

MOROCCO DOES IT AGAIN

Youssef En-Nesyri secures Morocco's semi final berth with 42nd minute goal

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

Following the world's biggest party that took place at Education City Stadium in Doha on Tuesday night when Morocco upset Spain in the FIFA World Cup 2022 round of 16, the vast majority of spectators from around the world on Saturday were overcome by emotions after Morocco secured a semifinal berth.

Morocco shocked Portugal in one of the biggest upsets in World Cup history, beating the Portuguese 1-0. With this, Morocco has become the only Arab nation to reach the semi final round of the first World Cup held in an Arab country.

In Oman, Morocco fans broke into tears of joy as they hugged each other after the match. "Morocco is a good team and against Portugal, it advanced its World Cup campaign after beating Spain and Belgium, and sharing spoils with Croatia. Morocco has indeed made the Arab world proud," said Amerat resident Abdul Wahab.

After the match, the Arab world was flooded with congratulatory messages with many hailing the heroics of the Atlas Lions. It has offered the Arab world hope of a country from outside Europe and South America reaching the finals.

Ali al Badi, who travelled to Qatar for the Morocco-Portugal match, said, "This is the first World Cup on Arab territory and we carried the Arab flag in this tournament. I came here specifically to support Morocco and am so proud of their performance."

In Doha, Omanis, Saudis, Qataris and Egyptians joined the celebrations, waving their countries' flags in souqs and on the streets. "This is a matter of pride. We are all happy for Morocco. It does not matter which team reaches this stage, as long as there is one Arab team," said Salim al Musallami, another Omani fan in Qatar.

Three Arab teams have previously reached the Round of 16 in a FIFA World Cup - Morocco (1986), Saudi Arabia (1994) and Algeria (2014). "If Morocco could beat Spain, who have been world champions, then losing to Portugal is not an option," said Mukhtar Sultan, a Moroccan living in Seeb, before the match. See also [Page 13](#)



Morocco's #19 Youssef En-Nesyri celebrates with defender Achraf Hakimi after scoring in their quarter final match against Portugal in Doha on Saturday (AFP)

GCC lauds Oman's 2050 target for net zero emissions

Sayyid Fahd leads Omani delegation to the 43rd GCC Summit



Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The GCC Supreme Council congratulated His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik over Oman assuming the leadership of the 43rd GCC Summit and wished the sultanate success in boosting the GCC march in all spheres.

The council also commended Oman's announcement endorsing the year 2050 as the date for achieving zero neutrality in carbon emissions. It underscored the pioneering step undertaken towards gradual transition to renewable energy by member states in order to improve environmental performance and mitigate the effects of climate change.

This was stated in a communiqué issued by the GCC Supreme Council at the conclusion of the 43rd session, held in Riyadh. On Friday, Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, headed the sultanate's delegation at the summit.

In his opening speech, Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, congratulated His Majesty the Sultan on Oman assuming the chairmanship of the 43rd Session of the GCC Supreme Council and wished His Majesty success towards this end.

Prince Mohammed bin

Salman stressed that close cooperation among GCC states will lead to the accomplishment of the desired goals. He affirmed that the GCC states will remain a reliable source of energy in the world. He pointed out that Saudi Arabia intends to present a new vision for developing and consolidating GCC joint action.

He underscored the need to find a political solution to the Yemeni crisis and stressed the importance of establishing an independent Palestinian state based on the Arab Initiative, while calling for espousing joint action to address climate change.

The official delegation of the sultanate to the summit comprised Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Oman's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of Oman to Egypt and its Permanent Representative at the Arab League, and other officials.

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POST COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Taxi drivers struggling despite city life limping back to normal

Our Correspondent
Muscat

It's been almost three years since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought life to a standstill for most. While things are slowly getting back on track in many sectors, Muscat's taxi drivers are still struggling to make ends meet.

Long wait for passengers and constant bargaining for fare have left taxi drivers, who have been struggling since the last few years, at their wit's end. The grim situation has compelled many taxi drivers to consider a change in profession. But the few who opted to try a different way to earn a living weren't successful.

Before the pandemic, driving a taxi was a decent business with taxi drivers earning a good deal. But they've fallen on hard times. Many complain that besides the pandemic, the growing number of city buses, rising inflation and the introduction of VAT on certain items have added to their woes.

With fewer passengers in Ruwi, Rusayl and Al Khuwayr - once considered hubs for taxis - coupled with easy accessibility to city buses, taxi drivers are now considering an increase in fares. "There used to be so many



people - mostly expatriates - at any given time of the day travelling as far as Seeb and Mawaleh," Abdullah Hamad Khamis, a taxi driver from Ruwi, reminisces. "Passengers went to every corner of the city. But now

but we are faster. Also we can drop off passengers closer to their offices and homes, which can be reached via small lanes where buses don't go."

Taxi drivers with big families and less income in the current

there's very little business. I have five children and my mother stays with me. My wife used to work but after delivery, she is at home. I am working in night shifts too. Sometimes I go back home around 1am. There are few taxis at night, so there's less competition. But the money I am earning is still not enough."

The city's taxi drivers have been considering a hike in minimum fare to at least 200bz.

"It's not possible to run a taxi on the same amount of money these days. Most of our passengers are blue-collar workers, so increasing the fare to 200bz will impact them, but at the same time it has become impossible for us to make a living by driving taxis with the number of passengers and business decreasing every day," said Khalid Hilal, another taxi driver.

It has become impossible for us to make a living by driving taxis with the number of passengers and business decreasing every day

KHALID HILAL

things are so challenging. There is hardly anyone at the taxi stand, so passengers have to wait long for the taxi to fill up."

Khamis added that with city buses now plying on several routes, there is a competition for taxi drivers. "Passengers say the buses are spacious and cheaper,

situation are forced to work extra hours. Khamis' friend Salman, another taxi driver, claimed he used to ferry as many as 100 passengers a day from Ruwi to Seeb until two years back. Now he has half as many passengers.

"Mornings and evenings were good for business. But now

Omani filmmaker bags award at international film festival



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani documentary filmmaker Mohammad Darwish bagged the Jury Award at the prestigious Arab-African International Documentary Festival (Algeria) recently.

The 12-minute short film named *Beta-Carotene* speaks about various types of water found in the wadis and ocean around the country. This is the first time ever that an Omani film bagged this award at the popular festival, held from November 22 to 26 with the participation of over 23 films from the region.

"I am very happy to win this award. Documentaries speak of a narrative that is direct and factual. They are based on deep re-

I was amazed to see the different colours of water in Oman. I realised that this feature needs to be told to the world

MOHAMMAD DARWISH

search and truth; we cannot afford to fictionalise anything," Darwish said. "I had been researching on the topic for a long time and was amazed to see the different colours of water in Oman because of its environment and properties. I realised that this unique feature - which is indeed a blend of chemistry, geography and culture - needs to be told to the world and thus my

team began our creation."

The team comprised of ten technicians including cinematographers, videographers for aerial shots, editors and colourists. The film was shot with cine camera and edited with Adobe Premiere Pro and DaVinci Resolve. All the members are based in Oman.

The director travelled the length and breadth of the country for his shooting and was amazed to see the various colours of the water like red, blue, yellow and gold. It took nine months for the shooting and post production to complete, he added.

Darwish will now be travelling to several other international film festivals in the region including Morocco and Egypt. The film also got recognition from Japan and other countries in Europe.



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Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology In AL Khuwair invites for the Following Project:

TENDER NO	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
122/2022/MTCIT/H Q-25 - Recall - 1	Consultancy Study to Simplify/Reengineer Government services through Manjam Labs	8/12/2022	15/12/2022	5/1/2023	Experienced Companies And Registered With The Secretariat General of Tender Board (FIRST CLASS)	(125/-) One hundred and twenty-five Omani Rial Non-Refundable

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by local bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (1%) of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to (Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee).

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
2. E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: **+968 24402200** e-mail : **etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om**

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE

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Indian celebrities to enthrall Oman audience on Dec 23

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Thousands of visitors are expected to turn up for the exciting cultural event to be presented by a renowned Indian actor-turned-parliamentarian at the Qurum Amphitheatre on December 23.

To be organised by Snehatheeram (translated as Loveshore), the show 'Tharum Thalirum' will feature actor Suresh Gopi, apart from acclaimed Indian stars Honey Rose, Navya Nair, Bollywood singer Kumar Sahil and a host of other stage artistes for the three-hour long programme.

The event will also feature stand up comedians Jobi Pala, Anoop Kalabhavan, Krishna Kumar and Nishabh along with several musicians.

Addressing a press-conference at the Royal Crown Hotel

Muscat on Friday, Snehatheeram chief Sreekumar Kottarakkara said that the cultural event had been planned two years back. "However it was delayed due to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdowns all over."

"Now we are back and we expect a huge crowd as the celebrities, who are coming to Oman are very popular," an elated Kottarakkara added.

Formed in 2019 with like-minded people, Snehatheeram aims to nourish and encourage talents in all spheres of art and culture besides extending a helping hand for the needy.

Apart from Kottarakkara, other members of Snehatheeram include Suvis, Shashidharan, Ajeesh Vasu and Sreelatha Suresh.

Tickets for the event have been categorised in three price brackets - RO2, RO3, RO5.

Final lists of voters for civic polls announced

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Interior has announced the final lists of voters for the municipal council elections for the third term.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Interior said, 'The lists are available via the election website (elections.om). The number of voters reached 731,767, including 347,965 women'.

The voters residing outside the sultanate will be exercising their franchise on December 18, while those in the sultanate will cast their votes on December 25, the statement added.

The ministry announced that the voting for the municipal council members' election for the third term will be via smart phones.

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	5.18am
Sunrise	6.39am
Duhr	12.05pm
Asr	3.06pm
Maghrib	5.26pm
Isha	6.42pm

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World Cup 2022 matches woo customers, provide fillip to outdoor restaurant sales

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 has given a much-needed boost to local restaurants while giving thrills to individuals, and families, who enjoy watching matches outdoors.

With the World Cup progressing from the quarter final to the semi final stage, games are likely to grow longer as overtime comes into play; games can no longer end in a tie.

"Semi final matches take on an entirely new meaning as families and individuals try to find time to watch the 2022 World Cup outdoors," Abu Rami, owner of The Kebab Land restaurant in Seeb, told *Muscat Daily*.

"We have set up a large screen outside the restaurant to provide a place for football fans." The restaurant is packed even



on weekdays on match days, improving its bottom line.

"If you sit in a space with

nothing to look at, you'll eat and leave," Abu Rami said. "But if there's a game on, you might

order something more and stay a bit longer."

Football enthusiast Sultan al

Rawahi noted that the matches are more exciting and a lot more fun to watch with a group of

If you sit in a space with nothing to look at, you'll eat and leave. But if there's a game on, you might order something more and stay a bit longer

ABU RAMI

other people.

"The FIFA World Cup, as the biggest sports tournament in the world, is bringing people together from across borders to share the joy of football. My family and I enjoy watching matches outside; it's more fun and exciting," Rawahi said.

Yahya al Hassani, owner of Lo Chef Steak House in Airport Heights, has set up two big

screens to woo customers. His strategy has worked; business is good every day.

"As the tournament nears its climax, the excitement is palpable among football fans. All the conversation seems to be on the major teams, such as Argentina, Brazil, France and England, fighting for the cup," said Hassani.

"Football and food are the perfect ingredients to get people together. Additionally, events like the World Cup motivate people everywhere to be more physically active for better health," said Ali Sheyadi, former goalkeeper of Al Suwaiq. "I see many parents bringing their children to watch matches outside their home."

Sheyadi believes watching their football heroes in action inspire young ones to play the sport, and consequently, stay physically and mentally fit.



Sohar Fort received 3,000 during National Day holiday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A total of 3, 902 people visited Sohar Fort from November 30 to December 3, according to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT).

Built in the 1st century AD, Sohar Fort is perched atop a hill and has five towers. In its vicinity are two parks - the Silver Jubilee Park and Sohar Park, which are ideal for people to unwind or take a break from the hectic pace of life in the city.

A statement issued by MHT said, 'As many as 3,902 people visited the historic Sohar Fort coinciding with the 52nd Glorious National Day holiday period from November 30 to December 3, 2022. Of the total, Omanis accounted for 88 per cent of the visitors.'

Historical sites in Oman recorded a significant increase in visitor numbers - 22,259 in 2020 compared to 7,064 in 2016, a growth of 215 per cent - according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Available data shows that the governorates of North Batinah and Dakhliyah have the highest number of castles and forts.

According to NCSI data, Nizwa in Dakhliyah received the largest number of visitors in 2020.

The Nizwa Fort received 143,767 visitors in 2019 and 44,047 in 2020. Muttrah Fort received 14,781 visitors in 2020, Taqah 4,457, Mirbat 691, Khasab 10,429, Bukha 6,367, Buraimi 1,068, Bahla 11,304, Jibreen 19,977 and Sansilah Fort 1,395.

Startup summit to kick off on Dec 12

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Investment and Startup Summit will kick off on December 12 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the auspices of H H Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, according to the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED).

A statement issued by the authority said, 'The two-day summit is part of the Rising Omani Startups Programme, which aims to support Omani startups



in the sultanate. More than 2,000 participants and 50 startup owners will take part in

the event.'

The summit will discuss matters on investing in startups. Additionally, several agreements will be signed and exhibitions and workshops for startups and decision makers held.

The number of micro, small and medium enterprises registered with ASMED this year till July increased 46.8 per cent, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

At the end of July 2022, 81,460 SMEs were registered in the sultanate.

Tender Announcement

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (SAOC) announces the amendment of the announcement issued on December 7, 2022, regarding Tender No.: MEDC/2022/100 to the details provided below:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (OMR)
MEDC /2022/103	Expansion of Infoblox DDI Solution	19/12/2022	26/12/2022	Specialized	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. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - 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 soft copy. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - 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 Organization - 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.



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MOH No: 558/2022

Oman's budget surplus widens to RO1.2bn



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's budget surplus increased to RO1.2bn in the first 10 months of 2022 as compared to a whopping deficit of more than RO1bn in the same period of 2021, mainly due to higher oil and gas revenues.

The sultanate's total government revenues surged more than 42 per cent to RO11.862bn during January - October period this year, up from RO8.333bn in the same period a year ago, according to data released by the Ministry of Finance.

Hydrocarbon (oil and gas) revenues jumped by more than 50 per cent to RO9.244bn in the first 10 months of this year from RO6.141bn recorded over the same period in 2021.

'Such increase [in revenues] is supported by higher average oil

price of US\$95 per barrel as well as an increase in oil production to 1.056mn barrels per day,' the Ministry of Finance said in its monthly Fiscal Performance bulletin.

Total public spending in the first 10 months of 2022 was recorded at RO10.654bn, which is RO1.315bn or 14 per cent higher compared to the same period a year ago

Net oil revenue in the first 10 months of 2022 jumped more than 39 per cent to RO6.193bn, while natural gas revenue surged by nearly 80 per cent to RO3.051bn, the data showed.

Public spending up 14%

Oman's total public spending during January - October period this year was recorded at RO10.654bn, which is RO1.315bn

(or 14 per cent) higher compared to the same period a year ago.

Development expenditure increased by 10 per cent to RO765mn rials in the first 10 months of 2022, which repre-

sents 70 per cent of the RO1.1bn allocated for total developmental spending for the full year.

The sultanate's current expenditure increased 9.5 per cent to RO7.879bn in the first 10 months of this year when compared to the same period a year ago.

By the end of October 2022, oil products and electricity subsidies amounted to RO610mn and

RO450mn, respectively, the ministry said.

Helped by improving fiscal position due to the government reforms and higher oil prices, the sultanate's sovereign credit ratings have been upgraded by various global rating agencies this year.

Recently, S&P raised its foreign and local currency long-term sovereign credit ratings of Oman to 'BB' from 'BB-', the agency's second upgrade for Oman this year.

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



Sultanate hopes to attract \$20bn investment in green hydrogen sector by 2030

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's government is expecting to attract total investment worth more than US\$20bn in the green hydrogen sector by 2030, according to a senior official at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

The sultanate has set an ambition to become one of the largest green hydrogen producers and exporters globally, targeting production of one million tonnes by 2030.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, director general of renewable energy and hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said, "It is hoped that the total investment that will be attracted in the field of green hydrogen until 2030 will reach more than US\$20bn.

This will be through the development and implementation of projects covered in the first package which consists of six investment opportunities distributed in two phases. The first phase was launched and the second phase will be launched in the second quarter of next year."

He said that the foreign investors have shown good interest in the first two investment opportunities offered for the green hydrogen projects in Duqm. With their purchase of pre-qualification documents, as many as 40 companies have shown interest to participate in the first two auctions for hydrogen concessions in Duqm, he added.

Shidhani noted that, as per the ministry's plan with Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), the first two green hydrogen concessions are expected to be awarded during the first quarter of 2023, which will be followed by the announcement of other investment opportunities for green hydrogen projects in Dhofar governorate.

He said that by signing these agreements for the projects planned to be implemented in the field of green hydrogen, Oman will achieve its goal of producing at least one million tonnes of green hydrogen by the year 2030.

Furthermore, Shidhani indicated that the ministry is currently studying the best options for developing the legislation to

attract more investments in the field of green hydrogen, and to develop a clear-cut strategy for the sultanate's energy transition journey.

He pointed out that the first phase of investment opportunities in the field of green hydrogen will be concentrated in the governorates of Al Wusta and Dhofar, and that the total land area allocated for green hydrogen projects in Oman is more than 50,000 sqkm.

Shidhani added that the work is underway to develop infrastructure investment packages and in this regard Hydrom will coordinate with specialised government companies on commercial basis.

With a vision to position Oman as a leading global green hydrogen hub, Hydrom - an autonomous subsidiary company of Energy Development Oman (EDO) - was recently launched to accelerate the development of green hydrogen sector.

Hydrom is focusing to develop the green hydrogen sector by enabling the delivery of projects competitively and at scale for the world.

Institutional Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education at the Arab Open University in Oman

The Arab Open University is one of the reputed universities in the Arab World that offer an efficacious model for private education due to its strategic partnership with the Open University in the United Kingdom. This partnership allows the Arab Open University to offer the Open University curricula and programmes including all its educational and learning resources in all the nine Arab countries in which it is present in addition to cooperation in the fields of academic and institutional validation, consulting, training, and skills development. This academic partnership was recently renewed by the Open University for the fourth time and upon fulfilling the requirements was awarded "Institutional Revalidation" in October 2022, wherein the Arab Open University received an unconditional renewal for a further five years with several commendations.

Therefore, the Arab Open University in the Sultanate of Oman is characterized by latest scientific and academic advancements in the educational systems and methods, based on the strategic goals of the Arab Open University. To further emphasize its commitment in offering quality education in the Sultanate of Oman, and its latest achievement was obtaining "institutional accreditation" from the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education, which was announced on 20th November 2022. This is an official recognition of the university's strong commitment to all quality standards in the sectors of governance and administration, teaching and learning and scientific research, community participation, and all the support services

This affirmation indicates that the quality of education offered at AOU Oman is assured and further instills confidence in the public and



Prof.Mohammed

all its stakeholders that the institution has conformed against national benchmarks.

To elucidate this commitment to quality at AOU and in AOU Oman, there are many core elements that play crucial roles; the fundamental function being Teaching and Learning.

This is the backbone of all higher education institutions and AOU Oman takes great pride in the quality of all its teaching staff as they are qualified, experienced and are involved in continuous research. A lot of planning and careful selection goes into the recruitment of qualified teaching staff in all its programmes. Plans are underway to recruit a greater number of qualified academic staff across all its programmes to ensure that teaching quality is not only maintained but enhanced.

Robust mechanisms are in place for oversight of its curriculum, assessments and students' performance through Deanships,

External Examiners, Local External Examiners, General Course Chairs and Academic Staff of faculties. By virtue of its affiliation and partnership with OU-UK, all its academic programmes are validated, and mechanisms are in place for the development of programmes and tracks. Its academic programmes ensure that students are exposed to the latest in their curriculum with opportunities to interact with industry experts through visits and guest lectures.

Another important aspect is Research. As a University, AOU Oman understands that focus on research contributes directly and /or indirectly to its primary mission of Teaching and Learning. It has made great strides in Research & Innovation wherein almost all its academic staff are research active through funded projects by The Research Council (12 awarded for this 2022-23 alone), research publications in distinguished refereed journals and recipient of Research awards. Joint Research Collaborations through interdisciplinary research and with other HEIs contribute towards Research Teaching Nexus and a strong Research Strategy that paves the way towards contribution in the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and the goals of the National Vision (Oman 2040).

Yet another vital facet is its involvement with other HEIs through research, professional development activities and student activities that ensure relevancy, exchange of best practices and professional collaborations. To further these collaborations, AOU Oman's academic staff are members of professional associations as it firmly believes these relationships bring in real-time industry inputs thereby providing invaluable learning opportunities to its students. The academic expertise acquired through Research and Professional Development activities is shared with the community by way of training

programmes, voluntary assignments, and academic staff's involvement in voluntary programmes organized by AOU Oman.

AOU Oman has supplied the local job market graduated over 3500 students, across different disciplines since its inception. Therefore, it firmly believes that its alumni to be its assets and ambassadors and engaging with them is mutually productive. AOU Oman regularly plans activities through its Alumni Committee.

As the main stakeholders of AOU Oman are its students, they are supported by a myriad of support services ranging academic advising, academic student support, counselling services and online services. They are also given opportunities to be part of academic and non-academic clubs that provides a rich learning environment outside the classroom. AOU Oman considers student feedback as a valuable source to effect improvements through feedback surveys and through its Student Advisory Council who are also members in key committees of AOU Oman which ensures that students are part of the decision-making process.

AOU Oman is now striving to provide a better teaching and learning environment through its new purpose-built premises. This new campus will provide AOU Oman's staff and students with enhanced physical infrastructure with regard to space, facilities, and IT services.

In conclusion, AOU Oman's commitment to quality in all its services remains resolute and it aims to give its students the best possible experience of University life. With this commitment, it can only produce stellar graduates who not only can hold their own in any professional working environment but can also contribute effectively in their chosen field of work.

It is worth mentioning that the Arab Open University is a non-profit university established

under the umbrella of the Arab Gulf Program for Development (formerly the Arab Gulf Program for United Nations Development Organizations) funded by the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, where Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz (may God have mercy on him) announced his initiative to establish the university in 1996, to be a non-traditional academic institution that can contribute to the development in the scientific, social and cultural fields. This initiative was officially announced at the meeting of ministers of higher education in the Arab countries, which was held in Beirut in September 2000 and Kuwait was chosen to host the headquarters of the Arab Open University in December 2000. In October 2002, the university began to provide its services in three Arab countries in strategic partnership with the Open University United Kingdom. The university has so far expanded to nine Arab countries, including the Sultanate of Oman.

On 16th March 2008, an agreement was signed to establish the Arab Open University in the Sultanate of Oman between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Arab Gulf Program for United Nations Development Organizations, to start providing services to students at the campus in Muscat since the academic year 2007/2008.

On 13th November 2022, the Arab Open University celebrated its twentieth anniversary of its establishment and inaugurated its new brand identity in preparation for the next phase of geographical and qualitative development, and in continuation of its developmental and academic mission in providing the labor markets in the Arab world with qualified graduates. The university as a whole has graduated over 60,000 students in the last 20 years so far.

Saudi reports \$27bn budget surplus, first in a decade

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia recorded its first annual budget surplus in nearly a decade, beating its own projections in a year of spiking oil prices, local media reported.

The surplus for 2022 amounted to SAR102bn (US\$27bn), representing 2.6 per cent of GDP, according to preliminary estimates, the Saudi-owned outlet Al Arabiya reported.

That was up from the surplus of SAR90bn that had been projected for 2022 at the end of last year.

The world's biggest crude exporter also preliminarily recorded GDP growth of 8.5 per cent for the year, higher than the 7.6 per cent predicted by the International Monetary Fund, Al Arabiya said.

The budget approved for 2023 foresees a surplus of SAR16bn (US\$4bn) and GDP growth of 3.1 per cent, Al Arabiya said.

The economic data comes as much of the world grapples with widespread energy shocks and deepening worries about recession.

The Gulf kingdom has benefited from spiking oil prices, triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, as well as growth in non-oil sectors that officials attribute to the Vision 2030 agenda of economic diversification.

In August, Saudi Arabia said



it had recorded a surplus of over US\$20bn in the second quarter, as oil revenues surged 90 per cent compared to the same period of 2021.

Oil prices have since fallen considerably despite a decision in October by the OPEC+ oil cartel, which Riyadh leads jointly with Moscow, to cut production by two million barrels per day.

In a briefing with journalists in Riyadh on Wednesday, Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan pushed back on the notion that the surplus resulted from the Ukraine war.

Instead, he said it reflected investments the kingdom had made in its oil and gas sector as well as growth in non-oil sectors, as officials push the Vision 2030 agenda of economic diversifica-

tion.

"We invested a lot of money when people did not," he said.

"We are not celebrating the surplus. For us it's not really big news. It's something that we expected. We've been working... to curtail our spending, to increase our non-oil revenues."

Future 'risk'

"Much of the fiscal situation and growth story is of course directly related to high energy prices, and indirectly related to the factors and geopolitical events moving prices," said Robert Mogleinicki of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

"Yet Saudi Arabia does deserve credit for its fiscal consolidation and economic reforms, which have also helped the over-

all economic picture."

Yet Justin Alexander, director of the consultancy Khalij Economics, said that while the surplus was "welcome", it could have been higher given that original projections appeared to be based on oil prices of around US\$70 per barrel while the average over the year will ultimately be around US\$100 per barrel.

Economic experts say Saudi Arabia needs a crude price of about US\$80 a barrel to balance its budget.

The numbers are "close to the originally budgeted level," said Alexander, who is also an analyst at the consultancy Global-Source Partners.

"Therefore almost all the windfall revenue from higher oil prices has been spent and the

ministry's projections suggest that these levels of spending will continue in the coming years, creating a risk if oil prices disappoint."

Oil prices have fallen considerably in recent weeks despite a decision made in October by the OPEC+ oil cartel, which Riyadh leads jointly with Moscow, to cut production by two million barrels per day.

This year's surplus is the first since the 2014 collapse of oil prices from more than US\$100 a barrel, which prompted Riyadh to borrow heavily and draw from its financial reserves to plug budgetary shortfalls.

It also imposed austerity measures like cutting fuel and power subsidies and levying a value added tax.

Jadaan said on Wednesday that such "difficult decisions" were unlikely to be reversed based on the surplus of this year and the expected surplus for next year.

"The last thing we want is actually to change policies in haste," he said.

The surplus will be distributed in the first quarter of 2023, with the majority going to increasing the kingdom's reserves, Jadaan said.

Some of it will go to the National Development Fund and some "may be" transferred to the sovereign wealth fund, he said.

AFP



Number of billionaires in world dips in 2022

Zurich, Switzerland - The number of billionaires in the world dipped in 2022 due to Russia's war in Ukraine, monetary policy tightening, stock market falls and the Chinese economic slowdown, UBS said.

Switzerland's biggest bank, which is among the world's largest wealth managers, said there were 2,668 dollar billionaires in March 2022 - 87 fewer than a year earlier.

It said they had a cumulative fortune of US\$12.7tn compared to US\$13.1tn the year before, after tracking their wealth.

"However, the total wealth and number of billionaires is likely to have fallen further since March 2022 due to declines in asset prices," UBS said.

There were 273 new billionaires in 2022, while 360 dropped out.

"It's a time of shifting fortunes. Rapidly rising interest rates, stop-start pandemic reopenings and war in Europe are feeding market uncertainty and volatility, with wealth created and eroded in almost equal measure," said the UBS Billionaire Ambitions report.

"Yet amidst the instability some themes persist - especially the broad concept of smart innovators rising to the top."

The sectors with the most billionaires were finance and investments (392) and technology (348).

The billionaire population in

the Asia-Pacific region remained the largest but slipped back by 59 to 1,084.

"Mainland China's zero-Covid policy slowed the growth after many years as the world's fastest-growing large economy," UBS said, as the number of Chinese billionaires dropped from 626 to 540.

UBS, which is among the world's largest wealth managers, said there were 2,668 dollar billionaires in March 2022 - 87 fewer than a year earlier

The number of billionaires in the United States rose from 724 to 735.

The numbers in western Europe fell from 474 to 467; and in eastern Europe from 154 to 127. The number in the Middle East and Africa dropped from 91 to 89.

The wealth of billionaires had shot up in 2021 thanks to the ultra-loose monetary policies imposed to stem the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had resulted in a stock market surge, said the report.

AFP

Recession in US 'not inevitable': Yellen

Fort Worth, US - A recession in the US is "not inevitable," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said, adding that she believes the world's biggest economy is on the right track in lowering inflation.

Her comments come on the heels of a forceful campaign by the US central bank to cool demand this year, walking a tightrope between lowering consumer costs while trying not to tip the economy into a downturn.

For now, many economists expect the US could experience a downturn next year.

On "whether or not we can avoid a recession, I believe the answer is yes," she told reporters during a visit to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing's currency facility in Fort Worth, Texas.

Supply chain bottlenecks are starting to ease and new apartment rents have "essentially peaked," with the labor market cooling slightly as well, Yellen said.



US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaks at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing Western Currency Facility on Thursday in Fort Worth, Texas (AFP)

"Without seeing significant net nationwide layoffs, I believe

we're on the right track in terms of lowering inflation and a recession's not inevitable," she added.

As businesses tone down

their growth expectations and hiring plans, the number of people leaving their jobs has also dipped a little, she said.

Last week, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell added it remains "very plausible" for the US to reach a soft landing, referring to a scenario where unemployment rises but the economy avoids a severe recession.

On Thursday, Yellen said that the United States has been "listening very carefully" to allies and trying to understand their concerns on Washington's push to spur climate-friendly technologies in America.

"I think the objective that Congress had was to make sure we have supply chains that are secure, and to try to include our allies in them," she said.

Asked if she had plans to visit China following President Joe Biden's meeting with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, Yellen said she had no definite plans yet but was "certainly open to it."

AFP

UK defends new post-Brexit finance reforms

London, UK - Britain on Friday launched a post-Brexit plan to relax curbs on its powerhouse City sector introduced after the 2008 financial crisis, denying the reforms will bring about new instability.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak insisted the government was not being reckless in scrapping "ringfencing" of assets held by the biggest banks, to separate their retail arms from riskier investment operations.

"No, the UK has always had and always will have an incredibly respected and robust system of regulation for the financial services sector," Sunak told reporters.

"But it's also important to make sure the industry is com-



UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

petitive - there are a million people employed in financial services and they're not just in London, in the City."

The ringfencing policy was introduced after the 2008 global financial crisis, to help banks survive another meltdown.

The so-called "Edinburgh reforms", announced in the Scot-

tish capital by finance minister Jeremy Hunt, also eased capital requirements for smaller lenders.

The government has already said it plans to lift a cap on bankers' bonuses, and to require UK regulators to prioritise growth and competitiveness, alongside market stability.

It says the reforms have been enabled by Britain's exit from the European Union.

Brexit is allowing the government to "reshape our regulatory regime and unleash the full potential" of the finance industry, said Hunt, who voted in 2016 to stay in the EU. He stressed that "we have learned the lessons of that (2008) crash, we put in place some very important guardrails, which will remain".

"But the banks have become much healthier financially since 2008," the chancellor said, adding the reforms would help the City better compete with US and Asian markets.

Since Brexit, the City has slipped behind Paris and Amsterdam by some measures. At Brussels' insistence, UK finance was not covered by Britain's EU trade treaty.

And there is mounting concern about the everyday effects on people and businesses of increased costs and border delays.

Brexit has not helped tame red-hot inflation or cut soaring food bills, according to recent research from the London School of Economics.

AFP

Job Opportunities

A leading Joinery Workshop and Fitout Company looking to recruit the following positions:

Joinery Workshop Incharge

Qualification & Experience:

- Bachelor / Diploma Degree in same field.
- Min. 10 years experience in Gulf/Oman as Joinery Workshop Incharge
- Oman driving license
- with NOC immediate joining

Joinery Estimator

- Bachelor / Diploma Degree in same field.
- Min. 10 years experience in Gulf/Oman in same field.
- Oman driving license
- with NOC immediate joining

Joinery Draftsman

- Diploma in same field.
- Min. 5 years experience in Oman in same field.
- Experience in preparation of detailed joinery drawings.
- with NOC immediate joining

Note: salary as per the experience and Qualification.

Eligible candidates are requested to email their CV to: jobsmuscat86@gmail.com

Patrol remains the most desirable Nissan: SBA

Over the years Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) has perceived that customers of the legendary Nissan Patrol love it for its power and prestige. From desert to city, the Patrol has conquered everything in its path including owners' hearts.

"For decades, the Patrol has built a rich legacy of being the Hero of All Terrain, while becoming proudly linked to the region and its people," a senior official of SBA said, adding, "Owners are proud of the Patrol's journey and its ongoing evolution to cater to the unique needs and expectations of its customers across generations."

Exemplifying power and premium quality, Nissan Patrol Patrol is luxurious and connected than ever before with numerous stylistic and technological advancements.

'A striking V-Motion grille and new 20-inch machine cut alloy wheels embellish the exterior of the iconic SUV, while all-new burgundy interiors elevate the level of opulence within the cabin. An all-new 12.3-inch infotainment screen with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity along with new 10.1-inch rear entertainment screens, allow drivers and passengers to be more connected, while en-



hancing safety and enjoyment', the company said in a statement.

Sulaiman al Abri - who appreciates the model's safety attributes - said, "With its suite of Nissan Intelligent Mobility offerings, the Patrol model offers drivers a safer, smarter, and more connected driving experience."

The safety of those onboard and around the Patrol is ensured through a variety of assuring technologies, including Intelli-

gent Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detection, Intelligent Lane Intervention, Intelligent Blind Spot Intervention, Rear Cross Traffic Alert with Intelligent Intervention, and Intelligent Cruise Control.

A long-time owner of the model Hamid Abdullah says, "The stylish and capable Nissan Patrol range is always ready to take on any terrain. Conquering the elements comes as second

nature to an SUV whose reputation and authority is equalled only by its legendary V8 power."

An SUV lover, Hassan al Alawi said, "Every detail, every inch of the Patrol is crafted to heighten driving pleasure - in every seat. The interiors celebrate the Patrol's legacy of 70 years. With meticulous attention to detail, the interiors create a truly first-class feel for every passenger."

Powerful design aesthetic

The Middle East formed a powerful attachment with the Nissan Patrol when the first-generation SUV landed in the Gulf in 1956. Proving itself as a reliable and capable SUV that can conquer all terrains, the Patrol model builds on the success of its predecessors and rewrites the benchmark for design, comfort, and technology.

Inspired by Nissan's powerful new design aesthetic, Patrol makes an impressive statement with a new, bold V-Motion chrome grille and 20-inch machine-cut alloy wheels. The stylized chrome along the bodywork emphasizes the visual breadth of the vehicle, while the design exudes luxury with a new side fender vent badge branded with the 70th Anniversary logo.

Drivers and occupants are welcomed into a premium cabin where every detail is crafted to heighten the driving experience, with the brand-new burgundy interior option specifically designed to celebrate the Patrol's 70-year legacy. Attention to detail and class-leading spaciousness create a truly first-class experience for all on board, accentuated through diamond-stitched quilted-tan leather seats.

sound isolation equates to a more relaxed and luxurious experience for all.

Two new 10.1-inch multimedia screens with wireless headphones and screen mirroring options transform the rear-seat entertainment to make long journeys more enjoyable, while all devices remain fully charged with multiple USB ports and a wireless charging tray upfront.

The Intelligent Rear-View Mirror strengthens the Patrol's arsenal of safety features by offering drivers an unobstructed view from a camera mounted on the rear of the vehicle. The innovative Intelligent Around View® Monitor makes parking and navigating tight off-road trails a breeze by offering drivers a 360-degree view of the SUV's surroundings.

Ultimate execution

Under the hood, Patrol offers drivers a choice of two powerful engines. The base 4.0-litre V6 produces 275 horsepower and 394 NM of torque, offering a unique combination of power, performance, and efficiency, while the larger 5.6-litre V8 puts out a staggering 400 horsepower and 560 NM of torque for ultimate performance in the toughest of conditions.

National University gets approval for 5th college

The National University of Science & Technology has got the approval from the Ministry of Higher Education Research and Innovation (MoHERI) to start a new college of Advanced Technology, the university informed. This fifth college of NU is slated to commence its operation in 2023 fall, it added.

The National University was established in 2018 upon merging three reputed professional colleges in Oman, namely The Caledonian college of Engineering, Oman Medical College and the College of Pharmacy.

Since it's inception, the university has made significant progress by expanding the portfolio of programs. In early 2022, the university acquired the full ownership of International Maritime College of Oman (IMCO) from Asyad as the fourth constituent college of National Uni-



versity.

In order to raise the academic standards of the National University, has forged academic partnership arrangements with some renowned institutions abroad. These include Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland; West Virginia University School of Medicine, and University of South Carolina in the US; Vellore Institute of Technology (Chennai), JSS University

(Mysore) and the National Institute of Technology Durgapur in India.

The university has also secured a letter of interest from the globally reputed Nanyang Technological University of Singapore for collaboration to establish the new College of Advanced Technology.

Recently the National University has entered into agreements with several universities and or-

ganisations for academic and professional engagements. These includes: Manipal University, Yenepoya University, Digital University, Kerala, ASAP Kerala, Indian Maritime University, Chennai.

'The university is proud of teaching students from over 31 countries. Staff of National University has also a good mix of academicians for more than 16 countries,' NU statement said.

The college which later were merged with the university have been promoted by Galfar Engineering & Contracting Co. Currently, Dr P Mohamed Ali, founder, former vice chairman and managing director of Galfar, is the chairman of the university's board of directors and Dr Ali al Bimani, former vice chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) is the Vice Chancellor.

Vodafone Oman gets Cyber Security Award at Big Data & Analytics Meet

Vodafone in Oman walked away with the prestigious Cyber Security Award at Oman's Big Data & Analytics Meet for its successful programme designed to protect its network and customers, the company said.

Hosted for the second consecutive year, the Big Data & Analytics award programme recognises and honours companies that have succeeded in showing how data, Big Data and analytics can boost corporate performance, improve customer experience, and drive product creation, sales and financial success.

Vodafone was recognised for its leading work in applied practice for Big Data in day-to-day cyber security operations; which allows the company to rapidly detect threats made at a scale and ensure comprehensive security controls. The company's proven cost-efficient approach with the use of open-source technologies; orchestration and



automation in a unified platform; and super-fast and scalable cloud deployment; were also lauded during the award ceremony.

"We are extremely proud to receive this award, which is testament to the skill, expertise and hard work of everybody involved in our Cyber Security function at Vodafone in Oman," said Jaifar al Mamari, Head of Cyber Security.

"Visibility is key to maintain any organizations security posture and by harnessing the power of big data we have man-

aged to achieve high visibility across all our attack surfaces. This award demonstrates our success so far and how seriously we take the security of not only our network but also that of our customers, to whom we have been striving to provide world-class experiences since we began our story here in Oman."

To date, Vodafone in Oman has assembled one of the largest Big Data and analytics clusters in the Sultanate that is designed for security monitoring, threat hunting and threat intelligence.

Spanish embassy organises gastronomic event

The Embassy of Spain in Muscat organised a gastronomic event with the motto 'Tapas & Paella' last Wednesday (December 7), at the Spanish Residence, a release said. This was an occasion to promote and foster the Spanish gastronomy and culinary cultures, among the Omani Community and friends.

Currently, the term 'Tapas' has become a sign of Spanish identity and the best symbol of the country's gastronomic culture. One of the most famous internationally is Paella. Currently there is a wide variety depending on the regions.

This culinary phenomenon has become an art and has been exported to the rest of the world with the help of the great Spanish chefs. Tapas restaurants can be found in many countries around the world.

The 'tapeo', going out for lunch or dinner tapas, is a re-

flection of the Spanish way of life.

Sharing tapas is synonymous with sharing time with friends, sharing good times and sometimes also cheering up those going through difficult moments. Eating is a way to 'socialise' and be with others.

The event aimed to highlight the meaning of diversity, both gastronomic and cultural, and for a better intercultural exchange and understanding in a friendly and jovial ambience.

As Ferran Adrià, one of the most representative chefs of Spanish cuisine once said, "Signature cuisine is putting your personality into what you do and that feeling makes it something different."

The embassy thanked all those individuals and companies that helped with the organisation of the event as well as all those who attended.

Badr Al Samaa marks 20th anniversary at grand event

Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals marked its 20th anniversary culmination event as a grand celebration conducted at The City Amphitheatre in Qurum, Muscat.

An overwhelming participation of more than 4,000 guests made this event successful and memorable, the hospital said. The event was attended by H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; Dr Muhanna bin Nasir Ali Muslahi, Director General of Private Health Establishments, Ministry of Health; H E Ali Salim al Jabri, Member of Majlis-e-Shoura; H E Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ambassadors of various countries such as India, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Nepal and Tanzania, besides several government officials and other dignitaries.

Nadir Shah, a writer, director, lyricist, actor and singer led a contingent of talented and well known artists from India who performed during the event. Haitham Rafi, a well known



Omani singer also entertained the crowd with his singing.

In his welcome address, MoideenKunhi Bilal, Executive Director, Badr Al Samaa Group, expressed sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and late Sultan Qaboos bin Said for their blessings and inspiring Badr Al Samaa to play an exceptional role by taking huge responsibility in the private healthcare sector of Oman and becoming a household name.

H E Qais al Yousef said,

"Today we are not just celebrating Badr Al Samaa's 20 years of distinguished healthcare services right across the Sultanate of Oman but also the outstanding contribution of Badr Al Samaa to the goals of Oman's vision 2040 and the dynamic renaissance we are enjoying under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik."

Dr Muhana al Musalahi acknowledged that it "is impressive to see that the centres of Badr Al Samaa are continuously raising

the bar of quality of care and adapting international accreditation programmes".

Dr P A Mohammed informed that Badar Al Samaa was started "as a small medical centre with staff strength of 13 in 2002".

"In 20 years we have grown to the largest private healthcare group of Oman having 13 branches, six hospitals and seven medical centres with a total staff strength of more than 2,000 out of which more than 500 are doctors," he added.

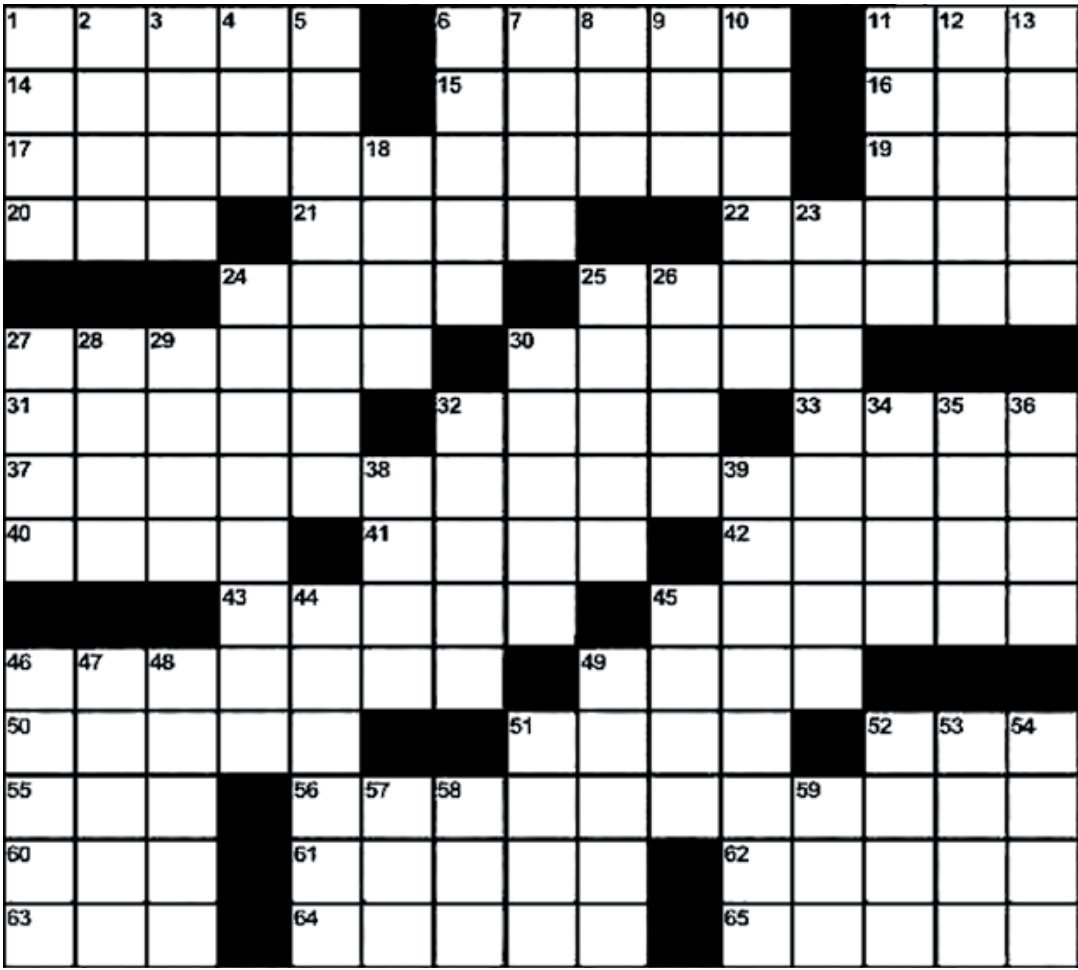
Abdul Latheef, Managing Director, Badr Al Samaa Group said 20 years celebrations were filled with activities of giving back to society through a large number of CSR activities, besides continuing medical education programmes for doctors. "Currently more than 500 Omanis are working with us."

Indian Ambassador H E Amit Narang noted that nothing better represents India-Oman friendship than the healthcare partnerships. Badr Al Samaa effectively followed the footsteps of the growth of Oman itself and changed the scenario of private healthcare sector of Oman for good.

Dr Firdous Mohammed al Ghafri of Badr Al Samaa, said that as an Omani doctor is enjoying the encouraging work environment.

In a vote of thanks, Firasath Hassan said, "It is a matter of pride to pursue the journey of becoming the largest private healthcare group of Oman and achieving the milestone of successful 20 years."

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Make obscure
- 6) Certain sorority member
- 11) Warm embrace
- 14) Nitrous_ (laughing gas)
- 15) "Encore!"
- 16) "Is that_?"
- 17) Easy existence
- 19) Genetic info carrier
- 20) Broke bread
- 21) Campus list keeper
- 22) Neptune's realm
- 24) Part of a three-piece suit
- 25) Malicious as a snake?
- 27) Tops in wanness
- 30) Drive away
- 31) Certain Arab
- 32) Super-duper
- 33) Ball girls, briefly
- 37) Words of romance
- 40) Card game for three
- 41) Chill
- 42) Follow as a result
- 43) Matter of debate
- 45) Incapable of littering?
- 46) Collisions

DOWN

- 1) Gaucho's lariat
- 2) Departure
- 3) Barney of Mayberry
- 4) Poem type
- 5) Type of dome
- 6) Jeweler's measure
- 7) Opposed, in oaters
- 8) Amigo
- 9) Apple or lemon
- meringue
- 10) Tennis partner?
- 11) Women guarded by a eunuch

- 12) Wrist-to-elbow bones
- 13) Thyroid, for one
- 18) Suffix with "song" or "gab"
- 23) Winter event
- 24) Type of blind
- 25) Locale
- 26) Weapon with a bell-shaped guard
- 27) D.C. figures
- 28) Crazily
- 29) Volcano output
- 30) Mallet-and-ball game
- 32) Black_ (cattle breed)
- 34) Like child's play
- 35) Bummed out
- 36) Husky's burden
- 38) Brewer's equipment
- 39) Like rained-out games, usually
- 44) Make busts
- 45) Mailed
- 46) In an unfriendly fashion
- 47) Projector projection
- 48) One of the corps
- 49) They're not to be believed
- 51) Scout's good work
- 52) Two semesters
- 53) Assortment

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Despite the less than cheerful attitude of one of your more uptight friends, you're going to have fun with them today. They're going through a bit of an emotional upheaval that is putting a sour look on their face, but that frown will turn upside down after a few minutes with you! Your sense of humor is likely to be the most effective tool for lightening the mood, so encourage their laughter to keep on flowing.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Everyone makes mistakes, and you should keep that in mind when someone who once wronged you reappears on the scene. You can choose to hold on to a grudge, or you can choose to let go of the past and give this person one more chance. Put yourself in their place and be willing to listen to what they have to say. You'd be wise to be a bit cautious with this person, but the stars say that forgiveness is a wise course now.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
There's a power shift going on in your life, and it appears that other people have more power over you than you have over yourself! It's wonderful to be considerate of others, but overdoing it can be a bit ridiculous. Don't let other people affect your schedule today. A last-minute request from a friend shouldn't cause you to drop everything and mount an extensive rescue operation. Take care of yourself first, and remind other people that you can't be taken for granted.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
If you focus too much attention on building new relationships, you could alienate the people in your existing relationships. Tone down the intense energy you've been focusing on someone new. It could be sending too strong a message, and you could be misunderstood. Instead, give equal time to the folks who have been in your corner all along and rooting for you when times were tough. Share this sunny period with them and you'll be reminded why you need them in your life.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
It isn't the most comfortable sensation in the world, but tension isn't always a bad thing. In fact, it can often bring out the best in you. A stressful situation can give your creativity and intelligence a terrifically satisfying jolt. Don't just seek out people who are completely compatible with you. If you only surround yourself with like-minded thinkers, your own mind and soul won't be challenged or grow.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Just for today, put aside all the cutting-edge technology that has invaded your life. Sure, it has saved you some time, helped you stay in contact with friends, and improved your punctuality, but it has also isolated you. Is your life in danger of becoming virtual? Get back to basics today. Have an in-person conversation and do your shopping at local shops instead of online. Immerse yourself in the energy of other people.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Your brain is fertile and active right now, so any idle chitchat might become very tedious very quickly. This is a good time to strike out on your own and search for a unique experience that will challenge you. A visit to an art gallery, library, or any other place designed for contemplation and deep thought would be quite stimulating for you. Your mind is very receptive to new ideas right now. Give it something substantial to ponder.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Let yourself linger in conversations today, especially with people you don't know very well. Sharing ideas and stories will help you learn more about someone who may, to your great surprise, become very important in your life. If there's a person who has been pushing for a relationship that you don't think you want, give them another chance. Sit down for a long talk. Your feelings may change.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
No matter what you need today, you have friends who can help you get it. Need a recommendation for a new hairstylist? Looking for the perfect place to go on your next vacation? Wondering what book to read next? Toss questions like that out to your social circle today, and you'll get some surprising and helpful answers. Who knew that the people who make you smile and feel good about yourself could also be such a wealth of information?

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
An upcoming party, luncheon, or other fairly mellow social event will be a wonderful opportunity to share a new story about yourself. So step into the spotlight and start speaking! Don't be bashful about sharing some details of your life, even if there's someone in attendance you desperately want to impress. This person is more intimidated by you than you are by them, and many people are very curious about you right now.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Wherever you go today, you'll be able to effortlessly put your special mark on things. All you have to do is speak your mind in your usual clever way and not be intimidated by anyone. This is a great time for you because you're full of unique ideas and a fierce charm that could bring a marble statue to life! The role of entertainer is becoming more and more comfortable to you, and you should explore ways to spend a little more time in the spotlight. People want more of you.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You've been trying to ignore it because you've been so busy dealing with other aspects of life, but today your need to feel socially useful will finally overpower your other urges. Don't worry. Getting involved doesn't have to turn your entire life on its ear. All you need to do is devote one or two hours a week toward helping out a cause you believe in. And you don't even have to formally join anything. How about just picking up the trash you see in your neighborhood?



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. The cochlea is part of which part of the body?

- A. Ear
- B. Eye
- C. Nose
- D. Throat

02. Which cricket team was accused of being the subject of rigging the result of an international cricket game against England at Lords in August 2010?

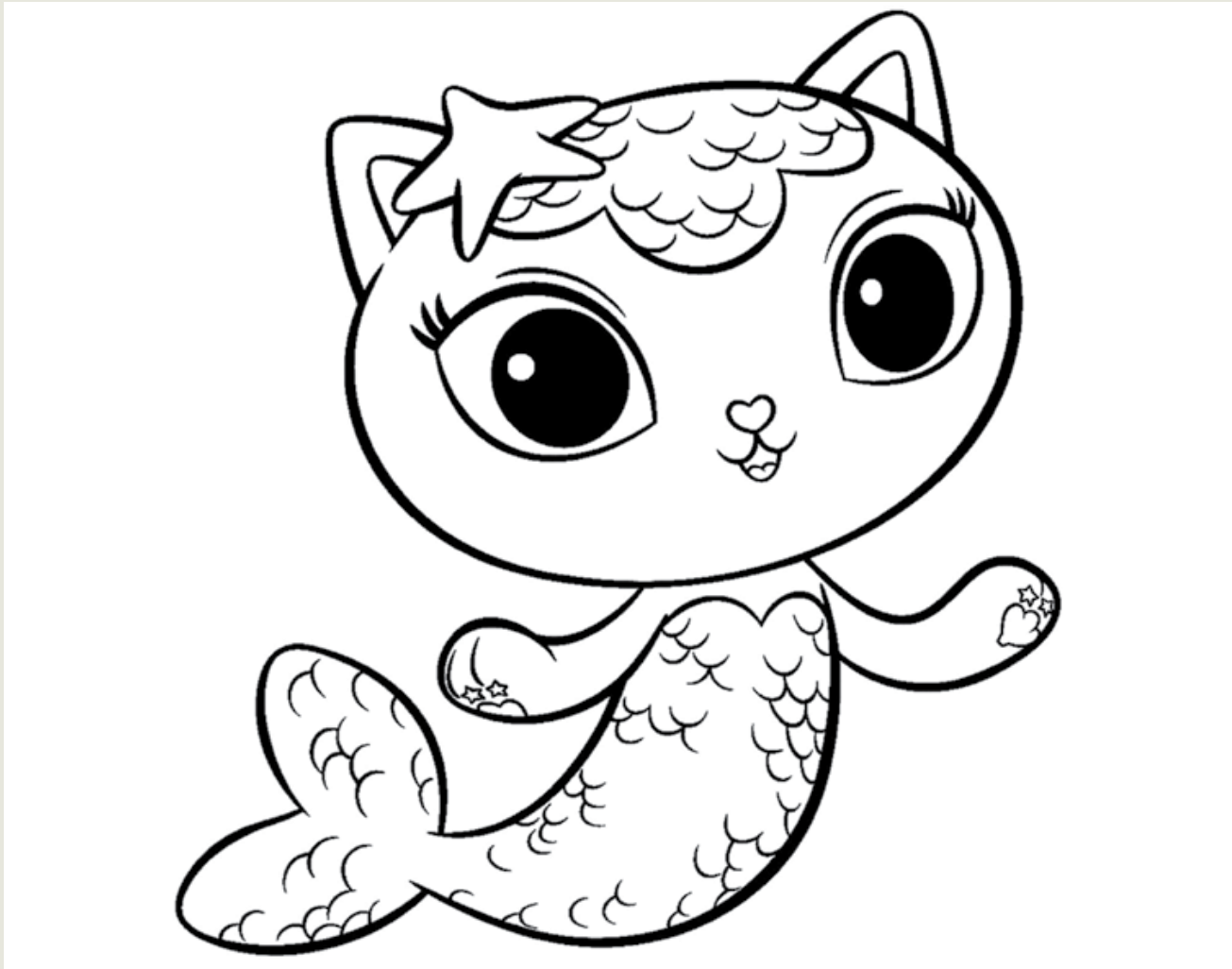
- A. Sri Lanka
- B. Bangladesh
- C. India
- D. Pakistan

03. Where is the Afar Triple Junction?

- A. Central southern Asia
- B. Birmingham, UK
- C. On the African coast of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden
- D. The North Island of New Zealand

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	S	B	S
M	C	Y	D
G	E	L	R
N	U	T	O

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

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

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

Lima's streets tense as Peru leader Boluarte hints at early elections

Lima, Peru - Peru's new president Dina Boluarte has said she will form a new government on Saturday, even as demonstrators pressed on Lima streets for ex-president Pedro Castillo to be freed after an alleged failed coup bid.

Boluarte told journalists that if the situation 'warrants it', the government will consult with Congress on holding an early presidential vote.

She urged those 'who are coming out in protest ... to calm down'.

Demonstrations continued on Friday, with protesters blocking roads with rocks, logs, and burning tires as they called for early elections.

The roadblocks interrupted traffic along the southern Pan-American Highway that links Peru and Chile.

Two days after the failure of his coup attempt, Castillo is sharing a detention centre with former president Alberto Fujimori at a police base in Lima.

The prosecution accuses this left-wing rural teacher of rebellion and conspiracy, and a high court ordered him into seven days in preliminary detention.

On the streets, meanwhile, the demonstrations continue for



Peruvian Dina Boluarte greets members of the Congress after being sworn in as the new President hours after former President Pedro Castillo was impeached in Lima, on Wednesday (AFP)

the second day and fuel uncertainty about the possibility that Boluarte can conclude her term in 2026, as she herself announced upon taking office.

Hundreds of demonstrators marched through the colonial centre of the capital, demanding

Castillo's release.

"I voted for Castillo, this Congress does not represent us, we want Castillo freed," Maribel Quispe told AFP, in the march that left the central Plaza San Martin, and included the Prosecutor's Office on its route to

Congress. "We want them to close this corrupt Congress and free Castillo. He made the decision to close Congress because they wouldn't let him work," marcher Sara Medina said.

Several dozen riot police officers closed the avenues that lead

to the legislature to prevent the protest from passing through.

The demonstrators burned banners with the image of President Boluarte, shouting 'coup leader!'

Earlier on Friday, Castillo's former chief of staff said that the Peruvian ex-president 'could have been induced' by drugs to dissolve Congress and does not remember delivering the national address that led to his downfall.

Congress was supposed to debate Castillo's impeachment

There are indications that the president was forced to read the message of dissolution

GUIDO BELLIDO



message of dissolution, and whoever wrote the text did so in order to provide an argument for his removal," ex-aide Guido Bellido said on Twitter.

Bellido, who visited his former boss at the Lima police base where he is held while under investigation for rebellion and conspiracy, also questioned Castillo's mental condition.

"The psychological state of P. Castillo when reading the message to the nation shows that he was not in control of his faculties. This suggests that he could have been induced. A toxicological test is urgently needed," he said.

The former rural school teacher won a shock electoral victory over Peru's traditional elites in June 2021.

The charges against him carry a jail term of between 10 and 20 years.

Boluarte, who served as vice president under Castillo, was hastily sworn in as Peru's first woman president just hours after the impeachment.

However, doubt is mounting over her ability to hold onto the job until the end of her mandate in 2026 in a country prone to political instability that is now on its sixth president in six years.

AFP

Quebec makes oath to Charles III optional

Montreal, Canada - The legislature in Quebec province adopted a bill on Friday making optional the oath of allegiance to Britain's King Charles III, Canada's head of state.

From now on, only the oath of allegiance to the people of Quebec will be mandatory to sit in the chamber. "This is a great moment for Quebec democracy. One more step towards the emancipation of the Quebec people from British colonialism, towards normality," said Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, the leader of the separatist Parti Quebecois, on Twitter.

"Things that we take for granted, that we think immutable' can change in 'just 12 minutes', he added, in reference to the adoption of the bill proposed by the ruling Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) party. Last week, at the opening of the parliamentary session, Plamondon and two other elected members were turned away from the doors of the Assembly for not having taken the oath to the king.

AFP

Brazil's Lula appoints former Sao Paulo mayor Haddad as finance minister

Brasília, Brazil - Brazil's president-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Friday named former Sao Paulo mayor Fernando Haddad, viewed unfavourably by many in the business community, as his finance minister.

Lula da Silva, who narrowly defeated incumbent Jair Bolsonaro in October elections, unveiled ministers in the key posts of foreign affairs, justice, defense, and chief of staff.

However, all eyes were on his pick for finance minister, with markets nervous over the incoming government's commitment to fiscal discipline and the inflation-hit economy in fragile recovery. "(I chose) comrade Fernando Haddad as Minister of Finance," Lula said during a press conference in the capital Brasilia.

Haddad, 59, who served as education minister from 2005 to 2012, succeeds powerful liberal economy minister Paulo Guedes, an ally of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro.

After Lula's new government takes office following his January 1 inauguration, the economy ministry will be dissolved and transformed into finance, industry



Brazil's President-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (centre) poses for a picture alongside future ministers during a press conference at the transitional government building in Brasilia, on Friday (AFP)

try and planning agencies.

When Haddad's name started circulating for the role, markets reacted with unease, viewing him as too much on the left and fearing he would jeopardise the budgetary balance.

"He represents the heterodox economic policy' that Lula's Workers' Party (PT) defends," said Antonio Madeira of the MCM consultancy firm. Madeira said that with Haddad in the finance ministry, he expects 'an increase in spending' and 'a more assertive state giving a significant role to public companies.'

Despite some of the reluctance towards Haddad, the Sao Paulo Stock Exchange's Ibovespa index was up on Friday by 0.5% after the names of the future ministers were announced.

Haddad said that in 2023 he will prioritise tax reform, a new fiscal framework, as well as 'recover the international agreements that are stopped', such as Mercosur-European Union.

Lula also tapped Mauro Vieira as foreign minister.

Vieira is a 71-year-old career diplomat who has already served as foreign minister as

well as ambassador to Argentina, the United States and the United Nations.

He is currently serving as ambassador to Croatia, which on Friday knocked Brazil out of the World Cup.

For the justice ministry, Lula appointed Flavio Dino, a former governor of the northeastern state of Maranhao.

Rui Costa, governor of the province of Bahia, was named to a ministry that falls between the roles of prime minister and chief of staff.

AFP

Kremlin critic Yashin jailed for spreading 'false information'

Moscow, Russia - Russia on Friday sentenced opposition politician Ilya Yashin to eight and a half years in prison for spreading 'false information' about Russia's offensive in Ukraine, the highest-profile conviction under new legislation criminalising criticism of the assault.

The 39-year-old Moscow councillor is just the latest in a long line of Kremlin critics to have been targeted in an unprecedented crackdown that has intensified since President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine. Yashin is an ally of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny and was close to Boris Nemtsov, an opposition politician assassinated near the Kremlin in 2015.

Supporters in the courtroom applauded Yashin, who smiled and waved to family despite being handcuffed, as the sentence was read out. Judge Oksana Goryunova said Yashin had committed a crime by disseminating 'knowingly false information about Russia's armed forces' and sentenced him to eight years and six months in a penal colony.

In April, he had described the alleged murder of civilians in



Ilya Yashin (AFP)

Bucha as a 'massacre', referring to a town near the Ukrainian capital Kyiv where civilians were found killed after Russian forces pulled back.

Yashin was tried under new legislation that came into force after the start of Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine to penalise what the authorities deem to be damaging or false information about the Russian military.

Asked about Yashin's conviction on Friday, President Vladimir Putin said: "And who is he? A blogger?"

The Kremlin chief said that, as a lawyer by training, he could not comment on the court ruling.

"I think it's inadvisable to question the court's decision," Putin told reporters following a regional summit in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek.

'Judges are criminals'

"Another shameless and lawless verdict from Putin will not silence Ilya and it should not intimidate Russia's honest people," Navalny said in comments posted on Instagram after the verdict.

Navalny, 46, is serving a nine-year sentence on embezzlement charges that are widely seen as politically motivated. His political organisations have been outlawed. Others also praised the opposition politician for his stance. "There are laws that should not be respected," tweeted science fiction writer Dmitry Glukhovsky. "All over the world, Yashin is a hero and a prisoner of conscience, and his judges are criminals."

Yashin refused to leave Russia after Putin sent troops to Ukraine on February 24 and regularly condemned the Kremlin's offensive in Ukraine to his 1.3mn subscribers on YouTube.

AFP

US and Russia again make deal but broader diplomacy on ice

Washington, US - The United States and Russia again showed they can do business with their second prisoner exchange this year but, despite some suggestions by Moscow, few expect broader diplomacy over the Ukraine war.

Working-level US and Russian diplomats met on Friday, a day after the swap, in Istanbul but a US official said they discussed a 'narrow set of bilateral issues' and not the Ukraine war.

In a scene whose choreography if not personalities were reminiscent of the Cold War, basketball star Brittney Griner, arrested on minor drug charges, walked on the tarmac in Abu Dhabi on Thursday to a plane that took her back to the United

States.

Walking in the other direction was Viktor Bout, an arms dealer arrested in a 2008 US sting operation in Thailand, who triumphantly returned home and declared that the West wants to 'destroy' Russia.

Still in prison was Paul Whelan, an American accused by Russia of espionage. The former Marine's detention sparked criticism of President Joe Biden by his Republican rivals, although the administration insisted it was still working to free him.

The Biden administration said that Russia did not budge. But President Vladimir Putin one day later dangled the possibility, saying that further swaps were 'possible' with the United States,



US basketball star Brittney Griner (left) filling documents before to be freed from prison in Moscow on Thursday (AFP)

sparking speculation on which Russians he seeks to free.

"This is the result of negotiations and the search for compromises," Putin told reporters on a visit to Kyrgyzstan.

He also said on Ukraine that

'ultimately, in the end, an agreement will have to be reached' in Ukraine - which he invaded in February, prompting a furious defense backed by Western weapons that has driven back Russian forces.

'Nothing more'

The United States and Russia arranged the prisoner exchange through quiet back channels with assistance from the United Arab Emirates.

In April, the two countries carried out a similar deal, swapping Trevor Reed, a former Marine who got into a drunken brawl, for drug-smuggling pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko, with the two swapped in Istanbul.

Turkey, the scene of Friday's closed-door talks, and the United Arab Emirates both have complicated alliances with the United States and have balked at efforts to isolate Moscow, serving as hubs for Russian expatriates.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken had proposed the pris-

oner swap involving Griner to his counterpart, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, in a July telephone call, their only known direct conversation since the war.

Blinken said after Griner's release that the United States was also willing to work with Russia on narrow issues such as arms control but that the swap indicated no wider diplomatic opening.

"This is about getting unjustly detained Americans back to their families," Blinken told CBS News.

"That was the focus. It's nothing more. It's also nothing less."

Western diplomats privately say it is crucial not to let back-channel diplomacy play into the

hands of Putin by making Russia an issue of the United States versus Russia.

Russia alleges it faced a threat from Ukraine's NATO aspirations. The United States insists that any peace initiative is up to Ukraine, the country that was invaded, and that it will not negotiate over Kyiv's head.

Will Pomeranz, director of the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute, said the swap was purely focused on the desires to free prisoners.

"I don't think this will have any impact really on US-Russia relations. They are in such a terrible, terrible state and I don't think this really changes the dynamic," he said.

AFP

INDIA

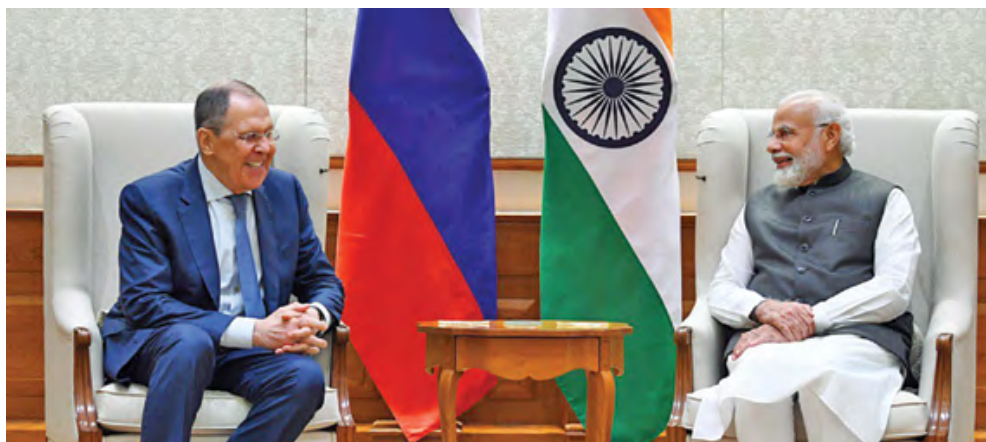
India–Russia Summit not to take place this year

New Delhi India - The annual India-Russia summit in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi was slated to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin is unlikely to take place this year due to 'scheduling issues' sources said.

"Reports of PM Modi not meeting Putin due to nuclear threat is baseless. The meeting is not taking place due to scheduling issues," sources told ANI. The annual summit between the Indian Prime Minister and the Russian President is the highest institutionalised dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between the two countries. Several media reports speculated that the annual in-person summit had been cancelled due to the Russian President alleged threats to use nuclear weapons in the Ukraine war.

"The meeting between New Delhi and Moscow is not taking place due to scheduling issues," the sources said adding that the decision has nothing to do with the ongoing Ukraine conflict.

Since 2000, India and Russia have maintained an annual summit mechanism. The last annual summit was held at the



This file photo shows Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov calling on India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his official visit to India, in New Delhi on April 1, this year (ANI)

Hyderabad house in New Delhi in December 2021 in which Putin had attended in person and this year PM Modi was slated to travel to Moscow for the summit.

Due to COVID-19, in-person summits were not held in 2020.

In 2021 Modi, and Putin held their first 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue and also signed an agreement for the procurement of 6,01,427 assault rifles AK-203 through Indo-Russia Rifles Pvt Ltd, under the military-technical cooperation arrangement for 2021-31. The India-Russia 2+2 Dialogue marked the first 2+2

meeting between the foreign and defence ministers of the two countries.

In September this year on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Uzbekistan's Samarkand when the two leaders met for a bilateral meeting, Modi told Putin that this was 'not an era of war.' This statement by Modi also was cited in the G20 Summit in Indonesia's Bali.

In November this year, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Moscow and held talks with his Russian counterpart

Sergey Lavrov in which Jaishankar raised concern about the consequences emanating from the Ukraine conflict that have affected energy and food security around the world.

Holding the press briefing with Lavrov, Jaishankar said he exchanged views on international issues with the Russian side, in which the Ukraine conflict was the dominant feature.

On November 17, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin was received in New Delhi by Vinay Kwatra, India's Foreign Secretary.

ANI

Sukhu to be next HP CM

New Delhi, India - Former Himachal Pradesh Congress chief Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu is expected to be the next chief minister of the state with the party's central leadership approving his name.

Sources said that the party's central leadership has approved Sukhu's name as the new Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh.

"His name will be announced by this evening after discussing it with other leaders," a source said.

The decision came a day after the newly-elected Congress MLAs passed a resolution authorising Congress high command to select the next leader of the legislature party.

The sources said Vikramaditya Singh, son of former Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh, is likely to be given a big responsibility in the government. They said Sukhu's name was decided after consultations with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge who talked to members of the Gandhi family.

ANI

Bhupendra Patel to continue as Gujarat CM for second term

Gandhinagar, India - BJP's Bhupendra Patel has been elected Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislative party leader and will take oath as chief minister of Gujarat for the second time on December 12.

The BJP is all set to form the government for a record straight seventh term in the state. Both Patel and state BJP president CR Patil today presented the letter of government formation to Governor Acharya Devvrat at Raj Bhawan.

The decision was taken after newly elected BJP MLAs selected him as the legislative party's leader during a meeting here at the party's state head-



Bhupendra Patel (ANI)

quarters, Kamalam on Saturday. Senior BJP leaders Rajnath Singh, B S Yediyurappa, and Arjun Munda, all of whom were recently appointed as central observers for the state, were among those who attended today's meeting.

Patel's name was unanimously proclaimed as the leader

of the legislative party.

"Today, a BJP MLAs meeting was held to choose the party leader, and they have all chosen me," Patel said after the meeting. "Once again, the people of Gujarat have supported the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he added.

When asked if the Uniform Civil code (UCC) will be taken up in the first cabinet meeting of the new government, Patel said: "The committee has been formed. Work will be done on the basis of their recommendation." As per sources, about 20 cabinet ministers will take oath along with Bhupendra Patel.

ANI

Bangladesh opposition mounts huge protest in Dhaka, MPs quit

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Nearly 100,000 supporters of Bangladesh's main opposition party descended on Dhaka on Saturday to protest against the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and demand new elections.

"Sheikh Hasina is a vote thief," they chanted at the Golapbagh sports ground where the rally was held as the crowd spilled into surrounding streets.

All seven opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party

(BNP) MPs announced their resignations from parliament at the event, which will leave the legislature largely a rubber stamp - Hasina's party already had more than a two-thirds majority.

Western governments and the United Nations have expressed concerns over the political climate in Bangladesh.

It is one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia but the Ukraine war has forced the government to suspend gas and diesel imports, while power cuts



Supporters of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) take part in the party's last divisional rally in Dhaka on Saturday (AFP)

and fuel price hikes have triggered demonstrations in recent months. The Bangladeshi taka has depreciated by up to 25 per cent, driving up the cost of food imports and hitting poor and lower middle class people.

Autorickshaw driver Russel Miah joined the rally to express anger at rising prices of food and other commodities, which he said had left him struggling to provide his family with three meals a day.

"I am a victim of oppression,"

he said. "I came here today to protest against the people who are responsible for my current situation."

None of Bangladesh's half-dozen television news stations carried live coverage of the event, raising suspicions authorities had pressured them not to.

A BNP official claimed that hundreds of thousands of people had joined the rally by mid-morning. "Our main demand is Sheikh Hasina resign and parliament is dissolved and let a neu-

tral caretaker government step in to hold a free and fair election," spokesman Zahiruddin Swapan told AFP.

A senior security officer speaking on condition of anonymity estimated the crowd at up to 80,000 people.

There had been no violence so far but SWAT teams, counter-terrorism units and canine squads were on standby, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police spokesman Faruq Ahmed.

AFP

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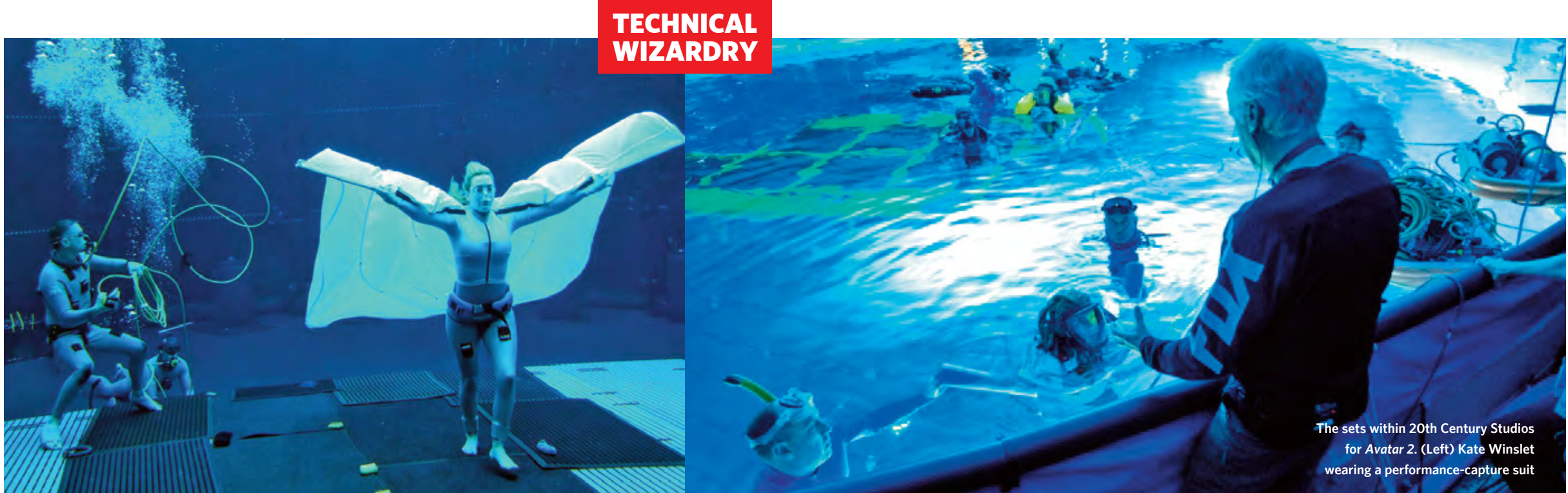
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From *Terminator* to *Titanic* to *Avatar*, director James Cameron has pushed Hollywood's technical wizardry to new limits, but human emotion must always come first, he says.

In an era when special effects are much more accessible to filmmakers, and studios are willing to regularly spend hundreds of millions of dollars on blockbusters, it is the artistic talent that makes the difference, Cameron said during a visit to Paris.

Whether he can still strike the balance will be tested as the world finally gets to see *Avatar: The Way of Water* next week - a sequel to his groundbreaking extra-terrestrial epic that has been 13 years in the making.

"Anybody could buy a paintbrush. Not everybody can paint a picture," the Canadian director said. "The technology doesn't create art. Artists create art - that's important."

It was originally hoped that a first sequel would be out in 2014, but Cameron's gargantuan ambitions led to repeated delays.

He does not come across like the sort of megalomaniac director of Hollywood lore - describing his sets as "a big hippie commune with a bunch of really great artists." But these hippies are armed with some powerful computers.

"We had over 3,200 shots, which is a lot to maintain high quality, high quality control," Cameron said. "We brought in machine deep learning and plugged AI into various stages of the process to assist us... not to take the place of the actors at all but actually to be more truthful to what they had done."

Connection to nature

The challenge was managing to draw emotion out of performances that were largely shot in front of green screens, and where most of the scenery and props would only appear later in the effects booths.

"The heart, the soul, the emotion, the conflict, creativity... all that happens first, and then all the technical work begins," he said.

Cameron has always justified the vast sums he has asked of studios - *Titanic* was both, the most expensive and most profitable, film of all time following its release in 1997, only to be topped by *Avatar* in 2009 - and he feels that responsibility every day.

"I can't be whimsical or impulsive, I have to be very focused and dedicated to creating something that's both, pleasing to me artistically and, I think, will be pleasing to the public and commercial enough to make some money," he said.

"It can't be too intellectual, but I can make it satisfying to me by putting in secondary and tertiary levels of meaning that I know are there."

Clearly, much of the impulse of the *Avatar* series is drawing attention to humanity's impact on nature, but the sequel also focuses on Cameron's aquatic interests.

Long fascinated by the sea, from 1989's *The Abyss* to *Titanic*, Cameron became a deep ocean explorer for National Geographic in the 2000s and was the first solo human to visit the deepest underwater trench, the Mariana

'Artists create art'

Veteran director James Cameron shares his mind on the artistic treatment for his upcoming *Avatar 2*, asserting that technology is nothing without an artistic mindset

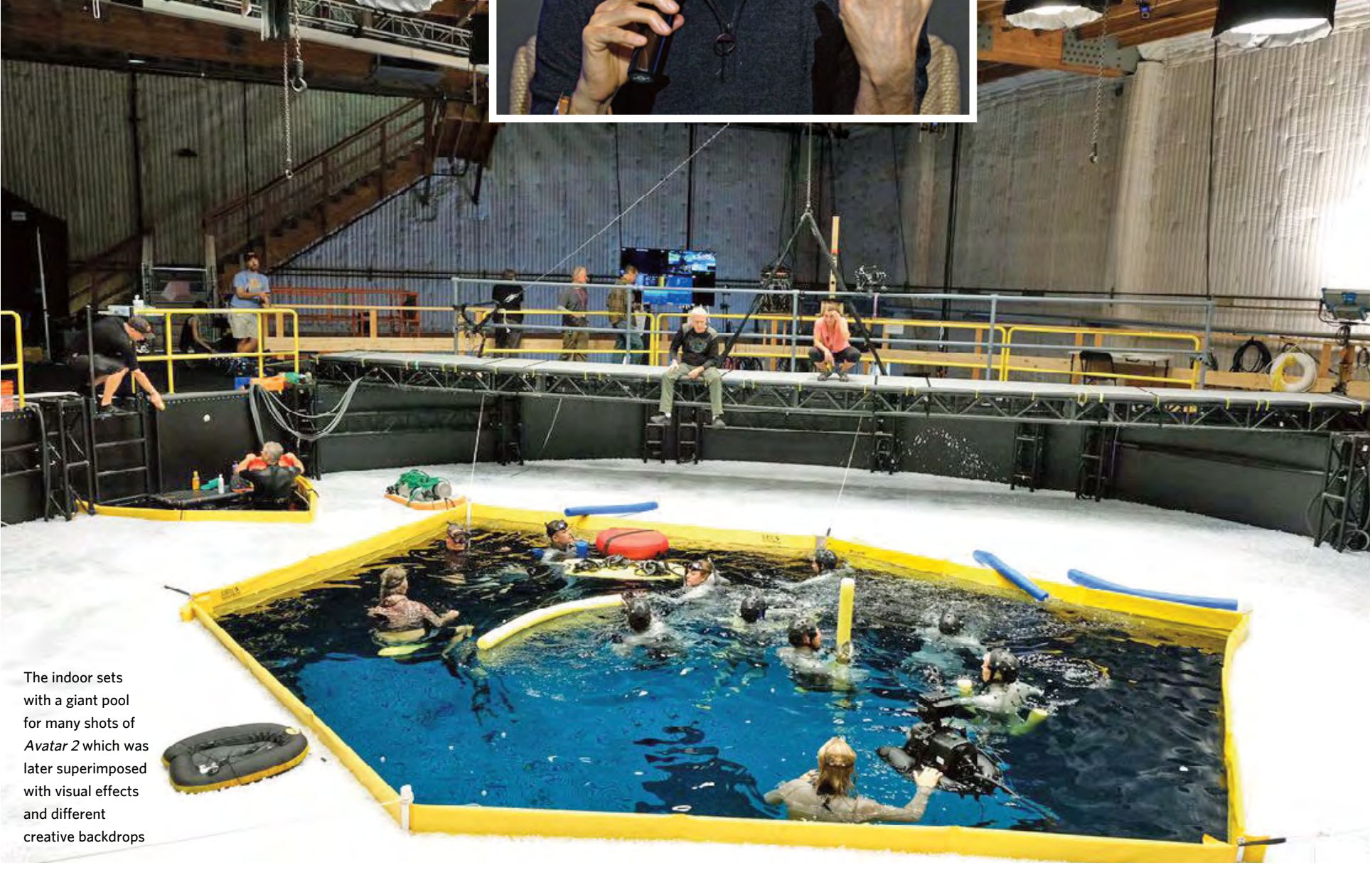


Trough, in a purpose-built submarine. He sees *Avatar* as 'awakening that thing in all of us, that connection to nature'. "The movie asks you to feel something for nature... It's about, may be, feeling a sense of outrage," Cameron said. "These Navi characters... they don't look like us, they're blue, they've got the ears and tails. But they represent the better angels of our nature. May be for 10 minutes after the movie's over, you see the world a little differently," he added.

AFP

The heart, the soul, the emotion, the conflict, the creativity... all that happens first, and then all the technical work begins

JAMES CAMERON



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Kawaguchi Yuho and Kawaguchi Seiren, a Japanese calligrapher couple, who visited Oman as part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Oman, left behind a few indelible marks of cultural camaraderie



Swirls and swooshes

Hubert Vaz

The writing was on the floor... The message came forth loud and clear... And those present were able to catch the 'En' - the energy which not just entrapped and enthralled the audience but also created a lasting 'connection'!

When Kawaguchi Yuho and Kawaguchi Seiren, a Japanese calligrapher couple, came to Oman a week ago to demonstrate the art of Japanese calligraphy, they had no clue how viewers would respond to their skill. But after several bouts of sharing their mastery with swirls of black ink over immaculate canvases laid out before intrigued audiences, they established a unique connection (En - in Japanese) with people in Oman.

The calligraphy duo displayed their dexterous strokes with black paint at an exhibition titled 'En', held over the past week with the support of the Embassy of Japan at the Omani Society for Fine Arts, Ghala. The exhibition concluded yesterday as scores of visitors took delight as well as inspiration from the masters of Japanese calligraphy who demonstrated not just their own versatility as calligraphers but also the diverse applications of this art form.

The exhibition also displayed works by Belgian visual artist, Ingrid Van Heyden who showcased the collaboration of Japanese and western arts to explore new artistic possibilities, by combining calligraphic imagery and techniques of contemporary art.

The calligraphers added a silver lining

to their visit by delivering an 'Art talk' at Matti Sirvio Art Galleria, in Jawharat al Shatti, Qurm, wherein they shared the intricacies of Japanese calligraphy to a turnout of artists and art lovers who were left spellbound with their sharing.

There was so much to talk about - feelings and thoughts expressed in composi-

tions; the power of the seemingly empty space between objects, symbols, unknown ancient characters, visual talkaholism.

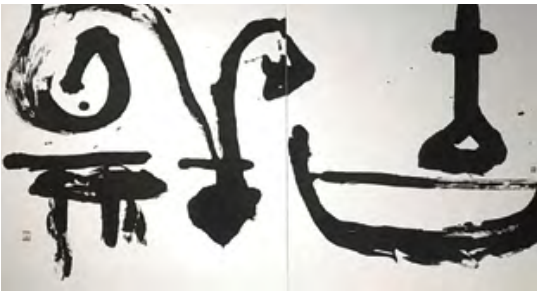
"Even our own people cannot read our works," exclaimed Seiren Kawaguchi while sharing the finer aspects of Japanese calligraphy wherein the experience

consists of learning the history of this unique art before being guided through the techniques involved. The skill lies in effectively using this ancient art form to convey contemporary concepts in a way that people are able to relate with it easily, she said.

Artists who attended the meet came

The art scene in Oman is still growing, and so, having presentations by international artists is very enriching and inspiring

MOHAMMED AL ATTAR



face to face with this new power of calligraphy which is also prevalent in many intricate forms in the Arab world and is a vital part of Islamic culture. What could be clearly seen through the demonstrations by the calligraphers was how complex concepts and emotions could be conveyed with much simplicity, they said.

Mohammed al Attar, an Omani artist who attended the talk, said, "Every brush stroke and every character seemed to tell a story. The whole process of creating an artwork is a journey - I find that every part of the journey is important, from the moment it starts circulating in the mind, till it touches a surface and until it is completed and presented to viewers. The art scene in Oman is still growing, and so, having presentations by international artists from different cultural backgrounds is very enriching and inspiring."

Matti, who hosted the talk for the benefit of artists who frequently participate in his joint exhibitions, said, "It was interesting to hear artists, whose English is a bit limited, express their inner feelings. I feel, just 3 per cent of their message comes through verbally. It's obvious that the only way to hear them is to spend time in front of their artwork, without a watch, without a phone. I hope, art will come back and motivate people to jump out of the digital hurricane."

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FIFA WORLD CUP

Qatar 2022



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2022 MUSCAT DAILY 13

THE RED JUGGERNAUT

En-Nesyri scores as Morocco down Portugal to become first ever African World Cup semi-finalists

Doha, Qatar - Morocco became the first African nation to reach the World Cup semi-finals as Youssef En-Nesyri's first-half goal sealed a tense 1-0 victory over Portugal on Saturday at Al Thumama Stadium.

The Atlas Lions, also the first Arab team to make the last four, added Portugal to their list of European scalps with a resolute second-half performance.

Cristiano Ronaldo has likely played his last World Cup match after making an ineffectual appearance as a second-half substitute, failing to score his first knockout-phase goal at the tournament.

Morocco took a 42nd-minute lead through En-Nesyri's header as they came on strongly late in the first period.

Portugal piled on the pressure after the break but an injury-hit Morocco, without three of their four first-choice defenders once skipper Romain Saiss was forced off, hung on despite being reduced to 10 men in added time.

The partisan crowd undoubtedly helped the North Africans over the line, although Portugal struggled to create many clear-cut chances as they lost a World Cup quarter-final for the first time.

Five-time Ballon d'Or winner

Ronaldo was sent on early in the second half by coach Fernando Santos but could not rescue the Euro 2016 winners.

Instead it was another famous day for Morocco, after previous upset wins over Belgium and Spain, on penalties, in Qatar.

Walid Regragui's men will face England or holders France in the semi-finals at Al Bayt Stadium on Wednesday.

Morocco will believe they can topple either of those sides, having still only conceded once at this World Cup.

Portugal enjoyed the majority of possession in the opening half-hour,

QUARTER-FINAL		
	MOROCCO	1
	PORTUGAL	0

but Joao Felix's fifth-minute diving header, saved by goalkeeper Yassine Bounou, was the closest either side came to an early goal.

Morocco always looked dangerous, though, and Selim Amallah ballooned a shot over and Sofiane Boufal curled straight at Diogo Costa for the Africans.

En-Nesyri strikes

It was no surprise when Morocco did forge ahead shortly before the interval. Portuguese goalkeeper Costa came for a cross from left-back Yahya Attiat-Allah he was never going to get to and Sevilla striker En-Nesyri did the rest with a towering header.

Portugal almost equalised seconds later in spectacular fashion when Bruno Fernandes crashed a bouncing ball from the right-hand side of the box against the crossbar.

A crazy few minutes before half-time also saw Attiat-Allah, only playing in place of the injured Nussair Mazraoui, blaze wide after another rapid counter.

Morocco almost doubled their advantage four minutes after the restart as Costa just about managed to prevent Hakim Ziyech's free-kick from the right from flying all the way in.

Santos wasted little time in summoning for his captain, sending on Ronaldo and Joao Cancelo.

Morocco, already without injured defenders Mazraoui and Nayef Aguerd, were dealt another blow when Saiss was stretchered off.

But nothing could stop them from making history.



Morocco's Youssef En-Nesyri scores the winner against Portugal in their World Cup quarter-final match at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha on Saturday (AFP)

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Louis Van Gaal says exit on penalties 'incredibly painful'

Doha, Qatar - Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal said his team's loss to Argentina on penalties in the quarter-finals of the World Cup on Friday was "incredibly painful".

The Dutch rallied with two late goals from Wout Weghorst to force extra time after Argentina led 2-0 through efforts from Nahuel Molina and Lionel Messi, who scored from the spot.

But Virgil van Dijk and Steven Berghuis watched in agony as their spot-kicks were saved in the shootout by Emiliano Martinez as Argentina won 4-3 on penalties, setting up a semi-final with Croatia.

"We failed to score the first two penalties so that's when things become really hard and tough. It is a matter of being lucky, a lottery," said Van Gaal.

The 71-year-old was also coach of the Netherlands when they were beaten on penalties by Argentina in the semi-finals of the 2014 World Cup.

"This is the second time we lost to Argentina this way. Two World Cups with the same coach for the Netherlands.

"I asked the players to train and to practise penalties, so I have nothing to reproach them for. To



We failed to score the first two penalties so that's when things become really hard and tough. It is a matter of being lucky, a lottery

LOUIS VAN GAAL

come back and equalise... to lose on penalties is unfortunate."

Van Gaal returned for a third spell in charge in August 2021 after undergoing treatment for aggressive prostate cancer.

The Oranje are unbeaten in 20 games under Van Gaal, including Friday's match, but he confirmed he would be stepping down from

the job as planned.

"The boys are feeling despondent. They gave everything and I'm incredibly proud. I had a wonderful time," he said.

"It is incredibly painful to see how we've been eliminated because I did everything I could to prevent this."

AFP

Croatia coach Dalic pledges 'this isn't the end' after beating Brazil

Doha, Qatar - Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic pledged "this is not the end" after his team sensationally dumped Brazil out of the World Cup on penalties at the quarter-final stage on Friday.

The match finished 1-1 after extra time, with Bruno Petkovic cancelling out Neymar's brilliant solo opener in the dying minutes.

Croatia, finalists at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, won the shootout 4-2.

Marquinhos missed the crucial spot-kick, hitting the post when he had to score to keep Brazil in it after Rodrygo's earlier attempt had been saved by goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic.

Croatia converted all four of their penalties.

"This is a victory for Croatian people," said Dalic. "A great match. We eliminated the main favourites."

"This is Croatia - pride, courage, faith and patriotism."

He said his team had risen to the challenge when under the most intense pressure.

"Croatia is the best when it's needed. When it matters, Croatia always succeeds. No one should underestimate us."

"This is not the end, we are moving on. We can achieve a lot."



Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic celebrates with Josip Juranovic after their victory against Brazil in quarter-final at Education City Stadium on Friday (AFP)

Croatia will face Argentina in the semi-finals.

On Saturday they will start preparing for that challenge, but, for now Croatia can celebrate what Dalic heralded as one of the country's best-ever victories.

"This is one of our greatest wins - it was a great performance from us tactically," he said at his post-match press conference.

"They (the players) are great fighters and only Croats can do that," he added.

Croatia have won all four

penalty shootouts in their history at the World Cup - two in 2018, against Denmark and Russia, and two in Qatar, against Japan and now Brazil.

"We have very strong character and we do not give up, we were prepared for anything today," said Dalic. "It has become quite normal for us in shootouts to become favourite, it's as though we have already won at that point, but you need to get to the penalties first. It's a feature of our team."

AFP



FIFA WORLD CUP

Qatar2022

PARADISE LOST, PARADISE REGAINED

Argentina squander two-goal advantage in regulation time against the Dutch before prevailing on penalties in dramatic quarter-final

Doha, Qatar - Argentina set up a semi-final showdown with Croatia after beating the Netherlands 4-3 on penalties following a thrilling 2-2 extra-time draw in a World Cup quarter-final classic.

Goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez was the hero in the shootout for the South Americans after Argentina squandered a Lionel Messi-engineered two-goal lead in the final minutes of normal time.

Dutch substitute Wout Weghorst scored two late goals - the second from an inventive free-kick in the 11th minute of stoppage time - as the Netherlands fought back with seven minutes of normal time remaining to force extra-time.

Argentina looked poised for the last four after Messi conjured up a brilliant assist for Nahuel Molina and a clinical goal from the penalty spot.

"It's a lot of joy, a lot of relief," said

Messi.

"We didn't want extra-time or penalties. We suffered too much because of how everything happened, but it is the quarter-finals of a World Cup. We knew how to suffer when it was our turn, but we got through to the semi-finals.

"It's beautiful, something impressive," he added.

For the Dutch it was a bitterly disappointing end to their tournament and they have now lost six of their last eight shoot-outs in major championships since 1992.

"We have been practicing penalties all year and despite everything we failed. It's a shame," said coach Louis van Gaal.

"As a coach, I want to have everything under control. That's why I asked the players to take penalties for their clubs, they all did. But if you miss two, you won't win. You just can't get

over a streak like this," he said.

The Lusail Stadium was turned into home for Argentina with the vast majority of the the 88,235 strong crowd backing the South American team and only a smattering of orange shirts in the crowd.

But all were treated to a thrilling late-night drama that finally reached its conclusion just before 1 a.m. local time on Saturday.

After a cagey start, Messi produced a moment of inspiration, ten minutes before the interval, to create the opener for his team.

Offering no clues of his intent, he split open the Dutch defence with a sublime reverse pass between Daley Blind and Virgil van Dijk into the path of Molina who timed his run perfectly and slotted home with the outside of his foot.

Van Gaal responded at the break by making a double change, bringing



Argentina players celebrate after beating the Netherlands in penalty shoot-out in the quarter-final at Lusail Stadium on Friday (AFP)

QUARTER FINAL		
	NETHERLANDS	2 (3)
	ARGENTINA	2 (4)
Argentina won on penalties		

Teun Koopmeiners and Steven Berghuis on into midfield in place of Bergwijn and Marten De Roon.

But while the Dutch saw plenty of

the ball their play remained too predictable and guileless.

Free-kick genius

Deservedly, the Argentines extended their lead in the 73rd minute after Denzel Dumfries tripped Marcos Acuna in the box and Messi made no mistake from the spot, burying the ball in the corner.

The Dutch, though, were not about to go out with a whimper -- pulling a

goal back, seven minutes from the end, with an angled glancing header from Weghorst from a Berghuis cross from deep.

Ten minutes of added time raised Dutch hopes and - tempers with a couple of mass confrontations - and they moved Van Dijk up front and pumped balls int the box.

Deep into added time, one of those high balls, led to a free-kick just outside the area.

TITE BOWS OUT AS BRAZIL COACH AFTER 'PAINFUL' EXIT

Doha, Qatar - Tite confirmed that it was the "end of a cycle" for him as coach of Brazil after the favourites were dumped out of the World Cup in the quarter-finals on penalties by Croatia on Friday.

The 61-year-old, who has been in charge since 2016, had previously made it no secret that he would leave the position after the tournament in Qatar, regardless of the outcome.

"It is a painful defeat but I go in peace. It is the end of a cycle," he told reporters after Brazil's dramatic

It is a painful defeat but I go in peace. It is the end of a cycle

TITE
Brazil coach

exit from the competition at Doha's Education City Stadium.

"I already said that a year and a half ago. I didn't come here to win and then turn around and say I was going to stay. People who know me know that."

The Brazilian Football Confederation has previously said it will not choose its next coach until January.

Asked to assess his time in charge Tite said: "In time I will be

able to respond better.

"I am not in a position now to evaluate all the work we have done, but as time goes by you will be able to make that assessment.

"I don't have the capacity to do that now after we have been eliminated."

Meanwhile, Tite was asked why Neymar did not step up to take Brazil's fourth penalty instead of Marquinhos when they had to score just to stay alive in the shoot-out.

"Because he takes the fifth and decisive penalty," he explained.

"The player with the most quality and the right mentality steps up when there is the most pressure."



Brazil's Neymar cries after losing to Croatia in the penalty shoot-out on Friday (AFP)

Point of no return? Neymar's dream slips away again, maybe for final time

Doha, Qatar - Yet another World Cup has ended in tears for Neymar, with football's most expensive player hinting he may not pull on the Brazil shirt again following a painful defeat to Croatia.

The 30-year-old, who gave Brazil the lead during extra time of their quarter-final in Doha with a brilliant individual effort, was distraught after Croatia triumphed on penalties.

Speaking to reporters, his voice trembling with emotion, he admitted he could not "100 percent guaran-

tee" he would be seen in the famous yellow shirt again.

Neymar, who has 124 Brazil caps, will be 34 by the time the next World Cup comes around in North America in 2026.

That is still younger than many leading names in Qatar, from Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo to Luka Modric and Olivier Giroud.

But Brazil's brittle number 10 hinted last year that he would not appear at another World Cup, suggesting in one interview that he

might not have the mental strength "to put up with even more football".

Neymar has carried the hopes of a nation into three World Cups since his emergence as a generational talent at Santos.

He has scored eight World Cup goals but the tournament has exposed his vulnerable physique and fragile emotions.

In 2014, playing on home soil, he was cut down in a quarter-final win over Colombia and stretchered off in agony with a fractured bone in his

back.

Without him Brazil capitulated, losing the semi-final 7-1 to Germany.

Four years ago, Brazil's build-up to the tournament in Russia was dominated by his battle to recover from an operation on a broken bone in his foot.

He came back in time, but that World Cup was still remembered for his tears in a win over Costa Rica before the Selecao lost in the quarter-finals to Belgium.

AFP

77



Neymar equalled Pele's record tally of 77 goals for Brazil with his brilliant strike against Croatia, but failed to make it past the legend as his opportunity to take the final penalty in the tie-breaker never came

10

LIONEL MESSI'S penalty against the Netherlands in the quarterfinal helped him draw level with Gabriel Batistuta with 10 goals at the top of Argentina's all-time World Cup scorers list



Messi slams referee after Argentina's win

Doha, Qatar - Lionel Messi said referee Antonio Mateu Lahoz should not have officiated Argentina's tempestuous shootout victory over the Netherlands in the World Cup quarter-finals at Lusail Stadium.

Argentina won on penalties early on Saturday after a dramatic 2-2 draw in which Dutch substitute Wout Weghorst scored twice late on, including a last-gasp equaliser from a short free-kick awarded when German Pezzella shoved over Weghorst.

"After they got the draw I felt a lot of anger," said Messi. "I don't want to talk about the referee, because they immediately reprimand you or sanction you, but I think people saw



Spanish referee Antonio Mateu Lahoz shows a yellow card to Lionel Messi

what happened. "FIFA has to review that, it can't give a referee like that a match of this importance, when they're not up to the task."

He added: "We didn't have a great game, and then the referee sent it to extra time. He was always against us. In the last play, it was not a foul."

"We didn't want extra time or penalties," said Messi. "We suffered too much because of how everything happened, but it is the quarter-finals of a World Cup.

"We knew how to suffer when it was our turn, but we got through to the semi-finals. It's beautiful, something impressive."

AFP

MOMENT IN TIME



PERFECTION: Argentina's Lionel Messi scores from the penalty spot in their quarter-final against the Netherlands at Lusail Stadium, north of Doha, on Friday (AFP)



(Louis) van Gaal sells that he plays good football and then he puts forwards in the box and starts throwing long balls. We deserved to go through and that's what happened

LIONEL MESSI

Argentina have 'passion and heart' says goalkeeper Martinez after penalty heroics

Doha, Qatar - Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez said "passion and heart" propelled his side into the World Cup semi-finals - and he was delighted to bring joy to his struggling country.

Martinez was one of the heroes of the quarter-final, saving the Netherlands' first two spot kicks in the penalty shootout after the match ended 2-2 following extra time. Argentina won the shootout 4-3 to move into a semi-final on Tuesday against Croatia, the surprise victors against Brazil.

"We are in the semi-final because we have passion and heart. We are excited, just like the people," Martinez said.

"The first thing that comes to



Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez denies Virgil van Dijk of the Netherlands in the penalty shoot-out in their quarter-final at Lusail Stadium on Friday (AFP)

mind is emotion. I do this for 45 million people," he added. "The country is not having a good time due to economic issues and giving joy to people is the most satisfying thing at this time."

He criticised Spanish referee Antonio Mateu Lahoz, calling him "crazy and arrogant".

"You say something to him and he speaks badly to you, he gives 10 minutes (of injury time) and gives all the free kicks to the Netherlands," Martinez said.

"Because Spain were eliminated, he wanted us to be knocked out too," he added.

Spain went out to Morocco in the last 16 on Tuesday.

AFP



Brazil's Thiago Silva consoles Marquinhos after the defeat (AFP)

Brazil captain Silva admits agony of World Cup exit

Doha, Qatar - Brazil captain Thiago Silva said his team's World Cup exit to Croatia on penalties was painful and that he was coming to terms with the fact he would never win the trophy.

The five-time champions lost Friday's quarter-final 4-2 in a penalty shootout after a 1-1 draw at the end of extra time in Qatar.

Neymar had given them the lead in extra time but Bruno Petkovic levelled in the dying minutes of the match.

"It is difficult," said Silva. "I have been through some disappointments in my life and when we lose something important that we have as an objective it hurts quite a lot.

"But we have to try to lift our heads and carry on. There is no other alternative."

The Brazil captain said his side had switched off for Croatia's goal.

"I think all of a sudden we lost our concentration," Silva said.

"We are not used to being hit on the break like that. We became a little disorganised and that is where the goal came from."

The Chelsea centre-back, 38, has likely played his final World Cup match.

"Sadly as a player I am not going to get to lift this trophy," he said. "Who knows if in future I will get the chance in another role."

INDIA-BANGLADESH ONE-DAY SERIES

ISHAN IMPOSSIBLE!

Kishan hits fastest-ever double ton as India crush Bangladesh by 227 runs in final one-dayer

Chittagong, Bangladesh - Opener Ishan Kishan hit the fastest-ever double century in one-day internationals in just 126 balls to set up a 227-run consolation win for India in the third match against Bangladesh on Saturday.

The left-handed Kishan, who made the team in the absence of injured skipper Rohit Sharma, powered India to 409-8 with his 210 off 131 balls including 24 fours and 10 sixes.

He and Virat Kohli, who made 113, put on 290 runs for the second wicket - the seventh-highest partnership in ODI history.

Bangladesh were bowled out for 182 in 34 overs but won the series 2-1 after their opening two victories in Dhaka.

India's 409 was their fourth-highest ODI score and the highest-ever total against Bangladesh by any team.

Kishan raised his maiden ODI hundred with a four as he let out a scream, and kept up the charge to convert into a double ton off Mustafizur Rahman as he and Kohli danced in the field.

Kishan is only the fourth Indian batsman to score an ODI double ton after Rohit - who has done so three times - Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag.

India lost Shikhar Dhawan for three in the fifth over after being invited to bat first, but Kishan hit back with a string of boundaries and took control of the innings with Kohli.

Kohli was dropped on one by skipper Liton Das, who spilled an



India's Ishan Kishan celebrates after scoring a double century in the final ODI against Bangladesh on Saturday



India's Virat Kohli celebrates after scoring a century against Bangladesh on Saturday (AFP)

The left-handed Kishan, who made the team in the absence of injured skipper Rohit Sharma, powered India to 409-8 with his 210 off 131 balls including 24 fours and 10 sixes

easy catch at short mid-wicket, and soon got into his groove but remained happy to play second fiddle to the attacking Kishan.

Kishan finally fell to a well-judged catch in the deep by Liton off Taskin Ahmed as he walked back to a standing ovation.

Star batsman and former captain Kohli hit Ebadot Hossain for six to register his first ODI century since August 2019 off 85

balls.

It took his century count in all three formats to 72, surpassing former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting.

Tendulkar remains top with 100 international tons in a stellar career that ended in 2013.

India lost quick wickets including stand-in skipper K.L. Rahul for eight and Kohli in the space of three balls, but Washington Sun-

dar's quickfire 37 led the visitors past 400.

In reply, Bangladesh kept losing wickets including Liton out for 29 and Mushfiquur Rahim bowled, for seven, by left-arm spinner Axar Patel.

Shakib Al Hasan attempted to put up some resistance with his knock of 43 before left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav bowled him as Bangladesh lost half their side for 124. The rest of the batting fell flat as pace bowler Shardul Thakur struck twice - including the key wickets of Afif Hossain and Mehidy Hasan Miraz - in the space of four balls across his two overs.

AFP

England in command of second Test after Pakistan batting collapse

Multan, Pakistan - England were in command of the second Test against Pakistan in Multan on Saturday, leading by 281 at stumps on day two as they eyed a series-clinching win.

The visitors were 202-5 in their second innings on a turning pitch - which has seen 25 wickets fall in two days - with the solid Harry Brook 74 not out, accompanied by skipper Ben Stokes on 16.

Earlier, spinner Jack Leach took 4 for 98 as Pakistan were bundled out for 202, giving England a 79-run first-innings lead and putting them in a strong position to take the Test series - their first in Pakistan in 17 years.

England won the first Test by 74 runs in Rawalpindi.

In their second innings in Multan, England opener Ben Duckett hit an aggressive 79 before he fell to spinner Abrar Ahmed, who took three wickets to add to his seven in the first innings. Will Jacks (four) and Joe Root (21) were his other victims.

With 3-81 in the second innings so far, Ahmed has become



England's Jack Leach (C) celebrates with team-mates after taking the wicket of Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan on Saturday (AFP)

the second Pakistani bowler to take 10 or more wickets on debut, after Mohammad Zahid's 11-130 against New Zealand in 1996. Brook, who hit eight fours and a six, added 68 for the fourth

wicket with Duckett.

Ahmed also had a hand in Zak Crawley's dismissal for three, running him out with a direct hit from mid-on as the batter attempted a quick single.

In the morning session, Pakistan's batters wasted a strong position after they resumed at 107-2 with skipper Babar Azam and Saud Shakeel looking to build a solid lead.

But once Azam was bowled by fast bowler Ollie Robinson for 75 in the seventh over of the day, the innings collapsed with seven wickets falling for just 37 runs.

Along with Leach, Root also found success with his looping off-breaks, dismissing Agha Salman (four) and Mohammad Ali (nought).

With lunch extended for the last wicket, Faheem Ashraf (22) and Ahmed (seven not out) held on for 23 runs before Mark Wood broke the partnership.

Root had figures of 2-23 and Wood 2-40.

Azam hit ten boundaries and a six and added 91 for the third wicket with Shakeel.

Leach lured Shakeel into playing a lofted shot toward mid-on where James Anderson held a smart running catch, giving the spinner his 100th Test wicket.

AFP



Manuel Neuer

Bayern star Neuer's season over after ski accident

Munich, Germany - Bayern Munich suffered a major blow on Saturday with their iconic goalkeeper Manuel Neuer announcing he will be out for the rest of the season after breaking his leg skiing.

"Hey guys," he wrote on Instagram with a photo of himself lying in a hospital bed with his thumb raised. "What can I say, the end of the year could definitely have gone better..."

"While I was trying to get my head clear while ski touring, I suffered a lower leg fracture.

"Yesterday's surgery went well. Many thanks to the doctors!

"It hurts to know that the current season is over for me."

AFP



Japan's Akane Yamaguchi hits a return against China's Chen Yufei

Yamaguchi and Tai cruise into badminton World Tour Finals decider

Bangkok, Thailand - World champion Akane Yamaguchi on Saturday booked a ticket to the last stage of the season-ending badminton World Tour Finals in Bangkok, crushing Olympic gold medalist Chen Yufei.

The Badminton World Federation shifted its \$1.5 million flagship event to the Thai capital's Nimibutr Arena after original host China dropped the tournament due to its tough Covid restrictions.

The semi-final on Saturday was a rematch of a clash from Thursday in which Chen beat Ya-

maguchi in straight games in the women's singles.

Yamaguchi got off to a flying start in the latest match-up with feisty smash shots and fancy footwork but Chen fought hard to stay in contention.

The Japanese 25-year-old managed to seal the first game 21-19 after an electrifying final rally.

Momentum stayed with her in the second, where she carved out a nine-point advantage by the mid-game interval before clinching it 21-10.

AFP

Boland takes three in an over to leave West Indies facing second Test defeat

Adelaide, Australia - Scott Boland grabbed three wickets in his opening over to leave a rattled West Indies on 38-4 and facing a heavy defeat in the second Test Saturday as the world's top-ranked team zeroed in on another victory to seal the series.

After the visitors were dismissed for 214 on day three of the pink-ball clash in Adelaide, in reply to the hosts' 511-7 declared, Australia called time again at

199-6 in their second innings.

It left the Caribbean side needing 497 to win, but they meekly surrendered under the lights to the line and length of Boland, in the side in place of an injured Pat Cummins. He removed Kraigg Brathwaite, Shamarh Brooks and Jermaine Blackwood in six sizzling balls without conceding a run - to leave West Indian hopes in tatters.

Boland, who ended with 3-9,

last played in the Ashes campaign on home soil a year ago, snaring an incredible 6-7 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, highlighting the depth of Australia's bowling stocks.

Mitchell Starc then enticed a nick from Tagenarine Chanderpaul (17) with wicketkeeper Alex Carey collecting as they crawled to stumps, still 459 runs adrift, with Devon Thomas and Jason Holder at the crease.

After the West Indies succumbed in their first innings on the cusp of the day's first break, Australian skipper Steve Smith opted not to enforce the follow on, conscious of his bowlers' workload with three Tests against South Africa ahead.

Cummins and Josh Hazlewood both missed the Adelaide clash with injuries picked up in the first Test at Perth that the hosts won by 164 runs.



Australia's Scott Boland in action during the third day of the second Test against the West Indies on Saturday (AFP)