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Expatriate population crosses pre-pandemic levels

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's expatriate population, which had dropped 11 per cent or 218,000 in 2020, is back to pre-pandemic levels and has crossed the 2mn mark once again.

The total expatriate population in Oman in 2019 was 2,019,348, an increase of 17 per cent or 296,019 compared to the 2021 figure of 1,723,329.

With the sultanate witnessing a budget surplus due to windfall gains from high international crude oil prices, signs of economic recovery and job creation are on the rise.

Recruitment picked up in the ten months of 2022, with over 102,000 Bangladeshi workers, 53,000 Indians and 58,000 Pakistanis forming the bulk of the new arrivals.

According to NCSI, 1,712,798 expatriate employees were working in various sectors in the sultanate at the end of 2019. The number dropped to 1,443,128 in 2020 and 1,409,473 in 2021. However, 2022 has seen a recovery, with the expatriate workforce going up 18 per cent – compared



RISE IN EXPAT WORKFORCE

Construction

84,434

Retail, automobile repair

36,497

Domestic/household

45,626

Sector distribution

The private sector, which employs the majority of expatriates, grew by 214,682 expat workers to 1,346,208 till October from 1,131,526 in 2021, while those engaged in the domestic/family sector grew by 51,034 to 290,985 from 239,951.

However, the number of expats working in the public sector fell by 12,570 to 25,426 from 37,996 at the end of 2021.

Bangladeshi workers continue to make up the bulk of the expatriate population, with their numbers rising by 102,705 to 633,758 in October 2022 from 531,053 in 2021. The Indian expat worker population went up by 53,361 to 524,539 from 471,178, while the Pakistani worker population rose

by 58,837 to 252,885 from 194,048 making up the top three expatriate employee populations.

The construction sector – the largest employer of expatriates – employs 438,018 and has added 84,434 new workers in the first ten months of 2022, followed by wholesale, retail and repair of automobiles as one sector (up by 36,497 to 243,365), domestic sector (45,626 to 228,226), manufacturing (191,789), and accommodation and food services (122,966), accounting for the top five sectors for expat workers.

The Governorate of Muscat is home to the largest number of expatriate workers (659,089), followed by North Batinah (238,378) and Dhofar (205,656).

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR



H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Al Murtafaa Garrison on Sunday H E Filali Ghouini, Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of promoting these. They also discussed various topics of common interest (ONA)

Sayyid Bilarab to inaugurate Liwa model city today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of the celebrations marking the 52nd National Day, H H Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said will preside over a ceremony marking the opening of Liwa Model Residential City.

The city, located close to Al Batinah Expressway and covering an area of 12mn sqm, has been built to accommodate 30,000 residents. It boasts of a broad range of services and facilities, including 1,300 housing units and around 3,400 single and double residential units. The city is designed to cater to 50,000 residents and visitors in the future.



H H Sayyid Bilarab

The project in the Naber area includes government schools, places of worship, a health centre, power generation stations, two fuel stations, parks, playgrounds and land for commercial establishments including malls.

Carried out by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the

city constitutes a comprehensive model for sustainable cities. Its development is based on interactive participation among the government departments concerned and public service providers. It witnessed direct participation from society in all its stages of planning and design.

H E Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shua'li, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, affirmed that the new city is a model city with integrated facilities and services, and constitutes an example for implementing sustainable and modern urban planning policies.

He added that the city fulfills the goals and requirements of the urban strategy of Oman.





STILL TIME TO CATCH UP

As FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 enters the second week, excitement and thrills continue. With Qatar hosting one of the biggest sporting spectacles of the world, it is a matter of pride for every Arab country as this is the first time ever that the region is hosting this gala event. Has Oman done enough to attract FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 fans and what else can be done to woo them before the end of the tournament? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers had to say on the subject:



Ahmed Balushi
Businessman

I do not think Oman has done enough to attract people to the sultanate. It was a great chance and we missed it. However, it is not too late and the tournament is just one-week old. The tempo will go higher in the coming days and weeks. We could have special World Cup Football rates for ticket holders who can come to Oman for a break. Oman can also make the visa process easy and on-arrival.

Salman Amri
Sales executive

Oman has always been a football crazy nation and with the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 being played next door, no stone has been left unturned to make it the best event here. There are several volunteers from Oman who have gone to Qatar. Also, there are several cultural brand ambassadors in Doha. Football is also a platform where fans from all over the world can learn about our culture and traditions. We have such men there who are doing this bridging work.

Sameer al Lawati
Government employee

Ali al Habsi is the brand ambassador of Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre which is the hub of football activities during FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 in Oman. The infrastructure and facilities there are extraordinary with giant screens and various activities to promote the game and the tournament. However, I feel we lack planning. Things could have been better and we can't dependent only on the activities at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Sumeet Verma
Businessman

There are multiple flights from Oman to Qatar on a daily basis. This is indeed one of the best facilities proving that the sultanate has done its best to promote the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. However, hotel charges are on the higher side and the authorities can work these out. We still have three weeks to go and if fans come here for a quick break, it will be beneficial for everyone in Oman.

Sulaiman al Musallami
Marketing manager

Oman has done so much to promote the tournament in the country. There are hotels all around that are showcasing the event. We have so many flights taking fans on a daily basis to Qatar. We can now also have more tourists coming to Oman by making attractive offers in some of the best resorts. I agree that our government and authorities have done enough to promote the tournament.



Oman has hosted big-ticket sports events in cycling and sailing, but is it ready for tournaments as big as the FIFA World Cup?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram

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Jindal Shadeed campaign celebrates Omani culture, passion for football

Muscat - Inspired by the passion for football exhibited by the local community and in celebration of an authentic culture of Oman, Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel (JSIS) unveiled a campaign titled 'The Steel of Oman' focused on promoting football in the sultanate on Monday.

With the ongoing FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 providing the perfect backdrop and adding to the excitement, the company unveiled the campaign's heart-warming film, and announced Oman's legendary footballer, Ali al Habsi as its brand ambassador.

The unveiling ceremony was held under the auspices of H E Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority, at Kempinski Muscat.

The film, shot with local aesthetics, highlights not just how football unites the nation, but also the beautiful culture of the sultanate and its people. The red-carpet event witnessed the presence of several public figures, celebrities, top-level officials and media personnel.

Commenting on the campaign, Harssha Shetty, CEO of JSIS, said, "Football has been a much-loved sport that brings the country together. While our new campaign has football at its heart, our film is also a journey through the authentic traditions of the country, its rich culture, and its strong values. Most importantly, it celebrates the people of Oman. Through this campaign, Jindal Shadeed seeks to further weave itself into the social fabric of Oman. At Jindal Shadeed, we will continue to deepen our relationship with the



At Jindal Shadeed, we will continue to deepen our relationship with the sultanate through initiatives that drive meaningful impact in society

HARSSHA SHETTY

sultanate through initiatives that drive meaningful impact in society."

Conceptualised by Weiden+ Kennedy India, in collaboration with director Ayappa from Early Man Films, the film pays tribute to Oman and its love for football through an inclusive and cultural lens, and stars official brand ambassador Habsi, marvelous scenery from across the country, various cultural spectacles, and a diverse crowd of football person-

alities and enthusiasts.

The unveiling event also featured exclusive printed works of renowned artist Hassan Hajjaj who captured the essence of Oman's sports scene by showcasing some of the country's top athletes. The film includes shots of Imad al Hosni, Abdul Aziz al Muqbali, Hassan Rabia, Khalifa Ayil, Tharaa al Ismaili, Malak al Zadjali, Paralympian Mohammed al Mashaikhi, Olympian Barakat al Harthy, racing sensa-

tion Shihab al Habsi, and Nadhira al Harthy, the first Omani woman to scale Mt Everest.

Commenting on the endorsement, Habsi said, "I am proud to be endorsing 'The Steel of Oman' as it reflects the strength and vibrancy of our beloved country. Jindal Shadeed has brought the many facets of Oman to life in this film, and I hope that everyone enjoys watching this film as much as I enjoyed shooting for it. I am also thankful to Jindal for their continued support to nurturing football in the country."

Cementing its commitment to promoting football, Jindal Shadeed has also signed an MoU with Oman Football Association and launched a collaboration with Habsi's Academy for Football via the Jindal Shadeed-HFA

campaign, thereby taking a more holistic approach to developing football in the sultanate.

Apart from sponsoring football teams, the company will also sponsor training centres for the youth. Focused on promoting inclusivity in the field and making football accessible to all, the campaign is designed keeping in mind both male and female football enthusiasts of all age groups.

While Jindal Shadeed has achieved stellar growth in its contribution to Oman's economy, the company has also been mindful of giving back to the local community. Through its various endeavours, it will remain committed to contributing to the socio-economic progress of the country aligned to Oman Vision 2040.

Nine-month shrimp fishing ban from Dec 1

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A nine-month ban on shrimp fishing and trading will take effect from December 1, 2022, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has announced.

In a statement, the ministry said that it declares the end of the shrimp fishing season in the sultanate for this year on November 30, and a ban on shrimp fishing and trading during the period of fertilisation, reproduction and natural growth from December 1 to August 31, 2023.

An official at MAFWR said, "The ministry urges all fishermen, fish transporters, companies, institutions, hotels, restaurants and individuals engaged in fishing and marketing of shrimp to get in touch with fisheries development departments and centres and record the quan-

tity of shrimp in their stock before the start of the ban. Trading and exporting shrimp will not be allowed during the ban period unless the leftover stock is registered in advance."

The ministry called on everyone to cooperate to avoid legal procedures and penalties.

Violators of the ban are liable to a fine of up to RO5,000 or

imprisonment of up to three months, or

both penalties, with confiscation of the quantity of shrimp, equip-

ment used in committing the violation, and tempo-

rary or permanent withdrawal of fishing licence.

MAFWR organises monitoring campaigns in cooperation with relevant authorities, including the Coast Guard of Royal Oman Police, Royal Oman Navy, Maritime Security Centre and the Ministry of Labour regularly to raise awareness on fishing regulations.



Dhofar Municipal Council holds meeting

Salalah - The Municipal Council of the Governorate of Dhofar held a meeting under the chairmanship of Sayyid Marwan Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar and Chairman of the council, on Sunday.

The council hailed the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin

Tarik approving the implementation of several developmental projects in the governorate, in addition to projects approved within the 10th Five-Year Plan.

The meeting discussed a wide range of topics and reviewed several recommendations.

ONA

47 projects worth RO10mn to develop Dakhliyah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dakhliyah is implementing 47 projects worth RO10mn through the Governorate Development Programme, according to H E Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Mawali, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Economy.

H E Mawali met Hilal al Hajri, Governor of Dakhliyah, last week, in the presence of representatives of several government institutions in the governorate, to review the projects that are currently being implemented in the

Projects relate to road works, and developing markets, gardens and public parks

governorate.

“These projects are related to paving and maintenance work of roads, developing markets, gardens and public parks, in addition to other miscellaneous projects with a social dimension or for economic return,” H E Mawali

said.

He visited project sites, including the Izki-Firq dual carriageway, Daris Bahla Road and Nizwa Park.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik raised the amount allocated to the Governorate Development Programme from RO10mn to RO20mn for each governorate for the current Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), starting from 2022.

Hajri confirmed some development projects have started, while others are in final stages of completion.



Development pacts signed for Dhahirah

Muscat - As part of its efforts to revitalise the economy and provide necessary services, the governor of Dhahirah signed four agreements on Sunday to implement a number of projects.

The agreements are for development of a Friday Market in the wilayat of Yanqul, a

Municipal Garden in the wilayat of Dhank, a Municipal Market in the wilayat of Ibri, and for paving several internal roads.

The four agreements aim to stimulate commercial activities and provide entertainment facilities for families in all wilayats, a press release stated.



RECALL CAMPAIGN FOR JAGUAR



Date of the campaign: 28/11/2022
Campaign type: Recall, Software Update & Safety Recall
Campaign section: Body & Electrical
Product description: Cars (Jaguar)

THE NUMBER OF AFFECTED VEHICLES	VIN NUMBERS	THE YEAR OF PRODUCTION	VEHICLE MODEL
75	SADCA2BV0HA049112 to SADCA2BX5NA694951 SAJAB4BV1GA912009 to SSAJAB4BG0GA907479 SAJBB4BG0GCRY08623 to SAJBB4BV6GCRY05627	2015 – 2022	F-Pace XE XF

Description of defect:

Airbag inflators (driver), Autoliv seatbelt retractor functionality, Car configuration file (ccf) update, Earc start up fail-Amber Lamp, EU2 EU5 P4M CO2 testing, Front lamp unit software update, Incorrect specification tail lamps, Software quality enhancement package, Unable to disengage all wheel drive (awd), Car configuration update (ccf).

Procedure:

JLR owners will be contacted. After Inspection if required the defected part(s) will be replaced for the concerning vehicles listed under campaign.

For more information:

Call us on 8006 2643 to book an appointment for the recall repair.

Contact data:

Call us on 8006 2643 for more information

Divers deploy sea installation in tribute to two great leaders



Our Correspondent
Muscat

A diving team of Oman installed a 500kg installation bearing the images of the two sultans in the seabed off the Quriyat coast on Saturday as a mark of their tribute to the two leaders on the occasion of the 52nd National Day.

Expressing their love for Oman and paying rich tributes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and to the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, 25 divers of the Quriyat Diving Team took great pain to deploy the 500kg piece in two hours.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Juma Khamis al Amri, head of the Quriyat Diving Team, said the divers dived into the water around Ras Abu Dawood in the wilayat of Quriyat to celebrate the 52nd National Day.



The event, conducted at a depth of 12m, was held from 1pm to 3pm, in cooperation with the

Blue Water Company, Omani Coast Guard, the Quriyat Municipality and the Quriyat Club,

Amri informed. The underwater installation of the images of the two sultans is

1m high and 2m wide.

The event was organised to recognise the support of the people of Quriyat and the volunteers, the team leaders said. “We expect the event to go a long way in promoting the tourism sites in Oman and popularising the sport of diving in the community.”

Moving the pieces was the biggest challenge because of their weight. “But with the cooperation of the participating parties, we were able to deploy them comfortably,” Amri said.

“The installation is made of environmentally friendly material, and will remain in that area forever to attract tourists and promote Omani tourism and coral reefs.”

Of future, Amri said, “The team will continue to spread awareness of the importance of preserving Omani beaches and promoting Omani tourism.”



Oman launches postage stamps at Venice Biennial

Venice - With the inauguration of a spectacular set of postage stamps, the Sultanate of Oman concluded its first participation in Venice Biennale held from April 21 to November 27.

The closing ceremony was attended by H E Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Culture in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and Commissioner-General of Oman's pavilion.

The event was also attended by H H Sayyid Nizar bin al Julanda al Said, Oman's Ambassador to Italy; Dr Aisha Stoby, Curator of Oman's pavilion; representatives of the companies supporting the pavilion and a large gathering of art enthusiasts.

During the ceremony, four postage stamps were issued by Oman Post featuring artworks of Anwar Sonia, the late Raya al Rawahi, Hassan Mir, Bodour al Riyami and Radhika Khimji displayed in the pavilion.

Besides highlighting the historic debut, the pavilion documented Oman's contemporary

art march by showcasing creative content and philosophical concepts linked to nature and the benefits it offers to mankind, notably under the theme of Venice Biennial - 'The Milk of Dreams'. The theme was inspired by a children's novel from the 1950s by the surrealist artist Leonora Carrington.

The stamps will be made available for fans and other members of the public later.

Oman's participation in the gala event, distinguished for its superior value and large volume of art lovers, is considered a unique opportunity to celebrate the common 'language of creativity' and rally Omani nascent voices in the global domain.

The biennial received massive international media coverage. Its venue saw a turnout exceeding 6mn visitors from all parts of the globe, with approximately 10mn views of its electronic website. As many as 8,100 media establishments and 5,540 international media agencies covered the event.

ONA

Tender Announcement

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Site Visit	Location	Tender Price (R.O)
RFQ MEDC /2022/097	Supply of (CLIP METER)	06/12/2022	13/12/2022	DCRP Approved Consultant Type 1 & 2	04/12/2022	MEDC Stores Department - South Mabaila	26.25

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and in I Supplier with Nama Groupe may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - For companies holding valid Riyada card, the tender fees will be 25% only from the tender price. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - to obtain the tender document and payment procedure , please visit MEDC Website/Vendor/E-Tendering, www.medcoman.com or call 24588600 – Ext: 8577 – 8726
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to MEDC Website/Vendor/E-Tendering, www.medcoman.com , one week before bid submission date - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER mentioned in clause 20.0 in Prime Document and to the supplier guideline available MEDC Website/Vendor/E-Tendering, www.medcoman.com
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF MINOR TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY S.A.O.C. - The bid bond should be included in the commercial proposal only as sof copy. - After the commercial opening , the qualified bidders will be notified to submit the original (hard copy) of bid bond to MEDC office. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - MEDC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - Muscat Electricity Distribution Company gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - For projects whose value is less than OMR 10K, the priority to award will be given to registered companies that hold a valid certificate Of Reyadah. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.

Nepalis take part in walkathon to celebrate 52nd National Day

Our Correspondent
Muscat

More than 400 people took part in a 3km long walk to commemorate the 52nd National Day of Oman at a congregation of the members of the Nepali community on Friday evening.

Organised by the Embassy of Nepal along with the members of the local Nepali Social Club, the Walkathon 2022 started at the Nepali Embassy and ended at Qurm Beach. The march was led by Dornath Aryal, the Ambassador of Nepal to Oman; his wife Swodesh; besides the embassy staff including the first secretary Somesh Thapa; labour attaché Dinesh Dhakal and financial attaché Anil Rana.

There was also a presentation by Nepali traditional musical band Panche Baja and dances by colourfully decked community members in various traditional



attires of their country. Other participants of the walkathon wore a T-shirts designed in the flag colours of the two countries with cross flags of Nepal-Oman and slogan 'Long Live Nepal-Oman Relations'.

“The Walkathon 2022 is a reminder of our strong people to people relationship between the two countries,” ambassador Aryal said. “This is a great occasion to celebrate the 52nd National Day of the sultanate. We

have participants from the Nepali community and it was quite refreshing and motivating for all of us.” He extended best wishes for good health and happiness of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, as well as continued peace, progress, and prosperity of Oman.

Badr al Sama Hospital provided an ambulance for emergency, while Royal Oman Police provided escorts and security services during the programme.

RO100 fine for littering public places, warns Muscat Municipality

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has warned people against littering in public places. The municipality shared photos of a site on top of the Amerat-Bausher mountain, which was recently littered with barbecue waste.

A statement issued by Muscat Municipality said, ‘This is not just littering, it’s a behaviour which harms public health, pollutes the environment, and deprives others from spending good times outdoors. Littering is forbidden by law, and punishable



by a fine of up to RO100.’ The cleanliness of Muscat and the preservation of tourist facilities and sites are the responsibility of everyone, the civic body stated.

Omantel, Helios to complete \$575mn towers deal in Dec

Our Correspondent
Muscat

All the closing conditions for Helios Towers' proposed US\$575mn acquisition of Omantel's passive towers infrastructure have been satisfied and the deal is expected to be completed in December, according to the announcements made by two companies.

Providing an update on the sale and leaseback of its passive towers infrastructure to Helios Towers, Omantel in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Sunday said, "The company is pleased to announce that all closing conditions for the acquisition have been satisfied."

Helios Towers, in a statement on its website, also said that all closing conditions have been satisfied for its deal with Omantel to acquire Omani telcom service provider's towers infrastructure.

Both companies said that the acquisition is now unconditional and they anticipate that the completion of the acquisition will take place during December 2022.

In May 2021, Omantel had entered into an agreement to sell its passive mobile tower infrastructure assets to Helios Towers for a cash consideration of US\$575mn.

As per the agreement, Omantel will only sell its passive mobile infrastructure assets comprised of 2,890 towers in the country



and enter into a long-term master services agreement to continue to utilise the tower assets.

tower portfolios across Africa. It builds, owns and operates telecom passive infrastructure, pro-

Infrastructure is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oman Infrastructure Fund (Rakiza Fund), a fund that is co-managed by the Oman Infrastructure Investment Management (OIM) and Equitix.

Helios Towers will purchase a 70 per cent interest in the newly incorporated holding company for the target assets with Rakiza purchasing the remaining 30 per cent, as per Helios Towers' announcement in June.

As per the agreement, Helios Towers will retain operational control of the target assets. Through the transaction, Helios Towers will establish its presence in the Middle-East region, becoming a leading independent tower infrastructure provider in Oman.

viding services to mobile network operators.

In June this year, Helios Towers signed another agreement with Omani firm Rakiza Telecommunication Infrastructure to form a joint venture holding company for the acquisition of Omantel's passive infrastructure assets in Oman.

Rakiza Telecommunication

The acquisition is now unconditional and Omantel and Helios Towers anticipate that the completion of acquisition will take place during December 2022

As part of the agreement, Helios Towers also committed to building a minimum of an additional 300 new towers over the next seven years.

Helios Towers, which is listed on the London Stock Exchange, is a leading independent telecommunications infrastructure company, having established one of the most extensive

GCC banks witness positive effects of higher interest rates

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The GCC banking sector has witnessed the initial positive effects of higher interest rates implemented by the GCC central banks following the rate hikes in the US.

Total net interest income of the listed banks in the GCC reached a record quarterly level at US\$18.6bn during the third quarter of 2022 as compared to US\$17.2bn in the previous quarter, according to a report released by Kuwait-based Kamco Investment.

"The sequential increase in net interest income was broad-based and was seen across the GCC countries. Credit growth in the GCC remained strong during the third quarter despite higher interest rates, indicating strong economic activity and business confidence in the region," Kamco Investment said.

On the other hand, GCC banks' non-interest income dropped to a four-quarter low of US\$7.4bn in the third quarter as compared to US\$7.8bn in second quarter of 2022, reflecting a slide in global and regional financial markets during the quarter.

As per the report, aggregate lending in the GCC remained strong during the third quarter. Central bank data showed Kuwaiti banks seeing double digit growth in outstanding credit facilities during the quar-



Credit growth in GCC remained strong during third quarter despite higher interest rates, indicating strong economic activity and business confidence in the region

ter while Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Omani banks registered low single-digit growths. The credit survey from the UAE central bank also showed strong lending during the quarter.

Data on the listed banks also

showed growth with aggregate GCC gross loans reaching a new record of US\$1.93tn, increasing by 1.2 per cent or US\$23.5bn during the third quarter of 2022. Outstanding net loans witnessed a slightly smaller growth of 1.1 per cent during the quarter as a result of higher provisions booked during the quarter.

The report showed that the GCC banking sector balance sheet continued to strengthen during the third quarter, although the growth rate slowed down to the lowest in six quarters.

Aggregate assets reached a new record high level of US\$2.9tn after increasing by 1.2 per cent during the third quarter of 2022 as compared to the second quarter.



US Fed eyes slower rate hike pace

Washington, US - A majority of US Federal Reserve policymakers found that a slower pace of interest rate hikes would "likely soon be appropriate," the central bank.

The Fed has embarked on an aggressive path to cool demand and bring down prices as inflation in the world's biggest economy surged to the highest level in decades, raising the benchmark borrowing rate six times this year.

With inflation hovering around 7.7 per cent, the latest policy meeting in early November produced a fourth consecutive three-quarter point interest rate hike, a major rise.

This brings the rate to a range between 3.75 and four per cent, the highest since January 2008.

But "a substantial majority of participants judged that a slowing in the pace of increase would likely soon be appropriate," according to minutes of the November meeting released Thursday.

"A slower pace in these circumstances would better allow the committee to assess progress toward its goals of maximum employment and price stability," the minutes said.

Participants of the meeting noted that it would take time for the full effects of policy to be realized, and a few found that easing the pace of interest rate hikes could lower risks of instability in the financial system.

In a sign of diverging opinions, some cautioned the impact of rate hikes could "exceed what was required" to bring down inflation.

But policymakers agreed at the meeting earlier this month that inflation was "unacceptably high" and well above the longer-run goal of two percent.

Annual consumer inflation came in at 7.7 per cent in October, down from a blistering high 9.1 per cent in June but still underscoring a heightened cost of living.

With surging consumer prices showing "little sign thus far of abating," some officials found that policy might have to be tightened more than anticipated.

They maintained that a period of slower growth would help reduce inflationary pressures.

Despite signs of slowing activity as the Fed's rate hikes trickled through the economy, officials saw that the labor market remained tight, with elevated wage growth.

New home sales posted a surprise increase last month as well, while demand for big-ticket American-made goods picked up more than expected, data released on Wednesday showed.

"Policy makers appear set to slow the pace of rate hikes," said economist Ryan Sweet of Oxford Economics.

AFP

Port of Salalah, Maersk join hands to launch new multimodal transport service

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its regional growth strategy, the Port of Salalah has partnered with global shipping giant Maersk to launch a new multimodal transport solution to Al-Mazyunah Free Zone.

Designed to facilitate inland services, the new offering extends beyond the Port of Salalah and includes securing customs clearances and bonded trucking services to Salalah and Al-Mazyunah Free Zone hubs under carrier haulage.

"The new service reduces lead time and allows access to multiple markets. It also aims to support the growth of SMEs in Oman and Yemen and attract new investors which is also aligned with the Oman 2040 Vision," the Port of Salalah said in a press statement on its website.

The Port of Salalah and Maersk have just completed the first trial shipment from China delivered to Al-Mazyouna Free Zone. The subject shipment was loaded in the Chinese port of Ningbo and arrived in Al-Mazyouna with a total transit time of



25 days. This makes Salalah the best choice for Yemen gateway, a major share of which otherwise was discharged in neighbouring ports and routed across the border through Oman.

This new corridor will help Yemeni importers to save costs and transit time. Maersk has confirmed its commitment to creating the required capacity, connectivity, and contracts to

scale this up, thereby also benefiting the local companies in Oman.

"We are excited to be expanding our inland service capabilities to help support customers beyond the port as a part of our commercial efforts focused on growing our gateway volume, of which Yemen plays an important role. We are thankful to the Ministry of

Transport, Communication and Information Technology, ROP Customs and Asyad Group for their support in making this happen," said Keld M Christensen, CEO of Port of Salalah.

Port of Salalah acts as a facilitator in anchoring Salalah as a gateway to Yemen and the current initiative, in partnership with Maersk, ensures seamless cargo movement where the cus-

tomers get single window service till the final delivery location. This will not only ensure increased efficiency to the customer but also has the potential to eliminate unexpected costs, including line demurrage and port storage as an example.

Christopher Cook, managing director at Maersk UAE, Oman and Qatar, commented, "Our ambition is to serve our customers with end-to-end, integrated solutions which will simplify their supply chains. Our joint efforts with the Port of Salalah aim to achieve this, and we look forward to unlocking new value for our customers across the Middle East and North Africa region."

As one of the world's most efficient transshipment ports, the new offering by Port of Salalah is well-positioned to offer a range of customers a consolidated, digital, streamlined service.

The Port of Salalah delivers world-class terminal capabilities, including containers and liquid and dry bulk handling. The port currently serves large volumes of multiple commodities through Al-Mazyunah Free Zone.

China orders banks to hold less cash to shore up ailing economy

Beijing, China - China's central bank has cut the amount of cash that banks must hold in reserve for the second time this year, a move that will inject about 500bn yuan (US\$70bn) into the country's flagging economy.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) said it would lower its reserve requirement ratio by 0.25 percentage points from December 5, bringing the weighted average ratio for financial institutions to around 7.8 per cent.

The move will help to "sta-



bilise the economy and consolidate a foundation for... upward growth", the PBOC said.

It added that it would "support financing in key areas and weak links, and promote the effective improvement of quality and reasonable growth of the economy".

China's economy has struggled in recent months as authorities have dug in their heels on a zero-Covid policy that has sparked business shutdowns, roiled supply chains and hampered employment.

The ruling Communist Party announced the relaxation of some measures this month, but officials in many areas have persisted with headline lockdowns, quarantines and testing mandates as national caseloads have hit all-time highs.

The Chinese economy grew at an annualised rate of 3.9 per cent in the third quarter, but analysts still expect the country to miss its overall yearly growth target of around 5.5 per cent by some distance.

AFP

ISG students win maths competition

A team of four students - Dhruvan G, Pallak Dhabalia, Rehan Shanavas and Tabitha Thomas - of Class XII from Indian School Al Ghubra won the 'Math League 2' competition organised by the Mathematics Club of Modern College of Business and Science.

The competition, conducted on November 17 at Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS), had six schools and eight colleges fighting for the top position. The team from Indian School Al Ghubra emerged victorious in the school category by securing the first place. Dr Moosa al Kindi, Dean of MCBS presented the trophy, gold medals and certificates to the winners. Principal Papri Ghosh congratulated the students for their performance.

Al Hayat International marks National Day

In a glittering ceremony, the staff members of Al Hayat International hospital celebrated the 52nd national Day the hospital's headquarters. The function started by playing Omani National Anthem and paying tribute to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Everyone wished His Majesty a healthy and long life. Chairman Dr K P Raman, vice-chairperson Dr Deepa Raman, senior HR and admin director Hamdan Amur Suwaid Awlad Thani, medical director Dr Zaharuddin, CFO Sumanth, senior operations manager Avinash P Nair, operations manager Pradeep Kumar, employees, doctors and a strong representation from various other communities were present at the event.

NBO's Muzn declares special benefits

National Bank of Oman's Islamic banking window, Muzn, has declared exclusive offers on the occasion of the 52nd National Day to new and existing account holders extending benefits from financing solutions, cashbacks for privilege banking and investment referral programme and merchant discounts. Muzn offers the best banking experience with the highest standards. Muzn is offering customers attractive financing rates starting from 4.5 per cent and up to three months installment holiday on all new loans for salary transfers, allowing them to take out a loan without the pressure of having to start paying their installments immediately.

Ooredoo wins investor relations award

Ooredoo has won the award for Leading Corporate for Investor Relations in Oman 2022 at an event organised by the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA) at the Annual Conference and Investor Relations Awards Ceremony in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The accolade recognises the company's effective relations with its shareholders, analysts, and other stakeholders within the investment community. This year, the prestigious award was presented by Haitham al Salmi, Chief Executive Officer of Muscat Stock Exchange, to Ahmed al Khuzairi, Head of Treasury, Investor Relations & Insurance at Ooredoo. The award win is a testimony of the dedicated service of Ooredoo's Investor Relations Team.

PSM occupies top position in IGCSE

Pakistan School Muscat has achieved another hallmark by registering 'marvelous results' in the IGCSE examination 2022. Cambridge International has announced the 'Outstanding Learner Award' identifying PSM as one of the best performing learners in the June 2022 examination sessions. Moonis Ali Khan was 'Top in the World' in English as a second language. Saad Nawaz Ghauri was AS Level top in Oman in Information Technology, while Fatima Javaid acquired 'high achievement' in Pakistan Studies. PSM has been implementing cutting-edge strategies to increase students' achievement level since its inception. It aims to spark a pursuit of knowledge in students so that they may keep on learning and become a valuable part of society.

Stage set for grand final races at Venture Connect championships

Places in the 2022 RS Venture Connect World Championships Grand Final are now set after an exciting last day of fleet racing. Organised by Oman Sail, 39 teams from 19 nations - the largest of all para sailing events worldwide in 2022 - have raced over four days at the Barceló Mussanah Resort with the last teams qualifying for the final in the last race of the day.

Oman's Sultan al Wahaibi and Ahmed al Balushi finished top of the Open category, and first place overall, with four first places and two second places from the seven races and earning a three-point lead at the top. Jens Kroker and Sabine Kroker-Hohmann finished second, two points ahead of Christopher Symonds and Manuela Klinger of Australia.

Piotr Cichocki and Olga Gornas-Grudzien of Poland ended the fleet racing on top of the Para category, three points ahead of Sweden's Fia Fjeldahl and Patric Rosenberg. Ange Margaron and Olivier Ducruix of France are in third, level on points with second and just one point ahead of fourth.

Malik al Qartobi and Ghalya al Jabri ended the day in 13th with Zaher al Atbi and Ali al Ghasaini close behind in 18th. Teammates Rayyan al Mujaini and Hamed al Subhi, and Hassan al Lawati



and Sami al Sulaimi ended the racing in 20th and 21st respectively, level on points after seven races. Adil al Siyabi

and Nasser al Rahbi finished in 25th.

At the end of the racing, Sultan al Wahaibi expressed his happiness at

finishing first overall. He said, "We have been able to maintain our position at the top of the Open category since

the first day of the championship, and we are very hopeful of doing even better in the remaining races in order to win the gold medal. The races have been challenging with strong competition between the participating teams. I am aiming to achieve first place in the two Grand Final races and maintaining our position."

Wahaibi also affirmed that nothing is impossible in life with good planning and teamwork. The top six para teams and top four in the open category will compete in the Grand Final to decide the winners and medallists.

The 2022 RS Venture Connect World Championships have been the first exclusively para sailing event to be held in Oman and helps position the nation as a regional hub for growing the sport across the Middle East, Asia and beyond.

The RS Venture Connect World Championships is proudly supported by title sponsor bp Oman, along with the Oman Paralympic Committee, Oman Maritime Sports Committee, Oman Air, the Barceló Mussanah Resort, Tanuf, the International Maritime College Oman (IMCO), RS Sailing, and environmental partners Clean Seas and Environment Society of Oman (ESO).

Knowledge Oman sets up new team for community seminars

Knowledge Oman, the leading community knowledge sharing platform in the sultanate, has appointed both local and expatriate new team members from the private sector, academia and youth in order to enhance the delivery of community seminars touching all segments of the society.

This has been done as part of enriching the society with knowledge led seminars that aims at engaging the public in critical thinking on current issues and collaborative efforts towards aligning with the Oman 2040 Vision, the group said in a statement.

Imad al Hamdani, working for one of the telecom operators is the new head of seminars, while Bradley Levack, an expat educator in one of the private international schools, will act as his deputy, and Hassan al Afarai will lead the volunteers that are integral part of the delivery of the seminar programmes.

"Sharing various practical industry knowledge, promoting talents and positivity across the country is what we do at Knowledge Oman. Bringing different industries together under one roof, along with the support of the academia, while ensuring youth too are part of the society impact has always been our goal," said Knowledge Oman president Balqees al Hassani, adding, "For that, we have now setup a new team that comprise of individuals that work in companies, educators that work in academia, and youth that are active and eager to be part of the impact."

Hamdani, currently heading the



Bradley Levack

strategic planning at Ooredoo, joins Knowledge Oman to lead the seminars team primarily focusing on planning, organising and conducting sessions for the society. Hamdani is a chemical engineering graduate from the University of Sheffield with more than 20 years of diversified experience in the fields of Engineering, IT, Commercial, Corporate Communication and Strategic Planning and Performance Management.

Bradley Levack, a South African educator at the Qurum Private School, joins the team to support Hamdani in seminar planning, organising and conducting sessions for community knowledge transfer.

Bradley has been involved in community development through Integrated Development Planning, a German Technical Cooperation programme. He has been instrumental in Heritage and Cultural Tourism devel-



Imad al Hamdani

opment, having served on the Board for Tourism Development and lecturing tourism at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, in Port Elizabeth. He was deployed to support various municipal structures in rural areas focusing on Youth Development Skills Programs. Bradley currently coordinates the International Cambridge and Pearson Edexcel Program at Qurum Private School.

Hassan Salem al Subi, a student at the Middle East College, joins the team to lead the volunteer pool to support the necessary delivery of the seminar programs and logistics. Hassan has received numerous certificate of appreciation from the college for organizing and conducting events as part of the academic activities. Hassan holds a certificate in human development accredited by the Magic Training LTD Institute.

Bank Muscat onboards workers' union on B2B

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has signed an agreement with General Federation of Oman Workers (GFOW) for its cutting-edge digital banking solutions for host-to-host connectivity.

The GFOW, the trade union representing the sultanate's workers before official authorities and in local, regional and international forums, has been onboarded to Bank Muscat's B2B Connect. Speaking on the occasion, Wafa Ibrahim al Ajmi, Assistant General Manager, Bank Muscat said: "We are delighted to onboard GFOW to our sophisticated Corporate Banking solutions. Our solutions are designed to enable the GFOW to process their large-scale banking transactions in an efficient way through digital channels.

"The straight-through nature of our payment solutions will support the GFOW to provide faster responses to their stakeholders. The GFOW will be able to achieve a high degree of automation in payables, reconciliation

and minimise risks related to payment processes. We continue to enhance our relationship with the GFOW with our complete range of products and services which includes collections and payment solutions."

GFOW chairman Nabhan Ahmed al Battashi said, "We are proud to partner with Bank Muscat to use the bank's state-of-the-art B2B Connect solution to greatly improve our operational efficiencies. Our members, vendors and partners will find it easier to complete their transactions with us, and we are confident that this will improve their satisfaction. Our partnership with Bank Muscat, has fortified the digital transformation of General Federation of Oman Workers, and we look forward to further augmenting this successful partnership for serving and benefiting private sector employees."

Bank Muscat's comprehensive B2B Connect solution is a host-to-host solution built on an advanced architecture and addresses various corporate needs.

Bank Nizwa offers home finance for 'Sustainability City' Yiti

As the leading Islamic bank in Oman, Bank Nizwa has consistently endeavoured to contribute to the nation's revenue diversification agenda. In line with the same, the bank recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sustainable Development and Investment Company (SDIC) to offer sharia'a-compliant home finance solutions to customers aspiring to buy properties at The Sustainability City - Yiti. This strategic agreement will help customers finance off-plan residential properties in the city whilst it is still under construction.

With a competitive profit rate of 4.85 per cent, Bank Nizwa seeks to make owning a home at this iconic location even more convenient, quick and secure. The Sustainability City - Yiti



is set to be the first fully sustainable community in Oman, and will meet the highest standards of social, environmental and economic sustainabil-

ity, with mixed housing typologies to suit different categories. The new project is also in alignment with Bank Nizwa's core values of supporting the

country's transition to a green, circular economy whilst focusing on holistic well-being.

Commenting on the signing of the MoU, Bank Nizwa CEO Khaled al Kayed said, "We are indeed delighted to have signed this MoU with SDIC, the company responsible for developing the Sustainable City - Yiti, one of the region's most prominent urban development projects to embrace the principles of sustainability.

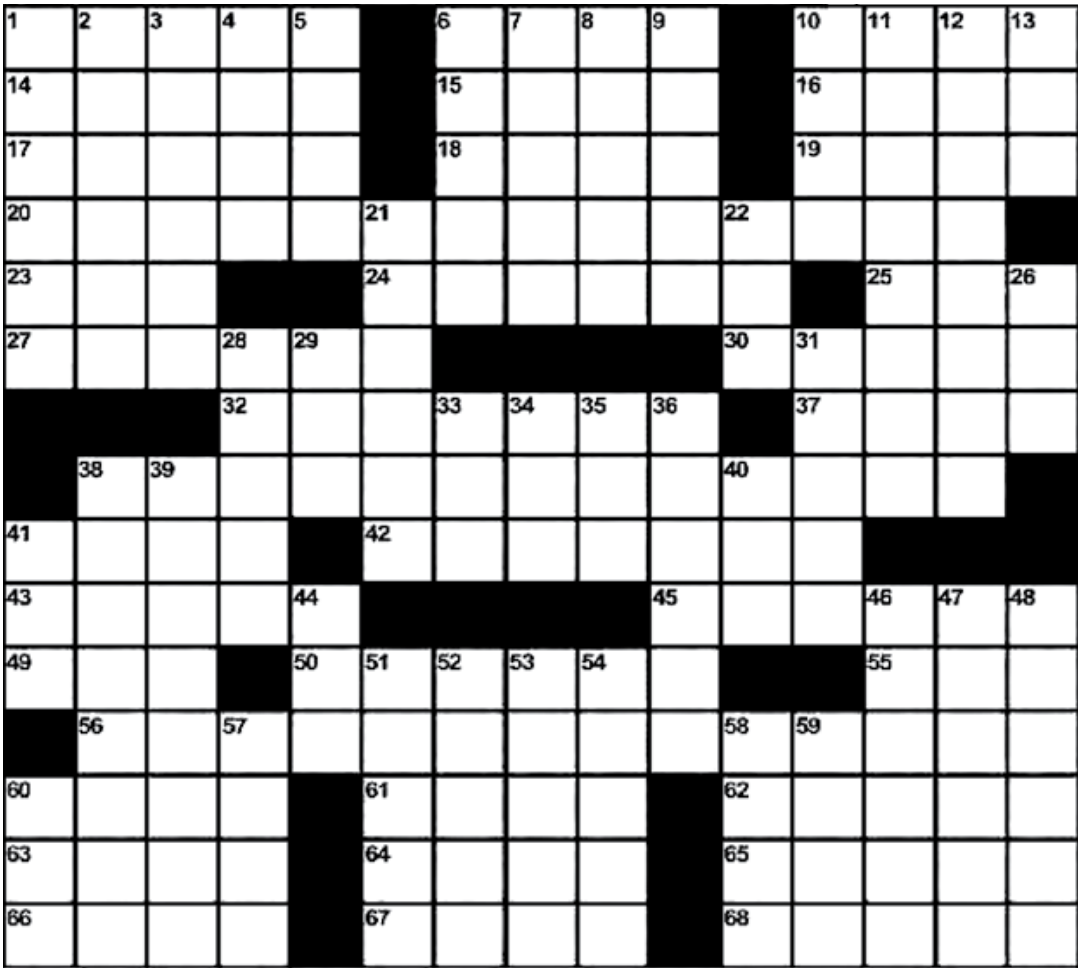
"This strategic initiative is congruent with Bank Nizwa's vision of playing an instrumental role in key national projects that are shaping the future of the country. The project's keen focus on green energy also complements Bank Nizwa's efforts towards fostering sustainable socio-economic progress in

the country through unique, industry-first products and services."

He added saying, "As the Sultanate's foremost Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa has established itself as a transparent, reliable and capable Shari'ah-compliant lender. Our actions are driven by an inherent zeal to make Islamic financing simpler, seamless and easily accessible to the community.

"At the same time, we constantly seek to deploy propositions that add value to the lives of our customers. Bank Nizwa's flexible Shari'ah-compliant financing solutions will go beyond giving an impetus to the real estate sector - it will help individual customers contribute to Oman's green vision as they enhance their asset portfolio."

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Loosed from bondage
6) "Quiet down!"
10) "... Was a Rollin' Stone"
14) Logical proposition
15) On the ocean
16) Word with "screen" or "teen"
17) Not perfectly round
18) African spread
19) Break in the action
20) Multipurpose ointment
23) Before, in the beginning
24) Like a volunteer
25) Bygone Turkish title
27) Agreeable types?
30) Based on the number eight
32) Casbah setting
37) "Where the heart is"
38) Candy and other sweets
41) Crime boss
42) Prepares
43) Sung drama
45) Oration platforms

DOWN

1) Disk type
2) Idolize
3) Doesn't hold back
4) Mideast bigwig
5) Carpenter's groove
6) Any port in a stonn
7) Deplete
8) Alabama march site
9) Pilgrim to Mecca (Var.)
10) It may be hard to swallow

11) Flatterer
12) Having more than one spouse at a time
13) Word indicating a tie
21) One in mid-thrust
22) Tokyo, formerly
26) Public house potable
28) Country estate
29) Wearer of pointy footwear
31) Kind of board
33) Zamboni surface
34) In-flight info, for short
35) Get_of (trash)
36) Evening party
38) Frolicking about
39) Capable of performing
40) Opposite of paleo-
41) Police officer
44) Point of no return?
46) "We hold these_..."
47) Wish undone
48) Absolutely hates
51) Laugh-a-minute folks
52) Provide, as with some quality
53) Square things
54) Reduce to bits

57) Custodian's collection
58) Christian designer?
59) Grimm beginning
60) _ few rounds (box)

NOTE PAD

A	P	O	P	I	R	A	T	E	P	U	N	S
L	O	B	E	C	O	L	E	S	A	T	O	P
B	I	O	C	H	E	M	I	S	T	N	A	S
U	L	E	U	S	E	L	E	A	T	H	E	R
M	U	S	T	N	T	L	A	R	G	O		
	A	G	O	R	A	S	O	M	A	L	I	
M	A	R	X	R	U	S	E	G	I	V	E	N
E	T	U	I	M	I	S	T	Y	M	E	A	N
R	O	N	D	O	N	I	N	A	I	R	K	S
E	M	E	E	R	S	E	A	R	N	S		
	R	E	A	M	S	D	O	T	A	G	E	
T	R	E	M	O	L	O	L	A	V	L	A	X
B	A	L	I	M	O	N	O	G	A	M	I	S
A	L	A	S	O	L	I	V	E	O	V	E	R
R	E	N	T	N	A	P	E	S	M	E	S	A

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Things and people are moving slowly, you included, and it's not the pace you're most comfortable with. You'd really prefer to step on the gas and zoom on down the road. Before that can happen, though, there's some weird energy you'd be wise to take a look at and try to convert to positive fuel. Think of it as a renewable resource that's available for your use if you can just change it up a bit. For you, it shouldn't be much of a challenge.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

If someone's giving you a strange vibe right now, you don't have to let it get to you. However, it might be a good idea to look beneath the surface to see why this might be the case. It's possible that it actually has nothing to do with you (yes, really, even though you are the center of the universe, it's possible). One way to get to the bottom of this might be to just ask them what's up in a non-confrontational manner.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

The vibes other people are giving off might affect you to an unusual degree now, so if someone's emanating crummy energy, give them a wide berth. Your internal state and the bigger picture are closely connected at the moment, so it's important that you're in a positive, supportive environment. As for those with the negativity going, you can always check back in with them a little bit later. Maybe in a few years.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Make sure that you aren't giving too much money to your friends. It's not such a bad thing to lend someone some money once in a while, but be careful to avoid financing any of their new projects or schemes. It's a complication you don't need right now. It's not about being selfish. It's about not creating a situation in which misunderstandings could result. Keep things simple and social and leave money out of it.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

The goal you've got in mind at the moment may be a worthy one, but is it altogether realistic? While you're mulling that over, there are probably some more pressing day-to-day matters demanding your attention, and this will just interrupt whatever progress you might be making. Whatever you do, keep communicating. You're good at it now, and as long as you're talking and listening, your thought processes will keep moving forward.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Just because you're extra skilled at making excellent decisions at the moment doesn't mean you should be saddled with every decision there is to be made. Luckily, you're also good at organizing groups and letting them handle things on their own with just a little bit of direction. Don't bite off more than you can possibly chew, and don't be afraid to delegate, whether it's in a work situation or personal one.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Getting your emotional health in check is always important, but it's even more important now. You need to balance things out and get a better sense of what really matters and what you should let roll off your back. You're might already feel good about your life, but once you start sharing your affection with friends and family members, your happiness will grow exponentially. Spread the love and pass out hugs like they're going out of style.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You might be tempted to be stingy now, whether at work or with your own hard-earned dollars, but nobody likes a cheapskate. There's a balance to strike here between your own self-interest (that is, protecting your bank account or budget) and being generous to a fault. You're an expert at finding balance, so look for the alternative that allows everyone in the situation to feel valued and no one to feel cheated.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You're ready to tell it like it is, but is your audience ready to hear the real deal? It certainly isn't an unfamiliar crossroads for you to find yourself at, and it's highly unlikely that you'll hold back this time. While your straightforwardness makes you a valuable asset, it might not make you incredibly popular right now. If you're concerned about keeping your fan base, engage your tolerant side before you decide what you're going to say.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You have plenty of patience today, which makes this the perfect time to talk to someone who always tests it. If you've been dreading a confrontation or difficult conversation, today is the day to finally go through with it. Patience gives you perspective, and this perspective will give you the courage you've been lacking. But the best part of this day is that you'll soon discover that you had nothing to fear in the first place.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're on top of the world, but someone close to you might be less so. Rather than trying to jolly them up, which could just annoy them, convey your concern, empathy, and willingness to help and then leave them alone. That way you can preserve and enjoy your own good mood (which, by the way, can be very good) and all the positive opportunities it's bringing your way. You might even have an amazing revelation about the future now.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Set your own priorities now and stick to them. Someone might be making demands on your time, whether at work, socially, or at home, that you just don't have the resources or patience or desire for at the moment. The temptation to just say yes and figure out how to fit it all in could be strong, but don't be afraid to make a few waves. Being wishy-washy won't get you where you want to be.

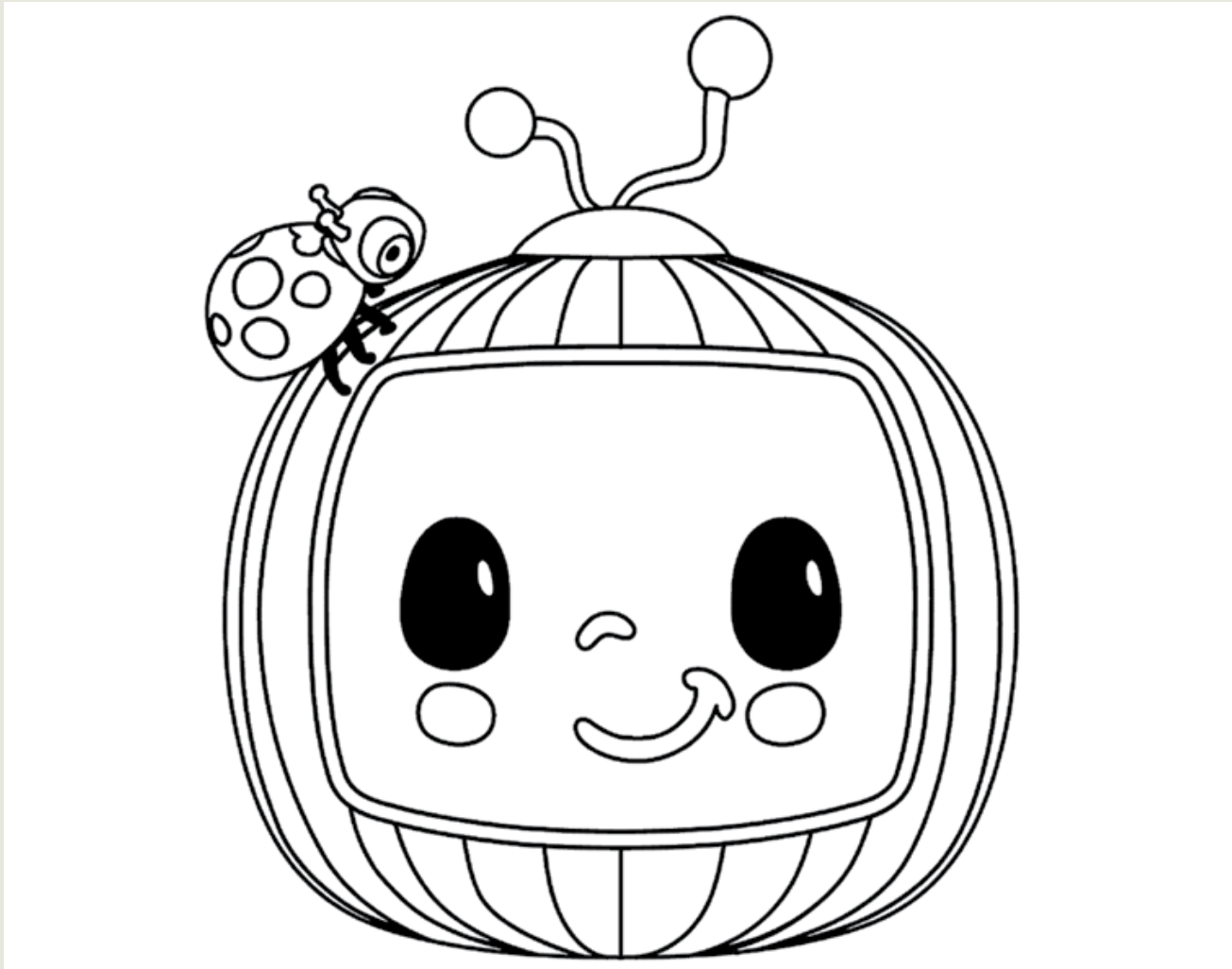


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. The national coat of arms of Portugal consists basically of a shield in front of a sphere; what is the sphere called?
A. Antikythera globe
B. Sextant
C. Armillary sphere
D. Earthapple
02. The composer of the music for "Blue Eyes", "Three Sisters" and "The Cat and the Fiddle" also composed the music for which of these other musicals?
A. Oh, Kay!
B. Showboat
C. A Connecticut Yankee
D. No, No Nanette
03. What is the mathematical result of taking a number, squaring it, multiplying by double the first prime number, quartering the result, dividing by the first number, and then taking away the first number?
A. 10
B. 1
C. The first number
D. 0

Answers: 1. C 2. B 3. D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

I	M	N	L
G	R	I	D
F	U	A	P
U	N	N	A

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

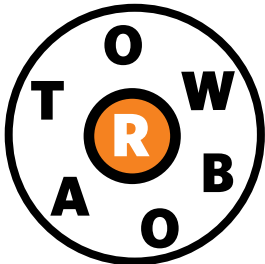
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Kim Jong Un vows N Korea to have world's most powerful nuclear force

Seoul, South Korea - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country aimed to have the world's most powerful nuclear force as he celebrated the launch of its newest intercontinental ballistic missile at a ceremony with his young daughter, state media reported on Sunday.

Kim also handed promotions to more than 100 officials and scientists for their work on the Hwasong-17 - dubbed the 'monster missile' by analysts and believed to be capable of reaching the US mainland - just days after Pyongyang test-fired it in one of its most powerful launches yet.

Hailing the new ICBM as 'the world's strongest strategic weapon', Kim said North Korean scientists had made a 'wonderful leap forward in the development of the technology of mounting nuclear warheads on ballistic missiles', the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

Building the nuclear force to protect the dignity and sovereignty of the state and the people 'is the greatest and most important revolutionary cause, and its ultimate goal is to possess the world's most powerful strategic force, the absolute force unprecedented in the century', Kim was quoted as saying in his order promoting the officials.

The leading officials and scientists had demonstrated to the world Pyongyang's 'goal of building the world's strongest army', he added. The launching vehicle for the new Hwasong-17 ICBM was awarded the title of 'DPRK Hero', a separate KCNA report said, using the initials for the North's official name.



This undated picture released from KCNA on Sunday shows North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un and his daughter greeting scientists and engineers from a defence science research institute, and workers at a munitions factory, who contributed to the test-firing of the new intercontinental ballistic missile (AFP)

The ultimate goal is to possess the world's most powerful strategic force, absolute force unprecedented in the century

KIM JONG UN

It 'clearly proved before the world that the DPRK is a full-fledged nuclear power', the report said, adding the North 'fully demonstrated its might as the most powerful ICBM state'.

Hong Min of the Korea Institute for National Unification said the North's trumpeting of the Hwasong-17's test-firing was

aimed at elevating its status as a nuclear power.

"If the (launch of the) Hwasong-15 in 2017 was focused on becoming a nation that can threaten the US mainland with nukes, the latest missile is focusing on becoming the most powerful ICBM state," he said.

The UN Security Council has passed nearly a dozen resolutions imposing sanctions on North Korea over its nuclear and missile activity since 2006.

'Limitless bolstering'

Attending a photo session on Saturday with officials and scientists who had contributed to the successful test-firing of the missile, Kim called for 'limitless bolstering of the defence capabilities', KCNA said in an

other report. Kim exhorted the scientists and workers to 'expand and bolster up the nuclear war deterrent of the country at an exceptionally rapid speed'.

The official *Rodong Sinmun* newspaper carried more than a dozen pictures of Kim at the photo session with his 'beloved daughter', who was revealed to be Kim's second child, named Ju Ae - dressed in a black coat with a fur collar, linking arms with her father as they posed in front of the gigantic

missile surrounded by uniformed soldiers.

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said the daughter's presence was meant to portray Hwasong-17 as 'the protector of the future generation'. "It looks like he will continue to parade his daughter on various occasions and use her as a means for propaganda," he added.

The November 18 ICBM test was the latest in a record-breaking blitz of missile launches by Pyongyang, with officials and analysts in Seoul and Washington warning they could culminate in a seventh nuclear test by North Korea, which last tested an atomic device in 2017.

AFP



Police officers stand at the entrance of one of two schools where a shooting took place, in Aracruz, Brazil, on Friday (AFP)

Death toll rises to four in Brazil twin school shooting

Brasília, Brazil - The death toll from a twin school shooting in Brazil rose to four on Saturday after a teacher wounded in the attack by a 16-year-old shooter wearing Nazi symbols died from her injuries, officials said.

Authorities in the city of Aracruz, in Espírito Santo state, had said some of the around 10 wounded, including three teachers and a student, were in serious condition after the Friday attack that shocked the country, which has seen a rise in school shootings in recent years.

"Unfortunately, the tragedy of Aracruz has not yet ended," said state Governor Renato Casagrande on Saturday.

"With deep regret we confirm the death of another victim, teacher Flavia Amboss Mercon," tweeted the governor, who had declared three days of mourning in Espírito Santo.

The shooter was a former student at the public school he targeted first, where he fired on a group of teachers, killing two people and wounding some nine others. He then went to a nearby private school where he killed an adolescent girl and left several more people wounded.

He has been arrested and will

face charges of murder and attempted aggravated murder, Espírito Santo police said.

Relatives of the other three people killed held wakes on Saturday, according to Brazilian media. "My daughter was always light and love. I lost my daughter to hate," Thais Sagrillo, the mother of a 12-year-old girl who was killed, told Globonews.

The attack was the twelfth school shooting in Brazil since 2002, according to research institute Sou da Paz.

The latest attacks spurred calls for gun policy reform, with critics hitting out at a series of presidential decrees relaxing regulations on firearms and ammunition under far-right President Jair Bolsonaro.

Brazilian president-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who has been sharply critical of the ex-army captain's relaxation of gun-control laws, defeated Bolsonaro in elections last month.

Officials said the shooter, a policeman's son, used two handguns in the attack, both registered to his father - one being his service firearm, and the other being a privately registered weapon.

AFP

Deadly census protests called off in Bolivia

La Paz, Bolivia - Protests to demand a new census were called off in Bolivia's economic hub of Santa Cruz on Saturday after weeks of unrest, with the country's leftist government set to carry out a count in March 2024.

The deadly protests, which have gone on for 36 days, were suspended after the country's Chamber of Deputies approved the 2024 census earlier in the day, with the bill now headed to the Senate.

In addition to cementing the census date, the bill pledges government spending changes and legislative assembly seat

allotment ahead of the country's 2025 presidential election. The protests in Santa Cruz first began on October 22 as activists demanded that President Luis Arce carry out the census by 2023, since the distribution of funds and legislative seats would depend on each region's population.

Many in Santa Cruz, a stronghold of center-right political forces that are opposed to Arce's government, believed their department was disadvantaged under current calculations that are based on a 2012 census.

AFP

White House blasts Trump for meeting with white supremacist

Washington, US - The White House on Saturday condemned former president Donald Trump for meeting at his Florida estate with a renowned white supremacist and with rapper Kanye West who is embroiled in a storm over anti-Semitic remarks.

Trump acknowledged having dinner with West, who now is known as Ye, on Tuesday night at Mar-a-Lago, and said he brought along friends, one of whom was Nick Fuentes, an outspoken anti-Semite and racist.

"I didn't know Nick Fuentes," Trump posted on his Truth Social account late on Friday.

White House deputy press secretary Andrews Bates condemned Trump's meeting with Fuentes. "Bigotry, hate, and anti-Semitism have absolutely no



This file photo shows Nick Fuentes answering question during an interview with AFP in Boston, Massachusetts on May 9, 2017 (AFP)

place in America - including at Mar-a-Lago. Holocaust denial is repugnant and dangerous, and it must be forcefully condemned,"

Bates told CNN.

President Joe Biden, who is spending the holiday weekend in Nantucket, ducked a question

about Trump's dinner: "You don't wanna hear what I think."

Fuentes is a Holocaust denier whose YouTube channel was permanently suspended in early

Bigotry, hate and anti-Semitism have absolutely no place in America. Holocaust denial is repugnant and dangerous

ANDREWS BATES

2020 for violating the platform's hate speech policy.

Trump announced his plans in mid-November to seek reelection

in 2024, and his embrace of a white nationalist unsettled some of his onetime administration officials. David Friedman, who was Trump's former ambassador to Israel, blasted the dinner at Mar-a-Lago.

"Even a social visit from an antisemite like Kanye West and human scum like Nick Fuentes is unacceptable," Friedman said in one of several tweets.

"Antisemites deserve no quarter among American leaders, right or left," he said.

Axios, a news website, cited what it said was a source familiar with the dinner who said Trump 'seemed very taken' with Fuentes even though he didn't seem to know anything about his background.

AFP

Breakthrough in Venezuela talks spurs US to ease embargo

Mexico City, Mexico - The government of Nicolas Maduro and the Venezuelan opposition broke a political stalemate on Saturday with a broad social accord, and the US government responded by allowing a major US oil company to resume operations in Venezuela.

The accord heralded a potential easing of a grinding economic and political crisis in Venezuela.

It paves the way for the United Nations to oversee a trust fund of frozen assets of the Maduro government to be used for a variety of social projects in the South American country, including programmes related to education, health, food security, flood response and electricity.

"We have identified a set of resources belonging to the Venezuelan state, frozen in the global financial system, to which it is possible to access," said Dag

Nylander, an envoy from Norway, which facilitated the negotiations. The amount to be released was not specified.

The agreement, signed in Mexico, ended 15 months of stalemate between the two sides, potentially easing a massive flow of refugees from Venezuela throughout the region and even impacting world oil markets.

Maduro praised the deal on Twitter, saying it 'opens the way for a new chapter for Venezuela, to keep advancing towards the peace and well-being that all Venezuelans yearn for.'

And UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said in a statement that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was committed to supporting the parties, calling the breakthrough 'an important milestone that has the potential to deliver broader benefits for the



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro (AFP)

people of Venezuela'.

The US Treasury Department said the accord marks 'important steps in the right direction to restore democracy' in Venezuela, and responded by issuing a license to Chevron Corp. to re-

sume limited oil extraction operations in Venezuela.

World's largest oil reserves

The license will remain in effect for six months while the Biden

administration assesses whether the Maduro government meets commitments made in the accord, Treasury said.

Chevron said it would 'continue supporting social investment programmes aimed at providing humanitarian relief' in the country and that the 'decision brings added transparency to the Venezuelan oil sector.'

The relaxation of curbs on Chevron's operations in Venezuela, which has the world's largest oil reserves, would allow the nation to move toward re-entering global oil markets.

International efforts to resolve the Venezuelan crisis have gained strength since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the pressure it has placed on global energy supplies.

A joint statement by Canada, the United States, Britain and the EU pledged 'willingness to re-

view sanctions' on Venezuela but demanded that it release political prisoners, respect press freedom and guarantee independence of the judiciary and electoral bodies. The powerful Democratic chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Robert Menendez, said the Biden administration should move slowly.

'Criminal dictatorship'

"If Maduro again tries to use these negotiations to buy time to further consolidate his criminal dictatorship, the United States... must snap back the full force of our sanctions that brought his regime to the negotiating table in the first place," Menendez said in a statement.

Despite its huge oil reserves, Venezuela suffers grinding poverty and a political crisis that

has led a UN-estimated seven million Venezuelans to flee the country in recent years. Food, medicine and such basics as soap and toilet paper are often in short supply.

Saturday's accord made no headway on a critical issue: How to move ahead toward presidential elections scheduled for 2024.

Venezuela's political crisis has worsened since Maduro declared himself victor of contested 2018 elections, which were widely seen as fraudulent, and generated widespread street protests. Maduro's opposition is seeking free and fair presidential elections while Caracas wants the international community to recognise Maduro as the rightful president and to lift sanctions, particularly a US oil embargo and freeze on the nation's overseas assets.

AFP

Kampala, Uganda - Uganda's president extended a six-week lockdown on Saturday on two districts at the epicentre of an Ebola outbreak that has claimed 55 lives but said its spread was being curbed.

Since the outbreak was declared on September 20, Ebola has spread across Uganda and reached the capital Kampala, though health authorities this week said case numbers were falling. The two central districts at the heart of the outbreak, Mubende and Kassanda, were placed under a 21-day lockdown by President Yoweri Museveni on October 15.

The measures - including a dusk-to-dawn curfew, a ban on personal travel, and the closure of markets, bars and churches - were extended on November 5 by another 21 days.

On Saturday, Museveni ordered that the lockdown on Mubende and Kassanda to be renewed for 21 days, describing the situation as 'still fragile'.

"If we open now and a case appears, we will have destroyed all the gains made in this war," Museveni said in a national address read by his deputy, Jessica Alupo. "I therefore appeal for calm and understanding. Our health workers will continue to do all it takes to save lives and bring the epidemic to an end."

According to WHO criteria, an outbreak of the disease ends when there are no new cases for 42 consecutive days - twice the incubation period of Ebola.

Health Minister Jane Ruth Aceng told AFP this week that the number of new cases being registered was declining and there were signs Uganda was 'winning' the fight. Uganda's WHO office said on Thursday that as of November 22, no case had been declared for nine days in Kampala, 10 days in Mbende and 12 days in Kassanda.

Museveni said it was too early to celebrate "but overall I have been briefed that the picture is good".

The outbreak has claimed 55 lives out of 141 cases, the country's health ministry said on Friday. Ebola is spread through bodily fluids. Common symptoms are fever, vomiting, bleeding and diarrhoea.

AFP

Houses remain precariously on the edge of a landslide in Casamicciola on Sunday, following heavy rains on the island of Ischia, southern Italy (AFP)

sought to free up access to homes, cars and shops.

Rescuers had recovered the body of a 31-year-old woman, according to Italian news agency AGI.

"It's a situation that hurts us, if only for the people who disappeared under the mountain. Here it's an island and even if we don't

really know everyone, it's almost that," Salvatore Lorini, 45, told AFP.

"The mountain came down, there was devastation of shops, cars, hotels and that was already happening nine years ago. Now I am cleaning my mother-in-law's shop," he said.

The landslide was caused by a

lack of maintenance and prevention 'because nature is nature, there was an earthquake, but a bit of prevention' could have saved lives, said Lorini.

The peninsula, off Naples, is no stranger to states of emergency following earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or severe weather.

Casamicciola Terme, a spa resort of 8,000 inhabitants in winter on the lush island of Ischia, near Capri, was hit by an earthquake in 2017 that killed two people.

It was completely destroyed by a much more powerful earthquake at the end of the 19th century.

Complex rescue operation

Heavy rain sent torrents of mud through the streets of Casamicciola Terme, a settlement on the north of Ischia, a lush island near Capri that is thronged with tourists in summer.

Trees were upturned and cars left battered on the side of the road or in the water, according to AFP journalists.

The fire service said earlier one house had been overwhelmed by the mud and two people had been rescued from a car that had been swept into the sea.

In the worst-affected area of the town, at least 30 families were trapped in their homes without water or electricity, with mud and debris blocking the road, ANSA news agency reported.

Officials said they expected to evacuate and find temporary homes for between 150 and 200 people by Saturday evening.

"The rescue effort remains complex due to the weather conditions," said the department for civil protection, but it stressed teams would keep working through the night.

Local authorities called on residents of Ischia to stay inside to avoid hindering the rescue operation. Casamicciola Terme was hit by an earthquake in 2017, in which two people died.

The devastation in Ischia comes just weeks after 11 people died in heavy rain and flooding in the central Italian region of Marche.

AFP

Indian Home Minister Amit Shah

New Delhi, India - An octogenarian man burned himself to death in southern India in protest at what he called New Delhi's attempts to impose nationwide usage of Hindi, a language mostly spoken in the north, police said on Sunday.

Language is an emotive issue in India where hundreds of languages and dialects are spoken, but English serves as the main official medium while state governments use regional languages. According to the most recent census in 2011, fewer than half of Indian citizens speak Hindi - just under 44 per cent. But last month a group of parliamentarians headed by the powerful interior minister Amit Shah reportedly recommended making Hindi the national official language, including for technical education such as medicine and engineering.

Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken of a 'slave mentality' around the use of English, and promoted the use of Indian languages.

But opponents accuse his government of attempting to impose Hindi, causing particular anger in the south.

Most southern Indian languages are Dravidian, a completely different language family to the Indo-European group which includes Hindi.

MV Thangavel, 85, a farmer in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, doused himself in petrol and kerosene and set himself alight, police said.

He was holding a Tamil-language placard reading: "Modi government stop imposing

Hindi. Why do we need to choose Hindi over our literature-rich Tamil... it will affect future of our youth." Senthil, a police officer who uses only one name, told AFP that Thangavel had killed himself.

"He wrote the banner against central government " he added.

Thangavel carried out his protest on Saturday outside an office in Salem of Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK party, of which he was a member.

Party leader MK Stalin - who has criticised the Modi government's language policies - offered condolences to Thangavel's family but urged others to avoid such extreme protests. "We must not lose another life," reports quoted him as saying, condemning the central government's 'domineering attitude'. "Let's continue to fight against the imposition of Hindi politically, democratically," he said. "Don't let narrow-mindedness spoil a beautiful country of diversity."

AFP



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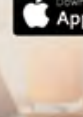


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'Iran rapper could face death penalty'

Salehi is charged with 'corruption on earth', one of the Islamic republic's most serious offences

Tehran, Iran - An Iranian rapper who expressed support for anti-regime protests is charged with 'corruption on earth', one of the Islamic republic's most serious offences. A US-based rights group had tweeted on Saturday that Toomaj Salehi's trial had begun 'without a lawyer of his choice', and his family said his 'life is at serious risk'. 'The trial has not yet begun but the charge against Toomaj Salehi has been drafted and sent back' to the court in Isfahan, said Assadollah Jafari, judicial chief in the central province, according to the judiciary's Mizan Online website.

Salehi is charged with 'corruption on earth', according to the judiciary, one of the Islamic republic's most serious offences. He is also accused of spreading 'lies on the internet, propaganda against the state, of having formed and managed illegal groups with the aim of disrupting security in cooperation with a government hostile' to Iran, and of inciting people to violence.

Iran's judiciary says more than 2,000 people have been charged since the start of the protests. Salehi is among a number of prominent figures detained.

The September 16 death in morality police custody of Mahsa



Women marching with anti-regime placards in the city of Zahedan in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province on Friday (AFP)

The trial has not yet begun but the charge against Toomaj Salehi has been drafted and sent back to the court in Isfahan

ASSADOLLAH JAFARI

Amini, 22, for allegedly breaching the strict dress code for women, sparked nationwide demonstrations. Authorities call them 'riots' and say they are encouraged by Iran's Western 'enemies'.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk says around 14,000 people have been arrested over the protests.

Salehi had disappeared at the end of October before appearing in a video published on November 2 by Iran's state news agency IRNA. The video claimed to show the first images of Salehi after his arrest. In it, the man says: "I am Toomaj Salehi. I said I made a mistake."

Rights activists condemned the recording as a forced confession.

His detention came shortly after he told the Canadian Broadcasting Cooperation: "You are dealing with a mafia that is ready to kill the entire nation... in order to keep its power, money and weapons."

Iran's judiciary has already confirmed six death sentences over the protests, and rights group Amnesty International says that based on official reports at least 21 people currently on trial are charged with crimes that could see them hanged.

Khamenei's niece arrested

Meanwhile, Iranian authorities

have arrested a niece of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei after she recorded a video describing the authorities led by her uncle as a 'murderous and child-killing regime'.

Farideh Moradkhani comes from a branch of the family that has a record of opposition to Iran's clerical leadership and has herself been jailed previously in the country.

Her brother Mahmoud Moradkhani wrote on Twitter that she was arrested on Wednesday after going to the office of the prosecutor following a summons.

Then on Saturday her brother

posted a video on YouTube, with the link shared on Twitter, where she condemned the 'clear and obvious oppression' Iranians have been subjected to, and criticised the international community's inaction.

"Free people, be with us! Tell your governments to stop supporting this murderous and child-killing regime," she said.

"This regime is not loyal to any of its religious principles and does not know any law or rule except force and maintaining its power in any way possible."

It was not clear when the video had been recorded.

AFP

S African woman held after 'racist' rant

Johannesburg, South Africa - A woman has been arrested after a Whatsapp voice message circulated on social media seeming to call for black people to be banned in South Africa, police said.

A case has been opened in Boksburg, a suburb 30km (18 miles) east of Johannesburg, against a woman who allegedly sent the voice message calling for a ban on black people instead of pitbulls.

Police said in a statement on Saturday they were investigating 'a case of crimen injuria', or wilful injury to a person's dignity by the use of racially offensive language.

"The suspect aged 60 years old was arrested and released the same day on a warning." She will appear in court next March.

The voice message follows a call from some South Africans to ban pitbulls following a rise in cases reported where the dogs have mauled people, particularly children. Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi on Twitter thanked police for their 'swiftness', adding, 'racists are mindless and useless!'

In the voice message a woman can be heard saying 'ban the black man, they rape they steal, they kill worse than any pitbull could ever get away with it'.

"Get all the black woman and cut out their uterus and their ovaries, that they cannot procreate." South Africa remains deeply divided along racial lines almost three decades after Nelson Mandela came to power vowing national reconciliation following the end of white-minority apartheid rule.

The voice message caused outrage on social media.

AFP

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Thousands protest Turkish strikes on Kurds in Syria

Qamishli, Syria - Thousands of Kurds protested on Sunday in the Syrian city of Qamishli against Turkish cross-border strikes targeting Kurdish groups in the country's northeast, an AFP photojournalist said.

One week ago Turkey began a barrage of air strikes against the semi-autonomous Kurdish zones in north and northeastern Syria, and across the border in Iraq.

It has also threatened a ground offensive in those areas of Syria.

The strikes came after a November 13 bombing in Istanbul that killed six people and wounded 81 and that Ankara blamed on the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which it and its Western allies consider a terrorist group.

The PKK has waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984. Turkey alleges that Syrian Kurdish fighters are the PKK's allies.

Kurdish groups denied any involvement in the Ankara blast.



Syrian-Kurdish demonstrators raise pictures of people killed during conflict, as they protest in the Syrian city of Qamishli, on Sunday (AFP)

Demonstrators in Kurdish-controlled Qamishli in Hasakeh province on Sunday brandished photos of people killed during the last strikes in the semi-autonomous region, the AFP photojournalist said.

They carried Kurdish flags alongside photos of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan - jailed in Turkey since 1999 - and protesters shouted slogans against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

They also chanted in favour of the resistance in 'Rojava' - the

name Kurds in Syria give to the area they administer.

"Only the will of the Kurdish people remains," protester Siham Sleiman, 49, told AFP. "It will not be broken and we remain ready. We will not leave our historic land."

Another demonstrator, Salah el-Dine Hamou, 55, said: "The message that we want to convey to the world is that we are victims of eradication. How long will we continue to die while other countries watch?"

AFP

Greece opens abuse, fraud probe into charity

Athens, Greece - Greece has opened a probe into one of the country's best-known child charities after numerous claims of alleged abuse and financial mismanagement, a justice ministry source told AFP on Sunday.

The Ark of the World, founded by a charismatic priest, has worked with underprivileged children for at least two decades in Athens and several other parts of Greece. Since mid-November, Greek media have been broadcasting allegations of malfeasance at the charity from former staff and former children under its care, their faces obscured and voices disguised.

One 19-year-old told police that he was allegedly sexually molested by a senior charity official, according to media reports.

One former staffer said that he was fired after speaking out after a co-worker allegedly beat three boys.

Others have claimed that charity executives demanded monetary donations instead of clothes and food, and lived lives of luxury.



The 'Ark of the World' charity headquarters in Athens (AFP)

The government this week replaced the organisation's entire board and installed new management.

The charity had been claiming to have some 500 children in its care, but deputy social affairs minister Domna Michailidou on Sunday told To Vima daily that the actual number was 136.

"(The children) are safe," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told Alpha TV on Friday, calling the case 'complicated'.

AFP

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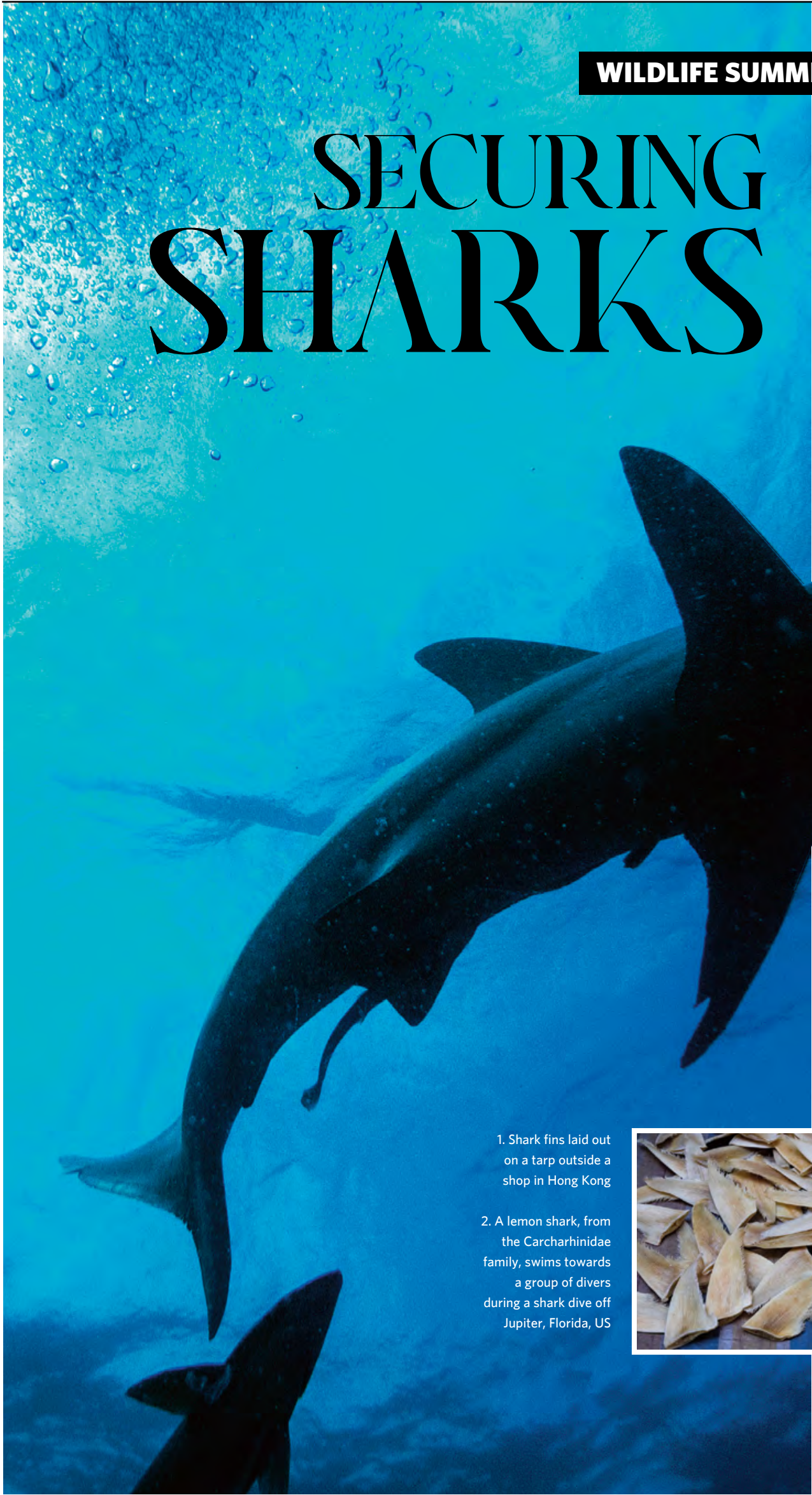
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WILDLIFE SUMMIT

SECURING SHARKS

Global wildlife summit approves shark protection

Delegates at a global summit on trade in endangered species last Friday approved a plan to protect 54 more shark species, a move that could drastically reduce the 'lucrative and cruel' shark fin trade.

Members of the requiem shark and the hammerhead shark families will now have their trade tightly controlled under the

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

The binding resolutions were adopted by consensus on the final day of the two-week meeting by delegates from 183 countries and the European Union, which takes place every two or three years.

"Proposal 37 approved," said Panamanian delegate and head of the plenary Shirley Binder of the requiem shark proposal, after Japan failed in getting the blue shark removed from the measure. The proposal regarding the hammerhead shark passed without

shark fins, which make their way onto dinner tables in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan, has spurred their trade.

Despite being described as almost tasteless and gelatinous, shark fin soup is viewed as a delicacy and is enjoyed by the very wealthy, often at weddings and expensive banquets.

Shark fins, representing a market of about US\$500mn per year, can sell for about US\$1,000 per kg.

"This will be remembered as the day we turned the tide to prevent the extinction of the world's sharks and rays," said Luke Warwick, director of shark protection for the NGO Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

The shark species will now be listed on what is known as CITES Appendix II, which is for species that may not yet be threatened with extinction but may become so unless trade in them is closely controlled.

"The crucial next step will be to implement these listings, and ensure they result in stronger fisheries management and trade measures as soon as possible," Warwick said.

From villain to darling

Sharks have long been seen as the villain of the seas they have occupied for more than 400 million years, drawing horror with their depiction in films such as 'Jaws' and occasional attacks on humans. However, these ancient predators have undergone an image makeover in recent years as conservationists have highlighted the crucial role they play in regulating the ocean ecosystem.

Joaquin de la Torre of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), told AFP that more than 100 million sharks are killed every



The 'historic decision' would mean up to 90 per cent of sharks in the market would now be protected

SHIRLEY BINDER

fertility rate, the constant hunting of the species has decimated their numbers.

In many parts of the world, fisherman lop the shark's fins off at sea, tossing the shark back into the ocean for a cruel death by suffocation or blood loss.

The efforts by conservationists led to a turning point in 2013, when CITES imposed the first trade restrictions on some shark species.

Ongoing exploitation

Delegates have been considering 52 proposals to change the protection levels of more than 600 species. They also approved new protections for the guitarfish ray, crocodiles, frogs, and some turtle species.

"Many of the proposals adopted here reflect there is ongoing over-exploitation and unsustainable trade, and escalating illegal trade, and some are due to complex interactions of other threats reducing species populations in the wild, including climate change, disease, infrastructure development, and habitat loss," said Susan Liberman of WCS.

CITES, which came into force in 1975, has set international trade rules for more than 36,000 wild species. Its signatories include 183 countries and the European Union.

AFP

1. Shark fins laid out on a tarp outside a shop in Hong Kong
2. A lemon shark, from the Carcharhinidae family, swims towards a group of divers during a shark dive off Jupiter, Florida, US



debate. Binder earlier told AFP the 'historic decision' would mean up to 90 per cent of sharks in the market would now be protected. Insatiable appetite in Asia for

year. "Sharks and rays are the most threatened species, more even than elephants and big cats." With many shark species taking more than 10 years to reach sexual maturity, and having a low

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PLANNER'S PERSPECTIVE

Farrokh Derakhshani, director of Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which was presented in Muscat last month, has an issue with certain trendy words

Tridwip K Das

The 2022 Aga Khan Award for Architecture came to Oman in October to be presented at Royal Opera House Muscat. Now in its 45th year, it celebrates projects – from slum upgrading to high-rise ‘green’ buildings – that not only exhibit architectural excellence but also improve the overall quality of life.

The triennial awards recognise architectural excellence in the fields of contemporary design, social housing, community improvement and development, historic preservation, reuse and area conservation, as well as landscape design and improvement of the environment.

The awards were established in 1977 by the Aga Khan, 49th hereditary Imam of the Ismaili Muslims, to identify and encourage building concepts that address the needs and aspirations of communities in which Muslims have a significant presence.

Welcoming guests at the awards ceremony, which was presided over by H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, award director Farrokh Derakhshani said winners of each triennial cycle have been celebrated all over the world “in places where Muslims are present or where they have enriched cultural heritage”.

Derakhshani described Oman as a “country steeped in history, rich in culture where tradition is the foundation for the future”.

Other factors that weighed in Muscat’s favour as host city included Oman being at the crossroads of civilisations between India and Africa. “So, you have different architecture brought by different people coming here – Portuguese, Persians or others. It’s a combination of all these.

“The other very important aspect in Oman’s favour is that it has kept its identity. Despite rapid growth and development, it has not alienated the people,” Derakhshani said.

The awards have been presented at Topkapi Palace in Istanbul – the first time it was opened for a public event in 1983, the Alhambra in Granada, Registan Square in Samarkand, Shalimar Gardens in Lahore, and Humayun’s Tomb – a UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Delhi, among other places.

“The awards for the previous cycle in 2019 were presented in Kazan, Tatarstan – the furthest northeast the Muslims have been. They were not made Muslim by the sword. They themselves asked people from Baghdad to come to convert them to Islam. They live in tolerance with the Russians... So, this way we present new territories where people don’t know Muslims exist. People don’t believe that in the Volga in Russia this culture exists,” Derakhshani said, explaining the criteria behind selection of venues and host cities for the awards.

40-year association

Derakhshani has been director of the awards for over 15 years. Based in Switzerland, he trained as an architect and planner at the National University of Iran before pursuing higher studies at the School of Architecture in Paris. His main field of specialisation is contemporary architecture of Muslim societies, and his professional work includes design and construction management of large-scale public works and infrastruc-

ture projects in Iran, as well as architectural design in Paris and Geneva. He lectures widely and serves on boards and committees of several cultural institutions.

He joined the awards in 1982. Aged 30, he was in Paris caught in a limbo after the Iran-Iraq war broke out. Unable to go back to Iran and uncertain of how or when the war would end, he initially joined on a five-month contract. Forty years later, he’s continuing to make invaluable contributions to the awards.

463 nominations, 20 shortlisted, 6 winners

From a total of 463 projects nominated for 2022, 20 were shortlisted which were whittled down to six winners. These were across a vast geography, across a wide spectrum of categories based on use from airport and school to museum/arts centre, and across a diverse range that reflects the blurring of boundaries between

the disciplines of architecture, landscape and infrastructure. The US\$1mn prize money was shared by projects in Senegal, Lebanon, Iran, Indonesia and two in Bangladesh.

While no project in Oman has won the award, the fish market in Muttrah was among 20 shortlisted projects from 380 nominations in 2019. The grand jury citation described the design as an example of “contextual regionalism, respecting both the traditional context and modern needs”.

Distinguishing factors

Explaining how the Aga Khan Award is different from other architecture awards, Derakhshani referenced the eligibility criteria this year. To be eligible for consideration in the 2022 award cycle, projects had to be completed between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2020, and been in use for at least one year. “The shortlisted nominations undergo rigorous

investigation by experts who visit and evaluate each project onsite; the award doesn’t go to a concept.”

Another distinguishing factor is the fact that the award is not given only to the architects, but also municipalities, builders, clients, master artisans and engineers involved in the winning projects. “No architectural work is the work of one person; it is the work of many people. Architecture offices are composed of many professionals. The architect doesn’t have a magic wand to create a design. Architects are unlike artists, musicians and other creators who do something on their own, whose creative product is their own work. Like the author of a book. But that’s not the case in architecture,” Derakhshani explained.

“An Egyptian master mason was the winner of one of the first projects. He came with the architect to receive the award in Lahore. He had never travelled out of Egypt in his life, and all of



(Tridwip K Das)

a sudden, he became world famous. This is how the award has broadened the concept of architecture.”

Architecture and quality of life

Elaborating on the role and impact of the awards, he said, “When the awards were created in the 1970s, the world did not look at architecture as it does now. It introduced a new idea into architecture: how architecture can improve the quality of life. Quality of life was not part of the thinking process of architects and de-



The architect doesn’t have a magic wand to create a design.

Architects are unlike artists, musicians, and other creators who do something on their own, whose creative product is their own work

FARROKH DERA KHSHANI

cision makers of the time. But now it has become routine for architects to try and improve the quality of life.”

Derakhshani, however, attributes the most significant role of the awards to the platform it gives to architecture. “The award ceremonies are held in very important... the most important architectural monuments of the Islamic world in the early days – in the presence of presidents, kings, heads of states... the highest person in the host country. This draws the attention of all the media in that country to talk about architecture, a subject not often talked about.”

Trendy words

Asked about the role of architecture in addressing climate change and environmental issues, he said, “I have a problem with some trendy words. Some years ago, sustainability was the buzz, now everyone talks about the climate... and all this is right. Every single project has to respond to all of this – one is not more important than the other.”

Derakhshani believes it is the architect’s job to respond correctly, ensure there is no wastage of material, and the design and material used factor in the climate of that place. “How intelligently and responsibly you choose your approach and technique while daring to do something new matter. Instead of sustainability, we need to use the word responsibility.”

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FIFA WORLD CUP

Qatar2022



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2022 | MUSCAT DAILY | 13



Morocco players celebrate Zakaria Aboukhlal's (top, R) goal against Belgium in their Group F match at the Al Thumama Stadium in Doha on Sunday (AFP)

ROAR OF ATLAS LIONS

Late goals from Sabiri and Aboukhlal help Morocco stun Belgium and take charge of Group F

Doha, Qatar - Morocco jeopardised Belgium's World Cup hopes as Abdelhamid Sabiri and Zakaria Aboukhlal's late goals secured a surprise 2-0 triumph in Doha on Sunday.

Belgium, third in Russia four years ago, could have qualified for the last 16 with victory but instead produced another insipid display after their fortunate opening win over Canada.

Substitute Sabiri was the hero thanks to a 73rd-minute free-kick which Thibaut Courtois allowed to bounce in at his near post, before

Aboukhlal grabbed a second in stoppage time. The tens of thousands of Morocco supporters responded by cheering their team home at a raucous Al Thumama Stadium.

Morocco are level on points with Croatia at the top of Group F and know they will qualify for the knockout phase for the first time since 1986 if they can avoid defeat against Canada on Thursday.

Belgium, the world's second-ranked side, will have to beat 2018 runners-up Croatia to be sure of going through.

GROUP F	
BELGIUM	0
MOROCCO	2

Morocco were dealt a blow after the national anthems when goalkeeper Yassine Bounou appeared to gesture he would not be able to play. The experienced Munir El Kadjouji was sent out in his place.

The Atlas Lions fans vastly outnumbered their Belgian counterparts and breathed a sigh of relief

when the Europeans almost grabbed a fourth-minute lead.

Hazard played in Michy Batshuayi whose effort from a tight angle was kept out by Munir.

Belgium dominated the early exchanges but Morocco did manage a shot at goal when Hakim Ziyech fired over from distance.

Morocco gain confidence

The African side continued to grow into the contest and Selim Amallah, who was born in Belgium, volleyed into the stands before Achraf

Hakimi blazed a presentable chance off target.

The crowd erupted in raucous celebration when Ziyech's free-kick flew all the way into the net in first-half injury time.

But the goal was ruled out

after a VAR check, as Romain Saiss was leaning just offside and the former Wolves defender was in 'keeper Courtois' eyeline.

AFP

'We can do anything,' says Morocco's Regragui after Belgium win

Doha, Qatar - Morocco coach **Walid Regragui** said his team "can do anything" at the World Cup after their surprise 2-0 victory over Belgium on Sunday.

The North Africans only need a point in their final Group F game against Canada on Thursday to reach the last 16 for the first time since 1986.

Late goals from Abdelhamid Sabiri and Zakaria Aboukhlal at the Al Thumama Stadium secured Morocco their first World Cup win in 24 years.

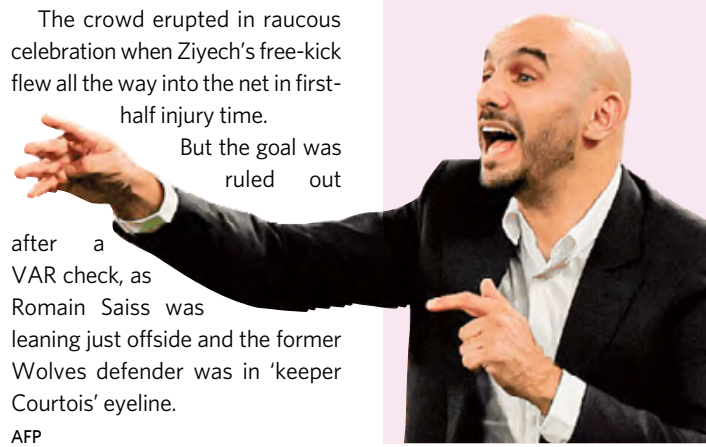
"We know if you don't give 100 per cent it's impossible to win," Regragui told a press conference.

"But with these fans, with these players and this spirit we can do anything."

"The competition is not over, we have to recover quickly for the game against Canada. Hopefully we can get a good result for the qualification."

All five African teams were dumped out in the group stage in Russia four years ago but Morocco joined Senegal in winning their second match in Qatar.

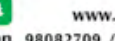
The Atlas Lions sit top of the group, having also held 2018 runners-up Croatia to a goalless draw.



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Kramaric hits double to fire Croatia as Canada crash out

Doha, Qatar - Croatia got their World Cup campaign back on track as Andrej Kramaric's double inspired a 4-1 win that eliminated Canada in Sunday's Group F grudge match in Doha.

Zlatko Dalic's side were stunned by Alphonso Davies's second-minute opener at the Khalifa International Stadium.

But Hoffenheim forward Kramaric equalised and Marko Livaja put the 2018 World Cup runners-up ahead just before half-time.

Second-half goals from Kramaric and Lovro Majer ensured Croatia could celebrate their first win of the tournament after a goal-

GROUP F	
CROATIA	4
CANADA	1

less draw with Morocco in their first match.

Croatia sit top of Group F, above Morocco on goal difference, and a draw in their final game against Belgium on Thursday would guarantee they reach the last 16.

It was an especially sweet success for Croatia after Canada boss John Herdman irked Dalic's men with his profane attempt to inspire

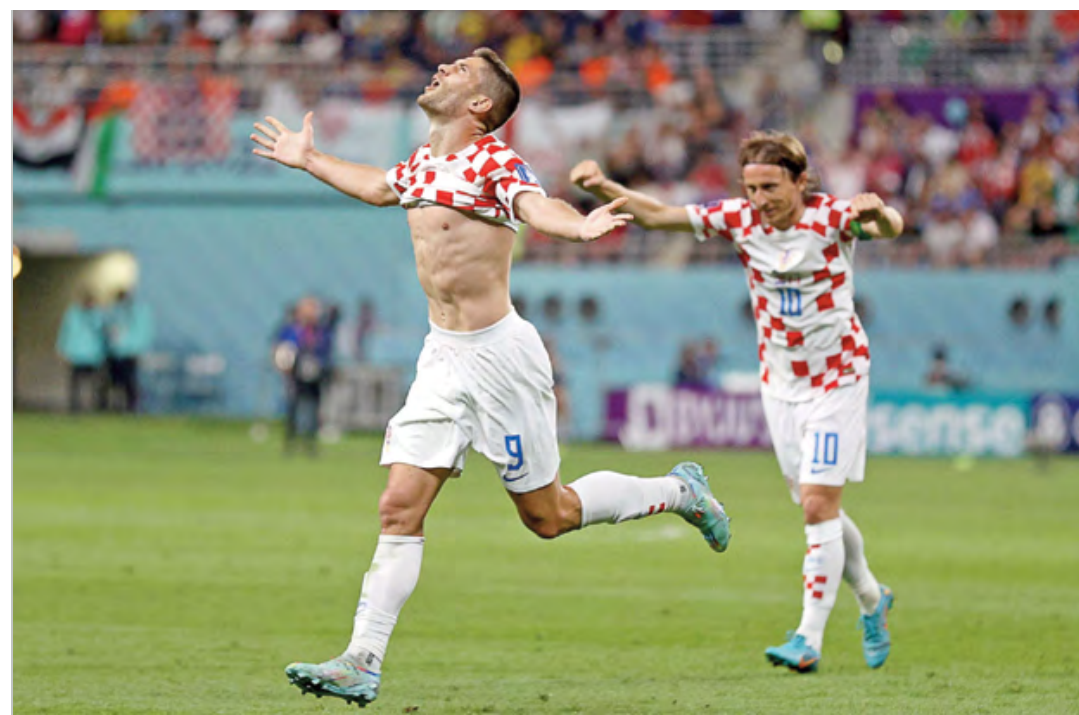
his players after a 1-0 defeat against Belgium in their group opener.

In a television interview, Herdman told his players: "They belong here. And we're going to go and eff Croatia."

Dalic had taken exception to Herdman's rant, insisting on Saturday that his team deserved "respect" from their opponents.

The Croatians let their football do the talking on Sunday, allowing them to seize control of a group blown wide open by Morocco's shock 2-0 win against Belgium earlier in the afternoon.

AFP



Croatia's Andrej Kramaric celebrates alongside Luka Modric after scoring against Canada on Sunday (AFP)



Qatar2022

Lion al Messi!

Maestro’s magical goal reignites Argentina’s hopes, illuminates the World Cup

Doha, Qatar - Lionel Messi helped keep Argentina’s World Cup bid alive with a stunning first goal in a 2-0 victory over Mexico on Saturday.

Defeat to outsiders Saudi Arabia in their opening Group C match in Qatar had left Argentina on the brink, knowing another loss would spell the end of their tournament chances.

But the Albiceleste just edged a disjointed and tetchy affair against their fellow Latin Americans at the Lusail stadium in Doha.

And who else but the mercurial Messi should be the hero, firing home a low shot from 20 yards on 64 minutes, before Enzo Fernandez added a thunderbolt second goal for Argentina three minutes from time.

“The first game cost us,” said Messi. “We knew that we had to win today, that another World Cup was starting for us and we knew how to do it.

“It was a tough game to pick ourselves up for because Mexico play well.

“They played the first half with intensity but in the second half we relaxed and became ourselves again.”

Messi’s goal meant he tied the late Diego Maradona on eight goals and 21 appearances at the World Cup for Argentina.

It came a day after Argentines



Argentina’s Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring against Mexico in their Group C match at the Lusail Stadium on Saturday (AFP)

marked the second anniversary of Maradona’s death.

The goals were two rare moments of quality in an often poor and tense encounter where the occasion seemed to get to everyone, except seven-time Ballon d’Or winner Messi.

But Argentina still need to win their final group match against Poland to guarantee a place in the knock-out stages.

“We cannot let up now. Every game is a final now, we cannot make any mistakes,” said Messi.

The first half was an entirely forgettable affair.

Mexico’s back five and aggressive approach left Argentina with little space or time to construct anything.

And the Mexicans never had enough players forward to cause their opponents problems when trying to counter.

The two sets of fans deserved so much more as they created a feverish atmosphere in the Lusail Stadium that was close to capacity with more than 88,000 supporters.

But even Messi could make no inroads, struggling to get on the ball and even less so in areas where he could cause damage.

The best early chance saw big Mexico centre-back Cesar Montes stab wide a devilish dead ball delivery from Luis Chavez.

Argentina came closest when Mexico goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa made a hash of trying to punch away a Messi free-kick that was curling dangerously towards goal. The referee’s whistle saved Ochoa as he collapsed to the ground claiming he was fouled.

That was another feature of the first period - players rolling around on the turf clutching their faces after imagined contact.

AFP

Scaloni calls for calm after Messi magic

Doha, Qatar - Lionel Scaloni pleaded with Argentines to show calm after Lionel Messi helped keep their World Cup hopes alive with the first goal in a crucial 2-0 win over Mexico on Saturday.

Argentina would have been eliminated from the tournament with a Group C match to go had they lost and despite this win, sealed with a fine Enzo Fernandez strike, they must still defeat Poland on Wednesday to ensure progression to the last 16.

Asked about images showing his assistant Pablo Aimar on the brink of tears during the game, Scaloni called for some perspective.

“You have to have some common sense, it’s just a football match,” he said.

“I received a message from my brother saying he was crying and it can’t be like that. It’s as if it were more than a football match.

“I don’t share that. The players must understand it’s a football match. If not, it will be like this in every match.

“It’s hard to make people understand that the sun will rise tomorrow, win or lose. What matters is how you do things.”

Scaloni said he for one wouldn’t be celebrating as his team are still not out of the water yet. Even with a draw against Poland, the two-time champions could still be eliminated.

“People will think I’m crazy but fine, we won, we’re celebrating, it happens,” he said.

“Tomorrow we have to prepare the game and it’s like when we won the Copa (America) final and we had to think about what came next.

“The joy doesn’t last long, you have to maintain balance.”

“It’s hard to make people understand that the sun will rise tomorrow, win or lose. What matters is how you do things.”

LIONEL SCALONI



No matter how much I can respect what you did inside the pitch, those remarks about Iran culture, Iran national team and my players are a disgrace to football

CARLOS QUEIROZ



Iran’s players celebrate with coach Carlos Queiroz after their victory against Wales in a Group B match on Friday (AFP)

Iran fury over Klinsmann’s World Cup criticism

Doha, Qatar - Iran and coach Carlos Queiroz called on Jurgen Klinsmann to resign from a FIFA experts panel on Sunday after the former Germany striker accused the Iranians of gamesmanship in their World Cup win over Wales.

Klinsmann, a member of FIFA’s seven-member technical study group that is analysing the World Cup in Qatar, took aim at Iran’s antics following their 2-0 Group B win against Wales on Friday.

The former USA coach said a series of niggling fouls and the conduct of the Iranian coaching staff during the game was part of a deliberate strategy to make opponents “lose their focus”.

“This is not by coincidence. This is all purposely. This is part of their culture, that’s how they play it,”

Klinsmann said while working as a studio analyst for the BBC.

“They make you lose their focus, make you lose your concentration and what’s really important to you.”

Klinsmann’s remarks drew a furious response from Iran’s football federation and Queiroz, who branded the German World Cup winner’s remarks a “disgrace to football.”

“Even not knowing me personally, you question my character with a typical prejudiced judgment of superiority,” Queiroz wrote in a series of posts on Twitter.

“No matter how much I can respect what you did inside the pitch, those remarks about Iran culture, Iran national team and my players are a disgrace to football.”

AFP

MOMENT IN TIME



UPROOTED: Japan’s Junya Ito is fouled by a Costa Rican player during their Group E match at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium on Sunday (AFP)

TODAYS MATCHES



CAMEROON
VS
SERBIA
2 PM



SOUTH KOREA
VS
GHANA
5 PM



BRAZIL
VS
SWITZERLAND
8 PM



PORTUGAL
VS
URUGUAY
11 PM

Brazil confident injured Neymar will be back to lead World Cup bid

Doha, Qatar - Brazil are confident that Neymar will return to lead their bid to win a sixth World Cup despite the world's most expensive player suffering an ankle injury in their opening match in Qatar.

The Brazil captain came off late on in Thursday's 2-0 win over Serbia with what was later diagnosed as a sprained ankle and has since been ruled out of their second Group G outing against Switzerland on Monday.

Doubts have even been raised in some quarters that he might struggle to feature again at the tournament, which finishes with the final in Doha on December 18.

But defender Marquinhos, who is also a teammate of the forward at Paris Saint-Germain, said Neymar has since been spending his days undergoing intensive physiotherapy in an attempt to recover full fitness as soon possible.

"At the time it was difficult for him and after the game he was sad which I think is normal given how much he has dreamt of this," Marquinhos said at a press conference on Sunday.

"Now, after the tests and the treatment, he is doing physiotherapy 24 hours a day which shows how much he wants to be back with us.

"We don't know when, but we hope it's as soon as possible," Brazil coach Tite insisted in the immediate aftermath of the win over Serbia that the 30-



Brazil's Neymar walks with a swollen ankle after their Group G match against Serbia at the Lusail Stadium on Thursday (AFP)

admitted. "I will keep doing so, not just for Neymar but also Danilo. I believe we are going to be able to use them again."

A Brazil win against Switzerland could be enough for them to secure a place in the last 16 with one group game to spare, depending on the result of the earlier Group G match between Cameroon and Serbia.

They would then play a last-16 tie on either December 5 or 6.



Neymar's ankle looks swollen as he leaves the field after their match against Serbia

Danilo also suffered an ankle injury against Serbia and is expected to be replaced against the Swiss by either Real Madrid's Eder Militao or the 39-year-old Dani Alves.

Yet it is the injury to Neymar that dominates all the talk in Brazil, a country which has become used to hanging on the fitness of its creative inspiration at the World Cup.

AFF



Portugal defender Danilo Pereira takes part in a training session at Al Shahania SC on Saturday (AFP)

Portugal's Danilo Pereira sidelined by broken ribs at World Cup

Doha, Qatar - Portugal defender Danilo Pereira will miss his country's final two World Cup group games after he fractured three ribs during a training session, the team said Sunday.

Danilo started alongside Ruben Dias in central defence for Portugal in their opening 3-2 win over Ghana in Group H.

The Paris Saint-Germain player was hurt in training on Saturday and has been ruled out Portugal's matches against Uruguay on Monday and South Korea on December 2.

The 31-year-old defender is set to undergo further scans to determine whether he could return should Portugal reach the knockout stage.

Portugal top the group with three points while South Korea and Uruguay both have one apiece.

AFF

Political football: war and peace by other means at the World Cup

Paris, France - As Iran prepares to play diplomatic arch-rivals the United States in the World Cup on Tuesday, here is a look at how geopolitics have spilt onto the pitch in previous World Cups:

MUSSOLINI'S 'BLACKSHIRTS' FRANCE-ITALY, 1938

Just a year before World War II broke out, defending champions Italy arrived in France with politics taking centre stage in their clash with the hosts.

Championed by Italy's then-leader, fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, the team were booed when they came onto the pitch at the stadium near Paris.

Undeterred, the Italians gave the fascist salute to the crowd and played in black shirts, a nod to the uniform worn by Mussolini's notorious "Blackshirts" militia.

Italy won the clash 3-1 and went on to win the competition.

COLD WAR BATTLE EAST GERMANY-WEST GERMANY, 1974

It would be the only game at the international level between the two national teams during the period when Germany was divided from 1949-1990.

Billed as the "battle of the brothers" and at the height of the Cold War, tensions were so high that traditional shirt swapping at the end of the match was banned.

With fears of terrorist activities, the match was categorised as high risk and armed squads were positioned around the stadium.

East Germany, playing in their first World Cup, pulled off a sensational 1-0 win, though things soon returned to script, with West Germany winning the tournament.

MARADONA'S MOMENT ENGLAND-ARGENTINA, 1986

This highly-charged clash took place in Mexico four years after Argentina's defeat to Britain in the Falklands War.

To the joy of their fans, Argentina took symbolic revenge, winning the quarter-final 2-1 with Diego Maradona scoring twice. His first goal was the infamous "Hand of God" goal in which he punched the ball past England goalkeeper Peter Shilton. Then a superb solo effort dubbed the goal of the century sealed victory.

"It was a final for us. It was not about winning a match, it was about eliminating the English," Maradona said.

SAY IT WITH FLOWERS IRAN-USA, 1998

Peace, not war, was behind the pre-kick-off niceties between the US and Iran at the 1998 World Cup.

The match, billed as one of the most politically charged in the game's history, began with a gesture of reconciliation from Iran's players, gifting bouquets of white roses to their US opponents.

Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran and the US have been at loggerheads.

The goodwill did not last long however as Iran famously stunned the Americans, beating them 2-1 and knocking them out of the World Cup.

AN EAGLE LANDS SWITZERLAND V SERBIA, 2018

This clash caused a huge outcry in Serbia after two Swiss players of Albanian origins (Kosovo and Labnai) celebrated their goals with a two-handed eagle gesture to mimic the black eagle in Albania's flag, considered by Serbia as a nationalist provocation.

The double eagle symbol is viewed as a symbol of defiance in Kosovo, which declared independence in 2008 in a move Serbia refuses to recognise.

Granit Xhaka, who was born in Kosovo, made the gesture after the scored Switzerland's first goal and Xherdan Shaqiri repeated it following his last-gasp winner that clinched a 2-1 victory.

FIFA fined the players although they escaped a ban.

AFF

Costa Rica beat Japan to hand Germany World Cup lifeline

Doha, Qatar - Costa Rica stunned Japan 1-0 thanks to a late goal at the World Cup on Sunday to blow Group E wide open and hand a potential lifeline to Germany.

Japan, who shocked four-time champions Germany 2-1 in their opener in Qatar, could have taken a giant stride towards the last 16 with a win.

Instead, they laboured for large parts of the match against a Costa Rica side who were hammered 7-0 by Spain, then defender Keysher Fuller scored in the 81st minute with a deflected strike.

It was Costa Rica's first shot on target at this World Cup and could be of huge benefit to the Germans.

The result left Spain, Japan and Costa Rica all on three points. Spain face Germany later Sunday in another crucial contest.

Japan made five changes to the team which shocked Germany in their opening match as coach Hajime Moriyasu made full use of his 26-man squad.

In temperatures of 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit) at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Japan immediately went on the attack and won a corner within 30 seconds to signal their intent.

Costa Rica coach Luis Fernando Suarez had resisted making wholesale changes to the team thumped by Spain, dropping teenage winger Jewison Bennette and defender Carlos

GROUP E		
	COSTA RICA	1
	JAPAN	0



Costa Rica's Keysher Fuller celebrates after scoring against Japan in their Group E match at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan, west of Doha, on Sunday (AFP)

Martinez to the bench.

Gerson Torres and 34-year-old centre-back Kendall Waston took their place in an ageing XI which featured four players from the 2014 World Cup quarter-finals.

But Japan's early promise melted in the Doha sun and the first shot at goal - a tame effort which sailed high and

wide - did not come until 10 minutes from half-time through Costa Rica's 30-year-old Joel Campbell.

A dreary first half came to a close with "Los Ticos" having had more of the ball but neither side mustering a shot on target.

Moriyasu had seen enough and made a double change at the break, one of them the introduction of Bundesliga-based striker Takuma Asano, who scored the winner against the Germans.

The Blue Samurai were immediately more cutting and midfielder Hidemasa Morita drew the first proper save of the match within seconds of the restart with a powerful strike.

Moriyasu threw on Brighton attacker Kaoru Mitoma for a defender just after the hour as Japan chased the victory that would put them on the cusp of the last 16.

It was all Japan as the match ticked into the last 20 minutes in front of 41,000 spectators.

Substitute Junya Ito looked to have wriggled free and was closing on goal, only for Costa Rica defender Francisco Calvo to cynically tug him back on the edge of the box, earning a yellow card that could easily have been red.

Costa Rica had done nothing for most of the game as an attacking force, but nine minutes from the normal time but surprisingly they stole it when Fuller's shot took a deflection and looped in.

AFF



WILD CARD TURNS ACE

Wild card entrants Canada beat Australia to win first Davis Cup

Málaga, Spain - Felix Auger-Aliassime sealed tennis history for Canada as they won their first Davis Cup title by beating Australia 2-0 in Sunday's final in Malaga.

The world number six eased past Alex De Minaur 6-3, 6-4 to give Canada the trophy at the expense of 28-time winners Australia.

Earlier Denis Shapovalov gave Canada, beaten finalists in 2019 to Spain, the first point with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Thanasi Kokkinakis.

Canada had come a long way since they were eliminated in qualifying by the Netherlands back in March before being handed a wild card into the finals after the exclusion of Russia and Belarus following the invasion of Ukraine.

Canada then finished second in Group B behind Spain in September, before eliminating Germany in the quarter-finals (2-1) earlier this week.

Shapovalov, the 18th-ranked Canadian, had been out of sorts in a semi-final defeat but hit back against Kokkinakis with 23 winners to the Australian's five.

Shapovalov raced to a 4-0 lead after quarter of an hour in Malaga, sealing the first set with his ninth winner after half an hour.

The Canadian staved off three break points in the fourth game of the second set.

Kokkinakis dug in to convert his first break point of four when Shapovalov was serving for the match and held serve but Shapovalov was not to be denied sealing victory on his second match point.

Earlier, Auger-Aliassime pulled double duty on Saturday to lead Canada into the final against Australia after orchestrating a 2-



Felix Auger Aliassime leads Canada's celebrations on the podium after their victory against Australia in the Davis Cup final in Malaga on Sunday

1 comeback win over Italy.

World number six Auger-Aliassime first defeated Lorenzo Musetti 6-3, 6-4 after Lorenzo Sonego had earlier beaten Denis Shapovalov 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (5/7), 6-4 in the opening rubber of the semi-final.

The 22-year-old Canadian then replaced the out-of-form Shapovalov to partner Vasek Pospisil in the decisive doubles and the gamble paid off in a 7-6 (7/2), 7-5 win over Matteo Berrettini and Fabio Fognini.

Berrettini, ranked 16 in singles but only 827 in doubles, replaced Simone Bolelli but the late switch by skipper Filippo Volandri backfired. In a doubles clash which lasted two hours, the Italians were made to regret surrendering early breaks in both sets.

The Canadian duo broke decisively for 6-5 in the second set before sealing their spot in the championship match leaving Italy still stuck on one Davis Cup title won back in 1976.

AFP



Canada players celebrate the fall of an Oman wicket

Canada edge Oman to win series

Muscat - Canada wrapped up a successful tour of Oman with a dominating win in the final one-dayer against the hosts to clinch the three-match series 2-1 at the Oman Cricket Academy ground on Saturday.

The series victory was icing on the cake after Canada emerged champions of the four-nation Desert Cup T20I series at the same venue last week.

In the final match of the 50-over series, Canada put Oman to bat first and bowled them out to a sub-par score of 166 in 49 overs. The batting of the hosts has been a matter of concern in the series and the woes contin-

ued with Ayaan Khan the top-scorer with 29. Jeremy Gordon and Saad Zafar combined well to wreck the Oman batting line-up with four wickets each.

Zafar was exceptional with figures of 10-3-28-4.

Canada batters have been in good form with the top-order firing and either setting up a good total to defend or chasing down at a quick pace. Openers Aaron Johnson and Srimantha Wijeyeratne along with Pargat Singh proved their calibre during the T20I series and were in good nick during the series.

Pargat Singh's unbeaten 87 off 69 and Wijeyeratne's unbeaten 58 off 49 helped Canada canter to a huge nine-wicket win as the visitors reached 167/1 in just 23 overs.

Earlier, Oman bounced back from the opening match loss to level the series 1-1 with an eight-wicket victory on Friday.

Put to bat first, Canada were bowled out for a paltry 97 in 37 overs with the hosts' bowling attack superb on the day.

Kaleemullah, Mohammed Nadeem, Ayaan Khan and Nester Dhamba picked up two wickets each while Fayyaz Butt and Wasim Ali bagged a wicket apiece.

Oman achieved the win with

Jatinder Singh (46) and Adeel Shafique (36) sharing an opening stand of 75 in 19.2 overs to put them on course for an easy win as they reached 98/2 in 23.2 overs.

Canada began the series on a rousing note last Wednesday as they scored 229/9 in the opener and then bowled out Oman for 145 to record a huge 84-run win.

Harsh Thaker smashed a solid 75 and Nikhil Dutta played a 50-ball 47 to guide the team past 200-mark.

Bilal Khan was the most successful bowler with three wickets while Ayaan and skipper Zeeshan Maqsood claimed two wickets each.

Smith wins Australian PGA Championship

Brisbane, Australia - World number three and reigning British Open champion Cameron Smith overcame a final round challenge and electrical storms to win the Australian PGA Championships for a third time Sunday by three strokes.

The 29-year-old was back on home soil after three Covid-impacted years away, with his presence helping draw the biggest galleries to the Royal Queensland Golf Club in Brisbane since the 1980s.

He didn't disappoint the fans, firing a final round 68 to end on 14-under 270, seeing off the challenge of Japan's Ryo Hisatsune (65) and Australian Jason Scrivener (67) who both tied for second at the DP World Tour-sanctioned event.

"It's awesome mate, I really didn't think I had it in me this week to be honest," said Smith.

"The start of the week was a



Cameron Smith celebrates after his victory in the Australian PGA Championship at Royal Queensland Golf Club in Brisbane on Sunday (AFP)

little bit scratchy, but my game got better and better as the week went on other than the front nine today."

Smith defected to the Saudi-

backed LIV circuit and is banned from playing on the US PGA Tour, but is allowed to tee off in DP World Tour events in his homeland as a full member of the

PGA Tour of Australasia.

His defection to LIV in September came after a breakthrough year with three US PGA Tour victories, including the

150th Open at St. Andrews in July, then one on the breakaway tour in Chicago.

Smith took a three-stroke lead into the final round ahead of China's Liu Yanwei and Japan's Masahiro Kawamura.

But by the time the players were forced off the fairways for a second time Sunday due to threatening electrical storms it had dwindled to one.

Smith returned and made a bogey at 11 for a three-way tie at the top with Scrivener and Hisatsune.

But he then played a magical shot from the rough and converted a birdie putt at the next to reclaim the lead.

Another birdie at the 13th put him two strokes clear with five to play and when Scrivener made a disastrous double bogey at the 17th, the victory was all but assured.

AFP



Sri Lanka's Kasun Rajitha (2L) celebrates after taking the wicket of Afghanistan's Mubeen Ur Rahman (R) on Sunday (AFP)

Sri Lanka bowl out Afghanistan for 228 in second ODI

Kandy, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka's bowlers, led by paceman Kasun Rajitha, fought back after a good start by Afghanistan to dismiss the tourists for 228 in the second one-day international on Sunday.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz (68) and Rahmat Shah (58) put on 113 runs for the second wicket after Afghanistan, who won the first of the three matches on Friday, elected to bat in their bid to clinch the series in Pallekele.

But the visitors slipped from 135-1 to 165-5 in the space of nine overs before Mohammad Nabi boosted the total with his 34-ball 41, which included two fours and two sixes.

Rajitha returned figures of 3-31 in his nine overs, while spinner Maheesh Theekshana and fast bowler Lahiru Kumara took two wickets each.

Afghanistan were largely cautious apart from a few hits from

Gurbaz, who smashed Theekshana for a six at long-on.

New Zealand-India ODI abandoned

The second one-day international between New Zealand and India was abandoned in Hamilton after rain halted play on Sunday. India, sent into bat, were 89 for one with Shubman Gill on 45 and Suryakumar Yadav on 34 when play was called off.

The fixture had been reduced to a 29-over match after a first weather disruption halted play for nearly four hours with India on 22-0 after 4.5 overs.

A further eight overs were bowled when play resumed before the rain sent the players back to the pavilion again and no more play was possible.

New Zealand lead the three-match series 1-0.

AFP

England cricketers land in Pakistan for first Test series in 17 years

Islamabad, Pakistan - England's cricket team arrived in Pakistan early Sunday to play three Tests for the first time in the country since 2005.

England played a successful Twenty20 series two months ago in Pakistan but have declined to play a Test match there for 17 years because of the precarious security situation.

They were due to visit Pakistan last year but pulled out after New Zealand abandoned their tour minutes before the first one-day international, citing security alerts.



Ben stokes

There were fears of a similar pullout earlier this month following an attack on former prime minister Imran Khan during a protest march in Wazirabad, a city in Punjab province.

But England's Test skipper Ben Stokes quashed all fears following positive security advice.

"It's been a long time since England have played Test cricket in Pakistan," Stokes said in Abu Dhabi on Friday.

"With what happened with Imran Khan recently, there was a little bit of concern, but we have Reg Dickason, who has been the

security man for many years with England, and we left it in his capable hands."

"In terms of the tour itself, I'm really looking forward to it," Stokes added.

"I've never been there, and I'm quite interested to see what the security lark is like. I've heard it's pretty intense."

The squad and support staff were whisked to the team hotel under heavy security which Pakistan has been putting in place since the revival of international cricket in the country since 2015.

AFP