

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. of the Republic of the Philippines on victims of floods and landslides which devastated several parts of the Philippines. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to President Ferdinand, families of the victims and the people of the Philippines.



Uphold Omani principles, religious values

H M : E N C O U R A G E Y O U T H S T O T A K E U P S E L F - E M P L O Y M E N T

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik presided over a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to Allah, the Almighty, for the bounties He has bestowed on Oman and its loyal people. His Majesty the Sultan expressed gratitude to Allah for the accomplishments made in all spheres of life in Oman. He invoked the Almighty to perpetuate these riches, praying that all efforts would meet with success in realising the good of the nation.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed local, regional and international conditions. He opened the meeting by exploring the economic, fiscal and social indices achieved last year (2022). His Majesty voiced his satisfaction with the positive outcome of national action at all levels. He underlined the significance of maintaining the pace in implementing the strategies, plans and programmes aimed at realising sustainable development and preserving the national gains.

His Majesty the Sultan spoke about the efforts undertaken by the authorities concerned to attract more local and foreign investments, develop sources of economic diversification and

augment the share of non-oil investments in the gross domestic product (GDP).

After reviewing the executive status of initiatives and programmes being implemented by the authorities concerned, His Majesty the Sultan laid emphasis on the necessity of follow-up of these aspects. In particular, he gave directives to consolidate investment and diversify its sources, streamline related procedures and addressing pertaining challenges in a way that reflects positively on investor confidence and enhances Oman's competitive indices.

The Council of Ministers listened to a briefing about the fiscal performance of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and its role in boosting the national economy. His Majesty the Sultan commended the performance of the OIA and its ability to realise good financial gains since its inception. He gave directives to channel the OIA's investments towards achieving added value in the national economy and consolidating production frameworks in a manner that augments local content and generates more jobs for citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan touched on the executive position of employment initiatives and programme. His Majesty the Sultan underlined

Streamline procedures to boost investor confidence and Oman's competitive indices

His Majesty urges families to bring up their children in accordance with sound educational values

Undertake regulatory standards of governance based on institutional partnership to achieve the satisfaction of the citizens, residents and the business sector

His Majesty praises Digital Transformation Programme

His Majesty hails citizens' participation in the Municipal Councils election

His Majesty commends the application of technology which empowered the citizens to remotely vote through smartphones

the importance of raising the awareness of youth about global standards of work culture and the need to encourage them to undertake self-employment.

In this context, His Majesty the Sultan instructed the departments concerned to furnish an appropriate environment for citizens to take all types of jobs and enterprises.

His Majesty the Sultan also reviewed the outcome of assessment of the performance of government units in 2022, prepared by the Government Performance Measurement Unit, which indicated the existence of tangible improvement in performance. He stressed the need to continue upgrading government performance at all levels to achieve the desired goals, visions and aspirations and keep pace with global developments. He urged all institutions to study areas of strength and weakness and to find the best ways to address the challenges facing them.

After reviewing the results achieved through the "Manjam" labs on streamlining government services, His Majesty the Sultan stressed the need to effectively participate in the upcoming stages of the laboratories. He instructed that such action would be undertaken in accordance with regulatory standards of governance based

on institutional partnership to achieve the satisfaction of the citizens, residents in Oman and the business sector.

In this context, he lauded government departments' improvement of performance in the Digital Transformation Programme, and he gave directives to maintain such efforts.

While reviewing the progress made in conducting municipal councils' elections, His Majesty the Sultan hailed citizens' earnest quest to engage in the elections, both from abroad and within Oman, as they compete to select the members who represent them in the 3rd term of municipal councils. His Majesty also commended the application of technology which empowered the citizens to remotely vote through smartphones and enabled those interested to follow up results of the elections.

His Majesty the Sultan expressed his satisfaction with the efforts exerted by the authorities concerned in organising the elections. He gave his blessings to the new formation of municipal councils. He also laid emphasis on the collaboration of efforts, in the next stage, to develop municipal services and develop governorates so that they could play their prospective roles in the nation building process.



His Majesty presides over cabinet meeting



FROM PAGE 1

While referring to the data on the spread of drugs and psychotropic substances, His Majesty the Sultan valued the efforts made by the departments concerned in combating the phenomenon. He pointed out that a five-year national strategy was endorsed to address drugs and psychotropic substances in the Sultanate of Oman (2023-2028). He gave directives to authorities to take necessary deterrence action to limit the negative (health, social, economic and security) impacts of the phenomenon.

His Majesty the Sultan also spoke about developments taking place in regional and international arenas as a result of changing

behaviour and alien concepts, which often challenge human rights, and other proclaimed justifications to impose certain visions, programmes and conducts that do not fit with prevalent principles. In this context, His Majesty the Sultan underscored the significance of engaging in upright action to consolidate innate Omani principles and values that stem from the teachings of true religion. He urged families to bring up their children in accordance with sound educational values.

At the conclusion of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan spoke about various aspects of concern to the nation and citizens. He wished all success in realising prosperity and progress for this dear homeland. — ONA

DEVELOP
MUNICIPAL SERVICES
AND DEVELOP
GOVERNORATES
SO THAT THEY
COULD PLAY THEIR
PROSPECTIVE ROLES
IN NATION BUILDING

TAKE ACTION TO
LIMIT THE NEGATIVE
IMPACTS OF THE
SPREAD OF DRUGS
AND PSYCHOTROPIC
SUBSTANCES

CONTINUE
UPGRADING
GOVERNMENT
PERFORMANCE
AT ALL LEVELS
TO ACHIEVE THE
DESIRED GOALS

STUDY AREAS OF
STRENGTH AND
WEAKNESS AND
FIND THE BEST
WAYS TO ADDRESS
THE CHALLENGES
ON PERFORMANCE
EVALUATION





Before His Majesty the Sultan, ambassadors take oath of office



MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, a number of ambassadors took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday. They were: Shaikh Mohammed bin Ahmed al Shanfari, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia; Eng Nasser bin Said al Munawari, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines; Issa bin Saleh al Shaibani, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of India. The oath-taking ceremony was attended by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy. — ONA

Oman condemns storming of Al Aqsa Mosque compound



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its condemnation of Israel's continuous, provocative and illegal practices. It rejected Israel's enabling one of its hard-line officials to enter Al Aqsa Mosque compound under the occupation forces' protection. Oman stresses that this action constitutes a provocation of Muslim feelings and a violation of the international law. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, Oman called upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities towards protecting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, ending the occupation of Palestinian lands and establishing a fair and comprehensive peace. — ONA



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10 finalists for Bilarab Award announced



MUSCAT: The Bilarab bin Haitham Award (BHA) for Architectural Design announced the names of the ten top projects qualified to the finalists in the award's second edition.

The second edition is devoted to competing for the design of the Maritime History Museum in the Wilayat of Sur, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. The finalists will contest the final three positions.

The six group teams which qualified are as follows: the first team is represented by Qais bin Khalfan al Rawahi and Adnan bin Ahmed Qatan; the second team is represented by Mwada bint Saif al Sawafi and Mohammed bin Najm al Tamami; the third team is represented by Ammar bin Abdulhameed al Kiyumi, Firas bin Nasser al Hashar and Mouaid bin Mubarak al Araimi; the fourth team is represented by Hafsa bint Mohammed al Balushi, Reem bint Rashid al Hashimi and Shatha bint

Abdullah al Sifi; the fifth team is represented by Kawthar bint Nasser al Azri, Fatima bint Abdullah al Balushi and Amal bint Salim al Zawawi and the sixth team is represented by Mohammed bin Khodabaksh al Balushi, Ammar bin Saleh al Saleh and Rawnaq bint Rashid al Ismaili.

Individual finalists are Yousef bin Ahmed al Ibrahim, Al Motaz bin Abdullah al Abri, Mohammed bin Salah al Balushi and Ahmed bin Abdullah al Abadi.

The finalists will present their projects before the jury panel, in the Wilayat of Sur, from January 30 to 1 February, 2023. Then, the committee will deliver its observations directly on the projects for the candidates to finalise those projects and submit the final format on February 10, 2023.

The top three projects will be announced during the final ceremony. — ONA

■ SHURA OFFICE REVIEWS SAI'S REPORT



MUSCAT: The Office of Majlis Ash-shura on Tuesday studied the 2021 report of the State's Audit Institution (SAI) during the council 4th regular meeting of the 4th annual convening (2022-2023) of the 9th term. The meeting was held under the auspices of Shaikh Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash-shura. The meeting also touched on other topics and endorsed the agenda of its 5th ordinary session of the current sitting. It reviewed a message filed by the Economic and Financial Committee comprising a number of reports, remarks and recommendations. — ONA

Qurum park among venues for Muscat Nights

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Qurum Natural Park will be one of the venues of the newly announced Muscat Nights.

Muscat Municipality on Monday also announced the closure of Al Naseem Public Park to visitors from Tuesday.

Both these parks have been closed for preparations for the activities of Muscat Nights 2023, which will start on January 19 to February 4.

While Muscat Municipality is yet to reveal the details of the Muscat Nights, including new features, this year's event will be a successor to the Muscat Festival, which was held in the capital annually since its inception in 1998. The last edition of the Muscat Festival was held in 2019 as the mega event was suspended following the Covid-19 related restrictions.

In the early days of the Muscat Festival, Qurum Natural Park used to co-host the event as one of the two venues before it was shifted to Al Amerat Park, mainly to resolve parking woes and traffic movement issues.

The festival highlights the culture and heritage of the Sultanate of Oman, apart from entertainment and other activities.

Muscat Municipality, which recently announced the launch of a competition to design a logo for Muscat Nights, has picked the design of Ali bin Said bin Sulaiman al Waeli. It said 34 participants took part in the competition.



5,000-year-old settlement unearthed in Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi



AL MUDHAIBI: As result of a second season of antiquary excavations in the archaeological site of Al Gharyein in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, exploratory teams unearthed a 5,000-year-old settlement.

This discovery was the outcome of joint cooperation between

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The excavation team was headed by Dr Nasser bin Said al Jahwari, Professor in the Department of Archaeology at the SQU College of Arts and Social Sciences. The team comprised Dr Khalid Douglas and Dr

Mohammad Hussein.

The Al Gharyein site's settlement boasts a unique organisation and planning. It featured a tower structure, surrounded by multi-room dwellings, a cemetery with mass burial graves and the remains of other buildings.

Al Gharyein settlement is

distinguished for its large buildings as large as 600-sqm each. Besides its exceptional architectural styles, Al Gharyein settlement played a major role in the region, with manifestations of human activities such as early farming, herding, copper smelting and trade exchange, notably among coastal communities. — ONA



Over 137% surge in flights at Oman’s airports

MUSCAT: The total number of international and domestic flights at the airports of the Sultanate of Oman (Muscat, Salalah and Sohar) surged at the end of October 2022 by 137.6 per cent to reach 51,017 flights compared to 21,466 flights during the corresponding period in 2021, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total number of inbound passengers through Oman’s airports increased considerably by 153 per cent. Inbound, outbound and transit passengers in the airports of Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Duqm reached 7,807,908 by the end of October 2022. The number of



outbound passengers also rose by 115 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

Breaking down the figures,

the number of international and domestic flights (outbound and inbound) went up by 116.6 per cent to stand at 54,165 flights

(carrying 6,744,565 passengers) at Muscat International Airport by the end of October 2022 compared to 25,592 flights

(carrying 2,784,037 passengers) during the corresponding period in 2021.

Salalah Airport recorded an increase in the number of international and domestic flights by 74.9 per cent to reach 7,206 flights (carrying 939,977 passengers) by the end of October 2022 compared to 4,121 flights (carrying 511,476 passengers).

The number of international and domestic flights at Sohar Airport surged by 413.2 per cent to stand at 739 flights (carrying 68,778 passengers) by the end of October 2022 compared to 144 flights (carrying 14,831 passengers).

Duqm Airport recorded a rise by 5 per cent in domestic

flights (outbound and inbound) to reach 544 flights by the end of October 2022 compared to 518 flights during the corresponding period in 2021. The number of passengers also went up by 39.4 per cent from 39,159 by the end of October 2021 to 54,588 passengers by the end of October 2022.

The Indian nationality topped the list in terms of the total number of passengers in outbound and inbound flights at Muscat International Airport to stand at 122,926 passengers by the end of October 2022, followed by Bangladeshi passengers 48,431. Meanwhile, the number of Pakistani passengers stood at 36,747. — ONA

Municipal Council members take oath of office

SALALAH/AL RUSTAQ/ NIZWA: Members of the Municipal Council of Dhofar Governorate took the oath of office in implementation of Article 14 of the Municipal Councils Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 126/2020 and its amendments. The ceremony was presided over by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, Chairman of Dhofar Municipal Council.

HH Sayyid Turki welcomed the new members, wishing them success in promoting the march of the council through the third term. He hoped that the council will foster partnership in serving society and consolidating the development march in line with the Royal vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

During the meeting, a deputy chairman was elected electronically by the members, who used “Tanmia” app. They also formed the council’s standing committees.

IN SOUTH AL BATINAH

Members of the Municipal Council in the Governorate of South Al Batinah on Tuesday took the oath of office before Shaikh Saif bin Hamyar al Shuhi, Governor of South Al Batinah,

Chairman of the Council.

During the Council’s first meeting of Municipal Councils’ Third Term, the members elected Saud bin Said al Ma’awali as Deputy Chairman of the Council. The election was conducted electronically through the use of “Tanmia” app.

The meeting also saw the formation of standing committees, which were the Legal Affairs Committee, the Social Affairs Committee, the Governorate’s Development Committee and the Health and Environmental Affairs Committee.

IN AL DAKHLIYAH

Members of the Municipal Council of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate also took the oath of office in implementation of Article 14 of the Municipal Councils Law.

The ceremony was presided over by Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, Chairman of Al Dakhiliyah Municipal Council.

During the meeting, a deputy chairman was elected electronically by the members using “Tanmia” app, which was recently launched by the Ministry of Interior.

They also formed the council’s standing committees. — ONA



Dhofar Governorate



South Al Batinah Governorate



Al Dakhiliyah Governorate

RAINS EXPECTED IN NORTHERN PARTS

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 3

Oman Meteorology has said that there are chances of scattered rains of varying intensity in the governorates of Musandam and North Al Batinah between Thursday evening until Sunday morning.

Seeb reported the lowest temperature of 18 degrees Celsius while Jabal Shams was the coolest place in the country with four degrees Celsius.

The state of the sea on the coasts of the Arabian Sea will be medium to rough while average waves on the coasts of Musandam Governorate and the Sea of Oman will be 2.5 metres.

There is a possibility of rising dust in the open areas of the South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates on Wednesday.

■ SALALAH PORT RECEIVES CRUISE SHIP AMERA



Salalah Port on Tuesday received the cruise ship “Amera” with 1,082 passengers on board, of them 696 are tourists from various nationalities. The tourist programme of Amera included tours to major archaeological, tourism and historic landmarks in the Governorate of Dhofar, besides visiting beaches and traditional markets in Salalah. The Sultanate of Oman is visited annually by a number of cruise ships due to the country’s prominent location overlooking the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and Sea of Oman. — ONA



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE

The tenders committee of Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following International tender:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
873/2022/MAFWR/HQ-88	Construction of a Recharge Dam at Wadi Sal in Wilayat Jaalan Bani Bu Ali - South Sharqiyah Governorate	210/-	Excellent	Sunday 15/01/2023	Wednesday 08/02/2023

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



A passenger wearing protective clothing amid the pandemic waits to board a domestic flight at Shanghai Pudong International Airport in Shanghai. – AFP

AS COVID-19 INFECTIONS SURGE

EU offers China vaccines

BRUSSELS: The European Union has offered free Covid-19 vaccines to China, the EU executive said on Tuesday, as infections there surged following Beijing's relaxation of its "zero-Covid" policies.

China has not responded to the offer yet, a spokesperson for the European Commission told journalists at a regular briefing. He did not specify the amount of vaccines the EU was offering or their manufacturers.

"In view of the Covid situation in China, (Health) Commissioner Stella Kyriakides has reached out to her Chinese counterparts to offer EU solidarity and support," he said.

"This includes public health expertise as well as variant-adapted EU vaccine donations."

Asked whether Beijing would accept the EU offer, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Mao Ning sidestepped a direct reply, telling Reuters that China's

Beijing spoke out against strict entry regulations of other countries for travellers from China which recently abandoned its zero-Covid policy

vaccination rate and treatment capacity continued to rise and its supplies were "adequate".

She said China was open to "strengthening solidarity and cooperation with the international community" to better meet its pandemic challenges, though it could "meet the demand of anyone who wants to be vaccinated".

China has so far insisted on using only Chinese-made vaccines - which are of the inactivated virus type and not based on the Western mRNA technology - for its own population.

Last month, Germany shipped

11,500 BioNTech Covid vaccines to German companies and embassy and consulate locations in China for use by German nationals there.

A source familiar with the situation said at the time that talks were underway with other European Union governments about getting them to citizens of other nationalities.

EU health experts were to meet today to discuss the Covid situation in member states ahead of another gathering on Wednesday when EU government representatives will weigh a coordinated approach by the bloc to travellers from China.

Meanwhile, Beijing spoke out against strict entry regulations of other countries for travellers from China on Tuesday, following a surge of Covid cases in the country which recently abandoned its zero-Covid policy.

— Reuters/dpa

Tunisia opposition slams president

TUNIS: The main coalition against Tunisian President Kais Saied said on Tuesday his administration was using the judiciary to close down opposition to his rule, after several inquiries were opened against its members.

In July last year, Saied sacked the government, froze parliament and seized far-reaching executive powers, later grabbing control of the judiciary, moves opponents said aimed to install a new dictatorship.

Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, president of the National Salvation Front, said he and three other members had been summoned



Tunisian President Kais Saied

for investigation after a complaint by another opposition figure from outside the alliance, Abir Moussi. Moussi's complaint came after

Chebbi last month accused her of trying to reinstall a dictatorship similar to that of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali who was forced from office in the country's 2011 revolt.

"In just 24 hours, without the complaint even being examined, a decision was already taken to prosecute us," Chebbi told journalists on Tuesday.

He said the speed of the proceedings showed the complaint was being "instrumentalised" by authorities.

"It's a shoddy piece of judicial theatre and one we won't take part in," he said. — AFP

■ AIMING FOR THE SHOT



A woman athlete looks through the scope of an air rifle while competing in a local shooting championship in Yemen's capital Sanaa. – AFP

Mideast powers condemn minister's visit to Al Aqsa

TEL AVIV: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were among nations to condemn a visit on Tuesday by Israel's new national security minister to Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque compound.

The move by Itamar Ben-Gvir has enraged Palestinians, while the United States warned of steps which may harm the status quo.

"Our government will not surrender to the threats of Hamas," Ben-Gvir vowed in a statement published by his spokesman, after the Palestinian group warned such a step was a "red line".

Ben-Gvir's visit comes days after he took office as national



A man takes a 'selfie' photo with the Dome of the Rock shrine at the Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem. – AFP

security minister, with powers over the police, giving his decision to enter the highly sensitive site considerable weight.

Under a historic status quo, non-Muslims can visit the site at specific times but are not allowed to pray there.

But in recent years a growing number of Jews, mostly Israeli nationalists, have covertly prayed on the compound, a development decried by Palestinians.

The UAE, which launched diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020, "strongly condemned the storming of Al Aqsa Mosque courtyard by an Israeli minister", in a foreign ministry statement.

The US ambassador to Israel, Tom Nides, said Washington "has made it clear to the Israeli government it opposes any steps that could harm the status quo in the holy sites".

Lying within Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, the compound is administered by Jordan's Waqf Islamic affairs council, with Israeli forces operating there and controlling access.

After his visit, Ben-Gvir vowed to "maintain the freedom of movement for Muslims and Christians, but Jews will also go up to the mount, and those who make threats must be dealt with — with an iron hand".

The politician has lobbied

to allow Jewish prayer there, a move opposed by mainstream rabbinical authorities.

Israel's chief Sephardi rabbi, Yitzhak Yosef, wrote to Ben-Gvir on Tuesday.

"What will people say when they see a minister, an observant Jew, who flouts the position of the rabbinate," he said in a letter.

Ben-Gvir was accompanied by units of the Israeli security forces, Waqf guards said, while a drone hovered above the holy site.

Jordan's foreign ministry spokesman Sinan Majali slammed the Israeli politician for "breaking into the blessed Al Aqsa mosque and violating its sanctity". — AFP

SHORT TAKES

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan shuts markets under conservation plan

Pakistan's government has ordered all malls and markets to close by 8:30 pm among other measures in a new energy conservation plan, the defence minister said, as the country grapples with an economic crisis.

The country's foreign exchange reserve levels barely cover a month's worth of imports, most of which are accounted for by energy purchases from abroad, with funds expected under an International Monetary Fund programme having been



delayed.

Khawaja Asif told journalists that measures approved by the cabinet aims to save the cash-strapped country about 62 billion Pakistani rupees.

HANOI

Rescuers to raise concrete pillar with trapped boy

Vietnam mobilised soldiers and engineering experts to try free a 10-year-old boy trapped in a buried hollow concrete pillar on a construction site.

Rescuers hope to raise the pillar from its 35-metre-deep hole and cut the boy, named Thai Ly Hao Nam, out — though after three days trapped inside.

The youngster fell into the 25-centimetre wide shaft of the pillar, sunk as part of a new bridge in Mekong delta province of Dong Thap, apparently while



looking for scrap metal.

A wider 19-metre-long metal pipe has been lowered around the concrete tube in which Nam is trapped to allow them to remove mud from around the pillar.

SEOUL

South Korea's orbiter sends photos of Earth, Moon

South Korea's first-ever lunar orbiter Danuri has sent black-and-white photos of the Moon's surface and Earth, the national space centre said.

Danuri — a portmanteau of the Korean words for "Moon" and "enjoy" — was launched on a SpaceX rocket from the United States in August 2022 and entered lunar orbit last month.

Its images — taken between December 24 and January 1 — show the lunar surface and Earth, and were shot from less than



120 kilometres over the Moon, the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI) said.

The images and videos will be "used to select potential sites for a Moon landing in 2032," it added.



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In brief

■ MADRID



SPAIN BUSTS CRIMINALS SMUGGLING E-WASTE TO AFRICA

Spanish police have broken up a criminal group that smuggled over 5,000 tonnes of hazardous electronic waste from Spain's Canary Islands to several African countries, authorities said. Police arrested 43 people suspected of having illegally shipped 331 containers of used electronics to Africa over the past two years, the finance ministry said.

The network allegedly forged customs documents for the exported waste to make it seem that the containers held second-hand goods, in an operation valued at over 1.5 million euros. Most of the trash was sent to Ghana, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal.

■ SANTOS



BRAZIL SAYS FINAL FAREWELL TO 'KING' PELE

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva led the tributes as Brazil said its final farewell to football legend Pele, widely regarded as the greatest player of all time.

Lula travelled to the southeastern city of Santos to pay his respects to family and friends of Pele. Lula and First Lady Rosangela "Janja" da Silva paused before Pele's coffin and embraced his widow and other family members inside the Vila Belmiro stadium, home to Pele's longtime club, Santos FC.

Tens of thousands of fans, political leaders and football dignitaries including Fifa president Gianni Infantino have filed through the stadium since the wake began on Monday.

■ ROME



CLIMATE ACTIVISTS FACE TRIAL FOR PAINTING SENATE

An Italian judge ruled that three environmental activists who sprayed the Senate with washable paint, sparking anger from the government, must stand trial. Laura, 26, Davide, 23, and Alessandro, 21, are accused of criminal damage and risk up to three years behind bars.

They were among five climate activists who used fire extinguishers to spray the the parliament in Rome with washable orange paint.

They claimed to be responding to the "willingness of elites to deliberately choose to condemn much of the global population to drought, famine, war and death," Laura said.

Russia mourns victims of Ukraine strike

SAMARA: Mourners voiced grief and anger on Tuesday at a rare public commemoration in Russia for the scores of soldiers killed by a Ukrainian strike on New Year's Eve.

Admitting its worst ever military losses from a single Ukrainian attack, Russia on Monday said 63 servicemen were killed when a temporary deployment point was struck in Makiivka, a town in the eastern region of Donetsk partially held by separatists since 2014.

Ukraine has taken responsibility for the strike and says the toll could be much higher. Russian bloggers say that many of the victims were reservists who were recently mobilised into the army.

Some 200 people laid roses and wreaths in a central square in the city of Samara -- where some of the servicemen came from -- as an Orthodox priest recited a prayer.

Soldiers also fired a gun salute at the commemoration, where some of the mourners could be seen holding flags for the ruling United Russia party.

"It's very tough, it's scary. But we cannot be broken. Grief unites," Ekaterina Kolotovkina, head of a group of army spouses, said at the ceremony.

Similar gatherings were reported in other cities of the Samara region including Tolyatti, home to Russia's largest carmaker AvtoVAZ.

The deaths immediately sparked heavy criticism in Russia of the army's senior command, including from nationalist commentators favourable to Russia's military intervention.

Russian military



Mourners gather to lay flowers in memory of more than 60 Russian soldiers that Russia says were killed in a Ukrainian strike in Samara. – AFP

correspondents, who have gained influence in recent months, said hundreds could have been killed and accused Russia's top commanders of incompetence.

There have also been reports that the servicemen were quartered next to a munitions depot which exploded in the strike and that some had been able to use their Russian mobile phones — giving away their location to Ukrainian forces.

The deaths sparked heavy criticism in Russia of the army's senior command, including nationalist commentators favourable to Russia's military intervention

"What conclusions will be drawn? Who will be punished?" Mikhail Matveyev, a member of the Russian parliament representing Samara, wrote on social media.

The Telegram account Rybar, which has around a million followers, said it was "criminally naive" for the army to store ammunition next to sleeping quarters. Russian President Vladimir Putin had yet to react to

the Makiivka strike, which comes during a holiday season before Orthodox Christmas which many Russians spend with their families.

At the gathering in Samara, Kolotovkina, the wife of a general, said she had asked her husband to "avenge" the victims.

"We will crush the enemy together. We are left with no choice," she told mourners.

— AFP



Passengers board a GWR train at Paddington Station as British rail workers kicked off the new year with a week-long strike in London. – Reuters

British rail workers join agitation for pay hike

LONDON: UK rail staff disrupted the New Year return to work on Tuesday in the latest strike action by workers in a range of sectors over the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation.

Workers across the economy are at loggerheads with the government as they demand big pay rises to cope with decades-high inflation, currently running at nearly 11 per cent.

Normally bustling London train stations were quiet on Tuesday, the first normal working day of 2023 after the New Year break.

Network Rail, which operates the UK's rail services, warned travellers of "significantly reduced" train services or no services at all in some areas until Sunday.

Five days of strike action beginning on Tuesday were to include two 48-hour strikes by around 40,000 members of the

RMT union. The Aslef union will also strike on Thursday.

Transport Secretary Mark Harper urged the rail unions to return to the negotiating table.

"The trade unions decided they wanted to go on strike this week, which is deeply unhelpful, damages the rail industry, damages the interests of the people that work in it," he told Sky News.

"I want to see them back around the table and we can try and hammer out a deal between the employers and the trade unions."

The RMT union, however, accused the government of intervening in negotiations in December to stop a deal. Harper denies the claim. RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said the minister had scuppered a potential settlement by insisting on the removal of guards from trains, in favour of driver-only operated trains. — AFP

Tears, anger at Paris funeral for shooting victims

VILLIERS-LE-BEL: Thousands of Kurds from across Europe travelled to the Paris suburbs on Tuesday for the politically charged funeral of three of their own killed in a December attack in the French capital.

Buses were chartered to bring people from across France and some neighbouring countries to the ceremony in Villiers-le-Bel, north of Paris, local sources said.

Tears and cries of "Martyrs live forever!" greeted the coffins, wrapped in the flags of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Kurdish-controlled Rojava territory in northern Syria.

The huge crowd followed the funeral on giant screens erected in the car park, showing the coffins surrounded by wreaths beneath a portrait of imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Police and security volunteers were on duty outside the hall hired for Tuesday's proceedings.

A xenophobic gunman, William Malet, killed two men and one woman in a December 23 attack on the Ahmet Kaya community centre in Paris's 10th district.

His victims were Abdurrahman Kizil, singer and political refugee Mir Perwer and Emine Kara, a leader of the Movement of Kurdish Women in France.



Members of the Kurdish community carry portraits as they attend the funeral service for the three Enghien Street shooting victims, in Paris' northern suburb of Villiers-le-Bel. – AFP

Arrested after the shootings and formally charged on December 26, 69-year-old Malet told investigators he had a "pathological" hatred for foreigners and wanted to "murder migrants", prosecutors said.

Malet, a retired train driver, had a violent criminal history and had just left detention over a previous incident.

But many Kurds in France's 150,000-strong community refuse to believe he acted alone, calling his actions a "terrorist" attack and pointing the finger at Turkey.

Tuesday's funeral recalled another held at the same spot almost exactly 10 years ago after three Kurdish activists linked to the PKK were shot dead, also in Paris' 10th district.

The Turkish suspect in the killings, believed to have had ties to Ankara's secret services, died of cancer in pre-trial detention.

More recently, an April attack in which men were beaten with iron bars at a Kurdish cultural centre in eastern French city Lyon was blamed on members of the Turkish ultra-nationalist Grey Wolves group, which has since been banned. — AFP

Remembering a hero of millions

Now that the most iconic sportsman of all-time Pelé has passed away, we are left wondering if he was really different from football itself. Yes, he was not only the symbol of football, the standard of excellence, and the embodiment of the game, but also a simple and humble person! As BBC reported, “Pele was an incredible success story in a country where racism and classism are still so dominant.

He always championed the power of football to bring the nation together, and to give opportunities to even the poorest Brazilians”.

For every football lover, Pele meant something. Even people with no interest in football refer to him as the King. There was barely any place on the planet where the Brazilian legend wasn't known! Everyone has a Pele story!

Pele has been an oft-heard name since my school days. Like many of my contemporaries in the football-crazy Indian state of Kerala where watching the Brazilian legend on television live in the mid-70s was a distant dream, still, he was familiar by not actually watching him play, but by studying a lesson about him in our school textbook.

I remember “A Miracle in the Football World”, the three-page lesson in Kerala state education syllabus that was part of the fifth class Malayalam language portraying the life of the legendary Brazilian player who was 30 at that time.

Pele was deeply connected to India. He visited India three times.

The first was in 1977 when the ‘king of football’ flew down for a friendly match against the local club Mohun Bagan in the then Calcutta while playing for the New York Cosmos.

It was the penultimate match of Pele’s career.

The second and third visits came in 2015 and 2018, respectively, as a guest for events.

Pele could have won over a nation with which he had no direct



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

I REMEMBER “A MIRACLE IN THE FOOTBALL WORLD”, THE THREE-PAGE LESSON IN KERALA STATE EDUCATION SYLLABUS THAT WAS PART OF THE FIFTH CLASS MALAYALAM LANGUAGE PORTRAYING THE LIFE OF THE LEGENDARY BRAZILIAN PLAYER WHO WAS 30 AT THAT TIME

connection, 50-odd years ago. I still remember his photos in yellow jersey printed on the covers of many leading sports magazines and newspapers in India. Pele was born into a poor family in Tres Coracoes in southern Brazil on October 23, 1940. He was christened Edson Arantes do Nascimento, which, he revealed in a 2014 tweet, was in honour of US inventor Thomas Edison as electricity had just been introduced to his hometown.

He never really forgot about the difficult circumstances in Bauru, Sao Paulo, where he grew up.

“I’m sure I’ve done more to help Brazil with my football and my way of life than a lot of people who make their living in politics,” he once said.

Understanding that his father, Dondinho, was a better footballer than it had been recognised, Pele’s pursuit to gain big things in football followed a wish to bring apposite dignity to the sacrifices of his poor family.

Like many celebrities, Pele too encountered problems like being labelled as a left-wing antagonist of the government or his commercial activities getting stuck in controversies or his extramarital affairs.

Still, he was the most outstanding player and an extraordinary human being who was fearless in raising his voice against racism, injustice, and inequality.

He was an advocate for the education of the poor and all.

Pele spent nearly two decades enchanting fans and dazzling opponents as the game’s most prolific scorer with Brazilian club Santos and the Brazil national team.

No doubt, the world has lost once-in-a-lifetime sportsman who leaves an extraordinary legacy.

The king of football has left us but his contributions will never be forgotten.

A great loss to not just to football but to the whole world of sports. Goodbye and thank you, Pele, for all you gave us.

PRESENT SIR



Sumatran tiger cubs play around a chalkboard placed during the annual stocktake at ZSL London Zoo in London on Tuesday. – Reuters

In defense of the climate activists

PETER SINGER

Last July, two activists from Just Stop Oil entered London’s National Gallery and made their way to John Constable’s The Hay Wain, an iconic painting of rural England as it was 200 years ago. After covering the painting with an image of environmental destruction, they glued their hands to the frame and awaited arrest.

Three months later, another pair of activists went to the National Gallery and threw tomato soup at Vincent van Gogh’s Sunflowers. In the Netherlands, one activist glued his head to Johannes Vermeer’s Girl with a Pearl Earring, while another poured something red over him.

The activists used the Girl with a Pearl Earring to challenge our values, asking the shocked onlookers how they felt when they saw the beautiful painting apparently being ruined. “Do you feel outraged?” they asked – and then answered their own question: “Good.

Where is that feeling when you see the planet being destroyed before your very eyes?” We value art, but what we stand to lose from climate change is incomparably more significant. Everything we value on this planet is at stake, including the continuity of both human and non-human life.

Why, then, do many people support the goal of stronger action against climate change, yet oppose the actions taken by Just Stop Oil and Last

ECO-ACTIVISTS CAN PROPERLY CLAIM THAT THEIR NON-VIOLENT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IS JUSTIFIED BY THE FAILURE OF OUR DEMOCRACIES TO SHOW SUFFICIENT CONCERN FOR THE INTERESTS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

Generation? It’s happened before. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” is a response to eight white clergymen who, writing in a Birmingham, Alabama, newspaper, had agreed with King’s goals, but not with his “extreme” actions (which were entirely non-violent). They urged King to wait patiently for “a more convenient season.” King replied that he found this lukewarm acceptance “more bewildering than outright rejection.”

Eco-activists may experience a similar bewilderment when they are criticised by people who say that they share their goals but object to their non-violent attempts, which, while taking care to avoid damaging the art, seek to raise awareness of the importance



of avoiding fossil fuels. We honour many protesters, past and present, who broke the law to advance a good cause. Suffragettes targeted great art in their struggle to obtain votes for women, and, unlike today’s eco-activists, deliberately slashed paintings. Today, however, we regard them as heroic feminist pioneers. In the United States, King’s birthday is a federal holiday. We support the courageous women of Iran in their protests against the theocracy there. And yet we do not also support non-violent protests against government policies that are manifestly insufficient to achieve the goal, embodied in the 2015 Paris climate agreement, of limiting

global warming to 2°Celsius, and preferably 1.5°C, above pre-industrial levels? In seeking a conviction against the people who glued their hands to the frame of The Hay Wain, the prosecutor sought to distinguish the actions of the suffragettes from those of the activists on trial by saying that the former “had no democratic means by which they could further their cause,” whereas today “We have an established democracy.” Yet activists for climate change have a powerful response to this argument. Today, it seems self-evident that democracy requires allowing women to vote, but not much more than a century ago, conservatives argued that women had no need to vote because their interests were already protected by their husbands or fathers. We laugh at that argument now, but we may be equally blind to serious flaws in our own democracies. Ask yourself who will suffer the most if we fail to prevent catastrophic climate change. The answer is the young and those yet to be born – both categories unrepresented in our political systems. In Justice Across Ages, Juliana Uhuru Bidadanure, a professor at Stanford University, cites statistics showing that

even among people old enough to vote, those aged 18-35 are significantly unrepresented in legislatures. In the US, this bias against the young is built into the constitution, which restricts membership of the House of Representatives and the Senate to those who are at least 25 and 30 years old, respectively, and the US president may not be younger than 35. For countries that do not have constitutional barriers against younger legislators, Bidadanure suggests a remedy. Following the example of countries that have quotas to ensure a voice for indigenous people, or other minorities, we could have quotas for younger people. Thomas Wells, of the Leiden Institute for Philosophy, has suggested electing representatives who serve as trustees for future generations. And, of course, we could lower the voting age, to 16 or even lower. In the absence of any such measures, eco-activists can properly claim that their non-violent civil disobedience is justified by the failure of our democracies to show sufficient concern for the interests of future generations. Like the suffragettes more than a century ago, today’s young people have no voice. ©Project Syndicate, 2023

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SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS FOR CHICHERIT

HAIL, SAUDI ARABIA:
French driver Guerlain Chicherit bounced back from five punctures on Monday to win Tuesday's third stage of the Dakar Rally which was shortened from 447 kilometres to 378 km due to torrential rain.

The 44-year-old Prodrive driver timed 10 hours 56 minutes with South African Henk Lategan finishing second, 3min 26sec off the pace. Argentinian Orlando Terranova posted the third fastest time, 5min 4sec adrift.

"It is wonderful," said Chicherit.

"Of course we are disappointed with what happened yesterday but we have proved what we can achieve if we stay focused."

Chicherit's delight was in stark contrast to that of overnight leader and three-time champion Carlos Sainz, who came to a juddering halt 213 km with a left wheel problem.

The stoppage cost the 60-year-old Spaniard nearly an hour -- the most immediate beneficiary was Qatar's defending champion Nasser al Atthiyah.

The 52-year-old tops the overall standings ahead of Saudi driver Yazeed al Rajhi, who is second, 13min 20sec off the pace, with Dakar legend Frenchman Stephane Peterhansel in third, 20min 45sec adrift.

Peterhansel's compatriot nine-time Rally World Champion Sebastien Loeb had a second successive bad day, last year's runner-up losing another 35 minutes.

The drivers were brought to an early halt shortly after the motorcyclists were as the rain bucketed down.

The motorcycling standings also features a new name as Australian rider Daniel Sanders has moved into the lead.

Sanders's win was ample consolation for the 28-year-old as his time penalty on Sunday for speeding had seen the GasGas rider stripped of the stage victory.

Sanders's ploy of deliberately not topping the stage on Monday so he could avoid being first out on to the course on Tuesday paid off handsomely.

He timed 5min 23sec faster than Argentinian rival Kevin Benavides with American Skyler Howes third, for a second successive stage, 6min 19sec adrift of the winner.

"I thought, ok, if I go for the win, I'll try and push the whole day and win by a lot, and now I'll focus on tomorrow," said Sanders, who was winning his fourth career Dakar stage.

"Of course, the Aussies have the strongest spirit. We've got some good natural desert skills."

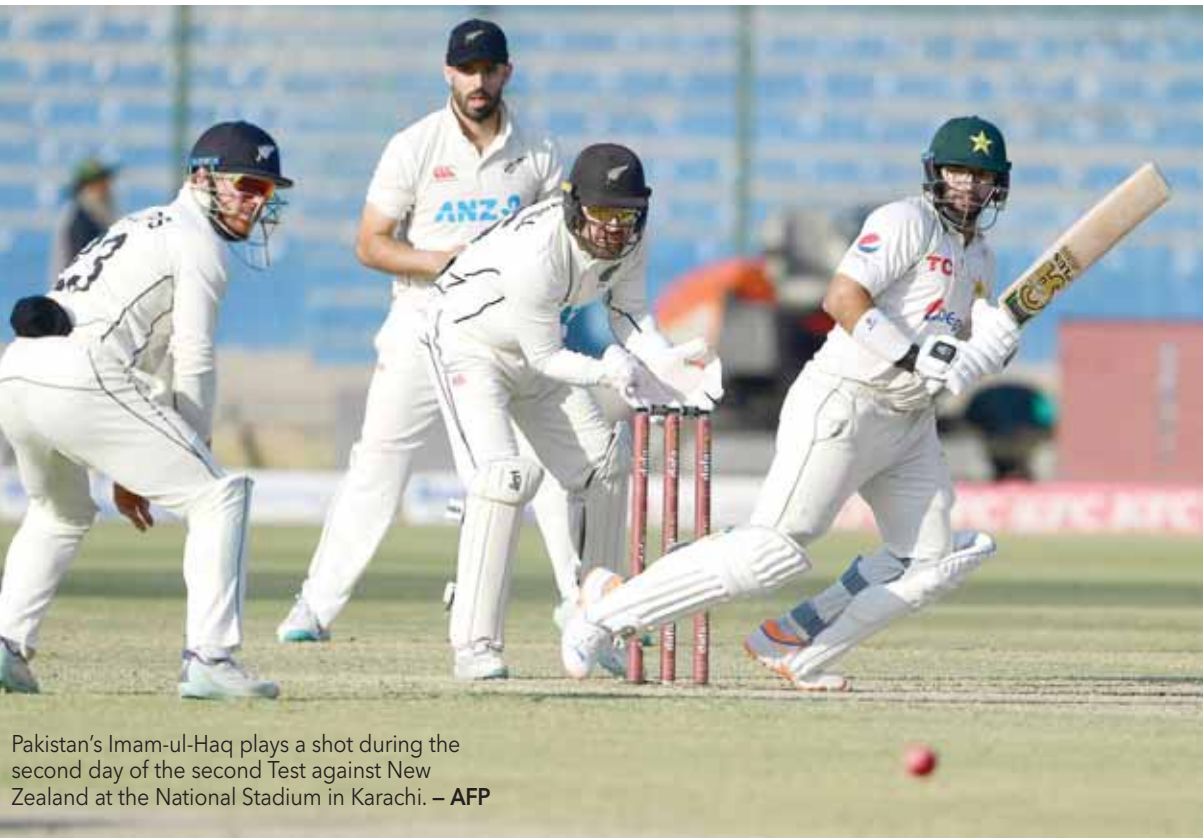
Sanders's chances of overall victory were also boosted as one of the main contenders Ricky Brabec, the 2020 champion, was taken to hospital after crashing in the stage.

The 31-year-old American came to grief on his Honda on the 274th kilometre of the stage and was taken to hospital by helicopter for further investigation after complaining of pain in his cervical veterbrae. Brabec, who also finished second in 2021, had been awarded Sunday's first stage after Sanders and others had been penalised for speeding.

He is the second of the main motorcycling contenders to bow out early in this year's edition. Britain's 2022 champion Sam Sunderland crashed out on Sunday. — AFP

FRENCH DRIVER WINS
DAKAR THIRD STAGE AS AL ATTHIYAH TOPS STANDINGS

HAQ ANCHORS PAKISTAN AFTER NZ PILE ON 449



Pakistan's Imam-ul-Haq plays a shot during the second day of the second Test against New Zealand at the National Stadium in Karachi. — AFP

KARACHI: Opener Imam-ul-Haq anchored Pakistan with a pugnacious half-century as the home team reached 154-3 at the close on Tuesday after New Zealand piled up a handy 449 in their first innings of the second Test in Karachi.

At the close of day two, Haq was unbeaten on 74 and Saud Shakeel 13 as the home team need another 96 runs to avoid the follow-on.

Pakistan started chaotically, losing opener Abdullah Shafique (19), Shan Masood (20) and skipper Babar Azam (24) before the Haq-Shakeel stand added 55 runs for the unbroken fourth wicket.

In contrast, New Zealand's tail wagged furiously, with Matt Henry (68 not out) and Ajaz Patel (35) both scoring Test-bests as they added an invaluable 104 runs for the last wicket.

The two-match series is tied after the first Test, also in Karachi, ended in a draw.

The National Stadium pitch offered little to the bowlers, but Pakistan did themselves no favours by having skipper Azam, the team's best batsman, run out.

Haq drove Bracewell towards mid-wicket and saw Azam stranded at his end attempting a third run.

But Haq took charge with his

seventh half-century -- even as Shakeel needed 42 balls to get off the mark at the other end.

Earlier, Shafique was the first Pakistan wicket to fall when he pulled pacer Henry's short delivery straight to the hands of Ajaz Patel and Masood gave a catch off Patel.

Henry and Patel had combined earlier to lift New Zealand from 345-9. Henry smashed eight boundaries and two sixes in his knock, improving his previous high against Australia at Christchurch in 2016 by six runs.

Patel also bettered his previous Test-best of 20 -- against England last year -- before he was the last wicket to fall, caught off spinner

SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND FIRST INNINGS

T Latham lbw Naseem71
D Conway c Sarfaraz b Salman122
K Williamson c Sarfaraz b Naseem36
H Nicholls c Sarfaraz b Salman26
D Mitchell b Salman3
T Blundell b Ahmed51
M Bracewell lbw Ahmed0
I Sodhi b Naseem11
T Southee st Sarfaraz b Ahmed10
M Henry not out68
Ajaz Patel c Salman b Ahmed35
Extras (b5, lb5, nb5, w1)16
Total (all out, 131 overs)449

Fall of wickets: 1-134, 2-234, 3-240, 4-255, 5-278, 6-279, 7-309, 8-340, 9-345

Bowling: Hamza 21-3-72-0, Naseem 24-7-71-3, Hasan 23-4-72-0, Ahmed 37-5-149-4, Salman 26-3-75-3

PAKISTAN FIRST INNINGS

Abdullah Shafique c Patel b Henry19
Imam-ul-Haq not out74
Shan Masood c Conway b Patel20
Babar Azam run out24
Saud Shakeel not out13
Extras (lb2, nb2)4
Total (for three wickets, 47 overs)154

Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-56, 3-99

Bowling: Southee 10-3-33-0, Henry 12-3-35-1, Patel 7-1-30-1, Bracewell 14-3-45-0, Sodhi 4-0-9-0

Abrar Ahmed. Naseem took the day's first wicket when he bowled Ish Sodhi for 11 with a ball that cut through sharply.

Blundell, who was 30 overnight, reached his fifty with a boundary and a single off Ahmed. He hit six boundaries in his 51 before being bowled by Ahmed.

The spinner then had Tim Southee stumped for ten, before Henry and Patel prolonged the innings, helping New Zealand cross the 400-mark.

Ahmed was the pick of the bowlers with 4-149, while Naseem Shah (3-71) and Agha Salman (3-75) were the other successful bowlers. — AFP



US driver Ken Block of Hoonigan Racing Division Team during the FIA World Rally Championship's in Silao, Guanajuato State, Mexico, in the file photo. — AFP

Driver and YouTube star Ken Block dies in snowmobile accident

LONDON: The world of motorsport paid tribute to American Ken Block, the professional rally driver whose daring stunts made him an internet sensation, after his death aged 55 in a snowmobile accident.

Block's Hoonigan Racing team confirmed his death in a statement on Instagram on Monday.

"Ken was a visionary, a pioneer and an icon. And most importantly, a father and husband. He will be incredibly missed," it said.

The accident occurred in Utah's Wasatch County and the Sheriff's Office said that Block was riding on a steep slope when the snowmobile upended and landed on top of him.

"He was pronounced deceased at the scene from injuries sustained in the accident," it said, adding that he was riding in a group but was alone when the accident occurred.

Having begun his rallying career in 2005, Block was named Rookie of the Year in the Rally America Championship. He competed in the World Rally Championship and won several rallycross medals at the X Games.

The American co-founded sportswear company DC Shoes and produced the Gymkhana video series, which featured him driving on dangerous tracks and obstacle courses. The series racked up millions of views on



USA's Ken Block

YouTube.

He also featured on the BBC programme Top Gear, including a sequence drifting and performing tyre burnouts around London with actor Matt LeBlanc.

Mohammed Ben Sulayem, a former rally driver and president of the International Automobile Federation (FIA), said on Twitter that Block was "an inspiration for us all and a true gentleman of our sport."

Jenson Button, the 2009 Formula One world champion, said he was in shock.

"Such a talent that did so much for our sport. He was a true visionary with his own unique style & infectious smile. Our sport lost one of the best today but more importantly a great man," he said on Twitter.

Nine-times world rally champion Sebastien Loeb, currently competing on the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia, posted a photograph with the words "RIP Legend". — Reuters

Bumrah added to India's ODI squad for Sri Lanka series



Jasprit Bumrah

NEW DELHI: Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah has been included in India's squad for its three one-day internationals against Sri Lanka after recovering from a back injury, the country's cricket board said on Tuesday.

Bumrah, 29, has been out of action since September and missed the Twenty20 World Cup in Australia, where India lost to England in the semifinals.

"The pacer has undergone rehabilitation and has been declared fit by the National cricket Academy (NCA). He will be joining the Team India ODI squad soon," the BCCI said in a statement.

Bumrah, called the Yorker

King for his ability to bowl the toe-crushing delivery, will join India's pace attack alongside Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umran Malik and Arshdeep Singh.

India begins their Sri Lanka series at home on Tuesday with the first of three T20 internationals while the ODI matches will follow from January 10. — Reuters

INDIA ODI SQUAD:

Rohit Sharma (capt), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Hardik Pandya (vice-capt), Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umran Malik, Arshdeep Singh

Fagor FCC thump Strenserv, ISM thrash MCCC by 216 runs

MUSCAT: Fagor FCC thumped Strenserv by 96 runs in the A Division League Season 2022-23 powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC and Indian School Muscat U19 beat Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre by 216 runs in the U19 Junior League Season 2022-23 powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC.

In the A Division match, Strenserv won the toss and put Fagor FCC to bat first.

Fagor FCC's second wicket partnership of 79 runs put them onto a firm base for a good total. Aneermon A scored a sublime

half century being dropped at first slip before notching a run. Fagor FCC posted a total of 221 runs.

Jaleel K picked five wickets while Abdul Rauf bagged three wickets along with Vijeesh claiming two wickets as well.

In response, Strenserv were cruising well towards the target but tumbled down losing five wickets between five overs and were packed at 125.

Mustaqeem Asif hit a chanceless half century to stage a lone battle for Strenserv. Nobish Gopi bagged five wickets while Aneermon A



(L-R) Shazaf Ali, Nobish Gopi and Aneermon were the architects of Fagor FCC win.

claimed three wickets.

ISM AMASS 334

In the U19 match, Indian



(L-R) Aditya Gurumukhi, Aditya Girish, Aditya MPR and Tanuj Sivakumar of ISM U19.

School Muscat U19's scored 334 runs courtesy of a sublime century from Tanuj Sivakumar and an aggressive half century

from Aditya Gurumukhi. Harshil Shetty picked three wickets for MCCC U19. In response, MCCC U19 were bundled down for 118

after Aditya Girish picked up four wickets and Aditya MPR claiming three wickets.

BRIEF SCORES

Fagor FCC 221 all out in 47.2 overs (Aneermon A 68 (88b) 5x4, 3x6, Shazaf Ali 50 (51b) 7x4, 1x6; Jaleel K 5-31, Abdul Rauf 3-37, Vijeesh V 2-52) beat Strenserv 125 all out in 32.4 overs (Mustaqeem Asif 51 (48b) 8x4; Nobish Gopi 5-16, Aneermon A 3-19) by 96 runs.

ISM U19 334-4 in 50 overs (Tanuj Sivakumar 136 (136b) 11x4, 1x6, Aditya Gurumukhi 68 (56b); Harshil Shetty 3-58) beat MCCC U19 118 all out in 38.1 overs (Aditya Girish 4-22, Aditya MPR 3-14) by 216 runs.

Djokovic sweeps to victory in Australia

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA: Novak Djokovic swept to victory in his first singles match on Australian soil since being deported a year ago, crushing Constant Lestienne at the Adelaide International on Tuesday to kick-start his bid for another Grand Slam title.

The Serbian superstar was given a warm welcome when he played a losing doubles clash on Monday and received similar treatment on a packed centre court.

He beat the Frenchman comfortably 6-3, 6-2 in 74 minutes, breaking once in the first set and twice in the second. “For the first match I can’t complain, I played very well,” Djokovic said.

“Thank you all for coming out today. Thank you for giving me the welcome that I could only wish for.

“Even the circumstances last year, it wasn’t easy for anybody. But I’m just happy to be here focusing on tennis, and enjoying my time with you guys.”

It was his first singles clash in the country after being kicked out before the 2022 Australian Open for not being vaccinated for Covid-19. Djokovic was subsequently barred from re-entering for three years.

The ban was lifted in November, allowing him a chance to win an unprecedented 10th Australian Open crown at Melbourne Park later this month.

Daniil Medvedev, who lost to Djokovic in the 2021 Australian Open final, also tasted victory, saving an incredible nine set points on his way to a 7-6 (8/6), 2-1 win over Italian Lorenzo Sonego who retired hurt.

Jannik Sinner, Denis Shapovalov and Victoria Azarenka were among other winners.

Fourth seed Andrey Rublev was cruising, up a set and 3-1 against Roberto Bautista Agut when the Spaniard began to turn the tables, emerging with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory. Rublev’s game fell apart as his opponent earned his 19th career



Serbia’s Novak Djokovic hits a return during his first round match against France’s Constant Lestienne at the ATP Adelaide International tournament. – AFP

win over a top 10 player.

“I’m really happy with how I played,” the winner said. “Andrey is a very tough opponent, it’s tough to beat him on this kind of court.

“I played aggressive and didn’t give up, and was able to turn it around.” There was disappointment

for Andy Murray 17 years after his only previous Adelaide appearance.

The three-time Grand Slam winner failed to fire in a 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 defeat by American Sebastian, who earned a second victory over the veteran.

Top seed Djokovic served to love

to open his account and it went with serve until he pounced in game six, working two break points with Lestienne netting a forehand to go 4-2 behind. He calmly closed out the set in 38 minutes and took full control in the second, quickly breaking twice to move 3-0 clear

before cruising home.

Djokovic will play another Frenchman Quentin Halys next for a place in the quarter-finals of a tournament he won in 2007.

Before his haul of 21 major trophies, the then 19-year-old Serb beat Chris Guccione in the final

ahead of his breakthrough triumph over Jo-Wilfried Tsonga at the Australian Open a year later.

WHAT A MATCH

Former world number one Medvedev, seeded two, also progressed but was given a tough workout by Sonego, a champion in Metz last year. They played a cracking 80-minute first set in their maiden meeting.

Sonego fended off three break points, but the tables were turned in game nine with the Russian forced to save six set points after a series of uncharacteristic unforced errors.

He saved another three set points in the next game before prevailing in the tie-break.

They exchanged breaks in the second set before Sonego retired after treatment on his right arm.

“I didn’t know it was nine set points, that’s crazy and probably the first time in my life I’ve saved nine set points,” said Medvedev, who suffered a demoralising five-set loss from two sets up against Rafael Nadal in the Australian Open final last year when Djokovic was absent.

“What a match to start the year and definitely unfortunate for everybody that it finished early even though we played for 1hr 40mins. I’m happy to be through and to win the first set.”

He will next meet Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic.

Sixth seeded Italian Sinner beat Britain’s Kyle Edmund in straight sets while Canadian seventh seed Shapovalov ground out a three set win over Australian qualifier Rinky Hijikata.

In an upset on the women’s side, Estonian former world number two Anett Kontaveit was stunned by Chinese qualifier Zheng Qinwen 6-1, 4-6, 7-6 (9/7).

But former two-time Australian Open champion Azarenka survived a tough battle with Ukraine’s Anhelina Kalinina 7-6 (11/9), 7-6 (7/5). — AFP

Gauff, Raducanu overcome rain disruptions in Auckland



Emma Raducanu

AUCKLAND: Top seed Coco Gauff cruised into the second round of the Auckland Classic on Tuesday while two former Grand Slam winners featured in rain-disrupted encounters.

The 18-year-old American, ranked seventh in the world, downed 35-year-old German veteran Tatjana Maria 6-4, 6-1 in a match that only lasted 82 minutes even with multiple stoppages as brief showers swept over the city.

Gauff, who has been as high as world number four, has only two minor titles to her credit and will be looking to win major trophies in 2023 but her game was marred by inconsistency on Tuesday.

After a powerful start that saw her race to a 4-0 lead in the first set, Gauff was broken twice by Maria who fought back to level at 4-4.

But Gauff composed herself to win eight of the next nine games and wrap up the match.

Emma Raducanu, the 2021 US Open winner, rallied from a set down to outlast rising Czech star Linda Fruhvirtova 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 with two rain breaks stretching the match to nearly four hours.

In her first competitive outing since being sidelined last October by a wrist injury, the 20-year-old Briton showed signs of rust as she



Coco Gauff

lost the first set to Fruhvirtova, three years her junior, and was down 0-2 in the second before her fortunes changed.

“I was like, you need to stop this and just pick it up, like be more aggressive and swing more freely,” said Raducanu as she explained moving up several gears to win four straight games to take control of the second set and then break twice more at the start of the decider.

“It’s always difficult playing your first match of the year, so it was always going to be a little bit of a challenge, especially with the conditions,” she said.

“I was loving the support. I felt like everyone was behind me and I absolutely loved it. Some moments it was tricky in the score and I would hear a young kid say ‘Come on Emma’ and I was like, ‘come on, let’s go.’”

The match between number two seed Sloane Stephens, the 2017 US Open champion, and Spain’s Rebeka Masarova was halted to be completed on Wednesday with Masarova up 2-1, 30-0 in the first set. The first-round match for 2020 Australia Open champion Sofia Kenin against Xinyu Wang was also put back to Wednesday. — AFP

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Ministry of Finance unveils new initiatives to bolster Oman’s fiscal performance

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JAN 3

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) has unveiled a wide set of projects to improve the fiscal performance of the Omani economy in 2023. Most notable is the establishment of a wholly-state owned gas company, Integrated Gas Company (IGC), which will contribute to an estimated RO 1.400 billion to the 2023 budget revenues.

The company, under the supervision of MoF, will improve the fiscal performance by removing gas purchase and transportation expenses from the State Budget, in addition to transferring net gas revenue to the treasury. Additionally, this year’s budget introduced a new item: a social security net subsidy.

An amount of RO 384 million has been allocated towards



the Social Protection System established in accordance with Royal Decree 33/2021.

The system aims to establish an integrated and comprehensive social protection system to ensure fiscal sustainability. The system will include various schemes such as social welfare schemes, retirement benefits, social security. However, most notably the system will aim to integrate various pension funds.

The project is currently under review by legislative authorities, and a Social Protection Law is expected to be issued.

Moreover, government service fees are estimated to generate a revenue of RO 1.330 billion in 2023.

The Ministry of Finance introduced the Government Services Pricing initiative earlier in an effort to streamline government services, reduce the number procedures and eliminate repeat payments. Based on the Fee Setting Policy Handbook issued by the Ministry, 845 fees were reduced, cancelled or merged in 2022. Seven government institutions have already adopted the system,

with five more expected to do so by 2023.

Furthermore, in light of issues facing global supply chains, the Supply Chain Financing Scheme (SCF) has been introduced by the Ministry to ensure the sustainability of the supply chain. The scheme, currently under development, will expedite payment to government contractors and suppliers with accounts payable worth RO 100,000 or more.

In addition, the Public Debt Law is set to be introduced to manage the government’s public debt, obtained from banks, financial institutions, or individuals. The law will aim to regulate and manage public debt operations, flow management mechanisms, diversify funding sources, monitor indebtedness and associated risks, and improve cash flow.

Additionally, the Financial

Law Executive Bylaws are currently under revision to address recent changes and meet current and future initiatives. The MoF will also introduced “Programme Based Budget (PBB)” in 2023, a fiscal planning approach that is expected to provide an accurate data base for monitoring and tracking government performance and linking financial planning to public policies.

The programme aims to integrate efforts and avoid duplication and 29 government entities are expected to participate in the system this year. Lastly, the MOF will allow members of the community to participate in the conversation. The e-platform Tafakur will allow individuals to share ideas, suggestions and solutions regarding fiscal sustainability, as well as public financial management.

PDO assesses 3D printing of 150,000 unique oilfield parts



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JAN 3

Majority state-owned Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) is harnessing 3D printing technology to manufacture thousands of unique spare parts for its oilfield operations with technological support from French startup Spare Parts 3D (SP3D).

Paris-based SP3D specialises in helping manufacturers digitalise their spare parts inventory through additive manufacturing (AM) – a technology that uses a CAD-generated 3D model directly to fabricate a three-dimensional object by adding layer-upon-layer of material.

SP3D announced in a press statement that it is assisting PDO in assessing the 3D printability of 150,000 unique spare parts.

Within a period of six months, the PDO-led team processed 150,000 coded spare parts in order to define a 3D printing adoption matrix based on technical feasibility and economical attractiveness, said SP3D.

This was made possible by SP3D’s data-driven funnel methodology, its unique machine-learning-based software, DigiPART, the availability of material coding information records, and the commitment of a multidisciplinary team at PDO, it stated.

“After having selected non-suitable parts, ourselves, we contracted SP3D for their ability to enrich our partial dataset. This helped to select the right spare parts to focus on for PDO’s AM journey,” said Mohammed al Yahyai, 3D Scoping workstream Lead and Lead Rotating Equipment Engineer at PDO.

According to SP3D, PDO now has a tool to enable its 3D printing deployment roadmap – speeding up additive manufacturing deployment by an estimated two years, and helping the company remain at the forefront of innovation in the Middle East.

“PDO now has access to an agile decision tool covering over 60,000 spare parts. Customised business cases filters enable PDO to select the most relevant parts to print and install or switch from physical to digital inventory,” said Paul Guillaumot, CEO of Spare Parts 3D.

“The ability to provide valorisation on AM potential is a first in Oman and of great support to accelerate In-Country Value initiatives and build our Industry 4.0 ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman,” added Sulaiman al Ruqaishi, In-Country Value Business Development Lead at PDO.

\$55/barrel oil price basis for Oman’s 2023 Budget ‘conservative and solid’, says Aufi

Energy transition: Minister of Energy and Minerals shares insights on Oman’s diversified energy strategy in interview to Al Monitor

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 3

The \$55/barrel oil price adopted by the Omani government as the basis for the 2023 State Budget is “conservative and solid”, according to Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

The characterisation came in an interview published by well-known Middle East-focused news platform Al Monitor on Tuesday, January 3, 2022.

Authored by Andrew Parasiliti, President and Chief Content Officer of Al-Monitor, the article featured Al Aufi’s views on, among other issues, Oman’s diversified energy strategy and its pivot to renewables and green hydrogen to decarbonise the national economy, as well as support the clean energy needs of the global market.

Earlier this week, Oman’s Ministry of Finance announced an average oil price assumption of \$55 per barrel as the basis for budgeting Fiscal 2023, up from \$50/b in 2022. In benchmarking



That’s why we continue challenging all the operators in terms of their activity levels and spend and so on. I think we stand at a very good position. Even if oil prices dropped to \$30 or \$25 per barrel, we should be able to continue producing.

ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUFİ
Minister of Energy and Minerals

this oil price for 2023, the Ministry noted that it served as a hedge against “oil price volatility”. Speaking to Al Monitor, Al Aufi said the \$55/barrel oil price basis for 2023 helps cushion Oman’s fiscals against sharp fluctuations in global oil prices.

“The pricing set for oil price in the budget is at \$55, as an average for this year, 2023, which is considered to be an acceptable

level, and it’s a quite conservative position considering we are at about \$75 to \$80 as we enter the year.”

He hastened to add, however: “That of course, doesn’t mean it can’t go down. There are still chances that it does, but I think the cushion is pretty conservative and solid. Even with that, there is a small deficit that the government is trying

to close using either loans or more aggressive control on the spending and so on.”

Oman’s hydrocarbon revenues, Al Aufi, further pointed out, are set to play a key role in bolstering the Omani economy in Fiscal 2023.

According to the Ministry of Finance, Oil and Gas revenues, projected to total around RO 6.720 billion, will account for sizable share of total budgeted revenues of RO 10.050 billion this year.

Al Aufi commented: “So both oil and gas seems to be on a good track to support the government policies and actions to try and reduce the total deficit and of course, close out the gap between the total level of borrowing and what the government have to pay back in terms of principles and interest. In addition to, of course, working on all the other sectors, be it tourism, logistics industries and so on, but the main contributor is coming still from oil and gas activities.”

In the interview, the Minister also reiterated Oman’s keenness to ensure that energy supplies are affordable, sustainable, and climate friendly. He noted in particular ongoing efforts to pare production costs. “We can only control our cost; we can’t control the market price,” Al Aufi pointed out. “So our

cost has to be very resilient and should be able to continue supplying the energy market even at low oil prices, and that’s our objective, that’s our mission.

That’s why we continue challenging all the operators in terms of their activity levels and spend and so on. I think we stand at a very good position. Even if oil prices dropped to \$30 or \$25 per barrel, we should be able to continue producing.”

Also key to Oman’s energy policy is sustainability of supplies through the pursuit of a diversified portfolio of resources available to the country, the Minister said.

“We do have oil, we do have gas, we do have renewable energy. We are looking very seriously into the potential of geothermal and tidal, where Oman is blessed with all these different options.”

Further, in line with Oman’s commitments to the Paris Climate agreement and net carbon neutrality, the nation has embarked on a green hydrogen pathway. To this end, the government and other stakeholders are working “aggressively” to reduce the carbon footprint of the hydrocarbon sector, as well as transportation and other carbon-emitting industries, he stated.

Bank Muscat recognised for CSR pioneering role in supporting persons with disabilities



MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to contribute in empowering persons with disabilities, Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate, is keen to support persons with disabilities through CSR programmes and initiatives in partnership with government institutions and NGOs.

Recently, Bank Muscat participated in the event the Ministry of Social Development organised on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. During the event, the Ministry of Social Development honoured Bank Muscat for its constant support.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development, where Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager – Credit, Bank Muscat, received the honour.

On the same occasion, the bank was also honoured for its CSR initiatives to provide support to persons with disabilities on the event the Oman Association of Persons with Disability held under the auspices of Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development, where Taya

Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager, Governorates, Bank Muscat, received the award.

On this occasion, Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager – Credit, Bank Muscat, said: “We are proud to participate in this important event organised by the ministry and of all the tremendous efforts that the Ministry of Social Development and various government and private institutions, NGOs and individuals are keen to put for the development of services and facilities for persons with disabilities.

“The bank pays great attention to activities, events and social responsibility programmes especially those targeted at developing facilities and services for persons with disabilities. These efforts are in line with the bank’s commitment to deliver long-term benefits for the disabled and helping them integrate into mainstream society, as well as encourage all efforts working towards ensuring the welfare of persons with disabilities.”

He further pointed out that the bank will continue working on developing sustainable programmes that provide support to the community.

MSX posts strong growth with \$2bn worth of stocks traded in 2022

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 3

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has emerged as the second best performing stock market in the GCC in 2022 with a 17.6 per cent overall growth compared to 12.9 per cent growth in 2021.

MSX is next to Abu Dhabi Stock Exchange, which recorded a 20.3-per cent gain in 2022, followed by Bahrain Bourse with 5.5 per cent growth, Dubai Financial Market with 4.4 per cent growth and Boursa Kuwait with 3.5 per cent growth.

Meanwhile, Qatar Stock Exchange and Saudi Exchange posted a negative growth of 8.1 per cent and 7.1 per cent, respectively. Overall, the GCC posted a negative growth of 6.4 per cent for 2022, compared to positive 34.9 per cent in 2021.

The MSX also emerged as the 2nd in the GCC with 36.8 per cent growth, amounting to \$2 billion in stocks market value traded in 2022. Qatar recorded the highest percentage growth of 43.4 per cent growth with \$44 billion value traded last year. Next is Dubai with 26.3 per cent growth, Abu Dhabi with 16.2 per cent growth and Kuwait with 9.8 per cent growth.

Meanwhile, Bahrain and Saudi



Arabia posted a negative growth of 33.8 per cent and 23.8 per cent, respectively in terms of the stock markets value traded, Kamco Invest said in a report.

The GCC recorded a massive increase in the value of Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) for 2022 with 49 amounting to \$23.3 billion, compared to just 20 IPOs in 2021, amounting to \$7.52 billion.

Meanwhile, the GCC recorded a decline in fixed income issuances for 2022 amounting to \$85.8 billion compared to \$145.5 billion in 2021. All the GCC corporation and government bonds and Sukuk

fell in 2022.

The GCC countries benefited from the increase in the crude oil price resulting to the growth of their economies. The average crude oil (Brent futures) for 2022 is \$85.91 per barrel compared to \$77.78 per barrel in 2021. The report also noted the fiscal breakeven oil prices for the GCC countries in 2022.

Notable of which is Bahrain with \$127.6 per barrel, Saudi Arabia with \$73.3/barrel, Oman \$70.9/barrel, UAE \$63.9/barrel, Kuwait \$56.7/barrel and Qatar with \$48.1 per barrel.

For the banking assets, with data as of September 2022, the GCC’s total banking assets reached \$2.993 trillion, compared to \$2.832 trillion in 2021 with Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia leading the group with \$976 billion and \$949 billion, respectively.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia posted the biggest value of projects planned or under execution in 2022 with \$1.376 trillion, followed by UAE with \$539.37 billion, Qatar with \$203.39 billion, Kuwait with \$201.77 billion, Oman with \$177.28 billion and Bahrain with \$65.45 billion.

PDO assesses 3D printing of 150,000 unique oilfield parts

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The partnership allows PDO to accelerate its AM journey based on extensive and comprehensive analysis. Enriching PDO’s existing data via the use of algorithms enabled the creation of a 3D printing parts selection matrix including both technical and commercial feasibility considerations.

“Our fundamental issue was to

logically and quickly screen and identify 3D printing candidates to define PDO AM scope and move forward.

“With the support of our partner SP3D, PDO is now able to make informed decisions, accelerate deployment, and support stakeholders,” added Philippe Dupont, Head of Material Procurement and Inventory Management at PDO.

OQ and MoAFWR conduct drone-based insecticide spraying trial

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 3

Supported by OQ, a global integrated energy group, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) carried out the experiment of spraying ultra-low volume (ULV) pesticides using drones at the Wilayat of Barka.

The results of first phase of aerial surveys by satellites and drones for the early detection of Dubas bug and the red palm weevil were reviewed using the spectral scanning technology. This was done in the presence of Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture; Ashraf bin Hamad al Maamari, CEO of Human Resources, Technology and Culture at OQ, and some other specialists and technicians.

This experiment is being carried out as part of MoAFWR’s



pursuits to develop pesticide spraying techniques and aerial surveys for early detection and control of agricultural pests, in collaboration with OQ Group by virtue of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the Ministry and OQ.

This MoU provides for implementing joint social

investment projects on introducing technologies and developing the technology of using drones in the agricultural sector by enabling small and medium enterprises (SMEs) specialised in this field, as well as the exchange of experiences and competencies.

The experiment proved successful and was culminated

in achieving good and promising preliminary results. It is hoped that the experiment will be expanded during the next period by spraying larger areas and controlling various pests using advanced and developed equipment that contributes to raising the efficiency of spraying and overcoming some of the challenges facing these operations in some places, especially those that are difficult to reach.

OQ’s support for the experiments of using drones to combat agricultural pests comes as part of its efforts aimed at strengthening the agricultural ecosystem, overcoming the challenges it faces, and stimulating SMEs that manage modern technologies.

The experiment was conducted by Energy Services LLC, in collaboration with Phoenix Space and Technology LLC and Modern Star LLC, which are Omani SMEs specialised in this field.

Nesto opens third branch in Saham



MUSCAT: Nesto Hypermarket Oman strengthened its retail presence in Al Batinah Governorate with the grand opening of its new store located at Saham. This is the retail giant’s 3rd in Batinah, 13th branch in the Sultanate and 107th in globally.

The new store was inaugurated by Shaikh Fahd bin Majid al Maamari, in the presence of K P Basheer, Chairman, Western International Group, Managing Directors Siddique Pallolathil, K P Jamal, Regional Directors Haris Pallolathil, Mujeeb VTK and Nesto staff.

Spread over an area of 75,000 sqft, the store will offer a one-stop shopping experience complete with enhanced and expanded departments to better serve customers in Saham, its residential areas.

The new store will feature sophisticated fit outs and category bays with spacious layout for categories like grocery, fruit and vegetables, dairy products, poultry, meat and fish and the ever popular hot food and bakery.

There is also designated section for electronics, IT products, stationery, and home appliances. There are multiple check-out counters and ample parking spaces to contribute to

a relaxed shopping experience.

The store will feature a range of exciting offers and deals on Fresh Food, Grocery, Electronics and Home Appliances, as well as inaugural offers on a range of products at attractive prices.

Speaking at the launch, K P Basheer, Chairman, Western International Group, said, “Under the able guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the country is rapidly progressing in all spheres and we thank His Majesty and the government for their pro-business approach. We thank the citizens and residents of Oman for their tremendous support towards all our ventures in this country. With every new store, our ultimate aim is to become the favourite shopping destination not just for customers in cities, but also in the smaller towns of the country.”

Siddique Pallolathil, Managing Director of Nesto Hypermarkets, stated, “We are truly excited to bring Nesto’s unique combination of variety, value and service to customers in Saham and the surrounding areas. The new store will be the perfect location for a seamless shopping experience and convenience for customers in Saham.”

Ireland startups planning move to US and UK



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

Several innovative Irish start-ups are choosing to move their fledgling businesses to other countries due to difficulties around product adoption, funding and market entry, according to the boss of Vaultree, a Cork-based cyber security company.

Chief executive of Vaultree, Ryan Lasmaili, said after his company raised \$12.8 million (12.14 million euros) in a series A investment round. The investment was led by Molten Ventures together with Ten Eleven Ventures and builds on Vaultree's October 2021 seed round of \$3.3 million.

While Lasmaili shared that he felt Vaultree had received "massive support from the Irish ecosystem," he believed that the company was one of the "rare cases," with many

innovative Irish start-ups either moving to the United States or the United Kingdom.

"Ireland uniquely is in an amazing situation location-wise, five hours away from the US, next to the UK and in the EU. It has massive benefits in terms of government support and so on. But what we have seen among start-ups, ourselves included, we have been extremely tempted just to say, 'hey, it makes way more sense just to move to the US.'"

He added: "Just last week, I was on the phone to another Irish founder, and she is moving to the US. For her, she said funding, product adoption and entry to market were all difficult. Out of 10 Irish founders (I know), I have seen six of them move to the US, that is massive." Lasmaili, who said

Vaultree would continue to base itself in Ireland and is optimistic about the sector here, said the Irish business ecosystem needed to be faster to adopt innovations from start-ups.

He said: "Large Irish companies or those with HQ in Ireland don't adopt Irish innovation – it is predominately first adopted outside of Ireland, in the US and the UK. I hope that changes in the future because I don't think it should be the US or others that first embrace Irish innovation. It should be local Irish companies saying, 'hey, they could help us.'"

Lasmaili said that many innovative Irish start-ups in the research space across technology, cyber security or health were being snapped up "very quickly" by US enterprises.

"To give you an insight, we have already received acquisition offers. We received our first offer three months out of the seed round. For us, it wasn't about being gobbled up right away but actually have more of an impact. This is another threat to innovation in general. Literally two years out of fundraising, they disappear – not in Europe but across the border." Lasmaili said raising funding in the current economic environment can be extremely difficult.

"There is really a bushfire going around," he said. "Personally, I think a lot of start-ups are going to disappear in 2023." However, he said he was "thrilled" with Vaultree's \$12.8 million raise, which he added had not been affected "much" by the current issues the technology sector has

been facing.

Vaultree will use the proceeds from the funding round to advance to sales, marketing and the development of its data-in-use encryption technology. Lasmaili said he will now look to add between 20 and 35 staff this year to his team of nearly 50.

"Operationally, we are looking at growing in Ireland significantly and in Europe and the US. As we are growing fairly fast, we have been blessed with a massive inbound lead of enterprises coming to us and asking for us to help them".

He added: "We have seen insane demand for our technology. The teams that will grow the fastest will be the operational teams, the technical sales engineers, sales support and research and development."

Singapore withstands a global property downturn

Property is crashing everywhere, except in Singapore. The Asian city-state's private residential prices are up 14% year-on-year, according to third-quarter data from Knight Frank.

That's a sharp contrast to major cities like Hong Kong and Sydney, which saw decreases of 7% and 4% respectively over the same period. After years of dizzying growth, real estate in financial centres is getting hammered on the back of rising interest rates and fears of a global recession.

Home prices in Hong Kong, the world's least affordable property market by far, could fall by as much as 30% by the end of 2023 from 2021 levels, reckon analysts at Goldman Sachs.

Singapore is grappling with the opposite problem. The city-state boasts a home ownership rate of nearly 90% as of 2021, thanks to the government's public housing policies.

With average annual real wages growing almost 20% since 2017 and total employment expanding, many households are now looking to upgrade to private residences. Yet due to Covid-19 disruptions, net new housing has fallen below the 10-year average.

As of the third quarter, 78% of planned private residential units were under construction, down from 90% in the same quarter in 2021, according to the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

The construction shortfall should ease. Demand, though, will remain robust: Foreign talent is steadily returning, as the city's non-resident population nears pre-pandemic levels of 1.68 million. Moreover, wealthy Chinese are increasingly seeking safe havens to park their assets beyond the reach of Beijing's common prosperity drive.

In the first eight months of 2022, buyers from the People's Republic accounted for about one-fifth of the 425 luxury condos sold in Singapore, Reuters reported. As China gradually reopens, even more capital outflows could follow. That will help buffer the city-state against a painful and sudden correction.

Real GDP growth is forecast to slow to 2.3% in 2023, from 3% a year earlier, per the International Monetary Fund. Still, Leonard Tay, an analyst at Knight Frank, predicts an up to 5% increase for private home prices in 2023.

Singapore's housing boom is sturdy enough to withstand a turbulent year ahead.

— Reuters

The fuel of the future



JÖRG HAAS

The author is Head of International Politics at the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Green hydrogen is all the rage these days. During November's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Egypt, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that Germany will invest more than €4 billion (\$4.3 billion) in developing a market for it.

In the United States, President Joe Biden's administration has made "clean" hydrogen a centrepiece of its Inflation Reduction Act, which provides subsidies for renewable energies. China, too, is so invested in electrolysis that some observers already fear that it will take over the market the same way it did with photovoltaic panels.

And even corporations like the Australian mining giant Fortescue are betting on it becoming a multibillion-dollar industry.

With inflation on the rise and the era of ultra-low interest rates over, financial markets will face a huge stress test in 2023.

While banking systems are more robust than they were in 2008, a real-estate slump could severely affect heavily leveraged private-equity firms, producing a systemic crisis.

When a technology is hyped to such an extent, many environmental activists tend to become nervous. Is "clean hydrogen" merely a way to greenwash so-called "blue" and "pink" hydrogen, generated from natural gas and nuclear energy, respectively?

Is it an attempt to produce a magic techno-fix that vindicates absurd excesses like space tourism and hypersonic flight, when the world's middle and upper classes should be shrinking their energy and resource consumption? Or is this the next stage of extractivism, appropriating low-income populations' land and water under the guise of fighting climate change?

The short answer to all these questions is yes. But that is neither inevitable nor the whole story. Yes, the green hydrogen dream could well develop into a nightmare if we do not get it right.

Still, it is an indispensable building block of the global economy's transition from climate-destroying fossil fuels to sustainable models based on 100% renewable energies. It may be difficult to accept this ambiguity, but the urgent need to avert a climate catastrophe requires no less.

Given hydrogen's many potential applications, some leading experts estimate that it could power 20-30% of global energy consumption by mid-century. But that does not

necessarily make it the most efficient choice. Electric batteries, for example, require far fewer renewable kilowatt hours per kilometre travelled to power cars and trucks than hydrogen fuel cells or e-fuels do.

Similarly, using heat pumps is more efficient than converting gas boilers to hydrogen. Organic alternatives to nitrogen fertiliser should also be given much more consideration. But there are several critical sectors with few economically viable zero-carbon alternatives to green hydrogen and its derivatives, including long-distance shipping and aviation, chemicals, and steelmaking.

Notwithstanding the hype, many industries will clearly need vast amounts of clean hydrogen to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. To illustrate the scale of the challenge, Bloomberg New Energy Finance founder Michael Liebreich recently estimated that just replacing today's "dirty" hydrogen – produced from fossil fuels – would require 143% of the wind and solar energy the world currently has.

Several countries in the Global South have been blessed with world-class solar and wind potential, enabling them to produce green hydrogen at very low cost. Some, like Namibia, have built their industrial development strategy around this competitive advantage.

But how could international trade in green hydrogen and its derivatives become a pathway to prosperity? And how can developing countries avoid the green extractivism trap and ensure that trade is fair and sustainable?

A series of consultations and studies in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, South Africa, Morocco, and Tunisia have explored these questions at length. A new report by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Bread for the World synthesises their findings and highlights the need to do no harm.

To prevent the green hydrogen dream from becoming a nightmare, we must develop the sector with territorial planning, and clear standards and policies, as well as uphold local communities' right to prior informed consent.

To deliver on the promise of post-fossil development and foster sustainable economies, governments must devise ambitious and realistic industrial strategies. And these strategies must be embedded in a systemic approach to sustainable development and the energy transition. Moreover, we need to consider how hydrogen is used – not just who can pay for it.

None of this will happen by itself. Achieving a sustainable future is a political choice that requires leadership and cooperation.

Several countries could help make fair and sustainable trade in green hydrogen a reality. Namibia, Chile, Colombia, and now (under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva) Brazil, for example, have the right political conditions for balancing green-hydrogen production with strong environmental and social standards. Over time, Argentina and South Africa could join this list and become producer countries.

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An advertisement for property rental services. It features a 3D orange humanoid figure on the left, holding a blue and white megaphone. The background is white with several overlapping colored shapes: a grey rectangle at the top left containing the text 'HAVE A PROPERTY', a red parallelogram to its right containing 'FOR RENT?' in white and yellow, and a large red trapezoid at the bottom right containing the text 'Contact us on: 99639264'. The word 'Advertise' is written in black above 'with us.' in the center. The overall design is modern and uses bold colors and 3D graphics.

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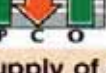
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Extinction crisis puts one million species on the brink

Nature is in crisis, and it's only getting worse. As species vanish at a rate not seen in 10 million years, more than 1 million species are currently on the brink. Humans are driving this extinction crisis through activities that take over animal habitats... **P18**



Parisian undertaker aims to introduce bicycle hearse in France

UNDERTAKER ISABELLE Plumereau cycled around Paris on a recent autumn day with a bicycle hearse that she hopes will soon bring a new "green" way of conducting funerals to the French capital. Quieter, environmentally conscious burials are a small but growing trend, and Plumereau says transporting the coffin with a specially designed cargo bike can confer a more down to earth pace to a

funeral. While bicycle hearses already exist in a few other countries, including Switzerland and Denmark, hers would be a first in France, according to the 51-year old undertaker. "For me, it makes sense to combine the bicycle and the hearse because, when we talk about



bicycles in Paris, we are talking about soft mobility and if there is one day when we need softness it's the day when we accompany someone we love to their final resting place," Plumereau said. "Everyone walks at the same pace (behind a bicycle hearse) and we hear each other, we hear the sounds of nature around us, the wind in the trees, the birds. In my view this is the best way to console yourself." Plumereau said she already had official authorisations to use the bicycle hearse - after adapting it to French regulations - and was just waiting for the green light from her insurer to get started. People passing by gazed at the black and lightwood bicycle hearse, some of them intrigued, not all convinced. "It's quite innovative," 49-year-old Elyes Mezou said, before adding that he wouldn't want it for his own funeral. — **Reuters**

READ

THINGS WE HIDE FROM THE LIGHT
BY LUCY SCORE

Nash isn't about to let anyone in his life know he's struggling. But his new next-door ne. But now, this chief of police is recovering from being shot and his Southern charm has been overshadowed by panic attacks and nightmares.



LIFESTYLE

A tourist takes pictures with the red lanterns of Chinese New Year decorations at the Thean Hou Temple ahead of the Lunar New Year celebrations, which marks the year of the Rabbit, in Kuala Lumpur on January 3 — **AFP**



TRADITIONS

Members of the 'Ekum Baba' escort their hunting costume during the annual hunting festival in Banjul on January 2, 2023. This hunting festival occurs every new years in Banjul. — **AFP**





Extinction crisis puts 1 million species on the brink

NATURE IS IN CRISIS, and it's only getting worse. As species vanish at a rate not seen in 10 million years, more than 1 million species are currently on the brink.

Humans are driving this extinction crisis through activities that take over animal habitats, pollute nature and fuel global warming, scientists say. A new global deal to protect nature agreed on Dec. 19 has the potential to help, and scientists are urging the world's nations to ensure the deal is a success.

When an animal species is lost, a whole set of characteristics disappears along with it - genes, behaviours, activities and interactions with other plants and animals that may have taken thousands or millions - even billions - of years to evolve.

Whatever role that species played within an ecosystem is lost too, whether that's pollinating certain plants, churning nutrients in soil, fertilising forests or keeping other animal populations in check, among other things. If that function was crucial to the health of an ecosystem, the animals' disappearance can cause a landscape to transform.

Lose too many species and the results could be catastrophic, leading an entire system to collapse.

GONE FOREVER

In the last five centuries, hundreds of unique animals have vanished across the world, such as the flightless Dodo bird killed off from the island of Mauritius in the late 1600s.

In many cases, humans were to blame - first by fishing or hunting, as was the case with South Africa's zebra subspecies Quagga hunted to its end in the late 19th century - and more recently through activities that pollute, disrupt or take over wild habitats.

Before a species goes extinct, it may already be considered "functionally extinct" - with not enough individuals left to ensure the species survives. More recent extinctions have allowed humans to interact with some species' last known individuals, known as "endlings". When they go, that's the end of those evolutionary lines - as occurred in these iconic cases:

"Toughie" was the last known individual of the Rabb's Fringe-Limbed tree frog. All but a few dozen of his species had been wiped out by chytrid fungus in the wild in Panama. In his enclosure at the Atlanta Botanical Garden, he was calling out in vain for a mate that didn't exist. He died in 2016.

The story of passenger pigeon "Martha" is a cautionary tale for

conservation: in the 1850s there were still millions of passenger pigeons, but they were eventually hunted to extinction as conservation measures were taken only after the species was past the point of no return. Martha, the last, died in 1914 at the Cincinnati Zoo.

"Lonesome George", found in 1971, was Ecuador's last Pinta Island tortoise. From the 17th century, some 200,000 individuals were hunted for their meat. Later, they struggled to compete for food after goats were brought to the island in the 1950s. Scientists tried to save the species through captive breeding before George died in 2012.

"Ben" or "Benjamin" was the



world's last known thylacine, a marsupial carnivore also known as the Tasmanian tiger. The animal was given protective status only two months before Benjamin died in 1936 in the Beaumaris Zoo in Tasmania.

ON THE BRINK

There are some species that could soon be reduced to their own endlings. The world's smallest porpoise - Mexico's critically endangered vaquita - is down to just 18 individuals in the wild, as populations have been ravaged by fishing nets.

The Northern white rhino subspecies, the second-largest land mammal after elephants, has no hope of recovery after the last male died in 2018. Only a female and her daughter are left.

These stories of endlings matter, scientists say, precisely because so

many extinctions happen out of sight.

"Somewhere in the core of our humanity, we recognise these creatures, we're touched by their story, and we feel compassion - and maybe also a moral compulsion - to help," said Paula Ehrlich, president and CEO of the E O Wilson Biodiversity Foundation.

The Northern white rhino isn't just a part of the world, she said. It's a world unto itself - its own ecosystem - mowing fields through grazing, fertilising lands where it walks, having insects land on its skin, and then with birds feeding off those insects.

"Understanding everything that an animal is and does for the world helps us understand that we, too, are a part

of nature - and we need nature to survive," Ehrlich said.

EXTINCTION OVER TIME

Unlike with the endlings, most species simply fade away in the wild without people noticing.

Scientists count 881 animal species as having gone extinct since around 1500, dating to the first records held by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - the global scientific authority on the status of nature and wildlife. That's an extremely conservative estimate for species extinction over the last five centuries, though, as it represents only the cases resolved with a high degree of certainty.

If we include animal species that scientists suspect might be extinct, that number shoots up to 1,473. The bar is high for declaring a

species extinct - a sobering task that scientists are already reluctant to do.

"It's hard to prove the negative, to prove you can't find it," said Sean O'Brien, an ecologist who heads the NatureServe non-profit working to establish definitive data on North American species. "And it's emotional. A botanist doesn't want to declare it extinct because it feels like a failure."

Among terrestrial vertebrates, or land animals with a backbone, 322 species have been declared extinct since 1500. Add in the number of possibly extinct species and the tally comes to 573.

For moisture-loving amphibians, vulnerable to both pollution and drought, things are looking particularly bleak with the extinction rate escalating over the last few decades. Only 37 species have been declared extinct with a high degree of certainty since 1500. But scientists suspect more than 100 others have disappeared over the last 30-40 years, according to a 2015 study in the journal Science Advances.

Last recorded sightings increase over time, especially from the mid-19th century start of the Industrial Revolution. That shows animals have been at increasing peril, but also that our knowledge of nature has improved as we study and survey more species.

There are many notable species among those that have vanished since 1500. The dodo was last seen in 1662, within 65 years of it first being recorded. The Pinta Island tortoise was last seen in the wild in 1972.

Some vanishings have inspired public outcry, such as the 2016 extinction declaration for the tiny Christmas Island pipistrelle bat species, last seen in 2009. It was Australia's first recorded mammal extinction in 50 years.

Losing hundreds of species over 500 or so years may not seem significant when there are millions more still living on the planet. But the speed at which species are now vanishing is unprecedented in the last 10 million years.

"We are losing species now faster than they can evolve," O'Brien said.

MASS EXTINCTIONS

Plenty of animals have gone extinct naturally or due to causes unrelated to human activity. In a healthy environment, as species die off naturally, new species evolve - and an evolutionary balance is maintained.

This turnover relies on what scientists consider a normal or background extinction rate.

— Reuters

SCIENCE

Scientists freeze Great Barrier Reef coral in world-first trial



SCIENTISTS WORKING ON Australia's Great Barrier Reef have successfully trialled a new method for freezing and storing coral larvae they say could eventually help rewild reefs threatened by climate change.

Scientists are scrambling to protect coral reefs as rising ocean temperatures destabilise delicate ecosystems. The Great Barrier Reef has suffered four bleaching events in the last seven years including the first ever bleach during a La Nina phenomenon, which typically brings cooler temperatures.

Cryogenically frozen coral can be stored and later reintroduced to the wild but the current process requires sophisticated



equipment including lasers. Scientists say a new lightweight "cryomesh" can be manufactured cheaply and better preserves coral.

In a December lab trial, the world's first with Great Barrier Reef coral, scientists used the cryomesh to freeze coral larvae at the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences (AIMS). The coral had been collected from the reef for the trial, which coincided with the brief annual spawning window.

"If we can secure the biodiversity of coral ... then we'll have tools for the future to really help restore the reefs and this technology for coral reefs in the future is a real game-changer," Mary Hagedorn, Senior Research Scientist at Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute said from the AIMS lab.

The cryomesh was previously trialled on smaller and larger varieties of Hawaiian corals. A trial on the larger variety failed.

Trials are continuing with larger varieties of Great Barrier Reef coral.

The trials involved scientists from AIMS, the Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, the Great Barrier Reef foundation and the Taronga Conservation Society Australia as part of the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Programme.

The mesh technology, which will help store coral larvae at -196C (-320.8°F), was devised by a team from the University of Minnesota's College of Science and Engineering, including Dr Zongqi Guo, a postdoctoral associate, and Professor John C Bischof. It was first tested on corals by PHD student Nikolas Zuchowicz.

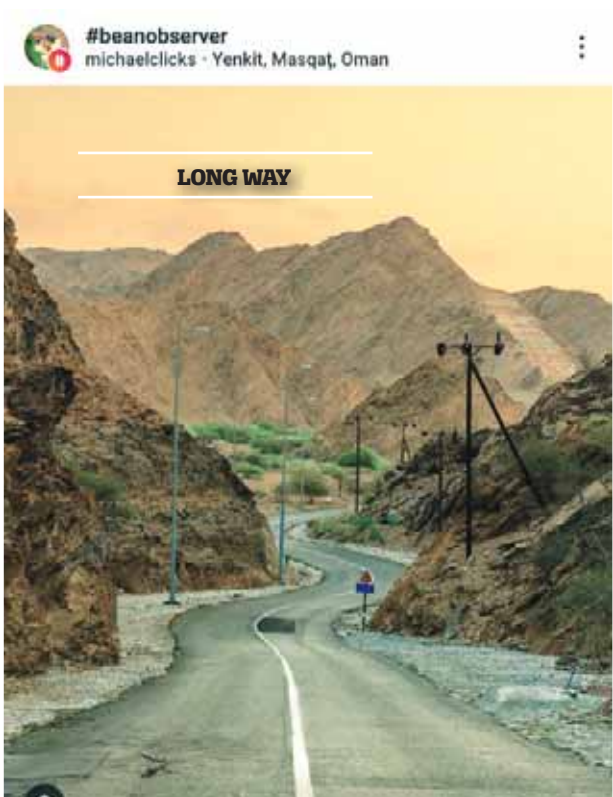
"This new technology that we've got will allow us to do that at a scale that can actually help to support some of the aquaculture and restoration interventions," said Jonathan Daly of the Taronga Conservation Society Australia.

—Reuters



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AROUND THE WORLD

GASTRONOMY

Pumpkin and rooibos ice cream on menu as Cape Town cafe champions African flavours



WHEN TAPIWA GUZHA first started making ice creams 12 years ago, he never imagined he would one day be whisking pumpkin puree and milk together to make an African flavoured ice cream at a cafe in Cape Town.

Hailing from Zimbabwe, 36-year-old Guzha says he wants to educate locals and visitors alike on African flavoured experiences and correct a narrative that things made in Africa are second rate or are not as tasty.

"At some point it became an aspirational thing to say I don't eat African food... so I started addressing... that problem," he said at his Tapi Tapi shop.

Located in the bohemian suburb of Observatory in Cape Town, he hopes to share the different flavours in tubs and cones, and celebrate African food culture, rituals and folklore.

Flavours include combinations of indigenously sourced food like pumpkin, popped maize, peanuts, sweet potato, clay, samp — a mushy dish made of dried corn kernels.

Every flavour he makes has a story behind it.

One such flavour is made from rooibos — a popular tea plant in South Africa — and sweet potato jam.

"It's quite common in Zimbabwe... to eat tea with sweet potatoes instead of bread," Guzha says.

People often bring him ingredients from other parts of the continent, he says, who get a free tub of ice cream in return.

Some customers said they found the flavours surprising and heart-warming and were struck by the familiarity of it.

Growing up, customer Clive Sibanda knew ice cream could be vanilla, something that is not native to South Africa.

"Now, if you eat something like samp, something... you grew up eating... it connects you with your childhood," he said.

— Reuters

LIFESTYLE

Jerusalem chef gives tourists a Palestinian taste of life in the Old City



PALESTINIAN chef Izzeldin Bukhari begins the tours he offers to the Old City of Jerusalem with breakfast at Abu Shukri's hummus restaurant which he says serves the perfect balance of chickpeas, tahina and lemon juice.

"Palestinian cuisine really utilises what the land has to offer," Bukhari says, explaining that these heavily plant-based recipes are deeply rooted in a connection to the local produce.

Bukhari, descended from Sufi mystics who walked to Jerusalem from Bukhara in Uzbekistan 400 years ago, takes guests down the narrow streets of the Old City, to food stalls and restaurants, telling stories of recipes dating back thousands of years.

For Palestinians living in the complex and often tense political environment of East Jerusalem, which includes the walled Old City and its holy sites of three major religions, food is a major part of their cultural

identity. The stories behind it open up ways to talk about the wider culture.

Bukhari explains that kras beid, a quiche-like dish but with a pizza-style crust, is not just a food but also a social activity which brings people together in the evenings. Even the humble plate of hummus served for

breakfast has found itself at the centre of heated debates about whether it is a Jewish or Palestinian dish.

"It gives me a way to talk about Palestine and the culture of Palestine through the food," said Bukhari.

The overwhelming majority of East Jerusalem's more than 340,000 Palestinians hold Israeli residency permits but few have citizen-



ship in Israel, which considers the entire holy city as its eternal, undivided capital.

The Palestinians have long sought the city's east, which Israel captured in a 1967 war and later annexed in a move not recognised internationally, as the capital of a future state.

Friction between Israel and Palestinians can sporadically arise, especially around the Al Aqsa mosque, one of the Middle East's most volatile holy sites.

A lesson on food becomes a lesson about a city which has changed hands, like recipes, over generations. In a spice shop, Bukhari explains that rice was once considered a rare delicacy and used sparsely or as a garnish served on other grains, while Palestinians mostly cook with other grains, such as Freekeh, wheat picked when it is young and then fire roasted.

"In our area politics is a big part of the talk of the day, so to have something different which is focusing on the culture, I found it to be unique and people enjoy it as well," said Bukhari.

— Reuters

ENVIRONMENT

Waste not want not: Santiago's poorest district plants recycling seed



EVERY MORNING, trucks collect potato and avocado skins, orange peels and other food scraps that residents of Santiago's poorest neighbourhood leave hanging in bags on their front doors or in tree branches or place in special bins.

For nearly two decades, the residents of La Pintana have been pioneers of recycling in Chile — South America's largest garbage generator.

Under a project started in 2005, the commune of 190,000 people enthusiastically gather their plant-based food waste, which is then turned into compost to help green their community.

In La Pintana, where 15 per cent of people live in poverty, 50 per cent of the community's organic waste is collected for recycling — a figure that puts to shame the 0.8 per cent achieved by Chile as a whole, according to environment ministry data.

"They do a lot with it (the waste): they produce compost and it is used for the community itself, for the squares and gardens," La Pintana resident Jose Vera said as he left two large cardboard boxes filled with scraps on the sidewalk, proud of his contribution.

"It is also a saving (for the municipality) because they no longer have to buy" fertiliser or pay landfill fees, he said.

Chile generates some 1.13 kilogrammes (about 2.5 pounds) of waste per person per day — the highest output in South America, according to World Bank data.

And in terms of recycling, it is far from achieving even Latin America's low average of four per cent of solid municipal waste processed.

But La Pintana, one of the first neighbourhoods of Chile's deeply socially unequal capital to adopt such a project, now collects some 20 tonnes of organic waste every day.

It is delivered to a local plant that turns the scraps into natural fertiliser for the town's own municipal nursery, and others.

A CHANGE IN PEOPLE

The municipality estimates to be saving some \$100,000 per year — money that can go to other community projects.

"There has been a change in people," since the project started, resident Vera said.

"They are now concerned about recycling and no longer put the vegetables with the garbage."

La Pintana's nursery, built on what used to be an unsightly landfill, yields some 100,000 plants of 400 different species every year.

These are planted back in La Pintana, one of the areas of Santiago with the fewest green spaces per inhabitant.

The nursery uses about a tonne of humus — a dark organic matter created when plant material decomposes — every year, according to project member Cintia Ortiz.

— AFP

art & life

Local Scene

f t i a l y @omanobserver

WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 4 | 2023



TURN THE PAGE WITH THIS BOOK

Abdulaziz al Jahdhami inspires others with his motivational book *On Stage of Life*. The book, which was released in February 2022, is intended to be a source of inspiration and motivation for people in workplace, school, hospitals or other public places.

On Stage of Life is a motivational book bringing a group of inspiring articles to highlight the significance of having adequate communications and interpersonal skills to deal with other humans of different interests, attitudes, behaviours, backgrounds and mindsets.

It refers to the people we usually meet on the day-to-day or the ones whom we accidentally come across in public, for instance. With all kinds of people, we encounter various moments and experiences, some of which deliver a lesson to us afterward.

The book reflects on life as a combination of good and bad memories! Life is too short to get up

everyday with your mind recalling regrets and negative thoughts of the past memories.

Admire people who give you good memories, true experiences and commendable respect. Forget the ones who gave you hard times, disrespect and heartaches.

Among the different characters spotlighted in the book are teachers, doctors, nurses, workmates, bosses and others. Those are just to name a few examples of personalities that one meets and deals with in almost every single day in life.

Therefore, one has to always remember that there is a reason behind everything happens or any person you meet in your life. Thus, never take anything or anyone for granted. Your life is a series of actions reflecting back what you have staged on life of others; a non-deniable fact that one shall never forget.

Just stay tuned to get back what comes in return; the good or bad you do comes back to you in a way or

another.

In view of that, it is not too bad to get a bite of somebody's upsetting word or provoking attitude; it could possibly be a recall of a past experience or a reminder of a memorable moment.

Sometimes, one does not realise the true value of a moment until it becomes a memory. Generally, life is a tragedy when seen in close up, but a comedy in long run for it is a drama where everyone plays a different role on its stage.

On Stage of Life advises all to close the door, flip the page and move on as all that matters is you leave the past where it belongs and make the best out of the rest of your life. Whatever you have experienced over the past days and years is not the end; it is just your life starting a new chapter. In fact, this marks a turning point in your story where one chapter transitions into the next. Life is going on in a way as simple as that, so you need to forget the mistake.

