capital Tunis.

In recent months, Saied’s opponents have staged a series

of street protests against his measures.

The main opposition parties have said they will boycott Saturday’s vote and accused Saied of a power grab in Tunisia.

According to a new electoral law, the number of seats in the

legislature will be reduced from 217 to 161.

Candidates are to be elected as individuals, not on party lists, a system seen as weakening political parties.

A total of 1,055 contenders are standing for election.

Some Tunisians sounded apathetic to election.

“No-one here is interested or knows about the candidates,” said Yassin El Ferchichi, a young man, on a Tunis boulevard known for its cafes.

“Can they (candidates) change people’s life and send prices down? They are a mere decoration,” he said on eve of the vote.

“The political situation has worsened economy. The crisis is complicated and will not be solved by mock elections,” El Ferchichi added.

Saied, who took office in 2019, has repeatedly defended his moves, saying they were in line with the constitution.

He has promised to safeguard basic freedoms and civil rights.

—dpa

Egypt’s new IMF agreement aims to reduce govt debt

CAIRO: The new International Monetary Fund (IMF) \$3 billion financial support package for Egypt aims to reduce government debt to less than 80% of gross domestic product (GDP) in the medium term, a cabinet report released on Saturday said.

The fund did not require the Egyptian government to cut spending on subsidies, the report said, adding that the new programme aims to strengthen the social protection network for citizens.

The IMF executive board approved on Friday a 46-month \$3 billion financial support package for Egypt, saying it will catalyse additional funding of about \$14 billion.



The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund on Friday approved a \$3 billion loan to Egypt, with an immediate disbursement of \$347 million. — Reuters

Egypt negotiated its latest loan from the fund as the economic fallout from the war in Ukraine exacerbated a foreign currency shortage resulting from Egypt’s large trade deficit.

In a background document on Egypt, the IMF said the new programme would

fund some of the country’s foreign currency financing gap, and that Cairo had secured \$5 billion in new financing for the fiscal year ending in June 2023.

Of that, \$2 billion would come from the sale of equity in private sector companies and \$3 billion from multilateral support, separate to the rollover of deposits by Gulf states in Egypt’s central bank.

Economists say one reason Egypt has struggled to attract investment despite repeated IMF programmes and reform plans is the prominent role of the state and the military in the economy, and the advantages afforded to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) over private sector firms. — Reuters

US court decision paves way for depositor case against Lebanese bank

BEIRUT: A US court of appeals determined this week that cases against Lebanese commercial banks can be tried outside Lebanon paving the way for more cases by depositors seeking to unlock their frozen funds.

The court decision, issued on Thursday in a case brought by Lebanese depositors against leading lender Bank Audi, overturned a federal district court’s decision that said Beirut courts had “exclusive jurisdiction” to try cases against Lebanese banks.

During Lebanon’s three-year financial collapse, banks have imposed tight controls on withdrawals in both US dollars and the local currency, which has lost more than 90% of its value.

Those restrictions have yet to become law and have been challenged in both local and international courts by savers who have sought to gain back their money promptly in US dollars, with mixed results.

The Raad family filed a lawsuit in New York’s Supreme Court in December 2020, saying Bank Audi had breached their contract by refusing to transfer their funds abroad at the beginning of the



Demonstrators carry banners during a protest organised by Depositors’ Outcry, a group campaigning for angry depositors, near Lebanon’s Central Bank building in Beirut on October 5, 2022. — Reuters

financial crisis, according to the court document.

Bank Audi moved the case to a federal district court, which dismissed their claim on the reasoning that such cases should be heard only by Lebanese courts.

Nada Abdelsater, a lawyer from ASAS Law representing Patricia, Stephanie and David Raad alongside lawyer Douglas Kellner, said this week’s new decision could allow them to proceed with the case, saying it had “made history.” — Reuters

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Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tender:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Non-refundable)	Tender Purchase Deadline	Clarification Deadline	Tender Submission Date
TENDER/2022/12/ENG/001	Construction of a New Filling Station at Al Wuqbah in Wilayat Yanqul in Al Dhahirah Governorate	100.000	22.12.2022	27.12.2022	01.01.2023

Bank Name & Account Number
Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with a minimum of 3 years’ experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** The tender bid should be submitted in a sealed envelope and addressed to the **Chairman of the Tender Committee**, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling **24610289/24610287/24610355**.

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co. (SAOG)
PO Box No: 57, PC: 116, Mina Al Fahal, Sultanate of Oman

The risk and reward of the Desert

Living in the Middle East, even though surrounded by one of the most attractive and hospitable coastlines in the world, it's easy to take the desert environment for granted, but it is very much more than sand or camels. They are in every respect, risk and reward environments.

The word desert itself has interesting origins, being from the Latin 'desertum,' which translates as 'the abandoned place,' and until this most recent century referred to any sparsely inhabited, inhospitable environment, with little reference to a lack of rainfall. However, in recent times geographers, scientists, and meteorologists have tagged deserts with the descriptive imperative of aridity, or low precipitation (rain, snow, mist, or fog).

Ironically, the Arctic and Antarctic continents are both referred to, scientifically, as deserts. Another irony is that most of the world's tropical rainforests, with their three hundred inches of annual rainfall, and the major hot deserts, with their paltry four to ten inches each year, share the same latitudes, both falling between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn which are parallel to the Equator, but 30 degrees North and South of that median respectively. The Tropic of Cancer actually crosses Oman, very close to Al Amerat and is signposted on Route 17.

The desert though, is a treasure trove, and far from being endless, empty, or abandoned. Wilfred Thesiger was a British Army officer, an explorer and adventurer, who wrote of the desert that he had found in it, "a freedom, unattainable in civilisation. A life unhampered by possessions, since everything that was not necessary was an encumbrance. I have found too, a comradeship inherent in the circumstances, and the belief, that tranquillity was to be found there."



Ray Petersen
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The writer is a media consultant

If ever the expanse needed an advocate, there he was, the man who challenged the most remarkable of desert crossings, the 'Rub al Khali,' or 'Empty Quarter,' not once, but twice, during the post-war period of the late 1940's, when there was significant tribal tension between the Bedouin tribes, of the times. Despite this, he held an unerring admiration for its people, saying, "No man can live this life and emerge unchanged. He will carry, however faint, the imprint of the desert, the brand which marks the nomad, and he will have within him, the burning urge to return." In those few words capturing the heart of the desert, its people.

Dr Nigel Winsor, of Earthwatch, and the Royal Geographical Society has researched the Wahiba Sands and much more of Oman, and says, "True wilderness has guardians who share generations of knowledge, but this handing down of knowledge is happening less and less and certainly for the Sands, they are on the cusp of ending as a true wilderness," and he remembers the distinctive Bedouin ability to be nomadic and move for rains as being "remarkable because it was sustainable." Winsor remains an aficionado of the desert and its people, through the Oman Natural History Lectures in London, every year.

He is among the many genuinely seduced by the environment, telling author Jenny Owen, "There isn't a day I haven't thought about the Sands, with the landscape and, as with all friends you respect them, miss them, and want to go back to see them. The Sands are not a tamed space, as nature is very unforgiving, and the desert can be angry, as when sandstorms come or sudden floods flash through." Yet, through it all, he sees himself as a true Ambassador of, and for the desert, adamant that forty days and nights does not make a believer, while a lifetime passion... does!

CAMELS, SCORPIONS, SPIDERS, SNAKES, PALMS, OASES, SAND AND SUN, THEY ARE ALL PART OF A WAY OF LIFE SO INTENSELY DIFFERENT TO ANY OTHER, BUT WHEN WE LOOK AT THE DESERT, IT IS EVEN MORE INEVITABLE THAT WE FOCUS ON THE PEOPLE

APPROACHING THE END OF ANOTHER WORLD CUP



The sun sets behind a luxury yacht at the harbour in Doha on Saturday during the Qatar 2022 World Cup football tournament. – AFP

Crimes and criminals

The recent incidences that involved the killing of two women in Oman in daylight caused shock to the whole community. Not only because the perpetrator was in a close relationship with the victim but because it occurred in brutal ways and in public places. The reactions of readers in social media were strong asking the obvious questions, what is going on?

We used to read and hear about similar incidents taking place in other countries like the university student in Egypt who stabbed to death his classmate who — according to the media — rejected his marriage offer. We read it and wonder, How can someone switch his feelings from love and wanting to have a family with the young woman to taking her life? Now we find ourselves asking the same questions.

In most societies, murder is considered the most serious crime that calls for serious punishment. It is a very complex behaviour that is often caused by multiple social, psychological and sometimes political factors. Psychologist have been studying murder for years and there is a special branch of psychology dedicated to studying criminal minds. Books depicting



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
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The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

MOST PEOPLE ASSOCIATE MURDER WITH MENTAL ILLNESS ALTHOUGH SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT OVER 80% OF KILLINGS ARE DONE BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO MENTAL ILLNESS

crimes are among the best sellers and movies and television series portraying murderers are popular among viewers. A good example is a recent Netflix series about Jeffrey Dahmer an American serial killer who murdered seventeen young men and ate some of their body parts was a very popular show.

Most people associate murder with mental illness although scientific research suggests that over 80% of killings are done by people who have no mental illness.

Strong emotions such as anger, love, hate, jealousy and frustration are often linked to a particular event and a close relationship usually proceeds the killing. This is why we find victims are usually family members, friends, or even business partners. In some countries, the use of drugs and alcohol is associated with murder as it caused the person to make poor judgment and act with out thinking of the consequences of his or her actions. The recent events caused several reactions in the social media with some readers attributing the killing as a violence against women driven

by old social beliefs, although women are sometimes involved in killing others and the victim is often a husband or sometimes their own children because of revenge and other factors. This shows that murder is not limited to a particular gender and jumping to assumptions can blind us from addressing the real problems. Another viewpoint towards the media

is that watching a movie about killing may trigger some people (who often have other factors) to commit a crime. This is often seen after a suicide incident is described in the media especial when details were published encouraging others who usually thought of suicide before going a head and doing it. This is why there is a call for the media to avoid glorifying events such as

suicide or the killing of another person to avoid tempting people who are vulnerable to commit such crimes.

Finally, a recent report from the office of public persecution in Oman showed that nine killings took place in Oman over the last year. Let's all work together and understand what is really going on and what we can do to fix it.





BAYAN AL HADHRAMI

Mohammed al Attar, an Omani artist, who through his latest art performance, 'Empty Room', had captivated his audience in an emulsion of emotions ranging from fear, loneliness and struggle to comfort and relief. Al Attar's 'Empty Room' was performed in Muttrah Fort on December 9, where Al Attar was seen confined within walls of white, transparent sheets.

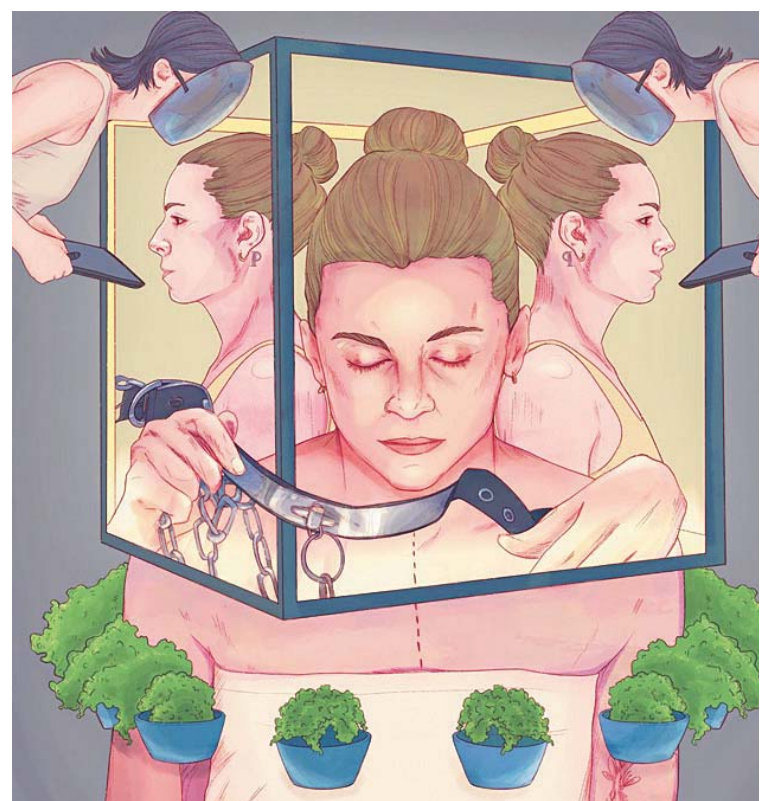
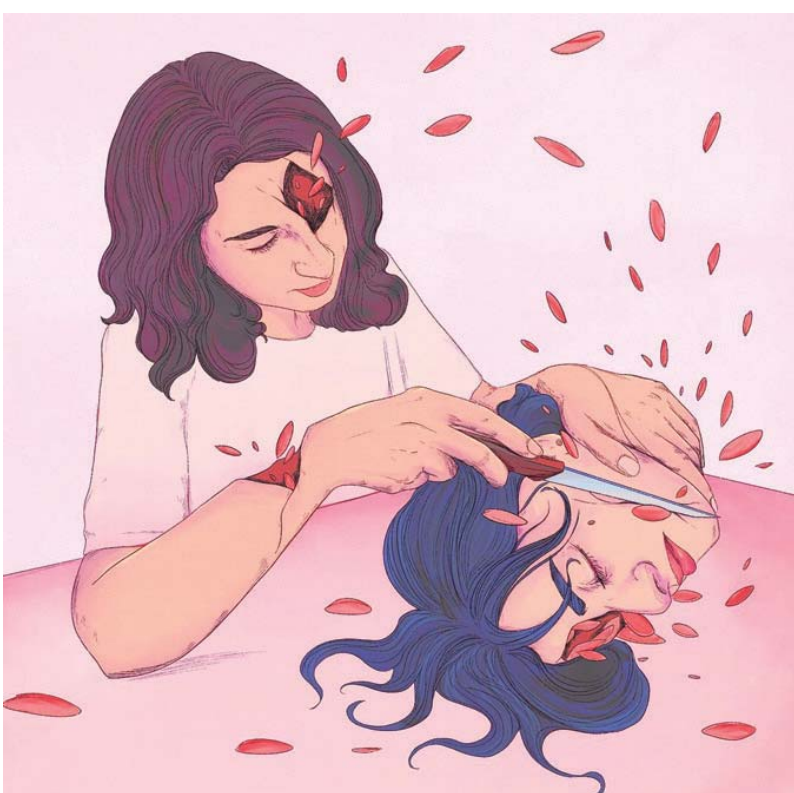
Al Attar's hands, covered in black paint, traced the sheets in loss then in desperation as he attempted to find a way out. The strokes of black gradually grew with the artist's desperation, however, he finally found comfort when a hand from the audience reached out and placed itself on the sheets separating it from the struggling artist. Al Attar then, finding the support and comfort he had waited for, ripped the sheets open. This performance had been beautifully captured by Fahad al Kindi's lens, sharing with us glances of Al Attar's 'Empty Room'.

Al Attar's artistic journey began from a young age; as a child, Mohammed possessed a wild imagination and attempted to deliver that wildness and freedom of imagination to the physical reality we live in as a form of art. He states

that he has maintained a strong relationship with his inner child and now at the age of thirty-one, alongside his wild imagination, he adds a layer of maturity in his artwork by leaving his comfort zone and expanding his forms of expression. Al Attar had recently decided to challenge himself as an artist and explore the art of performance. He believes that artists should always explore different mediums of expression and should not encircle their talent within a limited scope. His latest performance is an expansion of his first, 'The Chaos of the Mind', which was released on September 10. Both performances tackle themes of the inner conflicts and struggles many experience and the feelings of loss

and loneliness that accompany this struggle. Al Attar said that his art "is a safe space for every emotion and thought" and he attempts through his work to not only reflect his own personal inner struggles but other's as well. As an artist, he draws inspiration from all that is around him, including people, as he attempts to represent their thoughts and emotions through art. He aspires to, someday, perform worldwide and represent the Sultanate of Oman as an artist. Al Attar believes there are many exceptional Omani artists who have great potential and he hopes the art milieu in Oman gains the recognition it deserves.

You can reach al Attar @ mimoon_art





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AROUND THE WORLD

MUSIC

‘Everything is allowed’: Vienna’s dementia-friendly concerts



THE ELEGANT AUDIENCES for its world-famous New Year’s Concert with the Vienna Philharmonic may be the epitome of buttoned-up reserve, all tailcoats and taffeta.

But the gilded columns of Vienna’s grand old Musikverein are now home to concerts where something very different happens — where older people, often living with dementia, can let it all hang out and just go with the music.

“People can get carried away, they can dance and sing, which allows you to feel the music much more intensely,” said Andreas Trubel, a 67-year-old former IT developer dealing with neurocognitive issues, who heads a self-help group for “people who forget”.

He said he loved the “relaxed style” of the six-concert “Souvenir” series with people able to get up, walk around and talk as he listened to Schubert, Schumann and Brahms and a seasonal sprinkling of Christmas carols.

“Everything is allowed, every reaction is allowed and welcome,” the Musikverein’s director Stephan Pauly told.

The series, which began in October, is a “huge success”, he said, and has already become a “very beautiful and very important part” of its output, with more shows planned for the next season.

‘STILL RECEPTIVE TO MUSIC’

Rows of seats are spaced out to allow for movement and wheelchairs, and there are few of the normal rules of concert-going, so people with or without dementia “feel welcome”, said Pauly.

“People are still receptive to music even in an advanced stage of dementia,” said the concerts’ moderator Veronika Mandl, “because it connects to different areas of the brain.

“Music is memory, an emotion, a connection with different things,” she said.

Mandl did “a lot of research” into music that spectators might recognise as she was coming up with the programme, she said.

And she watches closely how the audience reacts, with some leaning on each others’ shoulders as they are moved.

At the beginning of each concert, which lasts around an hour, Mandl sets the tone. She tells the audience they can move around, go to the toilet if they wish, or even leave when they want.

Staff are also trained to understand people living with dementia and help them feel more comfortable.

An audience member who mumbled through a recital by a young Polish trio was gently guided to another place to give her more space.

Nursing home caregiver Iris Krall-Radulian, a trained musician herself, said many of the spectators were concertgoers before they got dementia.

“We know that (the music) has an enormous impact. They are much happier and they feel alive” after the concerts, she said. — **AFP**

MUSEUM

For US Museums with looted art, the Indiana Jones Era is over



FOR DECADES, there was a swashbuckling aspect to collecting by American museums. In the 1960s, for example, some museum curators embraced the chase for prized artifacts as if it were big game hunting.

Thomas Hoving, a Metropolitan Museum of Art curator who later became its director, took particular pride in his ability to outsmart rivals in the global pursuit of masterpieces. In one instance he recalled spiriting a Romanesque relief from a Florentine church out of Italy with the help of a dealer who, Hoving said, often stashed objects under a mattress in his station wagon.

“My collecting style was pure piracy,” he boasted, “and I got a reputation as a shark.”

Today many US museums are facing a reckoning for their aggressive tactics of the past. Attitudes have shifted, the Indiana Jones era is over, and there is tremendous pressure on museums to return any looted works acquired during the days when collecting could be careless and trophies at times trumped scruples.

Although the tide turned more than a decade ago, the pace of repatriations has only accelerated in recent years. In just the past few months, museums across the United States have returned dozens of antiquities to the countries from which they were taken.

The J Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles returned three precious terra cotta figures to Italy. The Denver Art Museum shipped four antiquities back to Cambodia. The Smithsonian

Institution returned 29 Benin bronzes to Nigeria. And the Manhattan district attorney’s office seized 27 looted artifacts from the Met, which are headed back to Italy and Egypt.

For some, the number of restitutions has become unsettling. Museums, like public libraries, have long enjoyed an exalted status as places that promote erudition by permanently preserving and displaying the significant objects that define human history and culture.

Consider, for example, the mounting pressure on the British Museum to return the Elgin marbles that once graced the Parthenon. They were acquired at the dawn of the 19th century when the Ottoman Empire ruled Greece. The British view the sculptures and bas-reliefs as legitimately transferred by the Ottoman authorities. The Greeks argue that the Turks, as occupiers, lacked the moral authority to dispense with their history.

In America, critics of the surge in returns worry that museum collections built over time by scholars and imbued by a sense of context are being randomly depleted. Should US audiences, they ask, be deprived access to iconic objects that they suggest belong, not to individual nations, but to humankind?

Leila Amineddoleh, an art and cultural heritage lawyer, has suggested that such thinking is outdated.

“Arguments against repatriation are sometimes supported by paternalistic and patronising arguments,” she wrote, “assert-

ing that western collectors and archaeologists ‘discovered’ these objects and have superior knowledge of them.”

Experts say a significant change in attitudes about collecting dates to 1970 when nations began ratifying a UNESCO treaty to stem the trade in illicit artifacts. Awareness of the problem expanded further 20 years ago when antiquities looting during the Iraq War made clear the scope of that black market.

But most significantly, US authorities, both local and federal, have made the return of looted cultural heritage more of a diplomatic and law enforcement priority. US Homeland Security Investigations reports returning more than 20,000 items since 2007, largely seized from dealers and collectors, but also found in many of America’s most prestigious museums.

Museums do show a heightened sensitivity to the integrity of their collections and have returned illicit objects based on their own research. But experts say most museum repatriations of recent years have been sparked by government claims or US law enforcement efforts.

“There is a sense that the US should not be the repository of the world’s stolen property,” said Stefan Cassella, a former federal prosecutor.

Experts say the 1970 UNESCO convention helped redefine acceptable behaviour when it came to antiquities. Nations pledged to cooperate and follow best practices to curb the import of stolen items. — **NYT**

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

The scourge of fruitless meetings!

MANY PEOPLE think that works meetings are a huge waste of time and that may be because most meetings prevent employees from working better. And in case you were wondering, it seems to me that the previous Corona pandemic (might made things worse!), as we all noticed that the number of meetings required for employees increased in varying proportions! But the real problem with meetings isn’t a lack of productivity — it’s the unhappiness you see on some employees’ faces! — especially when meetings are a waste of time and job satisfaction plummets. However, when job satisfaction declines, of course, so does a retention of happiness in general. Thus, for a good portion of people, cancelling meetings — or at least cutting them back — is one of the most direct ways to increase happiness.

Here is a fact that I do not mean to prejudice the value and importance of meetings. We are aware of the importance of works meetings in general, which focus on one or more of four tasks, including: sharing information, solving problems and making decisions, developing and implementing a strategy, or perhaps extracting information from the team after a period of performance!

However, I must point out that these are all good reasons to hold meetings. Because you may have attended many meetings that do not fall within any of these essential points for any meeting. For example, many meetings occur during a regular period of time as a matter of routine, without a specific reason. Only to help us feel like we’re accomplishing something!... and herein lies the error.

Therefore, those excessive and unproductive meetings will naturally reduce job satisfaction for several reasons. First, it generally increases

fatigue as well as our subjective sense of our workload. Maybe you’ve had a day of meetings and then you’re exhausted and haven’t done much. Secondly, people tend to engage in superficial acting (faking feelings!) during works meetings, which is emotionally and psychologically exhausting!

Thus, if you want to be happier at work (or want your employees to be happier), I make a point of fighting the scourge of unproductive, time-consuming meetings at every opportunity.

And when they are really necessary and unavoidable, there are some steps you can take to make them less draining and more beneficial. For example: If you are the meeting organiser, cancel all meetings that have no clear agenda or purpose. Definitely take this tip with a grain of salt if you are employed! It is unlikely that it would be helpful, if your boss asked you why you missed all the staff meetings, to say: I read an article in *Oman Daily Observer*!

On the other hand, limiting meeting lengths is important to a degree. Productivity experts believe that twenty-five minutes is ideal, based on what research says is the optimal amount of time to focus. So, perhaps the obvious point for you and me: we can make meetings more effective by staying focused and getting to the point. Topic and a commitment to finish it within a short period.

In the end, if there is one rule to remember about works meetings, it is to use them as sparingly as possible for the sake of your productivity and happiness. We know that under ideal circumstances, meetings will be unnecessary, but also that conditions are not always perfect!

Dr Yousuf Ali Al mulla.
A physician, medical innovator and a writer.



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Duqm Refinery project 96 per cent complete

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 17

The construction work at Duqm Refinery has reached advanced stages of completion and programmes have been launched to achieve operational readiness.

The total completion rate of the project is 96 per cent as of the end of November. The Duqm Refinery project is one of the major projects being implemented in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). It serves as the starting line for the plan to transform Duqm into one of the largest industrial and economic centres in the region.

The Duqm Refinery project is a joint venture between the OQ Group and Kuwait Petroleum International, located in the heart of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

The project includes three main packages. The first includes the main processing units of the

refinery while the second package includes facilities and services.

Meanwhile, the third package includes three sub-packages, which are storage and export facilities for liquid and bulk petroleum materials located in the port of Duqm, crude oil storage facilities in Ras Markaz and an 81-kilometre pipeline for transportation of crude oil from Ras Markaz to Duqm Refinery.

The Duqm Refinery includes 10 main processing units capable of producing diesel, aviation fuel, naphtha, liquefied petroleum gas, sulfur and petroleum coke which will help provide high-quality oil products to customers all over the world.

The crude refining position of the Sultanate of Oman will exceed 500,000 barrels per day of refined products when the Duqm refinery starts operations with a capacity of 230,000 barrels per day, which will include various types of Omani and Kuwaiti crude.



OQ completes construction of Phase 1 of Ras Markaz project



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 17

OQ Group has completed the construction works of the first phase of the Ras Markaz crude oil storage terminal, with a storage capacity of about 26.7 million barrels. The project, implemented by the Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO), is the largest of its kind and was built in accordance with international standards, with 100 per cent Omani financing.

The Ras Markaz project, which is located in the Al Wusta Governorate, is one of the strategic projects in the Sultanate of Oman.

Salem bin Marhoon al

Hashemi, general manager of the project, said, “Ras Markaz aims to store and blend all types of crude oil in large quantities, with its infrastructure capable of meeting the needs of local and international markets.”

The company aims to make the Ras Markaz project the largest crude oil storage project in the Middle East to serve as an important global centre for trading crude oil, given the strategic location overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean and to make the Sultanate of Oman a major centre for oil storage in the region.

Al Hashemi confirmed that the Sultanate of Oman currently relies on Mina al Fahal to export crude oil.

He pointed that first phase of the project is 10-square kilometre area, which can accommodate about 26.7 million barrels.

The total area allocated for the entire project is 40 square kilometres prepared to store up to about 200 million barrels of oil and the company will increase its capacity according to the growing demand.

Al Hashemi said that the project consists of two parts. The first is the marine works, which is now completed and which include the floating station for import and export, which is about 7 kilometres from the shore and two pipelines with a diameter of 42 inches and related systems.

The second part of the project is the construction of oil pumping systems, water treatment and building reservoirs, power stations network and other associated systems.

He added that the floating station for importing and exporting crude oil was built to receive the largest oil tankers in the world with a depth of up to 42 metres. It was linked to four main pumps to push crude oil to the storage area, which is located at an altitude of more than 120 metres above sea level.

The site is also ready to add additional pumps to keep pace with the demand for oil storage at the station whenever there is a need for expansion.

Duqm green steel cluster to create 2,000 jobs in Oman

Low-carbon sustainability: Green steel production and downstream value-addition are best examples of green hydrogen utilisation, says executive

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 17

A multibillion-dollar green steel cluster planned by Suhar-based Jindal Shadeed Group for establishment in Duqm Special Economic Zone (SEZ) has the potential to create an estimated 2,000 direct jobs, in addition to 2,500 indirect jobs, as well as spawn the growth of numerous small and medium enterprises (SMEs), according to a key executive.

Naveen Ahlawat, Chief Procurement Officer & Head — Green hydrogen and Gasification Projects at Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL), the parent India-based group, said the landmark investment will also position the



Sultanate of Oman at the forefront of the global green steel industry.

“Green steel produced from this plant will be exported to countries like Japan and Europe, while also fulfilling the requirements of the GCC region,” said Ahlawat.

“Oman will be turbo-charging green steel manufacturing across the world. Demand centres have

been created in Japan and Europe, but Oman will be the first country that will be turbocharging green steel production.”

Earlier this month, Jindal Shadeed Group signed agreements with authorities in Duqm for the establishment of a green steel cluster with an investment of around \$3 billion. Green steel output is

targeted at 5 million metric tonnes per annum and earmarked for the automobile, wind energy and consumer durables sectors locally and globally.

Speaking at the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2022 (Conference & Exhibition), which was held in Muscat recently, Ahlawat said the green steel cluster

Oman will be turbocharging green steel manufacturing across the world. Demand centres have been created in Japan and Europe, but Oman will be the first country that will be turbocharging green steel production

NAVEEN AHLAWAT
Chief Procurement Officer & Head, Green hydrogen and Gasification Projects at Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL)

at Duqm will be powered by green hydrogen produced through investments in 7 – 9 gigawatts (GW) of renewables and around 2 GW of electrolyzer capacity.

Duqm, with its proximity to some of the world’s most promising renewables-rich acreage, is ideal for investment in hard-to-abate industries, notably steel production, said Ahlawat.

Availability of green steel locally has the potential to ignite the growth of a green steel-based downstream manufacturing cluster, he noted. Importantly, the project’s contribution to the Omani economy is set to be immense, the executive pointed out.

“Total investment in this project is envisaged at close to \$3 billion, and it will contribute close to \$3.5 billion in value to the Omani GDP. It is also going to add to downstream value addition for so many ancillary units downstream of this plant.

There will be approximately 2,000 direct jobs created, in addition to around 2,500 indirect jobs. So we strongly believe that the green steel project will serve as a great test of the value addition created downstream of green hydrogen.”

Sharakah outlines future vision for Oman SMEs

MUSCAT: The Fund for Development of Youth Projects (Sharakah), made by Royal Decree for supporting the SME sector in Oman, recently attended the 18th annual meeting of the International Network for Small and Medium Enterprises (INSME), held in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The International Network for SMEs, based in Rome, Italy, holds an annual general meeting to address diverse subjects and significant challenges that concern the SME industry besides discussing the achievements and goals of the Association.

This year's INSME conference, with the theme "Empowering SMEs - Economic Diversification and Green Growth," was held at the JW Marriott Hotel, Baku, under the auspices of Mikayil Jabbarov, Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Other prominent international figures in attendance included Yves Leterme, former PM of



Belgium, Sergio Arzeni, President of INSME, Orkhan Mammadov, Chairman, KOBIA, and Ali Ahmed Muqaibal, CEO of Sharakah. Hosted in association with the Small and Medium Business (SMB) Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (KOBIA),

the 18th INSME meeting took into account the current and existing international context for the SME sector; addressing high-interest rates, a possible recession, damages caused by natural disasters and climate change and global conflict amongst others.

Recognising that SMEs are essential to the global economy as a driver, contributor and employer, Sharakah discussed future cooperation and joint projects during the highly strategic meeting. On the role of SMEs in global diversification and sustainability

efforts, Ali Muqaibal stated, "The speed of energy transition in any economy depends on many factors, such as the energy situation of the country, social and economic factors, etc.

"Amidst this environment, the incubation provided by multinational organisations and universities for SMEs has played a vital role in promoting green innovation by providing funds, closing gaps for research and development and acting as a catalyst in their integration of a green ecosystem as part of their ESG contribution."

The two-day meeting included many sessions and discussion panels for the attendees to deliberate and exchange market expertise and knowledge. The sessions covered sustainability and energy challenges for SMEs, contingency planning, innovation and green growth, policy and response, Annual General Assembly as well as a fruitful matchmaking session to pair

SMEs with potential investors and stakeholders.

The event also included sideline meetings for attendees to hold one-on-one discussions. Furthering its efforts to identify opportunities for growth and international engagement, Sharakah organised a side meeting with Orkhan Mammadov, Chairman of the Management Board of the Small and Medium Business Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (KOBIA), who has expressed his interest in visiting the Sultanate to seek out potential partnerships and areas of collaboration with Sharakah.

It's worth mentioning that Sharakah, aside from offering financial support and guidance to SMEs, also helps build local entrepreneurial capacity, advocates policies related to the SME sector and promotes the concept of entrepreneurship in the Sultanate in line with Oman Vision 2040.

NBO transforms kiosk to meet customer needs

MUSCAT: Committed to innovative digital banking solutions, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has recently upgraded its multi-purpose and self-service kiosk, which serves its customers around the clock. Located at the bank's head office in Athaiba and now also at its Al Khoud branch, the secure and user-friendly machine is part of NBO's continuous aim to deliver innovative and 24/7 digital services to meet the evolving needs of its customers.

The first of its kind kiosk in Oman enables customers to open an account, make payments and update their profile, anytime. Moreover, and while it was already possible to print out debit and Badeel prepaid cards in less than 3 minutes, customers can now also request, replace and renew their existing cards.

Meanwhile, the kiosk is integrated with the Royal Oman Police's (ROP) system to validate users' ID information, manage documents and



make use of a number of other key electronic services. Tariq Atiq, Chief Retail and Digital Banking Officer at National Bank of Oman, said: "We continue to simplify and optimise the customer experience as part of the digital transformation in banking. Our state-of-the-art and interactive multi-function kiosk enables our customers to interact directly with the bank and utilise our digital services around the clock, without having to visit a branch."

He added, "We continue to explore cutting-

edge and market-ready technologies and aim to introduce innovative solutions for the benefit of our customers and Oman, as we play our part when it comes to the shift towards a digitally advanced society as per Oman Vision 2040."

As a bank of firsts since inception, NBO invests heavily in innovative and customer-centric digital services like the constantly-enhanced mobile app, and its prepaid card Badeel, which, for the first time in the Sultanate, is available to both NBO and non-NBO customers.

Meanwhile, it continues to build on its portfolio of user-friendly solutions and make the banking experience seamless, inclusive, and altogether more enjoyable. More details about NBO's range of products and services are available at www.nbo.om, by contacting the Call Centre on 24770000 or by visiting any of the 60 branches located across Oman.

Bank Muscat organises special event for customers in Duqm

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat recently hosted a special customer meet in Duqm for its Asalah Priority Banking, Al Jawhar Privilege Banking, Najahi and Corporate Banking customers as part of its customer-centric vision and commitment to further strengthen its communication channels with customers. The event in Duqm follows earlier customer meets across other governorates and was attended by Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager, Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, bank officials and a large number of Premier Banking customers.

Welcoming the large number of attendees, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager, Personal Banking, said: "Bank Muscat Premier Banking is delighted to host our valued customers as part of our customer-centric vision and strategy. As the leading financial services provider in Oman, Bank Muscat is keen to proactively work to keep pace with global trends and respond to customer feedback.

"Hence, events such as these go a long way in helping the bank reinforce positive customer experience and helping customers realise their aspirations."



On his part, Taya Eid Bait Sabaea, Deputy General Manager, Interior Regions, said: "Over the last four decades, Bank Muscat has been keenly developing many innovative and new products and services to benefit our customers. Customer feedback has been central to this process and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued confidence and support, thereby enabling Bank Muscat to continue as the leading financial services provider in Oman."

The event in Duqm helped the bank further strengthen its partnership with customers and

get their feedback regarding new services, products and offers.

Customers were introduced to Private Banking services and investment options as well as the full range of exclusive services and benefits currently provided to them within Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking. In particular, Asalah Priority Banking customers enjoy a range of unrivalled benefits including access to a team of dedicated Relationship Managers, 39 Asalah Centres across Oman and a dedicated 24/7 Asalah Call Centre.

Exclusive lifestyle benefits for

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

The Asalah Debit Card offers access to 50 lounges worldwide and has a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO 1,000. Meanwhile, Asalah Visa Signature credit cardholders can enjoy airport lounge access at more than 1,000 lounges worldwide, and a 24/7 global concierge service.

The Asalah Visa Credit Card also offers 1 per cent cashback on purchases as well as free multi-trip travel insurance for customers and their direct family members. Cardholders can also enjoy complimentary chauffeur service to and from the Muscat International Airport. Asalah customers also enjoy access to an integrated wealth management platform that allows them to invest in global asset classes through a single touchpoint and get the latest updates on local and international investment opportunities.

Vodafone Oman recognised as sustainable greenfield digital operator



MUSCAT: The 16th edition of the prestigious Telecom Review Leaders' Summit in the UAE saw Vodafone in Oman widely complimented for successful greenfield digital operations, sustainability ambitions and cutting-edge technology, with three expert voices from the company participating in high-level panel discussions.

Under the theme 'Global, Regional, Digital', this year's summit brought together a galaxy of major players from the telecommunications world, with events predominantly focusing on operations in the Middle East and Africa.

Bader al Zidi, CEO of Vodafone in Oman, participated in the key ICT leaders panel discussion, alongside regional and international industry experts, including executives from Netcracker Technology/BostonGene, Nokia, Orange Egypt, STC Kuwait and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The panel examined governments' expectations from ICT leaders to enhance digital services, leaders' role in transforming the ease of network access, keeping up with expanding technology demand and how to expand/retain a qualified workforce.

"We are just starting our journey, but we have become an example of a fully digital company – agile, lean and

efficient," said Al Zidi.

"It's a model that works with the expertise of local and global partners to allow us to address the market faster and more efficiently, using new emerging technologies."

He added, "Greenfield has been our biggest advantage. We are not only a traditional telco service; we think a lot on data science and provide added value to our customers. We have set ourselves up to adopt big data – using a lot of insight from customers to build personalisation and become a data-driven organisation while from a network perspective, we have been building 5G from day one."

Other members of the panel praised Vodafone's model and success since its entry into the Oman market in early 2022, noting how it had allowed for greater sustainability to be built into its operations.

Toni Eid, founder of Telecom Review and CEO of Trace Media, said: "This year, we were back together again in Dubai for two days – with a more diverse audience and insightful panel discussions. Impressively, many notable industry leaders have joined us for the first time. This two-day hybrid event of the Telecom Review Leaders' Summit has been built on the success of many years of informative gatherings, finally culminating in this 16th edition."

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

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

NEW YORK: Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, has called for the role of the United Nations in supporting international efforts to establish peace in Yemen. In a virtual meeting with leaders of countries hit by the global coronavirus crisis, Guterres said the international community is grateful to the role of Oman for its role in enhancing efforts to establish peace and security in the United Nations. Guterres said the United Nations represents a unique model, the Middle East and the world's 193 countries to follow example of the United Nations in promoting peace and stability.

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SAMUEL KUTTY
MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are falling on deaf ears. A drive around the downtown Ruwi and its adjoining areas reveals how recklessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder. While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many are not. "In those critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves, and in some cases, it is necessary to police the behaviour of other people as well," said Hamad al Wahabi, who stopped his car to scare away a group of people at a side Ruwi. The Super Committee and Ministry of Health said it more than enough times to social distance, best way to stop the spread of COVID-19. Hamad said attitude of some is not acceptable, they paved the way for infection. Even not have the attitude to lay charges on offenders, at least can scare them. He told the Observer.

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

US begins
buying back
oil for strategic
petroleum reserve



Oil workers make a pipe connection on a drilling rig near Encinal, Texas. — Reuters

WASHINGTON: The US Energy Department said on Friday it will begin buying back oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), the first purchase since this year's record 180 million-barrel release from the stockpile.

The department will buy up to 3 million barrels for delivery in February, a senior official told reporters.

President Joe Biden announced the 180 million sale to combat surging gasoline prices that boosted inflation after the February war of Ukraine by Russia, the world's largest exporter of fossil fuels.

The sale shrunk levels in the SPR to about 380 million barrels, their lowest since 1984, raising concerns about energy security.

"We'll be releasing a solicitation to purchase 3 million barrels of oil for delivery in February of next year, 2023," the official said. Contracts will be awarded to energy companies by January 13. "This approach will lock in a price upfront when companies submit their bids," he added.

To help relieve supply shortages at refineries after an oil spill last week shut down the Keystone crude pipeline, the Energy Department will also execute an exchange of about 2 million barrels from the SPR, that companies will have to send back at a later date.

"We are able to do that at the same time we're doing the 3 million barrel buy-back."

The White House said it would buy back oil for the SPR when prices were at or below about \$67-\$72 per barrel, a bit below where US benchmark futures were trading on Friday at about \$75.

— Reuters

MoCIIP: Protection of industrial designs strengthens economic development

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 17

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has emphasised that the protection of industrial designs contributes to strengthening economic development, raising rates of investment returns, and the gross domestic product, providing protection against exploitation and enhancing the commercial image of the product, in addition to encouraging innovations and the presenting of distinctive designs.

In view of the importance of this vital sector, which is considered one of the important areas of intellectual property, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), represented by the National Intellectual Property Office, takes into account the issue of raising the awareness about the culture of intellectual property in general, as it attaches great importance to the protection of industrial designs for all, so that every individual is in society to be aware of its importance, ways of its protection, and the rights and duties of all parties, either an individual, an institution or a government entity.

Nidaa bint Yaqoub al Tamimi, a patent testing specialist at the



Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, stated: "The National Intellectual Property Office is the authority concerned with registering and protecting industrial designs, while it provides various services in this sector, including registering the application, amending, transferring ownership, and adding document of power of attorney or assignment of ownership."

She added: "As a result, there is an increase in the number of applications that registered as industrial designs in recent years, as the number of applications registered in the office during the

past three years reached a total of 112 applications."

She stressed the need to expedite the protection of industrial designs because they are considered an integral part of any business strategy for any company or business owner and creative designs that are created for marketing purposes.

Nidaa clarified that the importance of registering industrial designs lies in enhancing investments, as this protection contributes to increasing the return on investments, developing and marketing new attractive and innovative products, in line



with the requirements of local and international markets, and strengthening investment rights where it provides protection for the investment rights during the protection period, by combating commercial exploitation of the industrial design or copying it by other parties.

She stressed that this protection is enough to encourage individuals, owners of companies and designers to register and protect industrial designs that preserve rights and raise the gross domestic product, and it also enhances the commercial image of the design, as the industrial designs

can be an important element of the company's commercial image, while it gives strength and advantage to any product that raises and preserves the company's position in the local and foreign markets through the introduction of registered and protected products.

She also clarified that the protection of the industrial designs provides an opportunity for licensing or selling, while it is considered as a safe way to involve in contracts through which the protected design could be sold or licensed to another establishment, where it becomes a source of income for the owner of the rights.

The protection of designs also gives a positive image to the company in the local and foreign markets, where the industrial designs are considered as assets and a business belonging to the concern company and may increase the market value of the company and the marketing of its products.

Nidaa al Tamimi also emphasised that industrial design rights are regional rights, which it is limited to the country or (region) in which protection was granted, while it is possible to file its application internationally wise in accordance with the Hague Convention, which the Sultanate of Oman has joined on December, 4, 2008.

Oman's total oil exports rise 13.4 per cent in October

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 17

The Sultanate of Oman's production of crude oil and condensate oil increased by 10.4 per cent until the end of October, to reach 323.72 million barrels, compared to October last year, which amounted to 293.22 million barrels, according to the latest statistics from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Crude oil production alone increased by 14.1 per cent, while oil condensate production decreased by 2 per cent until the end of last October compared to the same period in 2021.



The average price of Omani crude oil increased by 56 per cent until the end of October 2022, to reach \$96.3 per barrel,

compared to \$61.7 per barrel until the end of October 2021.

The total oil exports of the Sultanate

of Oman increased by 13.4 per cent until the end of October, compared to the same period last year, as the total exports amounted to 269.39 million barrels, compared to the same period last year, which amounted to 237.49 million barrels, according to NCSI.

Oil exports to Japan recorded a growth of 201.7 per cent, to reach 10.21 million barrels until the end of last October, compared to the same period last year, which amounted to 3.38 million barrels.

Oil exports to South Korea increased by 73.6 per cent during this period, to reach 11.36 million barrels compared to October of 2021 with 6.54 million barrels.

Business relations open up opportunities in many sectors



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The author is a member of the International Press Association

Oman is expanding its economic influence to Europe. The recent meeting between the Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy and Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Peter Szijjarto, helped to strengthen the bilateral relations between Oman and Hungary.

The agenda included many economic points with an obvious emphasis on the diversification away from oil. The key to economic diversification remains developing the non-hydrocarbon sectors that all GCC economies could compete in.

Together, more competitive economic sectors and greater regional integration could enhance the GCC economies global competitiveness and sustain their

efforts at economic diversification.

Domestically produced goods and services will not soon replace the vast quantities of imported goods and services that are needed to support the 27 million citizens and 29 million expatriates living in GCC.

Furthermore, real economic diversification requires producing goods and services, other than hydrocarbons and their derivatives, that can be traded with the rest of the world. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are an engine for growth and employment globally, accounting on average for 33 per cent of GDP and 45 per cent of labour force in high-income countries, while they contribute more than 60 per cent of GDP and 70 per cent of employment in developing economies.

Small businesses are under-represented in global trade

across developed and developing economies, with just 10-15 per cent of industrial SMEs exporting their products, compared with 90 per cent of larger firms, according to an 2018 report by the OECD.

Agricultural businesses continue to make up a significant portion of the SMEs markets in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, with basic industries like food production, forestry and fishing accounting for nearly 49 per cent of the SME sector in Indonesia, and one-quarter to a third of small businesses in Sri Lanka.

Despite the global negative sentiment around economy in the past few years, rather than austerity measures, Oman has seen economic diversification as a solution, making it the first priority of its Vision 2040 development plan, released in 2017.

Some governments have taken

steps in recent years to counter financing shortages, creating sovereign wealth funds for small businesses, reforming the tax system to promote growth of small businesses, or providing incentives to commercial lenders to expand credit lines to SMEs, among other measures.

Governments that focus on developing SMEs can potentially enhance economic diversification and generate jobs. The SMEs are promoted as being supportive of the less wealthy, contributing to growth in household economies, creating jobs and decreasing migration from rural to urban areas.

Finance for small and medium-sized enterprises is still an area that receives a lot of attention in most business start-ups conferences, as well as being an important aspect for the growth of businesses.

Business environments are also critical for any entrepreneurs success.

Such factors play significant roles, including, but are not limited to, regulations and rules introduced in Oman in order to promote business formation, as well as ease of providing entrepreneurs with loans, as well as various support programmes that focus on capacity building for entrepreneurs.

GCC countries created institutions that provide development support and finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), such as Saudi Arabia State Directorate for the Promotion of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, the Qatar Development Bank, and Riyada in Oman. SME are a keystone in the effort for diversification, since their growth generates both real economic value and jobs.



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CROATIA EDGE MOROCCO TO CLAIM THIRD SPOT

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 17

2018 Russia runners-up Croatia claimed the third place in the Fifa Qatar 2022 World Cup after edging a fighting Morocco 2-1 in the third-place match at the Khalifa International Stadium on Saturday night.

Croatia made their intentions clear when they slotted home in the seventh minute of the match itself. Josko Gvardiol's flying header beat Morocco's star goalkeeper Yassine Bounou after a free kick from Lovro Majer 30 yards from goal.

Left-footed Majer curled it over the wall and was received by Ivan Perisic who flicked a header back across the area. Gvardiol charged to meet the ball and powered a spectacular diving header past Bono.

Morocco hit back in two minutes after a free kick outside the box. Captain Hakim Ziyech's inswinging free kick met

a header from Luka Modric but it looped towards Croatia goal and Achraf Dari made no hesitation in netting his first international goal for Morocco in the ninth minute to make it 1-1.

Croatia restored their lead in the 42nd minute through a first-time shot from Mislav Orsic which beat Bono and hit the inside of the far post and rebounded into the net.

In the 29th minute, Morocco top-scorer Youssef En-Nesyri could not get a touch on a Achref Hakimi cross flying across the Croatian goalmouth. Hakimi and Ziyech were instrumental in the speedy one-two move.

During the early minutes of the match, Morocco keeper Bono almost gave a pass into his own net when Croatia applied continuous pressure on the goalmouth.

Croatia led 2-1 at half-time.

Morocco brought in Ilias Chair in place of Abdelhamid Sabri during the second-half.



In the 52nd minute Morocco's En-Nesyri chested a long pass from Boufal but couldn't go past a watchful Perisic.

In the 56th minute, Moroccan midfielder Bilal El Khannouss was substituted by Azzedine Ounahi.

In the 60th minute, Nicolas Vlasic replaced a tearful forward Andrej Kramaric, who looked like suffering a hamstring injury, while making a cross for Croatia.

Morocco made another move in 65th minute through Hakimi, whose lofted cross was headed away by Josip Sutalo, under pressure from En-Nesyri.

Morocco made a double change in the previous minute with Sofiane Boufal and the limping Dari were substituted by Anass Zaroury and Badr Benoun.

Croatia responded with a double change as well with Bruno Petkovic and Mario Pasalic replacing Marko Livaja and Lovro Majer.

Croatia survived some tense moments after a Moroccan attack

in the 74th minute as the defence and goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic scrambled to put the ball away.

A turnout of 44,137 spectators, dominated by Moroccan fans, was recorded at the Khalifa International Stadium for the play-off match.

In the 75th minute, Livakovic prevented an equaliser with a superb save after a close-range shot from En-Nesyri.

The match produced a yellow card for Morocco's Ounahi after excessive appeals in the 69th minute. Amallah also received a yellow in the 84th minute for dissent after an incident with Petkovic.

In the 87th minute, Mateo Kovacic missed a good chance as his left-footed shot missed the target near the far post.

Morocco made a last-ditch effort in the additional time but the hard working En-Nesyri's header was just over the bar and Croatia finished the World Cup in third place.

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BUDGET FOR THE 2023-2026 CYCLE TO SEE USD 9.7 BILLION INVESTED IN FOOTBALL

FIFA FOOTBALL AGENT REGULATIONS APPROVED

TEAM CLUB WORLD CUP IN 2025

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 16

The Fifa Council approved an expanded 32-team Fifa Club World Cup set to begin in June 2025 and take place every four years, Fifa President Gianni Infantino announced in Doha on Friday.

The men's football tournament was planned as a 24-team tournament in 2021 but was cancelled due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Infantino said that through the Qatar World Cup 2022 "football reinforced its unique cohesive power by uniting the world in a spirit of peace and friendship."

"Ahead of the final, Qatar 2022 was an incredible success on all fronts. The fans from across the world were accorded a warm reception by the GCC people and it was a whole new exchange of culture and friendship," Infantino told a press conference after the Fifa Council meeting.

Infantino said the world soccer body is "positively bullish"

about their future prospects after the Fifa Council adopted several key decisions.

While confirming that Fifa's revenue at year end would stand at USD 7.5 billion – USD 1 billion more than budgeted – the Fifa Council approved the budget for the 2023-2026 cycle, which will see a revenue of USD 11 billion, of which a substantially increased proportion will be allocated to football investment, amounting to USD 9.7 billion.

The next World Cup will be a 48-team edition in the USA, Mexico and Canada in 2026.

"Talks are still on regarding the format of group stages, whether to hold three-team groups of 16 or four-team groups of 12," the Fifa chief said.

In relation to the Talent Development Scheme (TDS) which is led by Arsene Wenger, Chief of Global Football Development, the Fifa Council approved a dedicated funding allocation of USD 200 million to cover the 2023-2026 operational life cycle of this ground-breaking initiative, which aims to create a sustainable legacy for long-term



Fifa president Gianni Infantino during the press conference. – REUTERS

player development by helping each member association (MA) reach its full potential.

MATCH CALENDARS ENDORSED

Several key strategic principles related to the international match calendars and competitions for both men's and women's football were endorsed to the Fifa Council.

The windows for the international match calendar as of 2025 would include one extended window with four matches in late September and early October to replace the current two separate windows in September and October, with the other windows (November, March and June) unchanged.

In order to increase the possibilities for teams from

different confederations to play each other, Fifa would launch friendly tournaments – 'Fifa World Series' – which would take place in the March window in even years.

The decision for the Fifa World Cup 2030 host will also be made in 2024, with the bid regulations to be published early next year, Infantino said.

WOMEN'S TOURNAMENTS

For women's football, the current international match calendar structure will remain unchanged until 2025, with the Fifa Women's World Cup 2027 and 2031 hosts to be decided in 2024 and 2025 respectively.

The creation of a new Fifa Women's Club World Cup, a new Fifa Futsal Women's World Cup and the expansion of the Olympic Games Women's tournament from 12 to 16 teams have also been endorsed. The principles also include proposals to revise Fifa's youth tournament inventory – including expanded annual Under-17 tournaments, both for boys and girls.

"The U17 and U19 tournaments for boys and girls

are now planned annually instead of two years," Infantino said.

MOROCCO, UAE AND SEYCHELLES TO HOST FIFA TOURNES

The Fifa Council also appointed the Moroccan Football Association as the host for the Fifa Club World Cup 2022, which will take place from February 1 to 11, 2023. It also confirmed that the Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup 2023 will be hosted by the United Arab Emirates Football Association and the 2025 edition by the Seychelles Football Federation.

The Fifa Council took a major step towards the establishment of a fairer and more transparent football transfer system by approving the Fifa Football Agent Regulations, which seek to introduce basic service standards for football agents and their clients, including a mandatory licensing system, the prohibition of multiple representation to avoid conflicts of interest and the introduction of a cap on commissions, whose objective is to reinforce contractual stability, protect the integrity of the transfer system and achieve greater financial transparency.

ARGENTINA, FRANCE SEEK THIRD WORLD CUP TROPHY



ARGENTINA LOST 1-0 IN THEIR LAST TWO APPEARANCES IN THE WORLD CUP FINAL (1990 AND 2014)

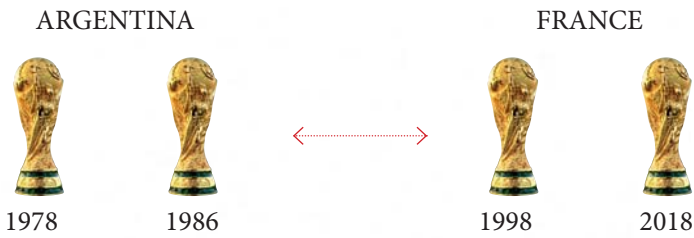
ARGENTINA ARE AIMING TO BECOME THE FIRST SOUTH AMERICAN NATION TO WIN THE FIFA WORLD CUP SINCE BRAZIL IN 2002

ARGENTINA HAVE SCORED 149 GOALS IN WORLD CUP MATCHES AND COULD BECOME THE THIRD NATION AFTER BRAZIL (237) AND GERMANY (232) TO REACH THE LANDMARK OF 150

ARGENTINA HAVE LOST ONLY ONE OF THEIR LAST 42 INTERNATIONAL MATCHES (W29, D12)

LIONEL MESSI WILL OVERTAKE LOTHAR MATTHAUS (25) AS THE RECORD APPEARANCE-MAKER IN FIFA WORLD CUP HISTORY IF HE PLAYS IN THE FINAL

ARGENTINA HAVE SCORED THE FIRST GOAL IN EACH OF THEIR SIX MATCHES AT QATAR 2022



FRANCE DEFEATED THREE OF SOUTH AMERICAN TEAMS EN ROUTE TO THEIR 2018 SUCCESS, INCLUDING ARGENTINA 4-3 IN THE ROUND OF 16 IN KAZAN, WHERE THEY CAME FROM BEHIND TO WIN WITH TWO KYLIAN MBAPPE GOALS

FRANCE'S HUGO LLORIS IS SET TO BECOME THE FIRST GOALKEEPER TO REACH 20 FIFA WORLD CUP APPEARANCES

FRANCE COULD BECOME THE THIRD TEAM TO WIN TWO SUCCESSIVE WORLD CUPS, FOLLOWING ITALY (1934-1938) AND BRAZIL (1958-1962)

FRANCE ARE THE FIRST FIFA WORLD CUP HOLDERS TO REACH THE FINAL SINCE BRAZIL IN 1998

FRANCE ARE UNBEATEN IN THEIR LAST TEN FIFA WORLD CUP MATCHES AGAINST SOUTH AMERICAN NATIONS

FRANCE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN TWO OF THEIR PREVIOUS THREE APPEARANCES IN THE FIFA WORLD CUP FINAL AND ONLY LOST OUT ON PENALTIES AGAINST ITALY IN 2006

FRANCE HAVE NOW REACHED THE FINAL IN FOUR OF THE LAST SEVEN EDITIONS OF THE FIFA WORLD CUP

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 17

THE Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 final showdown sees both Argentina and France bidding to lift football's most coveted trophy for the third time and therefore become the competition's fourth most successful nation – after Brazil (five wins), Germany and Italy (both four). This is Argentina's sixth appearance in the Fifa World Cup final. Winners in 1978 and 1986, they were runners-up in 1930, 1990 and 2014. France are appearing in their fourth final, victories in 1998 and 2018 sandwiching a defeat (on penalties) in 2006. Argentina's record in finals against European opponents is two wins followed by two defeats, while France's only previous final against a South American side brought a 3-0 victory against Brazil in 1998. Argentina have defeated three European teams in Qatar – Poland, the Netherlands (on penalties) and

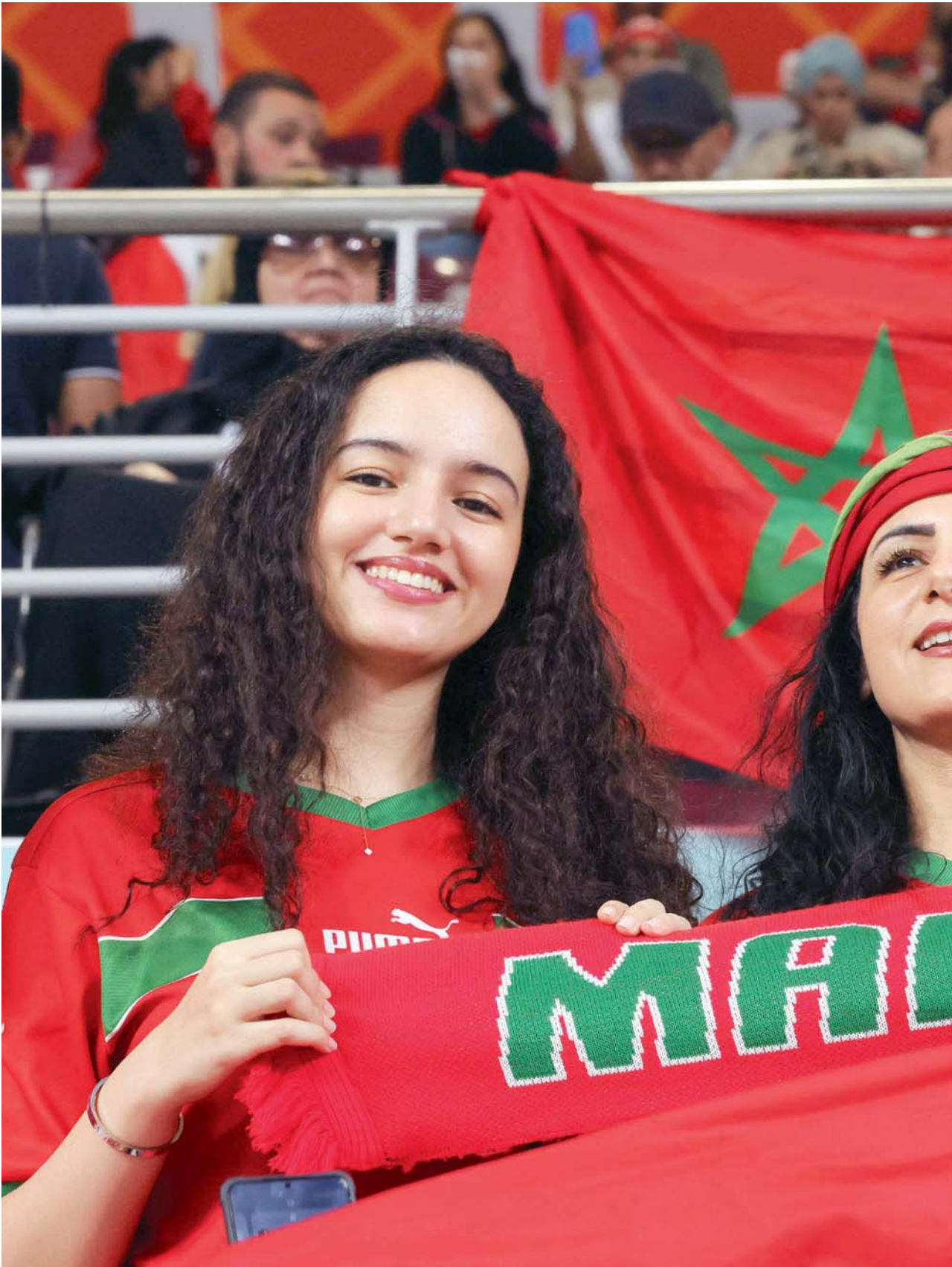
Croatia – whereas this is France's first game at the tournament against South American opposition. Les Bleus are on a ten-match unbeaten run against South American teams at the Fifa World Cup. They defeated three of them en route to their 2018 success, including Argentina 4-3 in the round of 16 in Kazan, where they came from behind to win with two Kylian Mbappe goals. While that was Argentina's most recent Fifa World Cup defeat against a European side, France's last defeat to South American opposition at the finals was against Argentina back in 1978, when they were beaten 2-1 in the group stage by the eventual champions in Buenos Aires. The first of the nations' three World Cup meetings came in the inaugural 1930 tournament, and was Argentina's first-ever finals encounter, which they won 1-0. In all matches between the teams, including friendlies, Argentina have won six and France three, with three drawn. The teams have not met since that 2018 encounter in Russia. There have been ten previous Fifa

World Cup finals between South American and European teams. While the head-to-head record stands at 7-3 in South America's favour, the last six such finals have produced alternate winners, with Europe prevailing in the most recent, when Germany defeated Argentina 1-0 after extra time in 2014. **KEY FACTS** The Fifa World Cup final has been contested between a South American team and a European team on ten previous occasions, with South America triumphing seven times. However, the three successes for Europe have come in the last five meetings. Argentina are aiming to become the first South American nation to win the Fifa World Cup since Brazil in 2002. Argentina are facing European opposition in the Fifa World Cup final for the fifth time, having previously encountered the Netherlands (1978) and West Germany/Germany (1986, 1990 and 2014). Argentina lost 1-0 in their last two appearances in the World Cup final

(1990 and 2014). Argentina have scored 149 goals in World Cup matches and could become the third nation after Brazil (237) and Germany (232) to reach the landmark of 150. Argentina have lost only one of their last 42 international matches (W29, D12). Argentina have scored the first goal in each of their six matches at Qatar 2022. Lionel Messi will overtake Lothar Matthaus (25) as the record appearance-maker in Fifa World Cup history if he plays in the final. France have now reached the final in four of the last seven editions of the Fifa World Cup. France have been successful in two of their previous three appearances in the Fifa World Cup final and only lost out on penalties against Italy in 2006. France are unbeaten in their last ten Fifa World Cup matches against South American nations (W6 D4). Their last defeat was against Argentina in 1978 (2-1).

France have remarkably kept eight clean sheets in their last nine Fifa World Cup matches against South American nations. France are the first Fifa World Cup holders to reach the final since Brazil in 1998. France have become the fifth team to win the Fifa World Cup and return to the final in the following edition after Italy (1934-1938), Brazil (1958-1962), Argentina (1986-1990) and Brazil (1994-1998). France could become the third team to win two successive World Cups, following Italy (1934-1938) and Brazil (1958-1962). France have been successful in 16 of their last 18 World Cup knockout ties (including one penalty shootout win). France's Hugo Lloris is set to become the first goalkeeper to reach 20 Fifa World Cup appearances. Didier Deschamps is aiming to become only the second coach to win two Fifa World Cup titles, following Vittorio Pozzo who was successful with Italy in 1934 and 1938.

F A N



Z O N E



Irving drills game-winner for Nets, Celtics and Warriors beaten

LOS ANGELES: Brooklyn star Kyrie Irving drilled a buzzer-beating three-pointer to lift the Nets to fifth straight NBA victory on Friday as reigning champions Golden State and league-leading Boston both lost.

Irving's step-back three-pointer gave the Nets a 119-116 victory over the Raptors in Toronto.

Irving led the Nets with 32 points. Kevin Durant added 28 as Brooklyn notched their ninth win in 10 games.

Brooklyn trailed by as many as 18 in the first half, but rallied to stay a game behind third-placed Cleveland in the Eastern Conference.

The Cavs — fueled by 41 points from Donovan Mitchell — rallied for a 118-112 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

Fred VanVleet scored a game-high 39 points for the Raptors, his pull-up three-pointer knotting the score at 105-105 with 3:06 to play.

Brooklyn responded with dunks from Ben Simmons and Durant as the teams traded the lead, the Nets going up 116-114 with 14.1 seconds left on a three-pointer by Yuta Watanabe who was fed by Irving.

Toronto's Scottie Barnes made two free throws to tie it up again, but Irving came through at the buzzer.

The Nets stayed a game ahead

of the fifth-placed Philadelphia 76ers, who beat the short-handed Warriors 118-106 in Philadelphia.

Joel Embiid scored 34 points and grabbed 13 rebounds and James Harden added 27 points and nine assists for the Sixers, who were short-handed themselves with Tobias Harris a late scratch with back pain.

The Warriors were without superstar Stephen Curry, who will be sidelined indefinitely after injuring his left shoulder in a loss at Indiana on Wednesday.

Andrew Wiggins missed a sixth straight game and Draymond Green was out with a thigh contusion as the Warriors fell to 2-14 on the road.

Jordan Poole led the Warriors with 29 points and Donte DiVincenzo scored 16 — including 15 on five three-pointers in the first half.

But Golden State couldn't maintain their early pace and couldn't contain Embiid as he scored 12 points in the third quarter on the way to his sixth straight game of at least 30 points.

"They made a lot of shots, they were hot to start the game," Embiid said of a Warriors team that led by two at halftime. "We knew at some point they were going to cool down. We just had to stay aggressive, get stops."

In Boston, the young Orlando



Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving (11) shoots the ball at the basket as Toronto Raptors guard Fred VanVleet (23) tries to block during the second quarter at the Scotiabank Arena. — USA Today Sports

Magic sprung a surprise with a 117-109 victory over the Celtics, whose league-best record fell to 22-8.

Jayson Tatum led the Celtics with 31 points and seven rebounds.

Jaylen Brown added 26 points, but Boston couldn't hold off a Magic team that won their fifth straight.

Boston centre Robert Williams made his season debut after having surgery on his left knee in

September. He scored nine points and pulled down five rebounds off the bench.

Moritz Wagner scored 25 points and Paolo Banchero added 20 for the Magic, who out-rebounded the

Celtics 53-38 and never trailed in the second half.

"We've been consistent with our work all year and it's starting to translate," Wagner said of the Magic, who are 13th in the East. "We've done a great job focusing on the game plan and I think with a young team that's a challenge. It's finally translating into wins."

- Knicks top Bulls -

Trae Young scored 31 points and Bogdan Bogdanovic added 28 for Atlanta as the Hawks beat the Hornets 125-106 in Charlotte.

In Detroit, Sacramento's De'Aaron Fox scored 24 points and Domantas Sabonis added 23 points and 13 rebounds as seven Kings players scored in double figures in a 122-113 come-from-behind victory over the Pistons.

Detroit led by eight at halftime, but the Kings surged in the third quarter, out-scoring the Pistons 38-23 to seize control, Detroit fans booing their team as the Kings put together a 23-6 scoring run.

The New York Knicks pushed their winning streak to six games with a 114-91 victory over the Bulls in Chicago.

RJ Barrett scored 27 points and Jalen Brunson and Quentin Grimes added 22 apiece, Brunson making a career-high six three-pointers and Grimes draining five as the Knicks finished with 17 from beyond the arc. — AFP

Oman Olympic Committee to organise the Olympic Day in Sur



The Oman Olympic Committee will organise Olympic Day of 2022, in cooperation with the Department of Culture, Sports and Youth in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, in the Wilayat of Sur on Friday. The event includes many sporting events and activities, beach football, beach volleyball, bicycles and kayaking.

Top-ranked Alcaraz relishing potential Djokovic rivalry

AUSTRALIA: World number one Carlos Alcaraz said he is lucky to have Novak Djokovic as a rival on the ATP Tour as it gives him the chance to test himself against one of the sport's greatest players.

Djokovic was deported from Australia in the lead-up to the season's first Grand Slam in January for not being vaccinated against Covid-19 and missed several tournaments including the US Open, where Spaniard Alcaraz claimed his maiden major.

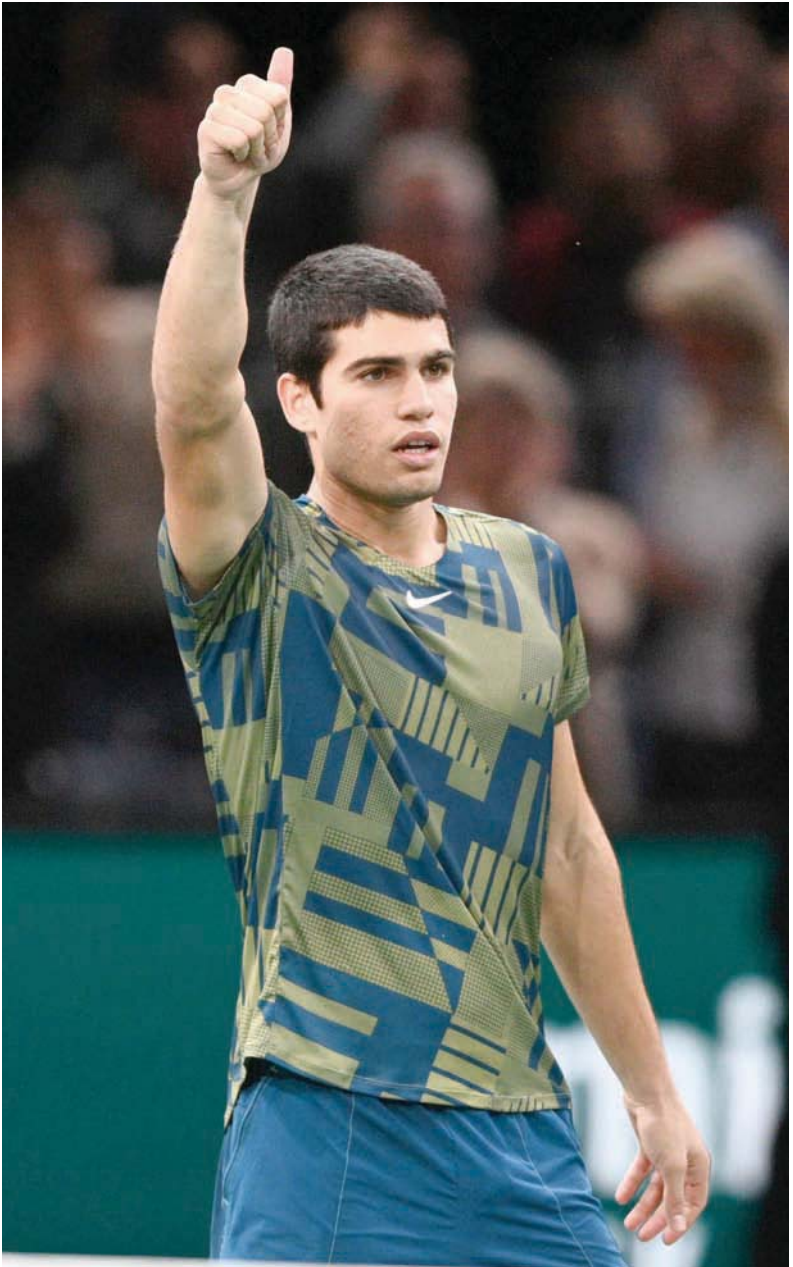
With Djokovic granted a visa to travel Down Under next year — where he will target a 10th Australian Open title — Alcaraz said he was looking forward to a potential meeting with the 21-times Grand Slam champion.

"Tennis is better having the best players in the world, and for the fans as well it's good to see a tournament with the best players," Alcaraz told reporters at the Mubadala World Tennis Championship exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi.

"I want to see Novak play in every tournament. I always say if you want to be the best, you have to beat the best player in the world. I'm a lucky guy to have him on the tour."

Alcaraz enjoyed a superb 2022 which he finished as the year-end number one and said he was nearing full fitness ahead of the new season, having missed the ATP Finals and Davis Cup due to an abdominal injury sustained at the Paris Masters.

"I feel good finally. I had a month to recover... and right now I feel almost 100%. I have been training normally this past week



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz Garfia celebrates after winning against Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov at the end of their men's singles round of 8 tennis match on day four of the ATP World Tour Masters 1000 – Paris Masters (Paris Bercy) – indoor tennis tournament at The AccorHotels Arena in Paris — AFP

and I'm feeling great," Alcaraz said.

"Of course having a target on my back from everyone is going to be a little bit different for me this year and I have to be prepared

for that.

"I'm going to try to finish 2023 in the same position as now. It's going to be a long year but I'm going to enjoy it."

— Reuters

Debutant Zakir hits ton for Bangladesh but India sniff win



Bangladesh's Zakir Hasan reacts after scoring a century (100 runs) during the fourth day of the first cricket Test match between Bangladesh and India at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. – AFP

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh: India broke through tough resistance from Bangladesh including a century by Zakir Hasan on his debut to be within four wickets of victory on day four of the first Test on Saturday. Set a colossal target of 513 runs in Chittagong, Bangladesh reached 272-6 at the close, still needing 241 runs, with skipper Shakib Al Hasan on 40 and Mehidy Hasan on nine.

Earlier opener Zakir put on a 124-run opening stand together with Najmul Hossain, a record against India, the pair having hung on in the final session of day three and to lunch on day four.

But in the second session, Umesh Yadav got the breakthrough and ended their stand when Najmul edged the ball into the slips. Virat Kohli initially dropped it at first slip but wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant dived to his left to grab the deflection and Najmul departed for 67.

Axar Patel, who was the pick of India's bowlers on the fourth day with 3-50, soon grabbed India's second wicket bowling Yasir Ali for five.

Kuldeep Yadav removed danger man Liton Das for 19 before Zakir swept Axar for a four to bring up his debut Test hundred.

But Zakir, only the fourth Bangladeshi to achieve the feat, scored no more runs and fell for 100 in the final session when Ravichandran Ashwin made him his only wicket so far in the Test.

Zakir played a defensive shot but could manage only an inside edge, which took a deflection off his pad to Kohli at slip.

"I only tried to bat as long as possible since we were chasing a big total," Zakir said after his 224-ball ton with 13 fours and one six.

"I did not want to think 'this is a Test match', a bigger match. I tried to stay as normal as possible," he said.

Bangladesh collapsed further after his departure as Axar bowled Mushfiquir Rahim for 23 and had Nurul Hasan stumped for three.

"The discussion was clearly after the first session was the kind of be patient, we knew that the wicket would be easy," said India's bowling coach Paras Mhambrey.

India, who have never lost a Test to Bangladesh, put on 404 in the first innings thanks to 90 from Cheteshwar Pujara and 86 by Shreyas Iyer. In reply Bangladesh were all out for 140.

In the second innings Pujara was again India's rock, reaching 102 not out alongside Shubman Gill who made 110, allowing the visitors to declare on 258-2.

The two five-day games form part of the ICC World Test Championship. India are fourth behind Australia, South Africa and Sri Lanka, having won six of their 12 matches.

Bangladesh are in last place with one win and one draw from their 10 matches. They have also not won a Test at home since February 2020. — AFP

Leach, Ahmed shine for England on a spinners' day in third Test

KARACHI: Spinners Jack Leach and teenager Rehan Ahmed shared six wickets between them as England dismissed Pakistan for 304 on Saturday on the opening day of the third and final Test in Karachi.

Leach grabbed 4-140 and Ahmed finished with 2-89 as Pakistan batters spoiled good starts after Babar Azam won the toss and batted on a turning National Stadium pitch.

But England also fell prey to spin, with mystery tweaker Abrar Ahmed trapping Zak Crawley without scoring before the visitors closed the day on 7-1.

Ben Duckett and Ollie Pope were at the crease with four and three respectively as England trail by 297 runs.

England lead the three-match series 2-0 after winning the first Test by 74 runs in Rawalpindi and the second in Multan by 26 runs.

Skipper Azam top-scored for Pakistan with 78 before running himself out in the post-tea session, while Agha Salman made 56.

But the start of the day belonged to Ahmed — who at 18 years and 126 days old became the youngest England player to start a Test — when he dismissed Saud Shakeel for 23 in his seventh over.

Before Ahmed, Brian Close was the youngest England debutant at 18 years and 149 days when he played against New Zealand in 1949.

Leach then came into the act, breaking a stubborn eighth wicket stand of 48 between Salman and Nauman Ali (20).

Ahmed, who was presented with his Test cap in front of his Pakistan-born father Naeem by former England skipper Nasser Hussain, described the scene as "the best moment".

"It's great to be part of it. I believe in myself and try to do my best when given an opportunity," he said.

"They (England players) backed me the whole day and I couldn't ask for more. To play at such a young age is a blessing. It's the best feeling in my life."



GOOD PROSPECT

Pakistan's head coach Saqlain Mushtaq, also a great spinner in his days, praised the youngster.

"It was a very impressive performance considering it was his first game. He is a young chap and he has a lot of potential and looks a very good prospect for the England team."

Saqlain thought his team fell short by 60-70 runs.

"It's not a bad total, some 60-70 would have been better, but we have to play disciplined cricket to restrict them because I think the pitch will get slower by the day."

In the morning session, Pakistan lost Abdullah Shafique (eight), Shan Masood (30) and

Azhar Ali (40) before Azam and Shakeel looked to have steadied the innings with a 45-run fourth wicket stand.

But Ahmed had Shakeel caught off a defensive shot at short-leg before Azam was adjudged run out by wicketkeeper Ben Foakes after a lengthy review.

Azam, who hit nine boundaries, also added 71 for the third wicket with Azhar.

Azhar — playing his last Test — fell at the stroke of lunch when he gloved a catch to a diving Foakes off pacer Ollie Robinson.

Sensing the pitch would take spin, England started the attack with Leach, who trapped Shafique leg-before in the sixth over of the

day. Leach becomes the first spinner to open the attack in a Test for England in 101 years — Jack White did the same against Australia at Leeds in 1921.

Masood fell to the trap of short bowling as he pulled fast bowler Mark Wood straight into the hands of deep fine-leg fielder Leach.

Masood hit five boundaries while Azhar had six hits to the ropes.

Under pressure to avoid their first-ever 3-0 whitewash at home, Pakistan made four changes from the second-Test line-up while England made two, bringing in Foakes and Ahmed. — AFP

Woods and son Charlie seek title before Tiger rests sore foot

MIAMI: Tiger Woods will play alongside his 13-year-old son Charlie this weekend at the PNC Championship even though the 15-time major winner said on Friday it could delay his injury recovery.

The 36-hole parent-child golf event will be played on Saturday and Sunday at the Ritz-Carlton in Orlando, Florida. It will be the third consecutive start for the Woods duo, 2021 runners-up.

"Any time I get a chance to spend time with my son, it's always special," Woods said. "The last couple years have been magical. We're looking forward to it."

Woods said playing the event might set back his recovery from the plantar fasciitis in his right foot that caused him to miss his Bahamas invitational earlier this month.

"I don't really care about that," Woods said. "I think being there alongside my son is far more important, and get to have a chance to have this experience with him is far better than my foot being a little

creaky." Woods, who turns 47 on December 30, has played only nine competitive rounds this year as he recovered from severe leg injuries suffered in a 2021 car crash.

After finishing 47th at the Masters in his comeback event, Woods withdrew after three rounds at the PGA Championship with leg pain and missed the cut in July at the British Open at St. Andrews.

"I played more this year than I certainly thought at the beginning of the year," Woods said. "But I got the chance to play in three major championships. That's far, far more than what I had expected going into the year. So it has been a positive."

Woods is uncertain of his 2023 plans but hopes for a return to the majors.

"If I didn't have the plantar feeling like this, I'd have a better idea," Woods said. "I'm supposed to be resting this thing and stretching and letting it heal. But I'm not doing that at the moment."



Tiger woods hits his tee shot on the first hole during a pro-am round of the PNC Championship golf tournament at Ritz Carlton Golf Club Grande Lakes Orlando Course. – USA Today Sports

Woods, whose 82 PGA Tour wins equals Sam Snead for the all-time record, played in a 12-hole exhibition match with carts last weekend but still struggles to walk 18 holes.

"This off season hasn't really

been an off season. I've kind of ramped things up," Woods said. "But after this, come Monday, we shut it all down and take care of this foot so that I can ramp up properly."

"I can practice. I just can't walk...

I can hit golf balls. I can do all that. I can hit shots around the green. I just can't get from point A to point B."

Charlie Woods tweaked his ankle on Friday, giving him a limp to match that of his father, but the

PNC allows players to use golf carts.

"We'll be ready come game time," Woods said.

- 'He'll win another major' - Three-time major winner Padraig Harrington, a PNC entrant with his son, says Woods will win another major.

"I'm not saying he 'could be' — I actually believe he will be a danger. I think he'll win another major," Harrington said. "I genuinely think he will be in contention."

The 51-year-old Irishman liked what he saw from Woods in The Match exhibition even though Woods didn't win a hole.

"You never doubt Tiger's mental ability," Harrington said. "He looked better physically at that match... he might be in a better place than I had thought."

Only two golfers as old as Woods is now have ever won major titles — Julius Boros at the 1968 PGA Championship at age 48 and Phil Mickelson at age 50 in last year's PGA Championship.

— AFP



MESSI AIMS TO LIFT ELUSIVE TROPHY

M B A P P E - I N S P I R E D F R A N C E R E A D Y T O D E F E N D C R O W N

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 17

Football superstar Lionel Messi is determined to take hold of the elusive World Cup trophy when his Argentina team meet holders France in the final of the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 at the Lusail Stadium on Sunday. The match will kick off at 7 pm (Oman Time).

Messi had said earlier that after their shocking opening defeat against Saudi Arabia it was all ‘finals’ for the Argentina team.

“It was very difficult to lose the first match against Saudi Arabia. But we could come back really strong, winning all other matches till the final.”

The mercurial player hoped Argentina would win the ‘original final’ also.

“So we played five finals, and luckily won all of them. Hopefully we’ll win the next one too.”

“I think among ourselves we were too

confident back then, because we knew our potential as a group, and we lost the first match by a fine margin. That helped us grow as a team and advance in the championship.”

FRANCE TO ‘LIMIT’ SPACE FOR MESSI

France manager Didier Deschamps said his side will try to limit the influence of Argentine superstar Messi in the final on Sunday.

“Our anti-Messi plan will consist of limiting his influence on the pitch for Argentina, just as Argentina will do with some of my players. And naturally, today’s Argentina team is not necessarily the same one we played four years ago,” Deschamps said.

The coach said their own star player Kylian Mbappe along with a host of other experienced and young players will want to lift the trophy as well.

“In the final against Argentina, we’ll

Our anti-Messi plan will consist of limiting his influence on the pitch for Argentina, just as Argentina will do with some of my players. And naturally, today’s Argentina team is not necessarily the same one we played four years ago

FRANCE
MANAGER
**DIDIER
DESCHAMPS**

witness an encounter between the two best sides. It’s a final, so there should be the same level of quality coming from both sides.”

“The strongest team will win, and it’ll definitely be the team who makes fewer mistakes. The team that masters those two aspects will win the trophy.”

Deschamps said it was not an easy way to the final.

“It wasn’t easy, but with a mix of skills, experience, a fighter’s mindset, even in the bad times. Even me as a coach and manager, it’s mostly the satisfaction and the pride for the group of players that are here.”

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Poland’s Szymon Marciniak will officiate the final. The 41-year-old, who made his Fifa World Cup debut four years ago, will be joined by assistants Pawel Sokolnicki and Tomasz Listkiewicz. Listkiewicz’s father, Michal Listkiewicz, officiated in the Fifa World Cup final in 1990 and at the

Fifa World Cup 1994.

Marciniak has already overseen matches involving both final teams at the tournament — Argentina’s last-16 win over Australia and France’s group-stage victory against Denmark.

Following an opening ceremony that celebrated bridging the gaps and getting to know one another beyond our differences, the final ceremony will last 15 minutes and reference the world coming together for the 29 days of the tournament through poetry and music.

‘A Night to Remember’ will wrap-up with a mashup of songs from the Official Soundtrack that marked memorable moments of the tournament. Performing live to the stadium crowd and global audience, Davido and Aisha will sing ‘(Hayya Hayya) Better Together’, Ozuna and Gims will do ‘Arhbo’, and the full female line-up of ‘Light the Sky’ will be present with Nora Fatehi, Balqees, Rahma Riad and Manal.

THIS IS KENYA



Statement by Ambassador

Kenya became 59 years old on Monday, 12th December, 2022. This is Kenya's welcome to all the wonderful people and residents of all ages in the Sultanate of Oman to experience Magical Kenya, her culture, tourism and engage in impactful and sustainable investment/trade and business.

Kenya, under the wise leadership of **His Excellency Dr. William Samoei Ruto, PHD, CGH., President of the Republic of Kenya**, is the sixth largest economy in Africa and the gateway to East and Central Africa. Nairobi is one of the top five cities in Africa. My President's Vision, together with the Region's leaders has seen the East Africa Community (EAC) grown with the addition of the Democratic Republic of Congo as the seventh member to accede to the EAC Treaty in April, 2022. This addition has propelled the EAC as the fastest growing regional trading market in Africa with over 466million people. Kenya is the EAC logistical, financial and business hub that links the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean.

The **Sultanate of Oman under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik**, is Kenya's historical, friendly and natural partner. Our longstanding warm and impactful bilateral ties dates back to the 17th Century is underpinned by our common values and principles as well as a shared vision for our people. Kenya and Oman bilateral trade was valued at **USD 109 million** and **USD 220 million**, in 2020 and 2021 respectively. This

is expected to double steadily, with the revival of trade and investments, including the Livestock exports in 2022 to Oman from Kenya. In the Ease of Doing Business index by the World Bank, Kenya's ranking improved from position 170 in 2012 to position 56 out of 190 countries in 2020 demonstrating Kenya is an investment destination of choice that is open and ready to do business. Kenya reaffirms her commitment to heighten the important and strategic bilateral relations with the Sultanate of Oman for both the prosperity of our Countries and People.

FUN FACTS;

- ◆ **Cultural and Heritage:** The joint East Africa Visa applied via www.evisa.go.ke permits you to travel into Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. A good percentage of Kenya's National Language Kiswahili comprise of Arabic words. It is one of languages recognized by the United Nations and is celebrated by the World every year on the 7th of July. More than 200 million people in the world speak Kiswahili, indeed, is widely spoken by many Omanis'.
- ◆ **Opportunities for Trade/Investments:** The distance between Kenya and Oman by direct flight is less than five hours and between Mombasa and/or Lamu Port in Kenya to Salalah Port in Oman is less than five days. Kenya is East and Central Africa's largest supplier of various commodities and

services, this includes; logistical services (through its highways, railways, sea/air ports), financial/banking services, medical services, ICT and is instrumental in supporting the Region's Food Security strategy. Kenya is home to Africa's largest Geothermal Station (Green Energy). It is also the world's largest export of Premium Tea (Chai) and the world's third largest exporter of flowers and macadamia. Kenya is Africa's top producer of flowers and Tea and is Africa's fifth largest producer of Coffee. Kenya's MPESA, the ICT innovation for transacting money via the mobile phone, has revolutionized the telecommunication and banking systems globally.

- ◆ **Magical Tourism:** Kenya is the world's premiere safari destination and is home to the Seventh Wonder of the World - the Great Wildebeest Migration. Kenya has the World's largest permanent desert lake and the world's largest alkaline lake - Lake Turkana it also shares with its neighbors the world second largest fresh water lake - Lake Victoria. Kenya was home to 'Sudan, the last male white rhino in the world and most eligible bachelor of his time!

This is real! Come and experience Magical Kenya, the Land of Hakuna Matata (No Worries)!

**HER EXCELLENCY AMINA ALI ABDALLA, CBS
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA TO
THE SULTANATE OF OMAN**

KENYA: THE LAND OF UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES

Kenya is the cultural home of Africa, a land of contrasts, where you will find savannas rich with big game, timeless cultures unchanged by the modern world, pristine beaches and coral reefs, equatorial forests and mighty snow-capped mountains, searing deserts and cool highland retreats offering endless opportunities for adventure, discovery and relaxation.

Kenya is the largest and most advanced economy in Eastern Africa, strategically located as a gateway to Africa, with strong growth prospects supported by an emerging, urban middle class and an increasing appetite for high-value goods and services. Kenya's economic blueprint **VISION 2030** is the foundation that guides her impressive and dynamic economic development.

Warm and welcoming, Kenya is the place where the phrase **HAKUNA MATATA!** (no worries) embodies the national attitude; and a smile is the most valuable currency.

◆ KENYA AT A GLANCE

Kenya lies on the equator and is located in Eastern Africa. At 580,367 square kilometres, Kenya is the world's 48th largest country by area. It has 47 Counties and Kenya's capital city Nairobi, operates 24/7 and is one of the top five cities in Africa.

◆ POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Kenya has a population of 47 million people (2019) spread across 44 tribes, each with its own language, dialect and customs that embodies Kenya's rich and diverse culture.

◆ OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Kenya's official languages are English and Kiswahili (About 40% of Kiswahili is Arabic). In addition, the various ethnic groups from all the 44 tribes typically speak their mother tongues within their own communities.

◆ CLIMATE

Generally, Kenya's climate range from tropical temperature (10° to 40°C). It is warm and humid at the Coast, cool and humid in the Central highlands, and hot and dry in the North and East. Visitors are able to enjoy most activities in the cities, beaches and in the national parks all year round.



KENYA: KEY LANDMARKS



1. The Great Maasai Mara Migration - Seventh Wonder of the World

This world-famous game reserve is in southwestern Kenya and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. The Maasai Mara covers an area of 1,510 square kilometers and host the world largest density of lions plus it is home to the Big Five (Lions, Leopards, Elephants, Rhinos and Buffaloes), cheetahs, giraffes, crocodiles, eland antelopes, range of bird species and many more animal species. During July to October every year, the world has the opportunity to witness the great and immense wildebeest migration; over two million wildebeest have to content with crossing the Mara River infest with crocodiles and migrate safely from been hunted and run down by larger carnivores during this season at the Maasai Mara.

2. Tsavo - Largest and Oldest National Park

The Tsavo National Park is Kenya's largest and oldest national park and offers some of the country's best safari opportunities. It spans an area of 8,200 square kilometres and is home to many animals including Lions, Leopards, Buffaloes, Giraffes, and cheetahs.

3. Mount Kenya - The Second-Highest Peak in Africa

Mount Kenya strategically lies at the heart of Kenya and provides breath-taking views for visitors from all over the world. The highest peak of this famous Kenyan landmark is 5,199 meters tall.

Mount Kenya is a Kenyan landmark that is a very popular tourist attraction for both local and international visitors to Kenya. Mount Kenya National Park, a forest reserve is home to various flora and fauna, surrounds the mountain.

It is home to many animal species, including elephants, tree hyrax, white-tailed mongoose, black-fronted duikers, mole rats, bushbucks, waterbucks, elands, leopards, black rhinos and buffaloes.

4. Lake Victoria - The Largest Lake in Africa

Also known as the second-largest freshwater lake globally, Lake Victoria's surface area spans over 68,000 square kilometers. The lake provides many opportunities for tourism throughout its borders with Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

5. The Great Rift Valley - Home to Africa's Largest Geothermal Station (Olkaria)

This world-famous valley stretches along the eastern side of Africa it includes many lakes, extinct volcanoes, and other geographical formations.

One of the most famous landmarks within the Great Rift Valley is Lake Naivasha, Hell's Gate National Park, which forms part of the valley. Hell's Gate has many exciting features including

- ◆ Geothermal Valley - a geothermal area full of boiling springs and steam vents
- ◆ Olkaria Geothermal Station - the largest in Africa
- ◆ Vultures' Cliff - where vultures can be seen nesting on the cliffs

6. Lamu - A UNESCO World Heritage Site

Amongst the oldest and best-preserved Swahili settlement in Africa and home to Lamu Town a World Heritage Site. This is a group of islands located off the coast of Kenya and is one of the country's most popular tourist destinations.

The archipelago comprises of Pate Island, Lamu Island, Manda Island and Kiwayu Island. One of the most famous landmarks in Kenya, Lamu Old Town, is also on these islands and allows visitors to explore its historical buildings and scenery.





ECONOMY

Kenya operates a liberal economy which promotes trade and investment. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 7.5 per cent in 2021.

1. CONTINENTAL / GLOBAL RANKING

Kenya is ranked 4th largest economy in Sub-Saharan Africa and the 6th largest in Africa. The World Economic Forum's country competitiveness report ranks Kenya first in Africa in quality of human capital, availability of research, innovation and business dynamism, making it the place to be as an investor. Kenya is globally ranked 56th out of 190 economies in the Ease of Doing Business Index with an ambitious plan to reach top 50 in the next 3 years.

Kenya is among the world's emerging economies to invest in, due to its accelerated infrastructure development and a stable political and macroeconomic environment.

2. GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)

Kenya's GDP in 2021 = USD 110.3 Billion. GDP per Capita growth is 5.1% FDI inflows in 2020 = USD 426.31 Million. Kenya's GDP per Capita in 2021 = USD 1643.6. Our GDP growth in 2021 = 7.5%

3. REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES

Kenya is a member of the East Africa Community (EAC) with population of about 466 million. Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, make up the East Africa Community.



CHOOSE KENYA



1. KENYA, AN INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOGISTICAL HUB

Infrastructure and Logistics is at the core of Kenya's economic narrative due to the country's role as a trans-shipment hub for goods moving to landlocked countries in East and Central Africa. The Port of Mombasa is located on international container routes, serving as a well-integrated landing port for regional shipping networks. Land connectivity has also become a major focus, with a number of large-scale projects undertaken to link regional countries with the global market. The LAPSET project which includes Lamu Port is Eastern Africa's largest and most ambitious infrastructure project bringing together Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan. Railroads are being built and extended while new ports are being constructed. This makes Kenya the logistical hub for the region.

Fortune magazine named Kenya as the best African emerging economy to invest in due to accelerated infrastructure development and a stable macro-economic environment. Kenya co-funded several priority infrastructures projects aimed at enhancing

Trade and Regional Integration in East Africa. The USD 3.6 billion Nairobi - Mombasa Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) completed in 2017 has efficiently links Kenya's Indian Ocean Port city of Mombasa to the capital Nairobi. The SGR has hit over two million passengers with a revenue earning estimation at Sh15bn. In addition to cross-county railway intercity railway stations are under construction with 27 planned in Nairobi City alone. The development of Nairobi Railway City as part of redeveloping Nairobi's Central Railway Station is also aimed at placing Nairobi as a global commercial hub by offering commuters convenience, safety and speed. The works on this was launched by Kenya's President on Wednesday, 7th December, 2022 and will accommodate upto 30, 000 passengers per hour at peak periods. New roads are being constructed in every county; Corridors, Highways and by-passes.

The USD 654 million Jomo Kenyatta International Airport expansion comprises of a 178,000m2 facility, is complemented by Nairobi Commuter Rail Service linking the city centre to the airport. While the Nairobi Expressway, a toll highway connects Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) to other

sections in Nairobi. JKIA is currently being expanded to handle 20million passengers. On the other hand, Kisumu Airport was upgraded to international status handling Boeing 737, DC9 and Airbus A310 while Moi International Airport and Eldoret Airport were renovated to handle large carriers. Lamu, Malindi, Isiolo and Wilson airports continue to complement the larger airports, including Jomo JKIA. Moi International Airport in Mombasa, Eldoret and Kisumu.

The USD 366 million, Port of Mombasa harbour channel was further deepened by 15 metres and widened to 500 metres to accommodate larger vessels. This together with the new Lamu port are among the investment that are transforming Kenya into a maritime hub. Others include Kenya's shipyard operated by Kenya Naval base in Mombasa which is the largest in East Africa and Kisumu Shipyards which will repair, refurbish and build new ships hence contributing greatly to Kenya's maritime and blue economy industries. To ensure timely delivery of products the Kenya Pipeline Company has constructed a US\$489m Mombasa-Nairobi multi-product pipeline.

2. KENYA, HOME TO DIPLOMATIC, GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS AND FINANCIAL HUB

The United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), is one of the four major United Nations office sites. It is amongst the UN's official headquarters based in Kenya and also hosts the global headquarters for two programmes: The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

Kenya hosts other major continental and international agencies include, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Labour Organization, UN Women, United Nations Development Programme, UNHCR, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Food Programme, World Health Organization, etc.

In January 2021, Kenya assumed membership to the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for a 2-year non-renewable stint. Kenya's success arguably stemmed from a widely shared perception of its stature as a stable role model on the continent, particularly East Africa, within which it stood out as the region's most developed and influential power.

3. VIBRANT FINANCIAL AND BANKING SECTOR

The Financial Services Sector (FSS) is one of the 6 priority sectors under the economic pillar of Kenya Vision 2030 that are expected to play a critical role in ensuring the country attains a 10% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate by the year 2030. Kenya has 43 banking institutions (42) commercial banks and mortgage finance companies, 9 representative offices of foreign banks, 13 Microfinance Banks (MFBs), 3 credit reference bureaus (CRBs), 19 Money Remittance Providers (MRPs) and 73 foreign exchange (forex) bureaus.

Equity Bank operates in five regional markets Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. While, Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) headquarters are in Nairobi, with its subsidiaries in Burundi, Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and South Sudan.

4. DIVERSE AND ACCESIBLE VALUE-ADDITION MARKET

Investing in Kenya offers Preferential Market Access within the African region. These market access pluses include:

- ◆ East African Community (EAC) - Population of 466,745,958 million comprising 7 member states, backed by a Customs Union Protocol.
- ◆ Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) comprises 21 member States with a population of over 560 million people, with a combined GDP of \$768 billion.
- ◆ Tripartite Negotiations between EAC, COMESA and SADC - expected to be concluded any time now, will create a free trade area (FTA) of over 600 million people.
- ◆ African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCTFA) provides an opportunity for Kenyan businesses and consumers to access improved range of competitively priced goods and services, new technologies, and innovative practices.





◆ World Trade Organization (WTO) - membership allows Kenya's products to access more than 90% of world markets at Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment.

5. SOLID AND GROWING MANUFACTURING SECTOR

The manufacturing sector is one of four main areas of focus by the Kenyan government's economic agenda and the local sector is experiencing an increase in international investment and domestic growth.

The cotton, textiles, and apparel (CTA) industry is Kenya's second- largest manufacturing industry after food processing and has been classified as a core industry.

Kenya is in a strong position to capitalize on the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) agreement as the country already captures more than a third of all apparel exports from Sub-Saharan Africa to the USA. 70% of Kenyan apparel firms have a US dominant market orientation.

6. SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES

Kenya aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrialized 'middle-income country providing a high-quality life to all its citizens by the year 2030.' The establishment of Special Economic Zones is key to the achievement of this Vision. Special Economic Zones in Kenya offer incentives to investors such as duty exemption, protection and repatriation of profits, tax exemptions and work permit facilitation.

7. KENYA, HUB FOR INNOVATION AND ICT

Kenya identified ICT as a key enabler to the attainment of the goals and aspirations of the Vision 2030. As at now, Kenya's Safaricom is the first private telecommunications operator in Ethiopia. Kenya's capacities include:

- ◆ Great innovation in ICT e.g. MPESA which has revolutionized the global financial sector for transferring money on the phone.
- ◆ The second largest, vibrant and highly tech savvy youthful population.
- ◆ Hosts the best incubation centers in the region e.g. I Hub, I-lab and IBM Centre.
- ◆ Key source of talent as demonstrated by the wide array of technology companies that have set up their regional bases in Kenya to tap into the talent.
- ◆ Has the best internet coverage and technology infrastructure across Africa.
- ◆ Home to Konza (Konza Technopolis) is a key flagship project of Kenya's Vision 2030 economic development portfolio. Konza a world-

class city, powered by thriving information, communications and technology (ICT) sector, superior reliable infrastructure and business friendly governance systems.

- ◆ Kenya is among the few African countries that is exporting software development services to global technology firms from USA, India, South Africa, Spain, Germany among other countries.

8. RENEWABLE, CLEAN, SUSTAINABLE GREEN ENERGY AND BLUE ECONOMY

Kenya has one of the most developed power sectors in sub-Saharan Africa, having opened its market to Independent Power Producers (IPPs) in the mid-1990s. Kenya benefits from factors including an active private sector and abundant renewable energy resources, especially geothermal, wind and solar.

Kenya's geothermal capacity was 863 Megawatts of electricity by last year. This is the largest capacity in the world. Kenya has embarked on sharing the capacity in the entire region.

Kenya offers one of the fastest growing and dynamic markets for renewable energy in Africa. With an eye on sustainable development, Kenya aims to help mitigate climate change by reducing Kenya's carbon footprint, while creating much-needed jobs. Currently, 70% of the nation's installed electricity capacity comes from renewable energy sources, which is more than three times the global average. Africa's largest single wind power facility is at Lake Turkana in Kenya's Rift Valley.

On the other hand, Kenya's Blue Economy seeks to promote economic growth, responsible production and consumptions, social inclusion, and preservation or improvement of livelihoods while at the same time ensuring environmental sustainability of the ocean and coastal areas through the circular economy.

9. HIGH-VALUE HUMAN CAPITAL

Kenya has a large pool of young, talented, highly educated, skilled and most sought-after work force in Africa. To date, Kenya has its capacities spread across various sectors in leading capitals in the world, from Doctors, Engineers, Academia and Hospitality. For instance, Kenya currently exports its nurse to the United Kingdom. The World Economic Forum's country competitiveness report ranks Kenya 1st in Africa in quality of human capital, availability of research and innovation. Kenya was ranked among the top 10 sub-Saharan economies leveraging their human capital in 2018 by the World Economic Forum.



KEY EXPORT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES
KENYA, A GLOBAL LEADER IN VALUE-ADDED AGRI-BUSINESS SECTOR



Kenya is the premier source of quality priced value addition horticultural produce, grown in natural conditions under the sun and delivered to markets through the best cold-chain infrastructure and logistics network in the world. That has increased confidence in Kenyan horticultural products in the global market and increased market entry into key markets in developed countries. Below are some of Kenya's leading exports:

A) HORTICULTURE

1. TEA: KENYA, THE WORLD'S BIGGEST EXPORTER OF BLACK TEA

Kenya is the biggest exporter of black tea in the world. In 2021, Kenya's tea export earnings amounted to USD. 1,107,041,101. Top buyers of Kenyan tea include United Kingdom, Afghanistan, Egypt, Sudan and Pakistan.

Tea processing facilities in Kenya meet local and international quality standards and are certified. Kenyan tea production complies with sustainable and trade practices and have most of the private certification such as fair-trade certification, Rainforest Alliance Certification, among others.

Kenyan tea has a distinct taste and quality; has a bright amber colour and a full-bodied flavour.

2. COFFEE: KENYA, THE 5TH LARGEST PRODUCER IN AFRICA

Kenya's coffee earnings hit USD. 205,128,204.12 as of January to August 2022. Kenya is the fifth largest producer of the coffee in Africa. Key markets for Kenyan coffee include Belgium, Germany, United States of America and South Korea.

All Kenya coffee is Arabica coffee grown on the rich volcanic soil found in the highlands of the country. 1400-2000 meters above sea level, and harvested during the months of October through December.

Kenyan coffee is medium roasted, robust and sophisticatedly crafted coffee beans that are revered for their highest grade on the rating scales. Kenyan coffee, with its rich body, has high acidity, intense flavour, delightful aroma and lingering the complex sweetness.

3. VEGETABLES

The wide geographical and climatic diversity together with complementary irrigation has allowed production of vegetables throughout the year that target both local and international markets. Kenya exports vegetables to Pakistan, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Egypt, and United Arab Emirates.

Vegetables grown in Kenya include tomatoes, cabbage, kales, garden peas, French beans, spinach, snow peas, carrots, pepper, snap peas, butternut, broccoli, runner beans, courgetti, cauliflower, beetroots, baby corn, radish, sweet corn, lettuce and turnips.

Asian vegetables grown in Kenya include eggplant, dudhi, okra, karella, tindori, turia and valor. The country is also producing aromatic plants which include; bulb onions, spring onions, coriander, garlic, long cayenne, bixa, rosemary, stevia, lemongrass, bullet chilli, parsley, ginger, chives, leeks, turmeric, basil, vanilla, celery and jatrophia.

Vegetables farming in Kenya continues to attract investors due to the solid infrastructure and modern technology, favourable climate, global positioning of Kenya and productive workforce.

4. FRUITS: KENYA, AFRICA'S LARGEST AVOCADO PRODUCER

The Kenyan weather is conducive for a variety of fruits to thrive because it can accommodate different types of fruits for better yields. Fruit farmers in Kenya have several options on the type of fruits to venture in depending on their investment plan.

Kenya's top export destinations for fruits include China, Netherlands, USA, France & Middle East.

The fruits grown in Kenya include banana, mango, pineapple, avocado, watermelon, pawpaw, lime, orange, purple passion, yellow passion, tree tomato, lemons, guavas, tangerine, loquats, pears, grapefruit, grapes, plums, sweet melon, custard apple, strawberries, apples, thorn melon, peaches, pepino melon and jackfruit.



5. NUTS

This subsector is important as a source of processed edible oil, animal feed and industrial oil. The scheduled nuts and oil crops in Kenya include coconut, Cashew nuts, Macadamia, Oil palm, Sunflower, Sesame, Castor, Canola, Peanuts, Bambara nuts, Sunflower, jojoba, linseed (flax seed).

- ◆ MACADAMIA: KENYA, THE 3RD WORLD'S LARGEST EXPORTER

Macadamia nuts are mainly grown in the central part of Kenya and is the third largest exporter of macadamia. It is grown by an estimated 200,000 smallholder macadamia farmers across the country while the rest is cultivated under plantation farms.

- ◆ CASHEW NUTS

Cashew nut is among the oldest cash crops in the Kenyan Coast and a major source of income for smallholder farmers mainly in Kilifi, Kwale, Mombasa, Tana River and Lamu Counties. Major export markets include United States of America, European Union, Japan, China, Hong Kong and Canada.

B) FLORICULTURE: KENYA IS AFRICA'S LEADING EXPORTER AND 3RD LARGEST EXPORTER IN THE WORLD

Kenya prides herself of a blooming flower sector. Kenya is Africa's lead exporter of flowers and ranks as the third largest exporter of flowers globally. The most significant markets for Kenyan flowers are the European Union, United States of America, United Kingdom, Russia, Australia, Asia and Africa.

Kenya produces roses, carnations, alstroemeria, gypsophila, lilies, eryngiums, arabicum, hypericum, statice, and other summer flowers.





C) DAIRY, LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY PRODUCTION - LARGEST AGRICULTURAL SUB-SECTOR

Dairy farming in Kenya is the largest Agricultural sub-sector compared to other Agricultural farming. It contributes to about 14% of Gross Domestic Products in Agricultural sector and when combined to Kenya National Goods Domestic Product it produced 3.5%.8 in May 2021. Milk production in the country includes 4.6 billion litres from cattle, 6.4 million litres from goats and 340 million litres from camels providing an important source of livelihoods to Kenyans.

Livestock comprises dairy cattle, goats, camels and beef cattle, small ruminants, non-ruminants, poultry and emerging livestock such as quail and rabbits. Kenya's export of livestock was approximately US\$14.52 Million in 2021 and mainly comprised of cows, sheep, goats and camels. Some of the key export markets for Kenya's livestock include countries in the Middle East, West Africa, Central Africa and North Africa.

Beef is largely produced in arid and semi-arid areas, where about 36 percent of the Kenya populations live. Dairy production is concentrated in high potential agro-ecological zones where fodder and pastures are available. Kenya Meat Commission procures all its raw

materials for its processes with due consideration of high-quality standards at all times. Strict procedures in livestock procurement/sourcing are adhered.

D) SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

According to the World-Wide Fund for Nature data, the total "ocean asset base" of the Western Indian Ocean region spanning from Somalia to South Africa is at least USD333.8 billion and the annual "Gross Marine Product - GMP" (equivalent to a country's annual gross domestic product (GDP) - is at least USD22.9 billion.

Kenya's share is about USD 2.4 billion of this Western Indian Ocean economy. With Coastal Tourism taking the largest share of about \$1.5 billion annually. Compared to the annual GDP of about \$60 billion for the country. Kenya's lucrative tuna belt is estimated to be 170,000 - 330, 000 Metric tons of fish in her expansive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

E) PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

Kenya's transport sector accounts for 8.3% of its total GDP. Its public transport system is privately operated with the road transport network served by matatus (minibuses), taxis (traditional and ride hailing services), boda-bodas (motorcycles), tuk tuks (three-wheelers) and trains both SGR and MGR.

The aviation transport service offers domestic and international flights handling both cargo and people. It is served by the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Moi international Airport, Kisumu International Airport, Eldoret Airport and Wilson Airport.

The Port of Mombasa, Port of Kisumu well as the newly constructed Port of Lamu serves as the entry and exit point for cargo not only for Kenya but for neighbouring countries as well signalling Kenya is open for business.

F) HEALTH SERVICES

The health sector comprises the public system, with major players including the Ministry of Health and parastatal organisations, and the private sector.

Health services are provided through a network of over 4,700 health facilities countrywide, with the public sector system accounting for about 51 percent of these facilities.

G) SPORTS - RENOWNED GLOBAL STARS

Globally, Kenya is mainly known for its dominance in middle-distance, long-distance races. Sports in Kenya are played both professionally and as recreational physical activities. Some of our iconic stars include, Ferdinand Omanyala, Eluid Kipchoge, Brigid Kosgei and Faith Kipyego. There are also our national teams in Rugby - Shujaa, Volleyball - Malkia Strikers and Basketball - Kenyan Morans.



KENYA AMONGST THE WORLD'S MAGNIFICENT TOURIST DESTINATION

KENYA'S GREAT WILDEBEEST MIGRATION - THE SEVENTH WONDER OF THE WORLD

There is no more exciting time in Kenya for safari enthusiasts and conservationist than in July. It is the highlight of the year for Safari lovers; the great wildebeest migration - the Seventh Wonder of the World. Millions of wildebeests and zebras will soon be squashed into the northern Serengeti and Masai Mara. They will zig-zag across the vast grasslands to cross the Mara and Talek Rivers. The crocodiles will lie in wait and pick off the young, weak and unlucky. Similarly, the big, strong, and fastest cats (lions -Simba, kings of the jungle, cheetahs - fastest animal on earth and leopards - great tree climbers, swimmers and very agile) will wait on the far side of the river waiting for exhausted wildebeests, antelopes, zebras which make easy prey. Thereafter, the scavengers (hyenas, vultures, and others) lay in wait to finish off the left-overs!

The animals usually stay around the northern eco-system until October, when they will start moving east and then south. Predation by leopards, lions, cheetahs and hyena at this time is great, simply due to numbers. There are just so many animals of prey around that the predators take full advantage to feed their own young, a time of plenty for all. October to November is when the short rains begin to fall in the south and east Serengeti, so the herds start to leave the Masai Mara, crossing the Mara River yet again, bringing all the same perils as before. They head slowly back to the Serengeti's eastern plains. By the time they arrive it will be February and the cycle is complete. Arrival at the calving grounds marks the end of this, and the start of the next year's migration.

Kenya, is world renowned as The Safari Destination and is home to the Twin Migration of the Humpback whales and Wildebeests. Kenya has the world's only wildlife park within its capital city and home to the **Big 5 - Elephant, Rhino, Buffalo, Lion and Leopard**. While the **Gerenuk, the Somali Ostrich, the Reticulated Giraffe, the Grevy's Zebra and the fringe eared Oryx, form the special 5 in Northern Kenya**. Kenya is also a birding paradise with over 1,100 recorded species of birds within Lake Baringo, Lake Nakuru and Lake Elementaita. Other unique locations are the Northern Kenya's spectacular Loroghi Hills, the wild Matthews Ranges and Ndoto Mountains. Further North, you will definitely enjoy the cultural festivals and on the shores of Lake Turkana, which is both the world's largest

permanent desert lake and the world's largest alkaline lake.

Kenya welcomes the wonderful people and resident of all ages in the Sultanate of Oman to experience the Magical Seventh Wonder of the World between July to October every year at Kenya's Maasai Mara and any of our diverse Magical flora and fauna. **Kenya Airways (www.kenya-airways.com) in conjunction with Oman Travel Point (www.travelpoint.om / +96891149686 / +96824661817)** would be the best way to secure your next gateway to Magical Kenya. **Kenyan Visas are issued directly online and within 48hours via the Government website - www.evisa.go.ke**. The Kenya Embassy in Muscat remains ready to assist in anyway.

COME AND EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC FOR REAL!



WE ARE READY TO DO BUSINESS, GIVE US A CALL!

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