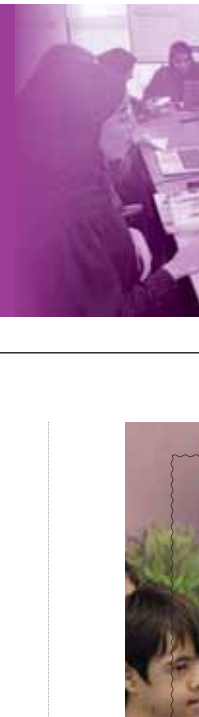


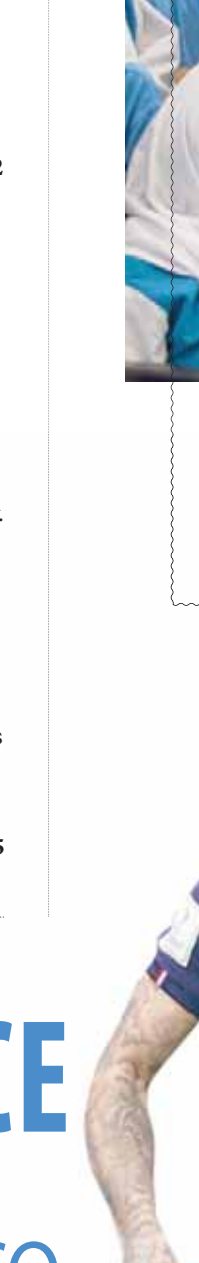
P7

SQU TEAM WINS
THIRD PLACE IN
WORLD
STUDENT OLYMPICS



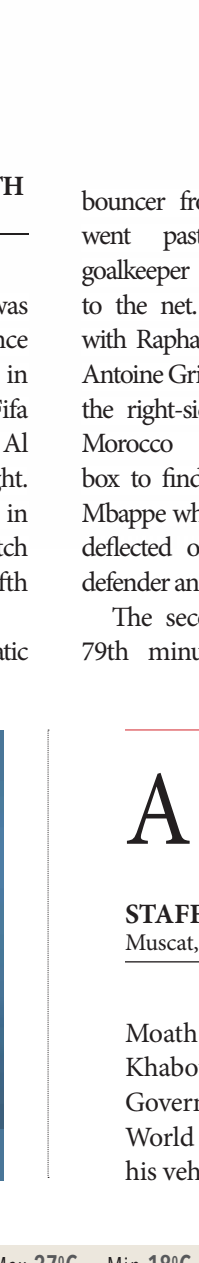
P19

PUJARA, IYER
PUT INDIA IN
COMMAND AGAINST
BANGLADESH



P9

OMAN TO HOST
AMAZON'S FIRST AWS
LOCAL ZONE IN MENA
REGION



MUSCAT

**COUNCIL DISCUSSES
DRAFT OF BUDGET**

The State Council on Wednesday discussed the draft of State Budget 2023. The session focused on the report of the Expanded Economic Committee on the draft of state budget for the fiscal year 2023. The report will be returned to the Council of Ministers, along with the recommendations of the State Council and the Majlis Ash'shura. Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, said in a speech that this session is held in secret.

SEE P2

LONDON

**OVER A MILLION SIGN
TO TURN OFF POWER**

More than a million British homes have signed up to a scheme which will pay them to cut electricity use to help prevent power shortages this winter, National Grid said on Wednesday. Under the demand flexibility service (DFS), homes that have signed up with their suppliers would be paid, usually via money off their bills, for turning off appliances such as ovens and dishwashers during a specific period when electricity demand is high. National Grid warned in October that homes could face three-hour rolling power cuts this winter .

SEE P5

FRANCE BEAT MOROCCO 2-0

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 14

Star player Kylian Mbappe was behind the two goals as France blanked a valiant Morocco 2-0 in the second semifinal of the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 at the Al Bayt Stadium on Wednesday night. France started with a bang in their very first move of the match with a stunning goal in the fifth minute itself. Theo Hernandez's acrobatic



HONOURABLE LADY INTERACTS WITH SPECIAL KIDS

Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, visited Association for Children with Disabilities (ACD) in Al Azaiba in the Governorate of Muscat on Wednesday. She took note of the services, training, educational and rehabilitation programmes for the children with disabilities.

SEE ALSO P2



Theo Hernandez celebrates after scoring his team's first goal

bouncer from the right post went past an advancing goalkeeper Yassine Bounou to the net. The move began with Raphael Varane sending Antoine Griezmann through the right-side corner of Morocco penalty box to find Kylian Mbappe whose shot deflected off a Moroccan defender and reached Hernandez. The second goal came in the 79th minute through substitute

Randal Kuolo Muani. Morocco had their first shot on target in the 10th minute as France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris dived to his left to save the curling shot by Azzedine Ounahi. In the 17th minute, Morocco's Sofiane Boufal got a through pass inside the French box but was unable to capitalize on it.

SEE PAGE 13

His Majesty issues two Royal Decrees

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued two Royal decrees on Wednesday. Royal decree No. (92/2022) is on military appointments and promotions at the Ministry of Defence. Article (1) appoints Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed bin Said Sakroon as Head of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies. Article (2) promotes Commodore Ali bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al Shidi to the rank of Rear Admiral and appoints him as Commandant of the National Defence College. Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (93/2022) refers to the Sultan's Armed Forces Day. Article (1) states that the 11th of December every year shall be named as Sultan's Armed Forces Day. Article (2) stipulates that the Sultan's Armed Forces Day shall be an official holiday for all members of the Sultan's Armed Forces in all parts of Oman. Article (3) cancels Royal Decree No. 49/76 on "Armed Forces Day". It also cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions. Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

OMAN DAILY @50

Media help to promote reason, avoid extremism

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

Oman Arabic newspaper chronicled the modern Omani Renaissance and helped to shape Omani identity, said Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, while launching the 50th anniversary celebration of the nation's second oldest broadsheet. Dr Abdullah said the newspaper recorded achievements made throughout the march of the Sultanate of Oman—the nation, the state and society—over half a century. The paper “symbolises the book of life in the march of modern Omani renaissance. Over the past five decades, Oman Daily's role was not limited to monitoring achievements and presenting them to society, but rather establishing social awareness, building a patriotic spirit that was essential at the start of the country's



Dr Abdulla Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, at the 50th anniversary celebration of Oman Arabic daily newspaper in Muscat on Wednesday. — ONA

renaissance and contributing to the evolution of an 'enlightenment discourse' for shaping Omani identity,” the minister said. The minister was speaking at the event held in the presence of officials, journalists, intellectuals, present and former employees of the newspaper at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OECE) on Wednesday.

Dr Abdullah said that newspapers around the world have become accustomed to marking their milestones by giving a pause during which they contemplate their accomplishments. The minister pointed out that daily action in the media provides no room for celebration outside the columns of the paper, be it in print or online.

TURN TO P4

A football fan takes land route to Qatar to beat air fares

STAFF REPORTER
Muscat, Dec 14

Moath al Saeedi from Al Khabourah in Al Batinah North Governorate went to see the World Cup matches in Qatar in his vehicle.

“I am fond of football, especially since which World Cup is happening near my country Oman. I decided to go to Qatar to attend the Morocco-Spain match crossing the land borders in my vehicle because of the high price of air tickets,” he commented on



his journey. “I was greeted well with speedy procedures across the land borders of the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar, so I arrived in Doha within eight hours from my starting point in Muscat.”

“When I arrived in Doha, I saw many fans wearing jerseys of their favourite teams, waving flags, and some chanting slogans. Qatar's markets, buildings, services, beautiful scenery, and World Cup organisation are very impressive.”

TURN TO P3





HONOURABLE LADY VISITS CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

MUSCAT: Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, on Wednesday visited Association for Children with Disabilities (ACD) in Al Azaiba in the Governorate of Muscat. She took note of the services, training, educational and rehabilitation programmes extended to children with disabilities. She was accompanied by HH Sayyida Hujaijah bint Jaifer al Said, ACD Chairperson and Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development.

During the visit, The Honourable Lady inspected the facilities of the ACD, its halls, equipment and devices used for training children with disabilities. She listened to a briefing about the efforts being exerted towards the welfare of the handicapped and the development of their skills, as well as the ACD's role in assisting the families of the disabled to incorporate them into society.

The Honourable Lady toured the ACD's exhibition and lauded the innovative contribution of



women volunteers. She expressed her admiration for the products made by children with disabilities enrolled at the ACD. At the conclusion of the visit, The Honourable Lady expressed her appreciation for the ACD staff

and volunteers' sincere efforts and noble quest to help this segment of children get access to the best specialised services.



The ACD staff and volunteers expressed their overwhelming happiness at the visit of The Honourable Lady and listening to her directives, which, they said, reflect her constant care and great attention to this segment of society. — ONA

State Council discusses draft of state budget



MUSCAT: The State Council on Wednesday discussed the draft of State Budget 2023. The deliberation took place during the council's second session of the 4th regular session of its 7th term. The session focused on the report of the Expanded Economic Committee on the draft of state budget for the fiscal year 2023.

The report will be returned to the Council of Ministers, along with the recommendations of the State Council and the Majlis AshShura.



Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, said in a speech that "this session is held in secret, as per the provisions of Article (52) of the Law of Council of Oman".

Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Harthy, Chairman of the State Council's Economic Committee, said that the drafting of the budget coincided with exceptional global events and exceptional conditions in the global economic arena.

He added that the Expanded

Economic Committee perceived the significance of focusing on macroeconomic policies and heeding potential risks of external variables on the national economy. Accordingly, the panel considered the inclusion of detailed recommendations and visions on six topics — which are: public views, public revenues, public spending, current deficit and means of funding, the financial position, estimates of spending within State Budget 2023, Al Harthy explained. — ONA

Oman and Syria ink MoU in air transport field

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of air transport and reaching an agreement to regulate air transport services.

The MoU, which was signed

at the headquarters of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) here on Wednesday, reflects the fraternal relations between the two countries.

It was signed by Eng Naif bin Ali al Abri, CAA Chairman and Eng Basem Mansour, General

Director of the Syrian Civil Aviation Authority.

The MoU provided for allowing the national airlines of both countries to operate a number of regular weekly flights between the two countries.

— ONA





PASI discusses investments

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) on Wednesday held its 2nd meeting of the year under the chairmanship of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, Board Chairman.

The meeting discussed a set of topics listed on the agenda, such as indicators for measuring the Authority's institutional performance for 2022, which covers the investment performance results for the same period.

The Board also approved the current and investment budget for the next year. It also discussed a number of topics and proposals related to investment and insurance and took appropriate decisions on their regard. — ONA

Health Research Funding event

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) represented by the Centre of Studies and Research at the Directorate General Planning and Studies, and in collaboration with the World Health Organization Office in the Sultanate of Oman, on Wednesday organised Health Research Funding forum at the Grand Hyatt Muscat.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Fatma bint Mohammed al Ajmiyah, MoH's Under-Secretary for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs.

The event shed light of three themes; first of which was the revolution space that focused on the impact of funding medical research from NGO and Private Institutions, while the capability theme discussed organ transplantation and chronic kidney disease. The third theme on scientific and technical creativity addressed the role of research on country development (the opportunities and challenges).

The event also reviewed the creative ideas to raise fund opportunities. — ONA

A football fan takes land route to Qatar to beat air fares

FROM PAGE 1

Moath says, "I went to the stadium to attend the match to encourage the Moroccan national team. Huge fans, a wonderful, enthusiastic atmosphere, and loud cheers. Morocco's match with Spain was more than wonderful, and there was great joy in the stands when Morocco won."

"I also went to attend the Morocco-Portugal match. As usual, the Moroccan players surprised the world with their abilities and determination to win. They dazzled the world with their outstanding play and their victory in the penalty shootout."

"Morocco's victory, according to Motah, is a victory for all Arabs. The Moroccan players excelled in playing. They did their best to achieve victory over other strong teams."

11 projects win National Research Award

MUSCAT: The ninth cycle of the Annual Research Forum, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation was held on Wednesday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), in which the winners of the National Research Award and Upgrade programme were announced.

The event was held under the auspices of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

During the event, Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation, said that "the National Research Award contributes to directing research to serve national priorities, raising the quality of research publication in international peer-reviewed journals and periodicals, and strengthening the Sultanate of Oman's ranking in the Global Innovation Index."

Afterwards, the 11 winning research projects were announced out of the 307 projects submitted this year for the 9th National Research Award (NRA) divided into the best published research led by a PhD holder or equivalent (senior specialist or higher in



the medical field) category and the best published research led by a young researcher (non-PhD holder) category.

Under the PhD Category, 'A novel drone-based system for accurate human temperature measurement and disease symptoms detection using thermography and AI' by Dr Ahmed bin Said al Maashri from Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) won in the Information and Communication Technologies sector.

In the Cultural, Social and Basic Sciences sector, the award

went to 'The complementarity of green supply chain management practices and the impact on environmental performance' by Dr Anwar bin Khamis al Sheyadi from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences at Al Rustaq.

In the Environmental and Biological Resources sector, the award went to 'Energy recovery and carbon/nitrogen removal from sewage and contaminated groundwater in a coupled hydrolytic-acidogenic sequencing batch reactor and denitrifying biocathode microbial fuel cell' by

Dr Mohammed bin Abdullah al Mamun from SQU.

As for the Education and Human Resources sector it was awarded for the project 'Learner readiness for MOOCs in Omani higher education institutions: Disparities between projections and reality' by Dr Aisha bint Salim al Harthiyah from SQU.

"TMEM63C mutations cause mitochondrial morphology defects and underlie hereditary spastic paraplegia' by Dr Fatma bint Abdullah al Salmiyah of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences took the award

in the Health and Social Services sector.

Further, in the Energy and Industry sector, the award went to 'Enhancing oil recovery by electric current impulses well treatment: A case of marginal oil field from Oman' by Dr Svetlana Rudyk (SQU).

Under the Young Researcher's category, the award was won by the project 'Self-Detection of Early Breast Cancer Application with Infrared Camera and Deep Learning' by Dr Mohammed bin Abdullah al Husaini from SQU in the Information and Communication Technologies sector.

For the Environmental and Biological Resources sector, the award went to 'Fresh-saline water dynamics in coastal aquifers: Sand tank experiments with MAR-wells injecting at intermittent regimes' by Shahad bint Matar al Yaquoubiyah from SQU.

In the Education and Human Resources sector, the award was won by 'The Role of the Technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Achieving the Requirements of Sustainable Development in Higher Education Institutions in the Sultanate of Oman' by Dr Mashael bin Awad al Saiari from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences at Salalah. — ONA

Oman participates in UNTC review session

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the State Audit Institution, is taking part in Costa Rica on reviewing the implementation of Chapters 2 and 5 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNC).

The visit is part of the work of the UNTC's second review session, which lasts from December 13 to

15.

The selection of Oman, alongside Ecuador, comes after experts from Oman revised the comprehensive self-assessment checklist and made observations on certain articles of the UN agreement.

Such country visits are conducted in implementation of the provisions of Article 4 of the

mechanism for reviewing the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Article 4 stipulates that each state that is party to the Convention should be reviewed by two other states. It requires checking the concordance of legislations of the country being reviewed with the texts and

provisions of the UNTC.

The two reviewing countries, acting in conjunction with the Secretariat of the Conference of the States Parties, shall prepare a "country review report" that identifies successful experiences, good practices and challenges, as well as observations on the implementation of the Convention. — ONA

Musandam Municipal Council meets

KHASAB: The Municipal Council of the Governorate of Musandam on Wednesday held a meeting under the chairmanship of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, Chairman of the council.

The meeting discussed recommendations and reviewed various matters related to the governorate.— ONA

RNO marks SAF, Retirees Days



AL MUSANNAH: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) on Wednesday celebrated the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Day, which falls on 11 December, and the Retirees Day, which falls on 7 December. The ceremony, held at Said bin Sultan Naval Base, was held under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

It was attended by the SAF Chief of Staff, some commanders of SAF and other military and security units, members of the Majlis Ash'shura, retired commanders, senior officers at SAF and other military and security units, retired officers, government officials shaikhs and dignitaries in the governorates of South and North Al Batinah. — ONA



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (49/2022)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/22/168	2022/MM/HQ-20	Construction of Muttrah Square (E-Tender)	155	15/01/2023	15/02/2023	Excellent

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200/24402330).



Media helped to promote reason, avoid extremism



FROM PAGE 1

The true celebration of journalism stems from a resolve to achieve more progress and realise success in all aspects of the profession, he said.

“We celebrate Oman as a country and a newspaper simultaneously. A country with all that has been achieved during the past decades and the way you see it today, full of progress and

prosperity. As a newspaper it was professionally able to monitor profound changes for future generations to know the efforts of the ancestors. Thus the newspaper becomes a comprehensive national archive for the entire Omani life,” he said.

“If everyone is talking today about the strength of Omani society and its distance from terrorism, we cannot overlook the role of the media in promoting

reason and appreciation of all ideas and opinions without extremism in thought or speech. This represents the Holy Quranic idea of ‘speak kindly to people.’”

Regarding the challenges facing the press, Dr Al Harrasi said, “We see in all these transformations and challenges facing the modern press great opportunities to live a new glory that is no less than its predecessor, and to present its sublime messages for a wider

and deeper impact. The Oman newspaper strives to invest in these transformations through an integrated development vision.”

The minister unveiled a postal stamp on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Oman Daily newspaper. He also opened an exhibition, which displayed the evolution of the newspaper. The event included a video on the newspaper’s history.

‘THIS NATION AND THIS PAPER’



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information, represented by Oman Daily, on Wednesday held a symposium themed “This nation and this paper” at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

The symposium was held within the framework of celebrating the 50th anniversary of issuance of Oman newspaper’s first edition.



The event aimed to highlight political, cultural and social contexts coinciding with the establishment of Oman Daily newspaper.

It also analysed the contents of the newspaper and its press discourse in various fields, as well as different editing characteristics.

Testimonies of some journalists and intellectuals who were part of the newspaper’s march were recorded during the event.

The symposium covered several core components, namely “The political, cultural and social contexts in the Sultanate of Oman during the period of the

founding and development of Oman Daily newspaper”, “The institutional development of Oman Daily newspaper (1972-2022)”, “Oman newspaper’s political, economic, cultural and social discourse (1972-2022)” and “The editing and designed of Oman Daily newspaper (1972-2022).”

The first publication of the newspaper was issued on November 18, 1972. First it was issued once a week, then it changed to become twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays). In 1980, it was published on a daily basis except on Fridays, then it fully turned into a daily newspaper in 1984. — ONA

Omani Civilisation exhibition opens at Sharjah Archeology Museum

SHARJAH: The “Omani Civilisation: Origin and Development” exhibition, organised by the National Museum in cooperation with Sharjah Museums Authority, was inaugurated on Wednesday at Sharjah Archaeology Museum. The exhibition runs till June 7, 2023.

The exhibition’s opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) Supreme Council Member and Ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah. The event was also attended by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, Sayyid Dr Ahmed bin Hilal al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the UAE and Manal Ataya, Director General of the Sharjah Museums Authority.

The exhibition showcases a rare collection of 100 artefacts that highlight the deep-rooted ties between Oman and the UAE and the rich history of the region. They also trace the social, and geographical developments witnessed by the Omani civilisation throughout the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age until the early Islamic era.

Featured objects in the exhibition



comprise fishing gears, weapons, clay and stone pots, ornaments, stamps, farming equipment, and jewellery such as a rare golden necklace that dates back to the period between 300 BC and 400 AD

Also displayed in the exhibition are a cuneiform tablet that dates back to 2100 to 2000 BC which

lists materials needed to build a fleet of boats that could sail from ‘Ur’, a Sumerian city-state in Mesopotamia (Iraq) to Magan (Oman), a collection of daggers made of copper and silver, as well as a number of figurines, ceramics, and stamps including one with proto-literate signs that date back to 2200 BC.

Commenting on the event, Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, said: “The National Museum, through its participation in the “Omani Civilisation: Origin and Development” exhibition took precedence as the first integrated museum exhibition from the Sultanate of Oman to be held in



the United Arab Emirates, which reflects the qualitative level of cultural and museum cooperation between the National Museum and the Sharjah Museums Authority.”

He added: “The exhibition comes within the framework of the cultural diplomacy pursued by the National Museum with the aim of promoting knowledge, and

in affirmation of the strong ties that link the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, through the exchange of artefacts and exhibitions, and providing access to the National Museum’s collections to a wider segment of visitors from around the world, citizens and residents of the United Arab Emirates.” — ONA



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THURSDAY | DECEMBER 15 | 2022

5

■ A STRUGGLE MARKS MILESTONE



Women supporters of the Palestinian movement Hamas gather for a rally in Gaza City on Wednesday, marking the 35th anniversary of the group's foundation.

Germany pledges tighter laws after far-right coup plot

BERLIN: Germany will tighten its gun laws and make it easier to expel extremists from the civil service after a far-right coup plot was uncovered last week, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said on Wednesday.

Twenty-five alleged plotters, including an ex-MP, former soldiers and aristocrat and businessman Prince Heinrich XIII Reuss, were arrested last Wednesday in huge dawn raids across the country.

Prosecutors say they had amassed an arsenal of weapons and were planning to overthrow the state and install their own government. A total of more than 50 people are being investigated for links to the plot, including current and former members of the police force, according to media reports. Faeser said she wanted to tighten the law to "remove enemies of the constitution more quickly from the civil service in future". "This serves above all to protect the vast majority of employees in public administration who carry out their duties very well," she said. The government will also will



Twenty-five alleged plotters, including an ex-MP, former soldiers and Prince Heinrich XIII Reuss (pictured), were arrested last Wednesday in huge dawn raids across the country.

"take legal measures in the area of tightening the weapons law", such as increasing checks on people who own weapons, she said.

According to Die Welt newspaper, police seized 93 weapons belonging to members of the group, including 19 handguns and 25 rifles.

However, plans to tighten gun

laws may be met with opposition from the liberal FDP, currently in government with Faeser's Social Democrats and the Greens.

FDP Justice Minister Marco Buschmann this week told the RND broadcaster he was opposed to such a move since "even the strictest weapons laws don't really help when people are obtaining weapons illegally".

Faeser also said the cabinet had agreed a new law to make funding streams more reliable for civil society organisations working to stamp out extremism.

Commenting on the plans on Twitter, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said "anyone who wants to divide, who plans a violent coup, will have us to reckon with".

Prosecutors say the alleged plotters belong to a movement known as the Reichsbuerger, which encompasses far-right extremists, conspiracy theorists and gun enthusiasts. The Reichsbuerger generally believe in the continued existence of the pre-World War I German Reich, or empire, under a monarchy, and several groups have declared their own states. — AFP

4 dead after migrant boat capsizes off English coast

DOVER: A small boat loaded with migrants heading for British shores from France capsized in the freezing waters of the English Channel early on Wednesday, resulting in four deaths, the British government said.

Lifeboats, helicopters and rescue teams working with the French and British navies responded to the incident, which took place as immigration to Britain organised by people-trafficking criminal gangs has become in priority issue for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government.

An investigation was underway, the spokesperson said.

LBC radio station reported that 43 people had been rescued.

A Reuters journalist saw one body bag being removed from a vessel at the lifeboat station in the port of Dover.

The incident occurred just over a year after 27 people died while attempting to cross the sea in an inflatable dinghy in November 2021, in the worst recorded accident of its kind in the Channel.

Temperatures have plunged across Britain in the last week, bringing snow to parts of the country.

Despite the freezing cold, more than 500 migrants have made the perilous journey in small boats since the weekend alone, with the people traffickers who organise the crossings taking advantage of low winds and calm seas.

They have followed the more than 40,000 - a record number - who have arrived from France this year, many having made the journey from Afghanistan or Iran or other countries suffering war and repression to travel across Europe and on to Britain to seek asylum.

In the last year there has also



Migrants picked up at sea while attempting to cross the English Channel, are escorted off from the UK Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) lifeboat at the Marina in Dover, southeast England, on Wednesday. - AFP

Despite the freezing cold, more than 500 migrants have made the perilous journey in small boats since the weekend alone

been a significant increase in the number of Albanians crossing the sea. Some British politicians say migrants from Albania - a European Union candidate - have not suffered persecution but are moving for economic reasons.

'TRAGIC LOSS'

Ambulances and emergency crews gathered on the quayside at Dover.

Sky News said some people had been transferred to a hospital in Ashford, Kent, but it was not known if they were survivors or fatalities. Speaking in parliament, Sunak expressed sorrow over the

tragedy.

"I'm sure the whole House will share my sorrow at the capsizing of a small boat in the Channel in the early hours of this morning and the tragic loss of human life," Sunak said.

"Our hearts go out to all those affected and our tributes to those involved in the extensive rescue operation."

Interior minister Suella Braverman, whose ministry oversees migration policy, put the blame firmly on the trafficking gangs.

"Crossing the channel in unseaworthy vessels is a lethally dangerous endeavour," she told parliament.

"It is for this reason above all that we are working so hard to destroy the business model of the people smugglers: evil, organised criminals who treat human beings as cargo."

Braverman had recently called the wave of arrivals an "invasion", drawing an angry response from Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama. — Reuters

Over a million sign up to turn off power

LONDON: More than a million British homes have signed up to a scheme which will pay them to cut electricity use to help prevent power shortages this winter, National Grid said on Wednesday.

Under the demand flexibility service (DFS), homes that have signed up with their suppliers would be paid, usually via money off their bills, for turning off appliances such as ovens and dishwashers during a specific

period when electricity demand is high.

National Grid warned in October that homes could face three-hour rolling power cuts this winter if the country is unable to secure enough gas and electricity imports.

It launched the DFS as part of its tool box to help prevent cuts.

National Grid's Electricity System Operator (ESO) said more than a million households have now signed up to the

scheme with homes saving a total of around 2.8 million pounds (\$3.47 million) during the five tests of the service it has held so far.

"These test results show that if called upon this service will help the ESO balance the national electricity network this winter and is a valuable addition to the ESO's operational tools," said Craig Dyke, Head of National Control at National Grid ESO.

— Reuters

US launches space force unit in South Korea

SEOUL: The United States military launched a space force unit in South Korea on Wednesday that will help better detect ballistic missile launches from North Korea.

North Korea has carried out a record-breaking blitz of weapons tests this year, including its newest intercontinental ballistic missile last month.

The new unit will provide "near-real-time detection and warning of ballistic missile launches", according to a statement from US Forces Korea (USFK).

"Just 48 miles (77 kilometres) north of us exists an existential threat; a threat that we must be prepared to deter, defend against, and — if required — defeat," said Lieutenant Colonel Joshua McCullion, who will lead the new space force unit.

The new unit enhances the "ironclad commitment to the US-Korean alliance," he said. — AFP

SALE OF VEHICLE/EQUIPMENT

Leading Construction Co. in Oman intends to dispose of their used vehicles and equipment, in 'as is where is' condition. The items identified are presently located at their Al Khoud yard and will be offered for inspection to the public on 19/12/2022, 21/12/2022 and 17/05/2022 between 08:00 am to 12:00 pm and 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.

Last date for submission of closed tender is 21/12/2022 at 05:00 pm at our Al Khoud office.

Interested parties may contact at
Tel: (+968) 24525345 / 24525314 / 24525303, Mob: 91354151



SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
Directorate General of Khoula Hospital



ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing is Saturday at 02:30	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
3282/2022/ MOH/DGKH-2	SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND END USER TRAINING FOR MOLECULAR LAB EQUIPMENT AT KHOULA HOSPITAL	31-December-2022	22-January-2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25,000

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Tenders should be submitted on line on the given website signed and sealed. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee before one day of date submission.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Any Clarification, you may contact via
Telephone: 24166670
Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Tourist flow from GCC benefits Oman

We see a lot of tourists from neighbouring countries on weekends and vacations. Border checkpoints are busy during holidays.

There is nothing new and extraordinary in people travelling from one country to the neighbouring country. Easy getaways are always a preferred choice as it is cheap and convenient.

More than three million visitors or tourists including those from Gulf Cooperation Council states come to the Sultanate of Oman.

There is more traffic in the autumn season. They come here and enjoy our huge tourism potential. They come here with friends and families.

The Dhofar Governorate attracts more tourists from neighbouring countries in the summer. The number is increasing year after year.

The data issued by ForwardKeys showed that Oman was recording an increase in the number of tourists compared to many tourist destinations in the region.

It said that there was an increase of more than 93 per cent from the beginning of September until the end of this year, compared to the same period last year.

According to it, the increase in the number of tourists from outside the region was 156 per cent during the same period.

The report has also projected that the number of tourists coming to Oman from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries was expected to increase by 196 per cent by the end of this year.



Ali Al Matani
ali.matani2@gmail.com

SOUTH AL BATINAH, AL DHAHIRAH, AL BURAIMI AND MUSANDAM, WHICH ACCOUNT FOR HALF THE POPULATION OF OMAN, SHARE THE BORDERS WITH THE UAE.

The UAE is one of the largest tourism markets for the Sultanate. The number of tourists coming to the Sultanate of Oman in the first three months of this year was 131,000.

This indicates that the inbound tourism is in favour of the Sultanate. This may not be noticeable in the case of air travel. But inbound visitors from land routes are many times more than those who arrive by air.

South Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah, Al Buraimi and Musandam, which account for half the population of the Sultanate of Oman, share the borders with the UAE.

It is natural that these governorates will have more a tourists on weekends and holidays.

People come here just for a change, recreation or shopping. This does not mean that there is no domestic tourism in these governorates.

One can hardly find an empty hotel or lodges even a few days before the start of the holidays.

The Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates are natural destinations for people in the region. This is due to their existing social, geographical and commercial links.

We should not forget that the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE are the two largest trading partners.

There are 3,000 Emirati companies registered in the Sultanate of Oman. Omani non-oil exports to the UAE increased by 71 per cent.

The trade exchange between the two countries in 2021 was RO 5.7 billion.

Such matters should be kept in their correct scientific, economic, and investment contexts, before engaging in conversations which are not based on any facts.

SWIMMING SANTA



An employee dressed as Santa Claus Christmas swims in large ocean tank in Blackpool, England, on Wednesday. The aquarium is home to more than 2,000 creatures including turtles, sharks and stingrays. – AFP

Evil clowns and cowardly lions

We live in a time when the people who are in charge are scared of the people who aren't. Professors report being terrified of their students. Publishing executives fear the wrath of junior employees. CEOs worry about staff revolts. Museum curators watch what they say lest it lead to professional annihilation. Politicians in senior positions are nervous about the newbies — on their own side.

Some of the fear is necessary and merited. Former New York Reps. Joe Crowley and Eliot Engel lost their primaries to energetic challengers because they were arrogant and too comfortable in their incumbencies.

Young employees at Goldman Sachs revolted early this year over nearly 100-hour workweeks that have the colour of abuse.

But the fear is also doing a lot of damage: to the people on whom the fear is inflicted, on those inflicting it, on the welfare of the institutions to which they belong. In healthy institutions, leaders are supposed to teach, inspire and mould younger people so they can eventually inherit and improve those institutions when they're ready to take charge.

In many of today's institutions, repeated abdications of authority by cowardly leaders have become invitations to arson by wilful upstarts.

I've thought about this a lot in recent years as one organisation after another capitulated in the face



Bret Stephens

IN HEALTHY INSTITUTIONS, LEADERS ARE SUPPOSED TO TEACH, INSPIRE AND MOLD YOUNGER PEOPLE SO THEY CAN EVENTUALLY INHERIT AND IMPROVE THOSE INSTITUTIONS WHEN THEY'RE READY TO TAKE CHARGE.

of outrage mobs, hanging good people out to dry to avoid having to stand on principle. I thought about it again last week when Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, speaking at a New York Young Republicans gala, said that if she and Steve Bannon had organised the Jan. 6 attack on Congress, “we would have won. Not to mention, it would've been armed.”

The comment sparked indignation among Democrats but not a word from Kevin McCarthy, who has cosied up to Greene to win her support in his bid for the House speakership. Greene later defended herself by saying the White House couldn't take a joke — the old

demagogic trick of riling the mob while playing the fool. Meanwhile, Republican leaders and conservative pundits more or less keep mum, just as they kept mum for years over the verbal hooliganism of Donald Trump before and (except for a fleeting spasm of conscience) after Jan. 6.

They tell themselves that condemning Greene or Trump only gives them the attention they crave. But they ignore the fact that failing to condemn the pair gives them the legitimacy and power they crave much more.

The problem with evil clowns is that it's the clownishness, not the evil, they soon shed.

This is not a new problem.



Activists of "Letzte Generation" (Last Generation) who glued themselves to a street to protest for a speed limit on highways as well as for affordable public transport, hold hands as they sit on the tarmac, in Munich, Germany, on Wednesday. – Reuters

Communist dictatorships came to power in Central Europe after World War II by pretending to play by democratic rules, until they didn't. The Nazis came to power in Germany the same way. They joined the institutions they intended to destroy.

And the people who were supposed to be the keepers of those institutions, the guardians at the gate, allowed — and sometimes even helped — them to do it.

Why? A good explanation comes in Max Frisch's 1958 play, “Biedermann and the Fire Raisers” (also translated from German as “The Arsonists” or “The Firebugs”).

It tells the story of a self-satisfied businessperson named Gottlieb Biedermann who reads the news that arsonists have been sweet-talking their way into people's houses and then, after being allowed to sleep in the attic, blowing them up.

“They should hang the lot of them,” says the outraged Biedermann at the beginning of the play. But he's their next victim.

The arsonists wheedle their way into his house with a combination of servile pleading, subtle bullying and appeals to Biedermann's moral vanity. And Biedermann, who nurses a hidden feeling of guilt and fears open confrontation, is their ideal mark. By the end of the play, he's handing the arsonists the matches with which they are going to blow up the house. He can't conceive that he's no longer in charge. He thinks he and the arsonists are in on a big joke, never realising that he's become the butt of the joke itself.

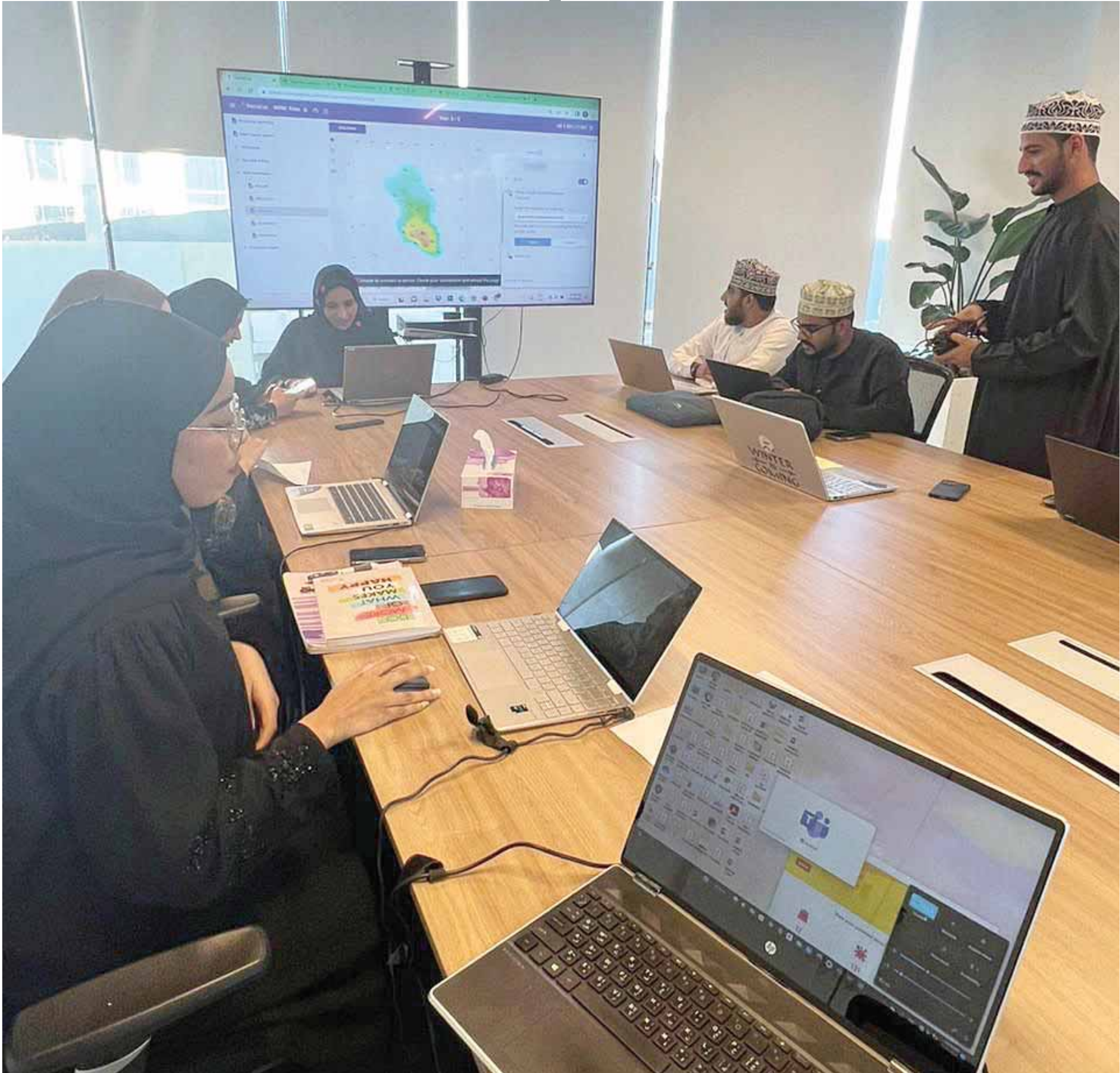
It's not hard to figure out who today's arsonists are. They aren't just Trump, Greene and Vladimir Putin.

They are also the ideological entrepreneurs in universities, businesses, publishing houses and news media working almost openly to undermine the missions of these institutions — intellectual excellence, profitability, free expression, objectivity — in the name of higher social goals like representation, sustainability, sensitivity and “moral clarity.”

Their aim isn't to make their homes better. It's to blow them up.

The harder challenge is to recognise our present-day Biedermanns: the university president who claims to believe in academic freedom, until he joins the arsonists in destroying the career of tenured faculty members; the magazine editor who claims to believe in vigorous debate, until he capitulates to those who don't; the Republican House member who says enough is enough after Jan. 6, until he finds it much more convenient to let bygones be bygones.

— The New York Times



SQU team wins third place in World Student Olympics

BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

STUDENTS OF Sultan Qaboos University won third place in the 2022 PetroCup World Student Olympics for oil and gas engineering students at the Russian NAFTA University.

Students studying petroleum engineering from various universities around the world compete in the PetroCup Olympics. Each participating university was asked to put together a group of ten petroleum engineering-focused students. The competition is based on the various tasks that are given to competitors. The assignment is to use a simulator to develop

an oil field and boost production for five years in a row.

The Society of Petroleum Engineers selected 10 students of Sultan Qaboos University including Aisha al Fadhailli, Aisha al Zaabi, Ali a Nizwani, Hamad al Fahdi, Ibrahim al Mahrouqi, Imran al Balushi, Mahmoud al Busaidy, Marwa al Surayhi, Rowa al Amri and Zayana al Busaidy. The SQU team in the first phase competed with regional teams and accomplished second place which qualified them for the global competition.

The team acknowledged that there were numerous challenges and struggles to overcome, making it difficult to win the competition. One of the challenges the team faced at the outset of their journey is the



way the team was put together. They found it challenging to collaborate with a group of ten people who all had unique perspectives, which was made more challenging by the fact that they had never worked as a team before. However, all acknowledged that in the end, they have a cohesive team that aspires to achieve greater success.

Additionally, they believe that their team's success is just the beginning and they intend to compete in additional regional and international competitions. Working as a team, in the opinion of senior Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering student Ibrahim al Mahrouqi, was the best option because different perspectives result in a variety of knowledge.

The team members concurred that their involvement in the PetroCup competition helped to develop and hone a variety of skills, including time management, cooperation, communication, problem-solving, management, and many others.

They also gain experience working under pressure because they had to put together a plan for running a specific field for five years in two days. Al Mahrouqi said that by taking part, he had the chance to learn many crucial skills related to the oil and gas industry. His self-confidence and awareness of his skills increased as a result of their winning qualities.

READ

HEALTHY AGING FOR DUMMIES

BY BRENT AGIN, SHARON PERKINS

Healthy Aging For Dummies explains how people can embark on a healthy lifestyle that will enable them to feel young, both mentally and physically, even as they're getting older.



CELEBRITIES

US-Mexican actress Salma Hayek arrives for the premiere of "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish" at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City — AFP



RECYCLING

A Christmas tree made from recycled plastic bottles by the non-profit and non-governmental organization Oke Spire and collaborators with some 15,000 plastic bottles — AFP





INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



sameer.mohd25
Muscat, Oman

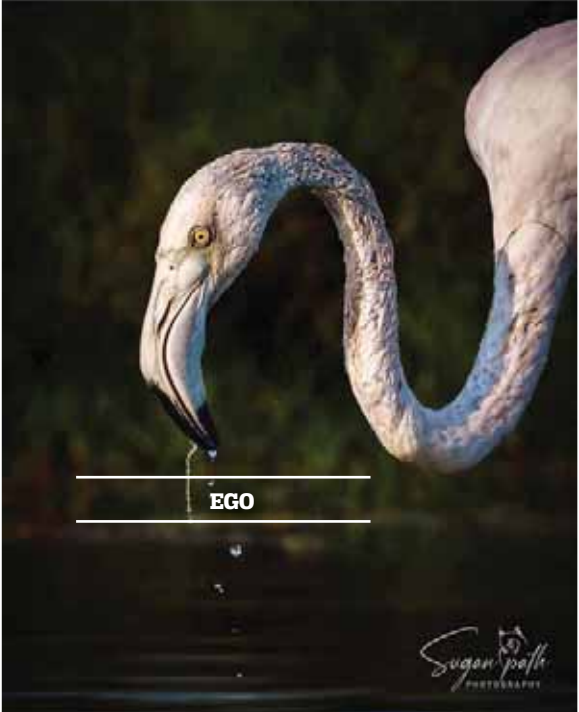
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NATURE



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0

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AROUND THE WORLD

FESTIVAL

Lyon's Festival of Lights goes energy lite to save power



LYON'S 'FETE DES LUMIERES', or Festival of Lights, which features intricate light structures projected on historical monuments and public buildings across town, is toning things down a bit this year due to the energy crisis, organisers said. "We are in a period of sobriety, so we took special care regarding the choice of technology", Lyon mayor Gregory Doucet told reporters. The cost of electricity for the four-day festival, which has 30 artworks consisting of monumental projections, immersive installations and luminous objects, amounts to only 3,500 euros (\$3,684), he said. Artists were asked to save energy by using more efficient LED bulbs, and the environmental



impact of their artwork was taken into account during the selection process. "The festival is now part of the city's DNA. It's important to maintain this event, but that doesn't mean we can't send a message of sobriety," Doucet explained. Lyon locals Beatrice Roche and Laurent Oger attend the festival every year. "I feel it's a little bit less ostentatious than the previous year", Roche said. Oger added that "the benefit-consumption ratio seems reasonable". "La Fete des Lumieres", originally a festival in which locals celebrate the Virgin Mary by putting a candle on their window sills, attracts large crowds of visitors from all over the world. It has changed considerably since its origins. This year, one of the artworks is the projection on Lyon's art museum of giant portraits singing, among others, Britney Spears and AC/DC songs. — Reuters

SCIENCE

NASA to conduct first global water survey from space



A NASA-LED international satellite mission was set for blastoff from Southern California early on Thursday on a major Earth science project to conduct a comprehensive survey of the world's oceans, lakes and rivers for the first time. Dubbed SWOT, short for Surface Water and Ocean Topography, the advanced radar satellite is designed to give scientists an unprecedented view of the life-giving fluid covering 70 per cent of the planet, shedding new light on the mechanics and consequences of climate change. A Falcon 9 rocket, owned and operated by billionaire Elon Musk's commercial launch company SpaceX, was set to liftoff before dawn on Thursday from the Vandenberg US Space Force Base, about 170 miles (275 km) northwest of Los Angeles, to carry SWOT into orbit. If all goes as planned, the SUV-sized satellite will produce research data within several months. Nearly 20 years in development, SWOT incorporates advanced microwave radar technology that scientists say will collect height-surface measurements of oceans, lakes, reservoirs and rivers in high-definition detail over 90 per cent of the globe. The data, compiled from radar sweeps of the planet at least twice every 21 days, will enhance ocean-circulation models, bolster weather and climate forecasts and aid in managing scarce freshwater supplies in drought-stricken

regions, according to researchers. The satellite was designed and built at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) near Los Angeles. Developed by the US space agency in collaboration with its counterparts in France and Canada, SWOT was one of 15 missions listed by the National Research Council as projects NASA should undertake in the coming decade. "It's really the first mission to observe nearly all water on the planet's surface," said JPL scientist Ben Hamlington, who also leads NASA's sea-level change team. One major thrust of the mission is to explore how oceans absorb atmospheric heat and carbon dioxide in a natural process that moderates global temperatures and climate change. Scanning the seas from orbit, SWOT is designed to precisely measure fine differences in surface elevations around smaller currents and eddies, where much the oceans' drawdown of heat and carbon is believed to occur. And SWOT can do so with 10 times greater resolution than existing technologies, according to JPL. **LOOKING FOR OCEANS' TIPPING POINT** Oceans are estimated to have absorbed more than 90 per cent of the excess heat trapped in Earth's atmosphere by human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. Studying the mechanism by which that happens will

help climate scientists answer a key question: "What is the turning point at which oceans start releasing, rather than absorbing, huge amounts of heat back into the atmosphere and accelerate global warming, rather than limiting it," said Nadya Vinogradova Shiffer, SWOT's programme scientist at NASA in Washington. SWOT's ability to discern smaller surface features also be used to study the impact of rising ocean levels on coastlines. More precise data along tidal zones would help predict how far storm-surge flooding may penetrate inland, as well as the extent of saltwater intrusion into estuaries, wetlands and underground aquifers. Freshwater bodies are another key focus SWOT, equipped to observe the entire length of nearly all rivers wider than 330 feet (100 metres), as well as more than 1 million lakes and reservoirs larger than 15 acres (62,500 square metres). Taking inventory of Earth's water resources repeatedly over SWOT's three-year mission will enable researchers to better trace fluctuations in the planet's rivers and lakes during seasonal changes and major weather events. NASA's SWOT freshwater science lead, Tamlin Pavelsky, said collecting such data was akin to "taking the pulse of the world's water system, so we'll be able to see when it's racing and we'll be able to see when it's slow." — Reuters

ENVIRONMENT

Activists dressed as birds and trees rally for nature at COP15 in Montreal



HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE on Saturday braved sub-zero temperatures to march the streets of Montreal, the host city of this year's UN biodiversity summit, demanding a strong new deal to protect nature worldwide. Wearing costumes to look like birds, trees and caribou, activists said the COP15 summit could fail to meet the urgency of the issue, with about 1 million plant, insect and other animal species now threatened with extinction. "We are inside the negotiations, we see what is happening and it is clearly not sufficient compared to our ambitions and our priorities," said the Global Youth Biodiversity Network's Esmeralda Wirtz, who travelled from Belgium to attend the summit. "That's why it is important to be on the streets today." Delegates from 193 countries at the summit are considering 24 targets, including pollution cuts and protecting 30 per cent of the world's land and sea by 2030. "Governments have had years to reach the agreement we need to save our planet's biodiversity from extinction," said Oscar Soria, campaign director at Avaaz, a global civic movement which helped to organise Saturday's march. With the draft agreement still being negotiated, Soria worried there wouldn't be enough time for an ambitious deal before the summit closes on Dec. 19. "They've turned COP15 into a stand-off," Soria said. Police on horseback, bicycle and foot patrolled the perimeter of the peaceful march, from where it began in Montreal's Mont Royal Park to the city's downtown, where COP15 is being held from Dec. 7-19. The march through Montreal also saw strong calls to protect human rights, particularly those of Indigenous groups who for years have worked to prevent nature loss on their lands. Arkilaus Kladi, a member of the Knasaimos-Tehit tribe, travelled to Montreal from West Papua, Indonesia. Dressed in a thick black parka against a midday temperature of -7 degrees Celsius (19 degrees Fahrenheit), Kladi said via translator that illegal logging and development activities were threatening the forests back home. Countries' ministers join the negotiations next week in Montreal with the hope of adopting a deal to guide conservation through 2030 and beyond. — Reuters





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To know more



125 Omanis benefit from training support under India’s ITEC programme this year



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, DEC 14

Around 125 training slots have been made available by the Indian government to Omanis this year as part of the ‘Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC)’ programme.

This was revealed by Indian Ambassador Amit Narang at a function marking ITEC Day at the embassy premises on December 13, 2022. Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

In opening remarks, Ambassador Narang said: “The ITEC programme that we are celebrating today is a manifestation of this ancient philosophy of India, which emphasizes not just acquisition but sharing of knowledge on the same footing. Under the ITEC programme, India shares its knowledge and

know-how for capacity building of other developing countries. It is however, not a one-way or a top-down process. It is a collaborative process in which India also gains by the sharing of knowledge and experience that this process facilitates.”

Around 100 people attended the reception. They included ITEC alumni from Oman, comprising officials and professionals from diverse sectors who have participated in various training courses in India under ITEC programme during previous years.

Ambassador Narang stressed India’s commitment to helping the Sultanate of Oman achieve the objectives of ‘Oman Vision 2040’, The ITEC programme has been enthusiastically subscribed to by hundreds of Omani officials and has not only facilitated specialised training and skill upgradation but also acted as a bridge to connect Indian and Omani people, he said.

TURN TO PAGE 12

Oman to host Amazon’s first AWS Local Zone in MENA region

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

As part of the Omani government’s efforts to tap international investment in the ITC sector, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to launch a local zone for cloud services and data hosting in Oman.

With the signing of the MoU, Oman is the first country in the MENA region to host AWS Local Zone after its launch in the US and other cities in the world. AWS also signed an MoU with Omantel to enhance the latter’s efforts to provide innovative solutions to its subscribers.

The MoUs were signed by Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology’s (MoTCIT), Wojcic Bagda, Director of the Public Sector in MENA at Amazon Web Services and Talal bin Said al Maamari, CEO of Omantel.

First launched in 2019, AWS had previously concentrated its Local Zone rollout in the US. AWS now has 25 AWS Local Zones worldwide, with announced plans to launch 27 more globally. AWS Local Zones are a type of infrastructure deployment that place AWS computing, storage, database, and other services near major centres of population, industry, and information



technology (IT), allowing them to deploy applications that require latency in the single digits of a millisecond to end users or on-premises data centres.

With the signing of the MoU, the MoTCIT aims to attract investments prospects in data centres and cloud services in, support digital transformation and contribute to the growth of the digital economy in the country. Amazon Web Services is one of the largest international companies specialised in data hosting services.

The agreement also aims to provide companies with access to the latest cloud technologies that enable them to continue innovation and digital transformation, which will contribute to Oman’s position as a global centre for data and cloud services. Under this cooperation, Amazon will train university students and job-seekers who are ITC majors and also provide trainings programmes for start-

up companies Dr Al Shaithani said, “The infrastructure in Oman and the extension of submarine cables contribute to supporting the digital economy projects and digital transformation and strengthen Oman’s position as an international hub to host and process data and provide cloud services in the Middle East. Today, we are very happy that we can provide the best cloud computing technologies to different businesses in country, in cooperation with one of the most important companies in the world in this field.

“The Local Zone of Amazon Web Services in Oman will enable local customers to store their data locally and take advantage of fast processing and response.

This contributes to increasing local companies’ access to advanced technologies and leveraging the full range of cloud services such as analytics, AI, cloud computing applications, machine learning, applications,

storage services and others, enabling them to increase the pace of innovation in their business.

Wojcic Bagda, Director of the Public Sector in MENA at Amazon Web Services, said: “We are pleased to launch our new Local Zone in the capital, Muscat, which will provide companies advanced cloud services infrastructure, as well as diverse and complete set of tools, solutions, computing, storage and data hosting services.

The new region will contribute to supporting the digital transformation journey of Oman and help achieving its vision for the digital future. This step comes within the framework of our efforts aimed at providing support to our customers in the Sultanate of Oman and enabling them to making the most of our advanced cloud services, as well as allowing local customers to store their data locally and to provide applications and services to their customers with very low response time.”

TURN TO PAGE 12

Construction work begins on Oman’s first green ammonia project

Green energy: First molecules targeted for export by mid-2025

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 14

Construction work has commenced on Oman’s first green ammonia project, underscoring the aggressive pace at which a new green hydrogen industry is set to materialise in support of the nation’s decarbonisation strategy.

Green Hydrogen and Chemicals Company (GHC), a joint venture between the UK unit of Indian energy developer ACME Group and Norway-based Scatec ASA, a leading renewable energy solutions provider, is developing the country’s maiden green energy venture at the Special Economic Zone in Duqm.

Phase 1, powered by around

500 MW or renewables, targets the production of 100,000 metric tonnes per annum of green ammonia. In the second phase, green ammonia output is anticipated to grow 12-fold to around 1.2 million metric tonnes annually.

Giving an update on the project, a top official of ACME Group said a number of consultants and contractors are currently engaged in the implementation of the project on the ground in Duqm. “We have already started the basic construction work even as our final financial closures are going to be sanctioned in a matter of weeks, hopefully before Christmas, but if not, then possibly in January 2023,” said Rajat Seksaria, CEO – ACME Group.

“The approach we have taken is very disruptive; we are not



waiting for a classical FID (Final Investment Decision), but using an entrepreneur approach, we are putting in our own equity until we get the final financial closure done,” Seksaria stated.

Speaking at the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2022, which was

held in Muscat last week, the official noted that initial capex costs totalling in excess of \$150 million to date have already been expended or committed towards the project.

“Specifically for this first phase, we already either spent or given commitments in the form of POs (purchase orders) totalling around \$40 million and LoIs (Letters of Intent) for around \$111 million, and this doesn’t take into account all the other overheads towards business development that we’ve been spending.

So we really want to speed up because we want to ship out the first molecules, ideally by end-2024, but we have kept open a window to achieve this certainly by the first half of 2025. That’s why we are working 24x7 on this project.”

To underpin the overall viability of the project and its

eventual bankability, ACME Group developed a pilot scheme at its facilities in the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan. The facility, serving as a “test-bed” for the Oman venture, was visited by Omani officials, as well as experts from countries around the world, he noted.

In addition to renewables and electrolyser components, the Oman project will also feature a desalination plant, hydrogen unit, ammonia storage facility and transportation components.

Some battery capacity is envisioned as well, he said.

“We have already signed the usufruct agreement with Oman’s authorities last year; the offtake term sheet (with Norwegian based ammonia distributor Yara) has been signed and a final agreement will be signed in a matter of weeks,” Seksaria added.

Bank Nizwa, Housing Ministry to offer real estate financing solutions

MUSCAT: The first and most trusted Islamic bank in Oman, Bank Nizwa, has partnered with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to offer attractive financing options to customers eligible to purchase properties in the premium Hai Al Naseem Housing Project in Barka, which falls under the ‘Surouh’ initiative.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has implemented a national initiative to make affordable housing available to all citizens in line with Oman Vision 2040. Khaled al Kayed, the Chief Executive Officer of Bank Nizwa and Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing, signed the agreement in the presence of several senior officials from both entities. This agreement will enable customers to own modern homes with unique specifications at Hai Al Naseem for a reduced price and with a competitive profit rate. In partnership with various government agencies and development projects, Bank Nizwa continues to provide innovative financial solutions and banking



products. These offerings consider customers’ evolving needs and keep up with their aspirations. Khaled al Kayed stressed the importance of concluding such agreements to strengthen the local economy, saying, “Bank Nizwa is committed to supporting national initiatives in collaboration with the government to achieve the goals for urban development in line with the Oman Vision 2040.

We at Bank Nizwa are honoured to contribute to this initiative’s success, which will be crucial

to achieving social and family stability. This agreement aligns with the bank’s strategy to support and finance various institutions.

We are committed to maintaining our support to meet the requirements of the next stage. Bank Nizwa will continue backing a multitude of projects in the Sultanate of Oman that enhance the local economy.

Furthermore, we have adopted many initiatives that address social issues and have established ourselves as a financing company

that is transparent, flexible, reliable and complies with Islamic principles.”

In its capacity as the Sultanate of Oman’s first Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa has always worked to improve the socio-economic landscape, cooperating directly or indirectly with numerous institutions to finance critical national projects. Aside from that, it has supported small and medium-sized businesses that positively and sustainably impact the country.

Sohar International launches revamped Minor Account

MUSCAT: Committed to nurturing a financially conscious society while encouraging savings and future planning amongst minors, Sohar International recently announced the launch of its revamped Minor Account. The Sohar | Minor Account is the perfect financial tool for parents who are looking at giving their child an early start in life by securing their future from a financial perspective.

With a zeal of features and benefits consisting of competitive interest rates on savings and zero minimum charges to free cash withdrawals from local ATMs and instantly issued debit cards, Sohar | Minor Account is designed to meet the needs of the local market and provide more value.

Commenting on the launch of the revamped account, Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking Officer at Sohar International said, “The world we live in today provides us significant exposure in all aspects of life including and not limited to financial literacy and banking in general. With that, parents have become more financially conscious especially when it comes to their children and how they



can instil healthy financial habits within them.

The new generations are continuously fuelled through their inherent ambitious spirits. It is, therefore, critical that they understand the importance of how such products enable them to save, invest, and therefore secure a promising future. One of the biggest advantages that minors have with respect to savings is the aspect of time. Inculcating a judicious savings mindset today will serve as a springboard to help them fulfil their dreams in the future.”

Al Hedaifi added, “Customer segmentation is a key aspect of retail innovation at Sohar

International. In line with this, Sohar International’s Minor Account is designed in a way that it offers the necessary encouragement to targeted segment to save for the future by offering them several benefits that complement their lifestyle.”

While an initial deposit amount of RO 50 is required to open the Minor Account, there are no minimum balance charges thereafter. On opening the account, children below 15 years are entitled to a free branded cash deposit card which can be used for deposits at Sohar International CDMs. With the intention of safeguarding the savings, these cards do not offer any withdrawal facility.

Meanwhile, children aged 15 years and above are provided a free branded debit card with a daily ATM cash withdrawal or POS usage limit of RO 50 per transaction. It also has a cap to ensure the total transaction amount does not exceed RO 200 per month. Parents interested in opening minor account for their children can simply head towards any of Sohar International branches with the necessary documentations.

ahli Islamic continues to offer 1% Hiba on Qitaf account

MUSCAT: Upholding its commitment to enhance customers’ banking experiences with products and services that are rewarding and gratifying, ahli Islamic has extended its exciting 1 per cent Hiba for new-to-bank deposits.

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

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

Highlighting the benefits accruing from the Hiba offer, Noora Sultan, AGM – Head of Retail Banking ahli Islamic, said, “We are leveraging the popularity of our Qitaf Savings Account to help new to bank customers establish a strong financial base with the added benefit of gift.

Our objective is to reward customers with an attractive cashback offer that will augment their financial strengths and inculcate a strong savings culture. We

have, from the very beginning, demonstrated our intent to enhance our customers’ banking experiences and financial inclusion with products and services that are tailored to meet the customers’ immediate and future needs, and the one per cent Hiba on Qitaf deposits is aimed at precisely this factor.

With the one per cent credited directly to the account, after the 3-month deposit period, we are opening investment avenues for our new customers an easy and convenient option to grow their finances.

“The offer is a part of our ongoing efforts to provide easy platforms for new-to-bank. We have taken constructive steps to create better awareness and understanding of Islamic banking, inspiring new customers to join our fold.

ahli Islamic’s Qitaf Savings Account is an investment account that enables you to invest your money based on the Shari’a principles of Mudaraba, whereby the account holder (Rabb ul-Mal) invests funds with ahli Islamic (Mudarib) through an unrestricted Mudaraba contract.

Furthermore, you can optimise your profitable investments with the option to withdraw funds at any time.



Feature-packed Kia K5 now with season of winning benefits

MUSCAT: Now own the Kia K5 and get a chance to be a winner with Kia! On offer is a chance to win a brand new Kia Niro Hybrid Electric Vehicle and Comprehensive Service up to 50,000 kms, 1 Year Insurance and Cash Gift. (Conditions apply. Please visit Kia showroom for details.) The K5’s angular design language highlights the brand’s new chapter in boldness and passion.

Adding to this is the K5’s low-slung and fastback silhouette from the side, highlighted by a chrome garnish that spans the roofline and wraps around the rear glass. The K5’s impressive exterior styling is enhanced with a number of exterior design features that include LED Headlamps, LED Daytime Running Lights, LED Front Fog Lamps, LED Rear Fog Lamps, LED Rear Combination Lamps, 18” Alloy Wheels, Solar

Glass, Panoramic Sunroof and Dual LED Headlamps.

The K5 is equipped with a powerful 2.5L GDI engine that offers 191 HP and 25.1 KG.M. Torque. The engine is paired to an 8-speed Automatic Transmission.

In the K5 a range of features enhance every experience. They include Drive Mode Select, Auto Cruise Control, Power Driver Seat, Auto AC, Power Passenger Seat, Navigation with 10.25” Display, Premium Music System, Red Leather Seats, Ventilated Front Seats, Paddle Shifter, Aluminium Pedals, Mood Lamp, Android Auto & Car Play and more.

Harmonising the open layout of the cockpit is a newly designed infotainment display that seamlessly stretches into the instrument panel, creating a futuristic, three-dimensional layout and driver-centric space.



Creating an inviting and comfortable interior are a range of features that include Tinted Glass, Tilt & Telescopic Steering, Radio with USB, Audio Remote Control, Driver’s Seat Height Adjuster, Rear AC Vents, Leather AT Knob and more.

Like with any other Kia vehicle, safety is an important aspect that contributes to making every drive fun. The K5 is equipped with a

range of advanced safety features like Driver and Front Passenger Airbags, Side and Curtain Airbags, Electro Chromic Inside Mirror, Blind Spot Collision Warning (BCW), Blind Spot View Monitor (BVM), Around View Monitor (AVM), Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Stability Programme (ESP), Tyre Pressure Monitoring system (TPMS), Front and Rear Parking Assist system and

Electric Parking Brake (EPB) with Auto Hold and more.

Customers looking to own a Kia can visit any showroom and experience a Kia. The campaign will end on January 26, 2023 (Conditions apply).

Kia (www.kia.com) is a global mobility brand with a vision to create sustainable mobility solutions for consumers, communities, and societies around the world. Founded in 1944, Kia has been providing mobility solutions for more than 75 years. With 52,000 employees worldwide, a presence in more than 190 markets, and manufacturing facilities in six countries, the company today sells around three million vehicles a year.

Kia is spearheading the popularisation of electrified and battery electric vehicles and developing a growing range of

mobility services, encouraging millions of people around the world to explore the best ways of getting around. The company’s brand slogan – ‘Movement that inspires’ – reflects Kia’s commitment to inspire consumers through its products and services.

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No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the ‘Good Partnership award’, ‘Family Like Care’ Service award’, and ‘Kia ‘Distributor of Distinction’ award.

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saif bin Khalfan bin Ahmed al-Jabri, Chairman of the Supreme Court Saif bin Khalfan bin Ahmed al-Jabri, Chairman of the Supreme Court Saif bin Khalfan bin Ahmed al-Jabri, Chairman of the Supreme Court

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Revolution and in commemoration of the memory of the founder late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a sixth series of new RO 50 banknote, which will begin circulating this month.

SOME PEOPLE ARE FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING

MUSCAT: The frequent orders and appeals issued by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are being followed by some people, while most people ignore the country's guidelines.

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

MUSCAT: The frequent orders and appeals issued by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are being followed by some people, while most people ignore the country's guidelines.



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Need to strengthen Islamic banking sector in Oman



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCI.

The Islamic banking sector in the region has grown significantly since it was launched in the early seventies of the last century, to become today a competitor to traditional banks and other banking and financial institutions. Islamic banks were launched in the Sultanate of Oman twelve years ago, and it was the last Gulf country in this regard, but today it occupies a prominent place in daily banking operations.

It also increased the confidence of many people in this sector, despite the limited number of products that it provides at the present time. The share of Islamic banking institutions in Oman today amounted to 16.2% of total assets at the end of the third quarter of this year, according to the data of the Central Bank of Oman, while the market share of the sector in total financing amounted to about 18.9%, and its share of total deposits was about 18.1%.

During the activities of the first session of the Islamic Banking and Finance Forum 2022, which was held recently, Tahir bin Salem al Amri, the Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman, revealed that the Central Bank is in the process of launching liquidity tools that are compatible with Islamic, which will meet the needs of customers, explaining that the Supreme Supervisory Authority Shariah has recently reviewed and approved the contract structures for these products that will be offered by Islamic banks and windows.

The Central Bank is also working on preparing a

roadmap for the windows of traditional banks to convert them into integrated Islamic banks taking into account all the regulatory requirements.

This sector has begun to give more attention to small and medium-sized companies and their employees, and to strengthen their operations in productive sectors such as agriculture and provide services to the logistical sectors that are growing significantly, which gives them the ability to compete, and enhances the benefits of customers and shareholders.

Converting the banking windows of traditional banks into full Islamic banks will create great competition with the current banks, at a time when there are only two Islamic banks in the Sultanate of Oman, while they will be acquired by a traditional bank, which is not approved by the Omani public, at a time when

The Central Bank focuses on supporting the Islamic banking sector. There are several main axes that include maintaining the growth of Islamic banking activity, enhancing financial stability, expanding financial inclusion, building capabilities and developing talents, and promoting and spreading banking awareness, which requires continuous efforts by those in charge to communicate the idea of Islamic banking.

The aim is how to deal with the sector, first and foremost the participation of community members and institutions in the development of community businesses in a positive way without carrying and introducing them into financial difficulties and challenges as happens with traditional banking institutions.

The Islamic banking sector needs to strengthen legislation to adopt best practices in order to be able to expand with Islamic products that also require protection from the concerned authorities and enhance transparency, so that the legislation regulating banks will distinguish what Islamic banks do as distinct from what conventional banks do.

Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals marks 20th anniversary



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 14

Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals marked its 20th anniversary culmination event as a grand celebration conducted at The City Amphitheatre in Qurum, Muscat. An overwhelming participation of more than 4,000 guests made this event successful and memorable.

The event was attended by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; Dr Muhanna bin Nasir Ali Muslahi, Director-General of Private Health Establishments, Ministry of Health; Ali Salim Al Jabri, Member of Majlis Ash'shura; Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; ambassadors of India, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania; under-secretaries, officials and media. Nadir Shah, writer, director, lyricist, actor and singer led a contingent of talented and well-known artists from India who performed during the event. Haitham Rafi, a well-known Omani singer also entertained the crowd with his singing.

The official ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Wahaibi followed by the national anthem of the Sultanate of Oman.

Moideen Kunhi Bilal, Executive Director, Badr Al Samaa Group, in his welcome address expressed sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and late Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Al Said for their blessings and inspiring Badr Al Samaa to play an exceptional role by taking huge responsibility in the private healthcare sector of Oman and becoming a household name. He said the milestone of 20 years motivates us to see bigger dreams and he reiterated that the growth of Badr Al Samaa with the support of everyone will continue. He welcomed all the guests and

dignitaries.

Qais Bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in his address said that today we are not just celebrating Badr Al Samaa's 20 years of distinguished healthcare services right across the Sultanate of Oman but also the outstanding contribution of Badr Al Samaa to the goals of Oman's vision 2040 and the dynamic renaissance we are enjoying under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. He said Badr Al Samaa's success in the past two decades has not only had a profound impact on our nation's well being but it has also been a source of important training and career opportunities for ambitious young Omani Healthcare professionals.

Dr Muhana Bin Nasser Al Musalahi, Director-General of DGPHE, MoH, in his address said that it is impressive to see that the centres of Badr Al Samaa are continuously raising the bar of quality of care and adapting international accreditation programs. He said I am sure Badr Al Samaa's outstanding performance in accreditations, patient care, community support, inspires other partners in the private medical sector. He said Badr Al Samaa did not limit service to main cities and capital areas but moved outside to cover the small cities and rural areas of Oman, providing high standards of healthcare services at an affordable price and supported Omanization by employing a large number of Omani staff.

Dr P A Mohammed in his address said that we started Badr Al Samaa as a small medical centre with staff strength of 13 in year 2002 and in 20 years we have grown to the largest private healthcare group of Oman having 13 branches, 6 Hospitals and 7 Medical Centres with a total

staff strength of more than 2,000 out of which more than 500 are doctors. He said we specialized in advanced medical treatments and we are continuing to introduce newer technologies and medical programs like Oncology, IVF and more.

Abdul Latheef, Managing Director, Badr Al Samaa Group, said 20 years celebrations were filled with activities of giving back to society like a large number of CSR activities like free health screening and awareness camps, blood donation camps, cancer screening and awareness programs, Continuing Medical Education programs for doctors were conducted. He said currently more than 500 Omanis are working with us and we are creating more opportunities for the nationals in future. He said our focus on quality healthcare and patient safety is our priority and Badr Al Samaa is proud as these areas are certified by international accreditation bodies like JCI (USA) and ACSHI for all its hospitals and we meet all standards laid down by MoH.

Amit Narang, Honourable Ambassador of India, in his address said that nothing better represents India Oman friendship than the healthcare partnership between Indian and Omani people. Badr Al Samaa has effectively followed the footsteps of the growth of Oman itself and changed the scenario of the private healthcare sector of Oman for good. He congratulated the Badr Al Samaa family for making this achievement happen and wished for many more success stories in the future.

Dr. Firdous Mohammed Al Ghafri, Badr Al Samaa, said that Badr Al Samaa provides a congenial atmosphere of work for all Omanis and she as an Omani doctor is enjoying the encouraging work environment.

Firasath Hassan, Executive Director, Badr Al Samaa Group,

in his vote of thanks said that it is a matter of pride to pursue the journey of becoming the largest private healthcare group of Oman and achieving the milestone of successful 20 years. He said our approach to healthcare is ever evolving and we continuously introduce the best technology, treatment approaches, and clinical pool of talent and quality programs. He thanked all the guests and dignitaries present in the event.

During the ceremony the certificate of Joint Commission International (JCI), USA was handed over by Qais Bin Mohammed Al Yousef to the representing teams of Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Ruwi and Al Khoud. At the ceremony 12 Omani employees who worked with Badr Al Samaa for many years were felicitated.

Managing Directors and Executive Directors of Badr Al Samaa presented mementos to Chief Guest Qais Bin Mohammed Al Yousef, special guests Dr Muhana Bin Nasser al Musalahi and Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas. They also presented mementos to Nadir Shah who was leading the group of renowned entertainment artists from India and K O Devassy, the outgoing Chief Marketing Officer of Badr Al Samaa who passionately served the group for 20 years.

With the trust of its patients and dedication of its clinical and non-clinical work force, Badr Al Samaa rose to the heights of becoming the largest private healthcare group of Oman. A timeline video showcasing the growth of Badr Al Samaa was presented to the audience.

The event followed by the spectacular series of musical performances, singing, comedy, talent show under the banner of "The Nadir Show". Al Maha Bint Nasser al Aadiah was the master of ceremonies of the event.

IEA raises oil demand growth estimate

LONDON: Prompted by a rise in Russian's oil exports in November, the International Energy Agency has raised up its estimate for oil demand growth this year by 140,000 barrels per day to 2.3 million bpd.

The global agency has also increased its growth estimate for next year by 100,000 bpd to 1.7 million bpd for a total of 101.6 million bpd.

The IEA said on Wednesday that the rise in Russia's oil exports comes ahead of a December 5 price caps imposed by the Group of Seven rich democracies, the EU and Australia to curb Moscow's wartime revenue. "As we move through the winter months and towards a tighter oil balance in Q2 2023, another price rally cannot be ruled out," the IEA said.

However, lower global prices and steeper discounts for Russian oil meant Moscow's revenue fell by \$700 million to \$15.8 billion, it said. The Paris-based energy watchdog said it continues to expect the price cap to reduce Russia's oil output by 1.4 million barrels per day next year.

Oman to host Amazon's first AWS Local Zone in MENA region

FROM PAGE 9

Talal bin Said al Maamari, CEO of Omantel, explained that the MoU is another important step in the company's journey towards achieving the goals of digital transformation for its commercial subscribers. "We are confident that the launch of the Amazon data centre on the local scale will enable us to enhance our offerings of corporate cloud services, including those offered to SMEs," he said.

125 Omanis benefit from training support under India's ITEC programme this year

FROM PAGE 9

Launched in September 1964, the ITEC programme is an initiative to support capacity building of friendly developing countries. Since its inception, more than 200,000 professionals from more than 160 countries have benefited from ITEC

courses.

Today, India provides over 14000 scholarships covering a diverse range of subjects from traditional areas like agriculture, SMEs, management, English language to IT, Science & Technology, and biotechnology, among other areas.



THURSDAY | DECEMBER 15 | 2022 | JUMADA AL ULA 21 | 1444 AH



France's Randal Kolo Muani (top) scores his team's second goal past Morocco's goalkeeper Yassine Bounou during the Qatar 2022 World Cup semi-final football match between France and Morocco at the Al-Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha on Thursday. – AFP

FRANCE BLANK VALIANT MOROCCO TO ENTER FINAL

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 14

Star player Kylian Mbappe was behind the two goals as France blanked a valiant Morocco 2-0 in the second semifinal of the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 at the Al Bayt Stadium on Wednesday night. France started with a bang in their very first move of the match with a stunning goal in the fifth minute itself. Theo Hernandez's acrobatic bouncer from the right post went past an advancing goalkeeper Yassine Bounou to the net. The move began with Raphael Varane sending Antoine Griezmann through the right-side corner of Morocco penalty box to find Kylian Mbappe whose shot deflected off a Moroccan defender and reached Hernandez. The second goal came in the 79th minute

through substitute Randal Kuolo Muani. Morocco had their first shot on target in the 10th minute as France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris dived to his left to save the curling shot by Azzedine Ounahi. In the 17th minute, Morocco's Sofiane Boufal got a through pass inside the French box but was unable to capitalize on it. In the next minute, Giroud's shot hit the side post after a counter attack. In the 21st minute, Morocco captain and central defender Romain Saiss, who suffered a muscle pull, was substituted by Selim Amallah. In the 28th minute, Boufal was booked for a sliding tackle on Raphael Varane. Kylian Mbappe got through to a goal-scoring position in the 36th minute but could only make a weak contact. Giroud got the ball only to hit it wide.

MOROCCO MADE SOME GOOD ATTEMPTS IN THE FINAL MOMENTS BUT COULD NOT BREACH THE FRENCH DEFENCE

Varane's effort to flick from a Griezmann corner in the 40th minute was also off target. In the 44th minute, Morocco made a valiant attempt to score as Jawad El Yamiq's acrobatic effort from a corner was nicely punched out by Lloris. Morocco won a free kick during the stoppage time of first half but was punched away by Lloris. Amallah was not able to connect another free kick inside the box just before the half-time whistle as France led 1-0. Morocco brought in Yahya Attiat-Allah instead of defender Noussair Mazraoui in the second half. The African side came dangerously close to score an equaliser in the 53rd minute with Boufal's cross creating panic in the French defence. French forward Giroud was substituted by Marcus Thuram in the 65th minute.

Morocco also replaced Youseff En-Nesyri with Abderrazak Hamdallah and Boufal came off for Zakaria Aboukhla. Official crowd turnout was 68, 294 at the Al Bayt Stadium for the semifinal. French President Emmanuel Macron was among the VIP guests at the stands. Morocco had a good opening in the 65th minute but was not given space by the French defence to hit the shot. Amallah was replaced by Abde Ezzalzouli and France replaced Ousmane Dembelle for Kuolo Muani. Kuolo Muani immediately validated coach Didier Deschamps' decision as he netted after a brilliant build-up by France and Mbappe providing the final assist. Morocco made some good attempts in the final moments but could not breach the French defence.

ARGENTINA SHOWED GREAT CHARACTER TO REACH FINAL

LIONEL MESSI



Argentina's forward #10 Lionel Messi celebrates after defeating Croatia 3-0 in the Qatar 2022 World Cup football semi-final match between Argentina and Croatia at Lusail Stadium in Lusail, north of Doha yesterday. – AFP

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 14

Argentina superstar Lionel Messi said his team had shown great character and determination to pull through and reach the World Cup final after their opening loss against Saudi Arabia.

"The first match was a hard blow to all of us. At the time we had played the last 36 matches without a single loss. So, to lose the first match in the World Cup to a team nobody thought we could lose to was a strong blow to all of us as a group," Messi told reporters after the 3-0 thrashing of Croatia in the World Cup Qatar 2022 semifinal at the Lusail Stadium on Tuesday night.

"But this group showed, once again, its strength. We pulled through and won match after match. We've done something amazing because every match after that was like a final."

"It was mentally exhausting to play every match like that, knowing that a single loss or draw could put us in a complicated situation."

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

"So we played 5 finals, and luckily won all of them. Hopefully we'll win the next one too. 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."

Argentina scored 12 goals in Qatar. Messi netted five in them and made three assists.

The playmaker said he is enjoying the moment at the World Cup.

"I have no clue. What I know is how much I'm enjoying this moment. Luckily, I feel good, I feel strong to face every single game. We've made huge sacrifices."

"In the last game, we played a long extra-

time. That was not easy at all. As for today, we were exhausted, but the team dug in, adding some more extra energy to win."

He added that Argentina played with good discipline against Croatia.

"We've played with discipline today. We knew the game would be set up this way. We've done a great job. We were aware they'd keep possession of the ball, as they have key players in that sense, making us run. But despite that, we created our usual chances, the game also got out of hand quickly."

"Personally, I've felt really happy throughout the whole tournament, and I still do now. Luckily, I've managed to help the team get the results we wanted."

READING THE CRUCIAL MOMENTS

Messi said the team could perfectly read the crucial moments of the game.

"Well, this team — putting aside the strength we have collectively — is very smart, and we know how to read key moments of the game, of every game. Scaloni stated that we've got a very smart team,

that knows when and how to dig in, we know when and how to have the possession of the ball, we know when to press, when to sit back. Our professional coaching staff highlights everything you need to be aware of in each game, even if it's minimal."

"That's hugely helpful for us, when we're on the pitch."

Messi said Argentina were patient in the semifinal.

"We never feel lost. We can always tell what our duties are: to clinch victories. As I said earlier, we knew the game would have the shape it had."

"That's why we didn't feel desperate when we had to run, or when they ran from one flank to another."

"We knew that was their strength, keeping possession of the ball. But we also knew we could make the most of that whenever we recovered the ball."

"They play in a very unorganised way in the midfield to keep the ball, leaving many spaces. And we were able to take advantage of that."



MESSI AND ALVAREZ

fire Argentina past Croatia into World Cup final

DOHA: An inspired Lionel Messi scored from the penalty spot and Julian Alvarez struck twice as Argentina beat Croatia 3-0 on Tuesday to reach their second World Cup final in eight years.

The two-times world champions, backed their passionate, singing followers at the Lusail Stadium, produced their best display of the tournament to ensure they will meet the winners of Wednesday's semi-final between holders France and Morocco in Sunday's final.

Messi, 35, who suffered defeat to Germany in the 2014 final, is desperate to crown his extraordinary career by winning his first World Cup and a third for Argentina after wins in 1978 and 1986.

And after getting his team on the way to victory with a perfectly struck first-half penalty he made sure of the win by brilliantly creating the third goal.

"It's crazy, we did it, we did it, we're

going to play one more final, once again Argentina is in a World Cup final," said Messi, after celebrating in front of the massed ranks of South American supporters who have travelled to Qatar.

"Seeing all these people, this family, throughout the World Cup, what we have experienced is something incredible. We are going for the last game, which is what we wanted," he added.

Croatia, runners-up in Russia four years ago, paid the price for some poor defending as they went out in the last four for the second time after their 1998 loss to France.

"We lost the match. I have nothing to complain about regarding the boys. They gave their best during this whole tournament.... It is a deserved defeat," said coach Zlatko Dalic.

It was not until the 25th minute when the game showed signs of life with a low pot shot from outside the box by Enzo Fernandez but Croatia

keeper Dominik Livakovic did well to get across and keep it out.

It was a tight affair but then a simple lofted ball over the top from Fernandez caught out the Croatian defence, Alvarez latched on to it, knocking the ball past the advancing Livakovic who collided with the striker and Italian referee Daniele Orsato pointed to the spot.

The Croats protested, both the players on the field and the staff the bench, resulting in a red card for assistant coach Mario Mandzukic.

SCORING RECORD

Livakovic guessed correctly but his dive was in vain as Messi's sweetly struck drive flew high into the net to put his side 1-0 up in the 34th minute.

It was Messi's fifth goal of the tournament, making him joint top-scorer with France's Kylian Mbappe. His 11th career goal -- in a record-equalling 25th World Cup appearance

-- also took him past Gabriel Batistuta as Argentina's all-time World Cup top scorer. Five minutes later, Argentina doubled their lead when, after a break from a corner, Messi's first-time ball found Alvarez inside his own half who set off on a long dribble goalwards.

With the Croatian defence backing off, Alvarez rode weak challenges from Josip Juranovic and Borna Sosa and then slipped the ball past Livakovic to send the heavily Argentine crowd into delirium.

Alexis Mac Allister then went close with an angled header from a corner, forcing a fine save out of Livakovic to avoid a third.

All Croatia could muster in response, before the break, was a low Juranovic cross-shot that Emiliano Martinez reacted well to.

Messi saved his best for last though, tormenting Josko Gvardial down the right, twisting and turning to leave the 20-year-old defender behind and pull

the ball back to the clinical Alvarez who coolly slotted home his fourth goal of the tournament.

Croatia's dream was over, their 37-year-old playmaker Luka Modric, so key to their outstanding record in the past two tournaments, taking the applause when taken off nine minutes from the end of what was surely his final campaign.

"We're sad, we were hoping to play another final. It didn't happen. We have to congratulate Argentina and that's it," said Modric, who questioned the awarding of the penalty which changed the course of the game.

The third-place match is all that remains for Modric and Croatia but the big prize remains within reach for Argentina, Alvarez and Messi.

Now with a double attacking threat, confidence running through the squad and Messi in top form, they are peaking just in time for the biggest game of their lives. — AFP

F A N



Z O N E





Oman U-20 team training hard for Asia Cup assignment: Coach

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 14

The head coach of Oman U-20 football team, David Gordo, said that the team is undergoing intensive training ahead of the AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan in 2023. The Spanish coach told the Observer that the team concluded a 10-day camp in Muscat on Wednesday.

The domestic camp of the national team ended with another loss against Iran at 2-1 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Tuesday. The team had lost in the opening preparatory match against Iran at 1-0.

“Despite the result of the both friendly matches, the team is in good condition and the players are developing their technical performance. Our focus is to shape the players properly for the Asian assignment. The Iran team is considered as one of the favourite teams in Asia. They are a very strong team and have top players. The national team boys got the chance to play against them and have the right environment ahead of Asian event,” the coach said.

The head coach of Oman U-20 football team began the match with the starting lineup that included Mazin Saleh as a goalkeeper. Ayman al Nabhani took a place in the defending line beside Turki bait Rabee, Salim al Abdali and Osama al Mahruqi. The mid-field was managed



David Gordo

by Ahed al Mushekhi and assisted by Abdullah al Anbouri, Ali al Balushi, Mohammed Abdulhakeem and Abdulmajeed al Balushi. Salah al Jadidi was in the front as an attacker.

Commenting on the team’s forthcoming plan, the 52-year-old coach responded that the team will return to training camps in January. “ In the middle of January, the team will have another domestic warm up camp in Muscat or Dhofar. This camp may feature two preparatory matches against the Iraq team but this to be confirmed soon. In February, the plan

is to have an abroad camp near Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan. It will be a good chance for the players to adapt with the weather condition prior to the Asian task. We are working to have some more friendly matches in the months of February and March,” he said.

The AFC U20 Asian Cup is scheduled to take place in Tashkent from March 1 to 18, 2023. Oman is in Group C with South Korea, Tajikistan and Jordan. The hosts Uzbekistan will compete with Indonesia, Iraq and Syria in Group A while Qatar will try to secure a berth in quarterfinals as they will meet Australia, Vietnam and Iran in Group B.

Defending champions Saudi Arabia, Japan, China and Kyrgyzstan are in Group D. The top four teams in the Asian finals will confirm their presence in the Fifa U20 World Cup 2023, which will return to Asia in Indonesia from May 20 to June 11.

Oman Squad: Turki Abdullah, Al Muhatadi al Abri, Mohammed al Aufi, Abdullah al Rajhi, Al Muntasir al Maawali, Salim al Shammakhi, Moamin al Souli, Mulhim al Hadhrami, Osama al Rawahi, Salim al Abdali, Abdullah al Anbouri, Said al Ghanbousi, Al Harith al Mukhaini, Mosab al Shamsi, Abdulaleem al Rawahi, Ahed al Mushekhi , Mazin Saleh, Al Muhannad al Habsi, Abdulmajeed al Balushi, Ali al Balushi, Salah al Jadidi, Ayman al Nabhani and Mohammed Abdulhakim.

NBA renames MVP trophy after Bulls great Michael Jordan

NEW YORK: The NBA is renaming its annual regular-season Most Valuable Player award after legendary star Michael Jordan — who claimed the honour five times with the Chicago Bulls.

The league unveiled the newly designed Michael Jordan Trophy on Tuesday, along with five other reimagined trophies named after league pioneers that will now be presented to the National Basketball Association’s end-of-season award winners.

Jordan, a six-time NBA champion, won five MVPs in his 15-season career, tied for second-most behind Kareem Abdul-Jabbar who won six. The NBA’s Social Justice Champion award is named for Abdul-Jabbar. Other renamed awards announced on Tuesday are the Hakeem Olajuwon Trophy for the Defensive Player of the Year, the Wilt Chamberlain Trophy for Rookie of the Year, the John Havlicek Trophy for



Sixth Man of the Year and the George Mikan Trophy for Most Improved Player. The NBA also announced a new award for Clutch Player of the Year, named after Jerry West, who played in nine NBA Finals and remains the only player to win Finals MVP while losing the series. — AFP

Alcaraz to defend Barcelona title in 2023



BARCELONA: World number one Carlos Alcaraz will defend his title at the Barcelona ATP tournament in April, the organisers announced on Wednesday.

The 19-year-old Spaniard won the clay court event for the first time this year by despatching compatriot Pablo Carreno in the final.

“Alcaraz is the first player to have confirmed his participation for the next edition of the tournament,” the tournament organisers said in a press release.

It was his third of five titles in 2022, with the pinnacle being the US Open.

He ended the year as the world number one, the youngest player to claim the top ranking since they began in 1973.

“Carlos Alcaraz is a unique player, with a lot of charisma and who also has fun on the court,” said tournament director David Ferrer in a statement.

“We are talking about a world number one who has been the youngest player in history to achieve it.

“He still has a whole career ahead of him to keep improving and growing as a player. He will be the great dominator of the circuit for the next 10 years, without a doubt.” — AFP

Wadi Kabir beat OCA in women’s cricket league

MUSCAT: Wadi Kabir beat Oman Cricket Academy by 7 wickets in the Women’s League Season 2022-23 powered by TM Done and Indian School Wadi Kabir Lions U16 beat Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre Yellow U16 by 56 runs in the Junior U16 League Season 2022-23 powered by Mazoon Dairy.

In the Women’s League match, OCA women rightly called the toss and elected to bat first. A steady partnership between Nitya Joshi and Nayan Anil took the OCA Women’s past 50 at the halfway of the inning losing just 1 wicket. However, Clarita Saldanha’s tidy bowling spell picking 3 wickets in her quota of overs made the OCA women lose wickets at regular intervals crumbling down

to 103. In response, a long-stand partnership of 64 runs at halfway mark between openers Shreya Prabhu and Clarita Saldanha almost ensured Wadi Kabir Women getting across the line. However, OCA Women picked 3 wickets in quick succession but Pratima B’s two boundaries ensured the Wadi Kabir Women crossed the line. Brief Scores: OCA Women 103/7 in 20 overs (Nitya Joshi 23(28) 3x4 ; Clarita Saldanha 11(3) lost to Wadi Kabir Women 104/3 in 18.1 overs (Shreya Prabhu 28(62) 3x4 ; Anshita Tiwary 9(1) by 7 wickets.

In the U16 League match, ISWK Lions U16’s won the toss and elected to bat first. ISWK Lions lost 2 early wickets in the powerplay with the middle order asked to



Shreya Prabhu and Clarita Saldanha

take control of the team. ISWK’s Saumya Sampat (67 of 67) and



Saumya Sampat

Shaunak Karvat (38 of 38) ensured that they get on a respectable total

to fight for. ISWK jotted 195 runs at the end of the innings losing 9

wickets courtesy Aditya Hegde’s 3 wickets and 2 wickets a piece for Shravan Shridhar and Hardik Shah. In response, MCCC Yellow U16 got off to a shaky start losing 3 wickets in the powerplay. Haider Sikora along with Mohd Imran Bohri and Yasin Asif tried getting closer to the target as much as possible but fell short losing wickets to the mighty spinners of ISWK Lions.

Dalwik Khandheria and Pushkar Kumar bagged 3 wickets each and Mohd Hanzalah claimed 2 wickets. Brief Scores : ISWK Lions U16 195/9 in 30 overs (Saumya Sampat 67(67) 5x4 ; Aditya Hegde 28(3) beat MCCC Yellow U16 139/10 in 24.2 overs (Haider Sikora 43(48) 5x4 ; Pushkar Kumar 13(3) by 56 runs.

Two relay world records smashed as Australia take charge at swim short course titles

MELBOURNE: Two more relay world records tumbled on Wednesday at the World Short Course Championships as rising Australian star Lani Pallister completed the 400-800m freestyle double and Olympic champion Kaylee McKeown won 100m backstroke gold.

Led by home by Pallister, Australia smashed the women's 4x200m freestyle record by nearly two seconds, touching in 7mins 30.97secs to obliterate the old mark set by the Netherlands in 2014. Canada came second and the USA third.

"To be here with these girls and come away with the world record is something I have dreamed about forever," said Pallister, standing on the Melbourne pool deck with teammates Madi Wilson, Mollie O'Callaghan and Leah Neale.

The United States shattered the mixed 4x50m medley mark, hitting the wall in 1:35.15 ahead of Italy.

Former world record holders the Netherlands came third, but were disqualified, handing Canada the bronze.

"My best split ever. Pretty cool experience to see that world record go down," said the USA's Nic Fink, who swam the breaststroke leg. Torri Huske, Ryan Murphy and Kate Douglass were also on the team.

— McKeown sizzles — It was the fourth world record of the meet after Australia set a new best in the women's 4x100 freestyle relay and Italy in the men's race on the



opening day on Tuesday.

Huske backed up to win the women's 50m butterfly gold while Brazilian veteran Nicholas Santos took out the men's crown aged 42.

Dominant 20-year-old Palliser built on her 400m win by winning 800m gold by a huge six seconds from New Zealand's Erika Fairweather, touching in a personal best 8mins 04.07secs.

"It definitely hurt a lot but coming away with another win is

just insane," she said.

Middle distance greats Katie Ledecky and Ariarne Titmus skipped the meet and Chinese 800m defending champion Li Bingjie again failed to suit up after pulling out of the 400m on Tuesday. Her American coach Mark Schubert told reporters she had Covid.

Australia's double Tokyo Olympic backstroke champion McKeown swam a sizzling final 25m

lap to claim the 100m title in 55.49, edging O'Callaghan, who usually swims freestyle, with American Claire Curzan and Canada's Ingrid Wilm joint third.

"I had a bit of a rough turn in my third 25 so I knew I had to give it everything coming home," said McKeown.

American veteran Murphy, a four-time Olympic gold medallist, won the men's 100m backstroke title with ease in a championship



record 48.50 ahead of Italy's Lorenzo Mora and Australian Issac Cooper.

Meanwhile, men's 100m freestyle world record holder Kyle Chalmers of Australia qualified third fastest for Thursday's final with teenage Romanian sprint star David Popovici — the long course world record holder — fifth.

They were both upstaged by little-know Caymen Islander Jordan Crooks who was quickest.

Tokyo Olympic champion Emma McKeon was comfortably first into the women's 100m freestyle final in 51.28 ahead of defending champion Siobhan Haughey of Hong Kong.

Adam Peaty made his tournament bow in the 100m breaststroke with the British long-course world record holder qualifying fourth into Wednesday's final. American long course record holder Lily King was fastest into the women's decider. — AFP

Pujara, Iyer put India in command against Bangladesh

CHITTAGONG: Cheteshwar Pujara and Shreyas Iyer powered India to a strong 278-6 on the opening day of the first Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong on Wednesday. Pujara hit 90 while Iyer remained unbeaten on 82, with both riding their luck. Axar Patel was out on the last ball of the day for 14, trapped leg-before as the second of off-spinner Mehidy Hasan's two wickets. Taijul Islam, the most successful bowler for Bangladesh with 3-84, bowled Pujara to end a dogged innings that featured 11 fours. Pujara and Iyer came together after India lost their fourth wicket on 112, with signs of spin in the first-day track at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium. Left-arm spinner Taijul had opener Shubman Gill out for 20 in the opening session before he trapped India's danger-man Virat Kohli leg-before for one.



India's Cheteshwar Pujara plays a shot during the first day of the first cricket Test match between Bangladesh and India at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. — AFP

In between, KL Rahul dragged a Khaled Ahmed delivery onto his stumps after making 22. Rishabh Pant launched a counter-attack, hitting six fours and two sixes to put India back in the driving seat after being 48-3. Mehidy ended his attacking innings in the post-

lunch session when he bowled Pant for 46. Wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan dropped Pujara off Ebadot Hossain on 12 in the second ball of the second session. Pujara and Iyer then took on the Bangladeshi bowlers before the hosts fought their way back into the contest

with two late strikes. India had made a brisk start, reaching 41 runs in 13 overs after stand-in skipper Rahul won the toss and elected to bat first. Gill attempted a paddle sweep but top-edged to Yasir Ali at leg slip. Taijul got the big wicket of Kohli after Rahul fell to Khaled. Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan passed a fitness test to lead the home side, with opening batsman Zakir Hasan making his Test debut. India have been hit by injuries, with captain Rohit Sharma out for at least the first match and fast bowler Mohammed Shami and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja playing no part in the series. The two-match series forms part of the ICC World Test Championship. India are fourth, having won six of their 12 matches. Bangladesh are in last place with eight defeats from 10 matches. — AFP

Uganda football team pulls out of CHAN tournament

KAMPALA: Uganda's national football team, the Cranes, has pulled out of the African Nations Championship tournament due to a lack of funds, a senior official said on Wednesday.

The tournament is due to be held in Algeria next month but the Ugandan team will not be participating because of the government's failure to provide the promised funding, said Moses Magogo, president of the Federation of Uganda Football Associations. "A hard decision was taken to pull the Cranes out of CHAN finals because without funds there is no other available option," Magogo said.

"It's a very disappointing situation especially (for) the players, the coaches that have made this journey to the finals and to the fans but this is a decision we took... painfully" he added. The finance ministry did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

This is not the first time



Uganda is pulling out of sporting engagements due to financial constraints.

In October this year, the U-23 men's football team was withdrawn from the Africa Cup of Nations qualifier because of a lack of money.

In September 2021, Uganda's national basketball team risked being kicked out of the AfroBasket championships in Rwanda after initially failing to clear their hotel bill.

Uganda's parliament has set up a committee to investigate the state-run National Council of Sports following allegations that officials asked for kickbacks to release budgeted funds to sports bodies in the country. — AFP

New Olympic sports had high rate of injuries in Tokyo: research

PARIS: Athletes competing in the newly introduced Olympic sports of BMX freestyle, karate and skateboarding suffered some of the highest rates of injuries at the Tokyo Games, new research showed on Wednesday.

The three new events were among the top five with the most injuries at the 2020 Summer Olympics, which was held in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Boxing and BMX racing had the highest rates, with 27 per cent of competitors getting injured, according to a study carried out by researchers from the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Next came the new events of BMX freestyle, which had 22 per cent of its athletes injured, followed by skateboarding with 21 per cent and karate with 19 per cent, said the study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

Other new events had fewer injuries, including sport climbing with a rate of 15 per cent, surfing with 13 per cent and 3x3 basketball with 11 per cent.

The study's lead author Torbjorn Soligard, who works in the IOC's medical and scientific department, said "it is important to note that more than half the injuries recorded did not lead to any time



lost from competition".

IOC researchers have tracked injuries and illnesses in every

Olympics since the 2008 Beijing Games. More than 11,300 athletes from 206 national teams were

monitored in Tokyo, with more than a thousand injuries recorded.

Overall, nine per cent of athletes in Tokyo suffered an injury, comparable to eight per cent at the 2016 Rio Games, 11 per cent at the 2012 London Olympics and 10 per cent in Beijing.

Tokyo saw the lowest rate of sickness ever recorded at an Olympics — it was conducted under strict Covid-19 restrictions — with 3.9 illnesses per 100 athletes, compared to 5.4 in Rio and 7.2 in London. "This might largely be attributed to the extensive countermeasures put in place to mitigate Covid-19, effectively

reducing transmission of Covid-19 and all respiratory infections," the study's authors said.

Less than 0.2 per cent of the athletes caught Covid.

Newly introduced sports were also among the most injury prone at the Tokyo Paralympics, with taekwondo and badminton among the top four with the highest rates, according to a parallel study.

Eight per cent of Paralympians were injured in Tokyo, a drop from the 12 per cent recorded at both the Rio and London Games, however the injuries that were suffered were more severe, the researchers found. — AFP

PLAYERS SUCCESSFULLY ADAPTED TO CROATIA GAME: SCALONI

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 14

Argentina players read the moments of the game and adapted brilliantly to the playing style of Croatia for the resounding semifinal win, according to Argentina manager Lionel Scaloni.

“I don’t think the result reflects that superiority we had. I do believe we deserved to win, but I don’t know whether it had to be with such a wide margin. From the start, they controlled the ball perfectly. We expected that, taking into account their top-class midfielders, who have played together for 4 or 5 years, they know each other pretty well. They make it very difficult to defend,” the 44-year-old said after the 3-0 win against Croatia.

“The general feeling was that they dominated in terms of possession, and we adapted to that style of play whenever needed. Naturally, the game opened up after the penalty. But all in all, we did what we had to throughout the game.”

Scaloni said he was rejoicing like every other Argentines after reaching the final.

“I will try not to get too emotional. It’s difficult to put into words. I’m living the dream of any Argentinian. Everyone would react like me, if they were in my shoes. Whenever you play for your country and represent it, it’s impossible not to give your all as the lads do, and it’s exciting. You may win or lose, but to be honest, being here is exciting, and our people’s support is really incredible. We go hand in hand.”

“Not doing so is difficult. When we go through tough moments, like when we lost to Saudi Arabia, our people were backing us up. We felt that support, and that is priceless.”

“It’s a moment to celebrate, especially as Argentina is at the top of the football world. That’s a reason to be happy. It’s time to celebrate, and later we’ll think about Sunday.”

Argentina controlled the match after the first 30 minutes of the match and continued it in the second-half.

“In the second half

we saw good passing, we strung together more passes, suffered less, but you need to know how to approach the game and what’s required at any given moment.

Scaloni said he is proud of the Argentine coaching staff.

“We’ve experienced really intense things with the national team, both positive and negative. There are so many moments between the team members and the coaches, to share that is positive for the players.”

“So I think we have a coaching staff who live for the national team, and suffer with them, with the fans, with the players.”

The manager said it was a nice feeling to be able to give a chance to their 23 players in the squad.

“Well, winning is always good and winning like that ahead of a final, it’s the best rest and the best remedy possible. On top of that, it’s no small feat to be able to have played all 23 outfield players.”

Scaloni said the match against Croatia was not as easy as it seems.

“We have played some matches with more intensity than this. But the occasion of the World Cup semifinal makes this all the more big. I can assure you that playing against this team isn’t easy.”

He said the squad wants to close the chapter of some flare-ups during the quarterfinal against the Netherlands.

“The match unfolded and the Netherlands played the match the way they did. We all fought. But I don’t want those things to come from our side, it came from their side first. Also, I want to turn that page.”

The coach mentioned the role of Julian Alvarez in the semifinal win.

“Julian has played incredibly today, not only for his brace, but also because he’s been outstanding in tackling the three Croatian midfielders. We sometimes played with only two midfielders, as our two wingers had to cover the advancing of their midfielders, and Julian could stop Brozovic or any other Croatia midfielder. He has had an incredible display all over the field.”

“He’s a disciplined guy, and we’re very happy with what he did, especially because he managed to find the net. That’s always great for a forward.”



Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni. – Reuters