

‘Media preserving the Omani identity’

Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, said that the Omani media could be best defined by two key titles ‘an honest message’ and ‘a sincere mirror’. In an interview with Saudi Arabia’s Asharq Al Awsat Arabic-language newspaper, the minister said that the Omani media contributed to shaping social awareness and enlightenment, preserving the Omani identity with its civilisational and humanitarian dimensions.

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Established 1981. Editor-in-chief: Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili

OMAN OBSERVER

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GAVI SHINES AS BARCA BEAT MADRID TO WIN SPANISH SUPER CUP



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ASYAD SHIPPING INKS PACT FOR TWO NEW LNG CARRIERS



P20

EXPLORING WADI MANJAL AND THE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS IN BETWEEN



MUSCAT

OJA FETES IFJ PARTICIPANTS

Oman Journalist Association on Monday honoured the committees, working teams and public and private establishments which participated in the “31st World IFJ Congress”, under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information. Dr Abdullah thanked OJA and media persons for their contribution towards the success of the 31st World IFJ Congress.

SEE PAGE 3

KATHMANDU

BLACK BOX FOUND AFTER NEPAL CRASH

Searchers found both the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder on Monday from a passenger flight that crashed killing at least 68 people in Nepal’s worst plane accident in 30 years, officials said. The data on the recorders may help investigators determine what caused the Yeti Airlines aircraft, carrying 72 people, to crash before landing in Pokhara.

SEE PAGE 6

MOSCOW

PUTIN SLAMS ARMS SUPPLY TO UKRAINE

President Vladimir Putin on Monday slammed Kyiv’s “destructive” policies and growing Western arms supplies to Ukraine in a phone call with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Kremlin said. Meanwhile, the toll from a devastating Russian strike on Dnipro rose to 40 on Monday, as more bodies were pulled from the debris of one of Russia’s deadliest attacks since its invasion.

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INSIDE



ARREST OF ‘LAST GODFATHER’ DEALS BLOW TO MAFIA

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GERMAN MINISTER RESIGNS AFTER MONTHS OF CRITICISM

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Climate change and air pollution are two sides of the same coin



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said presents Green Branch award to winners during the conference in Muscat on Monday.

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth on Monday patronised over the opening ceremony of the first edition of “Oman Conference for Environmental Sustainability”.

The three-day conference focuses on topics related to air pollution and climate change.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, Head of the committee organising the conference, said during the opening statement that the Sultanate of Oman was and still is on the lead among countries that accord attention to environment and biodiversity.

The first environment-related institution was established in the 70s and legislation to protect the environment was issued in 1976, he said.

Al Amri reiterated that the

conference stems from a deep-rooted belief in the importance of research and its role in reaching effective solutions to tackle various issues and challenges.

He pointed out that the conference comes at a time when climate change and air quality issues are at the top of the agenda of various international political, environmental and economic events.

Al Amri said that the conference aims to discuss integrated management, best practices, international experiences and environmental legislations in fields related to air quality and climate change. The event also highlights the latest technologies, innovations and 4IR tools used in detecting and reducing air pollution and alleviating its social, health and environmental effects.

TURN TO P2

AL YAHMADI SCORES WINNER



Oman’s Jameel al Yahmadi in action with Bahrain’s Sayed Dhiya Saeed at Arabian Gulf Cup 25 semifinal in Al Minaa Olympic Stadium in Basra on Monday. Oman will take on Iraq in the final match on Thursday. – Reuters

OMAN POWER INTO FINAL

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 16

Oman stormed into the final of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup edging Bahrain 1-0 in the second semifinal at the Al Minaa Olympic Stadium in Iraq on Monday night.

Oman will take on hosts Iraq, who beat Qatar 2-1 in the first semifinal earlier, in the final on January 19.

The moment for Oman came in the 83rd minute when Jameel al Yahmadi smashed a powerful shot to the top right corner of Bahrain from outside the penalty box after a nice assist by Salah al Yahyaiei.

Bahrain earned the first corner of the match in the seventh minute and got another one in the next minute.

Zahir al Aghbari gave a dangerous cross for Oman

with nobody to connect in the ninth minute as Oman made their first move.

In the next minute, Oman missed a close chance as Issam al Subhi’s shot was blocked by the Bahrain defence for a corner after a good pass by Salah al Yahyaiei.

Jameel al Yahmadi headed the resultant corner towards goal but straight to Bahrain goalkeeper.

FULL REPORT ON P10

A pilot couple killed in air crashes in Nepal - 16 years apart

KATHMANDU: In 2010, Anju Khatiwada joined Nepal’s Yeti Airlines, following in the footsteps of her husband, a pilot who had died in a crash four years earlier when a small passenger plane he was flying for the domestic carrier went down minutes before landing.

On Sunday, Khatiwada, 44, was the co-pilot on a Yeti Airlines flight from Kathmandu that crashed as it approached the city of Pokhara, killing at least 68 people in the Himalayan nation’s deadliest plane accident in three decades.

No survivors have been found so far among the 72 people on



board.

“Her husband, Dipak Pokhrel, died in 2006 in a crash of a Twin Otter plane of Yeti Airlines in Jumla,” airline spokesman

Sudarshan Bartaula told Reuters, referring to Khatiwada. “She got her pilot training with the money she got from the insurance after her husband’s death.”

A pilot with more than 6,400 hours of flying time, Khatiwada had previously flown the popular tourist route from the capital, Kathmandu, to the country’s second-largest city, Pokhara, Bartaula said.

The body of Kamal K.C., the captain of the flight, who had more than 21,900 hours of flight time, has been recovered and identified.

Kathiwada’s remains have not been identified but she is feared dead, Bartaula said.

“On Sunday, she was flying the plane with an instructor pilot, which is the standard procedure of the airline,” said an Yeti Airlines

official, who knew Khatiwada personally.

“She was always ready to take up any duty and had flown to Pokhara earlier,” said the official, who asked not to be named because he isn’t authorised to speak to media.

Reuters was unable to immediately reach any of her family members. The ATR-72 aircraft that Khatiwada was co-piloting rolled from side to side before crashing in a gorge near Pokhara airport and catching fire, according to eyewitness accounts and a video of the crash posted on the social media.

— Reuters SEE ALSO P6



Climate change, pollution two sides of the same coin

FROM PAGE 1

Oman Conference for Environmental Sustainability sheds light on the latest policies and strategies related to the adaptation and reduction of climate change effects in a bid to achieve net carbon emissions, Al Amri added.

He further pointed out that the number of scientific papers participating in the conference reached 80 out of hundreds of submitted papers. The selected papers will be published on the Journal of Environmental Science and Pollution Research.

Al Amri added that the number of participants is 400 from 25 countries. In addition, 100 participants are taking part in the youth ecothon, which is held on the sidelines of the conference.

On his turn, Sami Dimassi, representative of the UN Environment Programme and Director of the UN West Asia Office said that climate change and air pollution are two sides of the same coin, which necessitates addressing both issues coherently.

Dimassi added that based on science, the planet is facing a climate crisis, a biodiversity crisis and waste pollution crisis.

He also mentioned that many major scientific reports on climate action indicated that the world needs to reduce greenhouse gas emission by 45% in order not to go above 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming by 2030.

He affirmed that organising this important conference which deals with issues at the core focus



of the UN priorities, indicates the ability and political will in the Sultanate of Oman to organise such international environmental conference and events that address urgent environmental issues.

The inaugural ceremony saw the announcement of the winners of the Green Branch Award, designed to recognise the efforts undertaken by institutions and individuals to promote environment conservation and to highlight their distinguished contributions in this field.

In the Institutions Category, the prize went to Omani Indian Fertilizer

Company (OMIFCO), International Integrated Energy Group (OKEO), Shell Development Company and the Environment Society of Oman (ESO). In the individual category, the winners of the Green Branch Award were Basmatna Ghair team, Qurayat Divers team and Mohammed bin Said al Hinai. A company called 44.1 Firm bagged the honorary prize of the Green Branch Award.

The first day's tasks included a dialogue session titled "Reducing emissions and improving air quality: insights and results from the 6th Assessment Report of the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change".

In addition, 28 working papers were presented during four parallel sessions, with the participation of experts, scientists and specialists from Oman and abroad.

The conference included an environment exhibition that showcased the latest technologies, solutions and technologies in various environmental fields.

Specialised workshops focusing on green hydrogen energy and methane management were held on the sidelines of the conference, which

promotes the values of research, development and innovation through the establishment of environment-action initiatives like Youth Ecothon (Manafaa Initiative).

The initiative is designed to open up vistas for local participation of Omani students from public and private universities, so that they could propose ideas for environmental projects with low-risk developmental return, notably on air pollution and climate change.

Oman Conference for Environmental Sustainability has been organised within the context

of national priorities of Oman Vision 2040. Attended by experts, scientists and specialists from Oman and abroad, it focuses on methods of conservation of the environment and natural resources in accordance with the government's directives for the implementation of the future vision.

The Environment Authority is organising the first edition of the conference in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, Sultan Qaboos University, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and Al Roya Foundation for Press and Publication.

The conference serves as a discussion platform aimed to present Oman to the world as a strategic centre that is capable of organising and hosting such international environmental events for the management of urgent environmental issues.

The conference coincides with the Sultanate of Oman's celebrations of Oman Environment Day. It underscores the significance of coordinating environmental action involving governmental, academic and research institutions, regional and international organizations, as well as private sector companies, civil society organisations and individuals.

The overall aim is to collaborate all efforts for the establishment of an environment whose elements are sustainable and safe, whose ecosystems function in an effective and balanced way and whose resources are renewable. — ONA

Ministry honours 48 Omani achievers



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the General Directorate of Youth, organised on Monday a ceremony honouring the accomplished Omani youth, entitled "Thank you, our youth" at the National University of Science and Technology in Bausher.

The ceremony was sponsored by Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Public Services Regulatory Authority.

During the ceremony, 48 young men and women who owned individual and collective projects and achievements were honoured. They had made

remarkable achievements at the regional and international levels in various scientific, literary, technical, artistic and social fields.

Faris bin Muhammad al Awfi, Acting Director of the Youth Programmes Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said the General Directorate of Youth seeks to translate the ministry's objectives into a practical translation with regard to the youth sector through complementary work and partnership with various sectors to improve programmes.

— ONA

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 16

To ensure safety and regulate adventure tourism, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) will launch an online service for licensing adventure travel operators in the first quarter of this year, a top official said on Monday. The move comes as Oman sees an influx of domestic and international tourists to explore its majestic mountains, caves, valleys, sandy deserts and picturesque coasts.

The ministry is aiming at optimal utilisation of natural and cultural resources which contributes to developing the tourism and heritage sector, enhancing economic diversification, building a sustainable tourism economy and achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Yousef bin Rashid al Harassi, Head of Product Development at the Directorate of Product Development and Tourism Experiences, MoHT, said: "Diversifying tourism products is one of the most prominent methodologies of the ministry in boosting tourist traffic and enhancing tourism experiences, especially global adventure tourism activities that attract adventurers."

"Adventure tourism contributes to boosting economic growth. Oman is ranked among those countries that attract many segments of tourists, including those interested in adventure tourism."

He pointed out that the geographical nature of the Sultanate of Oman, ranging from mountains, caves, valleys,



sandy deserts, and marine environments, contributes to raising the number of adventure tourists that come from all over the world, in addition to domestic tourists who also enjoy this type of tourism.

He added that the number of adventure tourism enthusiasts are constantly growing in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

MoHT is closely following this growth, in cooperation with other government entities, to provide all necessary services to tourists and to make Oman among the safest tourist destinations for adventure tourism activities in the world.

Al Harassi underscored Oman's unique natural diversity, which is reflected in the diversity of tourist destinations that are preferred by the adventurers. Natural sites such as the Eastern and Western Al Hajar Mountains and some sites at the governorates of Dhofar and Musandam have become attractive destinations for adventure tourism.

Al Harassi mentioned that in an effort to maximise the benefit of the unique natural diversity of Oman, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is working on implementing many value-added projects that complement natural aspects in adventure tourism.

These specialised projects related to adventure tourism will contribute to providing local communities with new sources of income and enhance the economy of the governorates.

Accordingly, organisers of tourist groups, tour guides, and small and medium enterprises will have good opportunities to invest in adventure tourism activities, he said.

Al Harassi said MoHT utilised research and best international practices in regulating and managing adventure tourism activities.

The ministry also seeks to encourage the private sector to invest in adventure tourism projects of all kinds.

MoHT is working in

cooperation with Omran and the Office of the Governor of Musandam to implement the zipline project in the Governorate of Musandam, which will boost adventure tourism activities.

The ministry had also issued a Tender No 8/2022 for the supply and installation of informational and sign boards for mountain trekking paths (73), apart from 30 information boards for mountain roads in the Sultanate of Oman, especially in the eastern and western Hajar mountain range and the Governorate of Muscat.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism looked at the New Zealand experience in organising and managing adventure tourism activity, which is one of the best models, as one in three visitors to New Zealand has a relationship with adventure tourism.

There are plans for mountain ambulance and rescue services in cooperation with Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDA).

CHILD IMMUNISATION COVERAGE REACHES 100PC IN 2021



The number of healthcare establishments in the Sultanate of Oman reached 1,848 in 2021. Of those, 65 per cent are private clinics, according to the Health Bulletin 2022, issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The number of workers in public and private health establishments stood at 56,119. Moreover, the rate of coverage of children's immunisations in 2021 reached 100 per cent. — ONA



OJA fetes participants of World IFJ Congress

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Oman Journalist Association (OJA) held a ceremony on Monday to honour the committees, working teams and public and private establishments which participated in the “31st World IFJ Congress”, under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information.

Dr Abdullah in his speech expressed his thanks and appreciation for the efforts undertaken by OJA and media persons for their contribution towards the success of the 31st World IFJ Congress, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman in May 2022.

In a statement to ONA, the minister valued the action taken by public and private media organisations in highlighting Oman's potentials, notably in the tourism and investment sectors. He exhorted Omani journalists and media personnel to double efforts for promoting Oman's regional and international capacities.

Thanking OJA for honouring Oman Observer, Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili, Editor-in-Chief, said: “Observer daily was able to cover various local, Gulf, Arab, and international developments, in a way that expresses the Omani approach that is far from exaggeration and capable of dealing objectively with all developments.”

Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak al Araiimi, OJA President, in his speech said: “The annual ceremony of the Omani Journalists Association honours the official and private institutions and work teams that contributed to the success of the 31st Congress



of International Federation of Journalists.”

He further added that OJA will continue to support media professionals throughout the country, and empower journalists and media professionals through the provision of programmes and activities that help them achieve the goals.”

Faiza bint Mohammed al Balushiyah, Editor-in-Chief, Shuoon Al Omaniya newspaper, said: “The honour embodies the keenness of the Ministry of Information and OJA to support press institutions, as their involvement in regional and international events contributes to the exchange of experiences to improve journalistic work and develop the skills of Omani

journalists.”

She also thanked the Minister of Information, Dr Abdullah and the OJA for honouring Shuoon Al Omaniya among the participating teams.

They have arranged training and qualification programmes during the past five years, as has implemented more than 40 courses and training programmes inside the Sultanate of Oman and abroad, in prestigious press and media institutions, including Thomson Foundation in the UK, the Al Ahram Foundation in Egypt, Al Jazeera Institute in Qatar, and the Union of Arab News Agencies in Jordan, in addition to other high-level institutions in Tunisia and Morocco.

About 350 journalists

representing federations, unions and associations from more than 100 countries from different continents of the world participated. The ceremony included a photo exhibition featuring photos taken during the 31st IFJ Congress — both the preparatory stage and the activities of the conference.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Dr Abdullah felicitated the participants, supporters, establishments and individuals who contributed to the success of the 31st World IFJ Congress.

The 31st Congress received local, regional and international attention as the most prominent press and media event in the Middle East, was held from May 31 to June 3, 2022.

Media contributed to preserving the Omani identity: Minister

MUSCAT: Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, said that the Omani media could be best defined by two key titles ‘an honest message’ and ‘a sincere mirror’.

In an interview with Saudi Arabia's Asharq Al Awsat Arabic-language newspaper, the minister said that the Omani media contributed to shaping social awareness and enlightenment, preserving the Omani identity with its civilisational and humanitarian dimensions. Besides, it boosted the patriotic spirit that re-invigorated the development process and spawned transformation in various fields.

He added that the Omani media remained an inspiring message, a source of knowledge and a construction tool. The media objectively expresses the traits of the Omani character and its civilisational role through the ages. Besides, the Omani media extended the bridges of brotherhood and friendship with all countries and peoples in accordance to a balanced policy.

The media track in Oman Vision 2040 is fundamental. The media has, since the national conference that outlined the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 under



the supervision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, carried out transparent coverage of the discussion sessions and played a prominent role in incentivising the executive programmes that seek to find speedy and sustainable solutions of top-priority tracks such as the financial and economic situation, economic diversification and attracting foreign investments.

The minister pointed out that the Omani media played an interactive role in the backdrop of the exceptional circumstances the world witnessed. These were the Covid-19 pandemic, the drop in oil prices and the political crises that the world has recently witnessed and that affected many countries in various ways by transparently reporting what is going on in terms of plans, programmes and solutions through specialised dialogue media programmes that brings together the decision-makers and stakeholders.



Supreme Judicial Council discusses ways to develop legislative system

MUSCAT: The Supreme Judicial Council on Monday held its first meeting of 2023, during which it discussed measures on developing judicial and administrative aspects of the legislative system in Oman.

The meeting considered ways of finding appropriate solutions to address the challenges facing the smoothness of the workflow and upgrading the efficiency of judicial rulings.

The meeting was chaired by Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Vice-Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council.

At the outset of the meeting, Sayyid Mohammed highlighted the efforts made in terms of

performance of the judicial authority during 2022. His speech touched on steps taken in finalising lawsuits and establishing justice at all levels.

Sayyid Mohammed stressed the importance of accelerating the adjudication process to achieve prompt justice, enforcing the law and preserving the rights of litigants.

The Supreme Judicial Council is mandated to draw up the general policy of the judiciary. It therefore strives to ensure the proper functioning of courts and the Public Prosecution Department, as well as the streamlining of litigation procedures. — ONA

Global forum on marketing dates on Jan 18

MUSCAT: The international forum on developing practices for marketing dates will kick off on Wednesday January 18 and lasts for two days.

The forum is organised by the International Dates Council in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The forum will cover various aspects of dates production, marketing and promotion.

It will discuss benefits that could be secured for all segments of the value chain (the farmers, manufacturers, marketing agencies, traders, consumers) as well as the national economy and the environment—with a view to maintain sustainable growth.

Held under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the forum will be attended by researchers and specialists from academic, research and consultative establishments from Oman and the regional and international arenas.

— ONA

Kids to learn art, science, culture, technology this winter vacation

MUSCAT: The activities of the Children's Museum winter programme, which lasts for four weeks began on Sunday. It targets the age groups from 6-16 years during the mid-year vacation period, during which various events are presented in several fields such as culture, science, engineering, technology, innovation, art, sports and health.

The first week of the programme is about ‘Our Culture, Our Identity’ and will continue until January 19. It will include 3 workshops namely palm-making, folk games, and winter tales. It aims to preserve the Omani heritage and develop manual labour skills, as well as endearing the cultural heritage to children by narrating folk tales.

The second week from January 22-26, targets health and sports sector, and includes basics in 5 episodes of football, volleyball, basketball, handball, and bowling. There will also be classes to improve personal skills, building work teams, social interaction, promoting happiness, teaching basketball skills and handball, in



addition to spreading the sport of bowling in the Sultanate of Oman.

During the third week, from January 29 to February 2, it targets arts and fun through 5 workshops. These are Arabic calligraphy (Al Wissam calligraphy), watercolour painting, happiness bouquet, soap making, and origami art, and aims to discover and promote young people's skills in the field of visual arts, encouraging them to highlight their artistic creativity.

This also introduces students to paper materials and the way to use them for artistic handicrafts,

as well as introducing students to natural soap making methods and teaching students on how to make shapes using paper materials.

During the final, the themes will deal with science and innovation, and will be held from February 5 to 9. The programmes will involve 5 workshops, namely learning the alphabet programming ‘Matatalab’, observing the sun, as well as night observations of the moon, Saturn and Jupiter, and the world of ‘Fishertechnic’ for programming. — ONA



Take extra care as winter is here



PRECAUTIONS CAN HELP GET RID OF THE UNEASINESS OF WINTERS. IT IS ALWAYS BETTER TO COVER MOUTH AND NOSE IN ORDER TO RESTRICT DIRECT COLD AIR ENTERING INTO THE RESPIRATORY TRACT

KABEER YOUSUF
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Winter is always a cool respite from the scorching days and a perfect escape from the sweltering summer.

But the few weeks of cool breeze and misty mornings are equally unfavourable if sufficient care is not taken in terms of health and safety, say experts.

When the temperature dips, they say it's better to stay indoors as much as possible and avoid going outside.

Performing any type of strenuous activities can put the lungs at risk of exposure to dry air and cause a flare up of symptoms.

Oman has reported an increasing number of cases of cough and influenza.

"In winters there is always a surge in respiratory diseases both upper respiratory tract infection like the common cold (influenza) which usually affects pharynx, larynx and vocal cords, and also lower respiratory tract causing inflammation and infection of trachea, bronchus, lungs, causing bronchitis and pneumonia in lungs," says Dr Dilip Singhvi, Specialist in Internal Medicine, Apollo Hospital.

Excessive exposure to cold air causes narrowing of the tract thereby increasing asthma attacks, exacerbations of chronic lung disease (COPD) and the like.

"Cold air is often dry air, and can irritate the airways if you have asthma, COPD or bronchitis. This can cause wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath. Dress warmly and keep yourself dry. It is better to cover the nose and mouth with scarf in low temperatures," says Dr Viresh Chopra of Oman Dental College.

Additionally, in winters there is more exposure to moulds, pollution, smog, which are all capable of triggering acute asthmatic attacks.

However, certain set of precautions can help get rid of the uneasiness of winters the first of which is to cover mouth and nose in order to restrict direct cold air entering into the respiratory tract.

People falling in the target group are advised to take influenza vaccine every year before the start of winters.

Also, one should make it a point to wear warm clothes and not to forget his regular medication if he has asthma or chronic lung disease at the earliest, according to Dr Singhvi

And for smokers, they have an unpleasant news that they ought to quit smoking as it can trigger chest infection. Hence, quitting is the best option if at all they prefer to lead a healthy life.

"These are measures we can take to help reduce risk of developing chest infections and stop them spreading to others," adds Dr Chopra.



Cold air is often dry air, and can irritate the airways if you have asthma, COPD or bronchitis. This can cause wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath. Dress warmly and keep yourself dry. It is better to cover the nose and mouth with scarf in low temperatures

DR VIRESH CHOPRA
Oman Dental College



Recall Campaign



Date of Campaign : 17/01/2023
Campaign Type : Recall Campaign
Product Description : SL - Junction Box Multi fuse and Upper cover Replacement

Division	Vehicle Model	Affected Vehicle production range	VIN Range	No. of affected Vehicles
KIA	Sportage (SL)	15th May'2013 - 17th Nov '2015	KNAPC8120E7509442 - KNAPC8125G7873908	1893

Description of defect:

On some affected vehicles in the specified production date range, an engine compartment fire may occur from the area where the Hydraulic Electronic Control unit (HECU) is located. Illumination of ABS warning light may appear while driving or burning /melting smell, smoke from engine compartment maybe felt while driving or when the vehicle parked.

Procedure:

Verify affected vehicles as per the VIN replacement of Junction box Multi fuse and Upper cover. All affected vehicles will be inspected and repaired at no expense to the vehicle owner.

For more information:

Customers, who own Sportage (SL) model vehicle as per the above VIN range, may please contact M/s. Reliable International Automotive LLC for details & booking appointment from 17/01/2023 onwards for installations.

Contact Details:

Toll free No. 80073222 on all working days (Sunday to Thursday) between 08.30 to 17.30hrs.



Call for efforts to forge methods to enhance aviation security



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is hosting the third meeting of the Middle East Aviation Security Group, which kicked off in Muscat on Monday in cooperation with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Al Abri affirmed Oman's keenness to continue cooperation with ICAO members to overcome all future challenges in the international civil aviation sector and forge harmonious methods between countries to enhance aviation



security.

Meanwhile, Eng Mohamed bin Abubaker Farea, ICAO Regional Director, Middle East Office, said that the meeting will coordinate efforts to upgrade the standards of the civil aviation sector in the Middle East.

"The meeting constitutes an opportunity to discuss key challenges facing this vital sector and consider the best ways to enhance cooperation frameworks and coordinate efforts to promote the civil aviation sector in the Middle East region," Farea added.

Attended by experts and specialists in the field of aviation security, the meeting

seeks to establish a regional cooperation framework to limit the associated risks and foster initiatives that keep pace with the international plan of the ICAO.

The meeting also aims to develop and update the Middle East's civil aviation security facilitation plan, promote related accomplishments and prioritise countries' needs in relation to the aviation security and facilitation programme. This covers establishing capacity-building projects and coordinating necessary assistance activities with the countries concerned.

Oman will present 6 working papers at the meeting.



The papers will deliver the findings and views of security experts at the national and operational levels, specialists in the Civil Aviation Authority and the General Administration of Airports Security, airport and aircraft operators, and ground service providers.

The sessions of the meeting include nearly 30 working papers related to the international and regional civil aviation system and ways to keep abreast of developments in the field of aviation.

The papers will highlight measures to utilise all capacities and capabilities to face challenges to maintain security and safety of air transport. — ONA

40% WORK COMPLETED ON WATERFRONT PROJECT IN SHINAS

SHINAS: The Municipality of North Al Batinah Governorate continues to implement the waterfront project in the Wilayat of Shinas, with an area of 35,250 square metres and a total value of about RO 389,000. The project is located in the northern part of the wilayat.

Ahmed bin Ali al Shehhi, Director of the Municipal Affairs Department, Wilayat of Shinas, said: "The establishment of this project comes within the governorate development plans, and aims to create an outlet and a park for families and children, indicating that the project, which has a

completion rate of 40 per cent, includes the establishment of health facilities."

"A walkway for bicycles and for exercising, in addition to private green spaces, areas designated for children's games, exercise equipment, and a number of sales outlets," he added.

He explained the project will be an important avenue for tourism, in addition to the Shinas Public Park which opened last year. Work has also been undertaken to develop and construct buildings and rest houses for families and facilities for sports, recreational and environmental activities. — ONA

MoH announces 19 investment projects

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health on Sunday announced 19 investment projects, 11 investment opportunities and 14 empowerment projects.

This was announced during a conference held to highlight outcomes of the Investment Laboratory, which took place during December 4-29, 2022.

The laboratory was organised by the Ministry of Health, with support from Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-



up Unit and in cooperation with the Oman National Programme for Investment and Export

Development 'Nazdaher'. At the conference, the Ministry of Health also signed

an agreement with the Trading and Investment Company and ITHCA Group.

Moreover, the four-week investment lab aimed at promoting investments in medical industries, improving the quality and efficiency of health services, empowering human resources, training and qualification and improving the investment milieu in the health field to keep pace with Oman Vision 2040 goals. — ONA



Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Centre

AUCTION ADVERTISEMENT FOR LEAD WASTE DISPOSAL

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Centre announces the following Auction:

Auction No.	Auction Title	Last Date for Collection of Auction Document	Bid Submission Closing	Auction Specification Fees
CCCCRC/AUC/001/2023	Lead Waste Disposal	30/01/2023	07/02/2023	No Fees

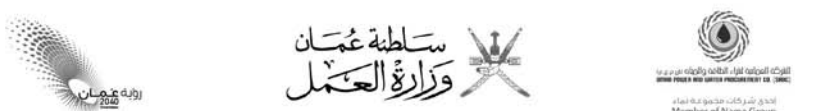
Qualified companies interested in participating in this Auction shall collect the Auction specifications from the date of this advertisement from the following address:

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre – Purchase Department.

Biddings that meet the above requirement should be submitted (Hardcopy & Softcopy) in a sealed envelope by an Omani National from your company addressed to the head of Purchase Committee in the tender box.

Please note:

- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/ clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than Two weeks before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries you may Contact via e-mail: purchase@cccrc.gov.om



JOB OPPORTUNITY

Legal Counsel
OPWP is looking to recruit an Omani candidate to fill the vacant position of **Legal Counsel** in the **Regulatory & Compliance Department**

Requirement and Criteria:

- Bachelor's Degree in Law.
- Minimum of 9 years of relevant experience.
- Experience in contract drafting within the related industry and ideally the electricity sector.
- Experience in corporate governance.
- Experience in dispute resolution.
- Experience in electricity markets is an advantage.

Key Responsibilities:

- Please refer to the Job Description available at OPWP website.

Interested **Omani** candidates are requested to apply through OPWP website www.omanpwp.om no later than **21 January 2023**.

The company may respond to or call only those candidates who fulfil the requirements.

RNO receives new batch for military training

MUSCAT: On Sunday, the Royal Navy of Oman, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, received a new batch of citizens to start military training, including holders of bachelor's degree and of a general education diploma. The graduates passed the various stages of evaluation, medical and physical tests and examinations.

This comes as a continuation of the national efforts of Sultan's Armed Forces to absorb citizens looking for work. Those who meet the requirements for recruitment will undergo the basic military training programme as officers who are candidates to join their counterparts in the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) in various naval bases. — ONA



إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

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

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
6/2023/ MTCIT/HQ-5	UPGRADING SECURITY INFORMATION AND EVENT MANAGEMENT	16-01-2023	05-02-2023	12-03-2023	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (ALL GRADES)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON- REFUNDABLE

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

CORRESPONDANCE:

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

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

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Black box found after Nepal plane crash



Family members and relatives of victims who died in a plane crash, weep outside a hospital in Pokhara on Monday. — Reuters

KATHMANDU: Searchers found both the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder on Monday from a passenger flight that crashed killing at least 68 people in Nepal's worst plane accident in 30 years, officials said.

The data on the recorders may help investigators determine what caused the Yeti Airlines ATR 72 aircraft, carrying 72 people, to crash in clear weather on Sunday just before landing in the tourist city of Pokhara.

Both recorders were in good shape and would be sent for analysis based on the recommendation of the manufacturer, Teknath Sitaula, an official at Kathmandu airport, said on Monday.

Under international aviation rules, the crash investigation

agency of the country where the plane was designed and built, is automatically part of the investigation. ATR is based in France and the plane's engines were manufactured in Canada, by Pratt & Whitney Canada.

Rescuers were battling cloudy weather and poor visibility on Monday as they scoured a river gorge for passengers who are unaccounted for, more than 24 hours after the crash. Sixty-eight bodies have been recovered.

Reuters footage from the crash site showed rescuers looking at the charred remains of the plane near the gorge.

The plane, on a scheduled flight from Kathmandu to Pokhara, gateway to the scenic Annapurna mountain range, was carrying 57 Nepalis, five Indians, four

Russians, two South Koreans, and one person each from Argentina, Ireland, Australia and France.

Pokhara police official Ajay K.C. said the search-and-rescue operation, which stopped because of darkness on Sunday, had resumed. "We will search for the remaining four that are still missing," he told Reuters. "It is cloudy now... causing a problem in the search."

Minutes before the aircraft was to land on Sunday, the pilot asked for a change of runway, a spokesperson for Pokhara airport said.

"The permission was granted. "We don't ask (why), whenever a pilot asks we give permission to change approach," the spokesperson, Anup Joshi, said. — AFP

Europe investigators hear Lebanon witnesses in assets probe

BEIRUT: European investigators began questioning high-profile witnesses in Lebanon as part of a probe into central bank governor Riad Salameh's wealth, a judicial official said on Monday.

France, Germany and Luxembourg in March seized assets worth 120 million euros (\$130 million) in a move linked to a probe by French investigators into 72-year-old Salameh's personal wealth. Salameh — who denies wrongdoing and remains in his post despite a travel ban — is also being investigated by Lebanese authorities on suspicion of financial misconduct including possible embezzlement, money laundering and tax evasion. — AFP

Renowned Pakistani lawyer, human rights activist shot dead

PESHAWAR: A prominent Pakistani lawyer and human rights activist known as a vocal critic of both the military and militants was shot dead on Monday at a court in the Peshawar, police said.

Abdul Latif Afridi, a former president of Pakistan's Supreme Court bar association, was shot multiple times, apparently by one gunman, on the Peshawar High Court premises, police official Kashif Abbasi said.

"We have arrested the culprit from the crime scene," he said, adding that the suspected shooter had dressed as a lawyer to gain entry to the court premises.

He identified the suspect as Adnan Sami Afridi, not related to the deceased Afridi.

The accused did not try to flee after the shooting, lawyers on the premises said. Though a heavy police contingent is deployed at the Peshawar court, lawyers are not body searched on entry. Security arrangement at the court have previously been questioned,



A police officer surveys the crime scene after, according to police, a gunman killed Abdul Latif Afridi, lawyer and former president of Pakistan's Supreme Court Bar Association, in Peshawar on Monday. — Reuters

especially after a teenage boy shot and killed a US national of Pakistani origin who was on trial on blasphemy charges inside the courtroom in 2020.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the killing and expressed his grief and sorrow.

Afridi, a renowned human rights and political activist, has been a vocal critic of the powerful military's alleged interference in Pakistani politics and of Islamist militancy. — Reuters

Arrest of 'last godfather' deals new blow to ailing Sicilian mafia

ROME: The arrest of Sicilian mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro deals a powerful blow to the mythology of the Cosa Nostra, toppling a symbol of the group's resistance to police efforts to break up organised crime.

Messina Denaro, 60, was Italy's most wanted mafia boss and had been on the run for three decades. He had been sentenced in absentia to a life term for his role in the 1992 murders of anti-mafia prosecutors Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino.

His arrest comes almost 30 years to the day after police caught Salvatore "Totò" Riina, Cosa Nostra's biggest figure of the 20th century, and marks the last step in efforts to dismantle the group's historical clan leadership.

Experts describe Cosa Nostra, its fame amplified by movies such as "The Godfather", as an ailing crime group facing several difficulties, including competition in the highly lucrative drugs market. Although Cosa Nostra retains control of its Sicilian territory and a capacity to infiltrate the broader economy, it has been supplanted by groups such as the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta in the



A screengrab taken from a video shows Matteo Messina Denaro being escorted out of a police station after he was arrested in Palermo on Monday. — Reuters

connections with clans in the United States. Messina Denaro was among the masterminds of Cosa Nostra's bombing strategy of the early 1990s which triggered national outrage and forced politicians to act, introducing waves of anti-mafia laws and making hundreds of arrests.

"That 'declaration of war' against the state certainly meant a weakening of the organisation that fostered other groups, such as the 'Ndrangheta," said Federico Cafiero De Raho, a former prosecutor and a lawmaker with the opposition 5-Star Movement. — Reuters

drugs trade. "Messina Denaro was the last godfather, he represented all the secrets of Cosa Nostra.

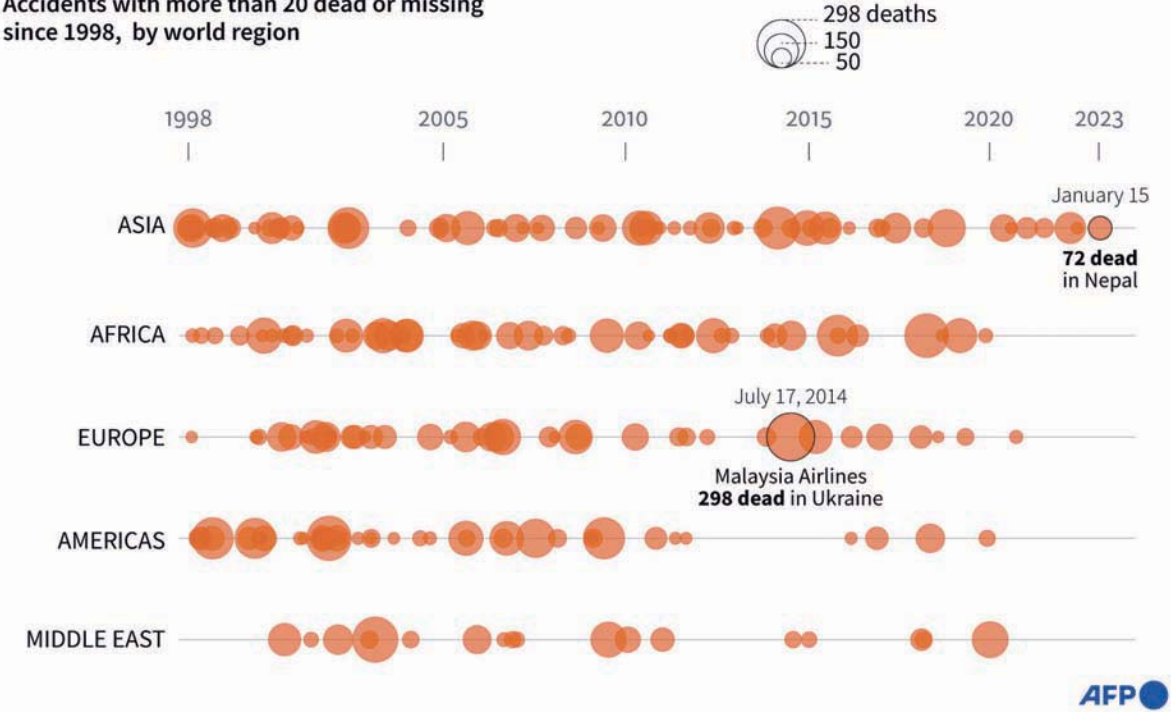
It is the end of a myth and the organisation will have to cope with this," said Anna Sergi, an expert in organised crime at England's Essex University.

Sergi said it was not clear who would step in to replace Messina Denaro in what is now a more factionalised mafia.

"If Cosa Nostra wants to rebuild the leadership it had in the past it needs directives, but there are no big chiefs anymore," Sergi told Reuters, adding that she expects the group to try to rebuild

The most deadly plane accidents over the last 25 years

Accidents with more than 20 dead or missing since 1998, by world region



SHORT TAKES

AMMAN

TikTok in talks with Jordan to lift month-long ban

TikTok said it is in talks with Jordan to lift a ban in place since December after videos posted on the app were accused of "inciting murder and chaos".

Jordanian authorities on December 16 suspended use of the app in the kingdom, after a senior police officer was killed and others were injured during protests over fuel prices.

"We have faith that through our ongoing conversations with the authorities, we can arrive at a resolution that would allow



TikTok to continue serving the millions of users in Jordan," TikTok said. "We are also committed to keeping TikTok a safe and positive environment for our global community."

JERUSALEM

Israel appoints Halevi as new military chief

Major General Herzi Halevi (pictured left) was appointed Israel's new military chief of staff on Monday, in a ceremony hosted by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We will prepare the army for war on fronts near and far," Halevi vowed at the ceremony, at the start of his three-year term.

A former military intelligence chief, Halevi was serving as deputy to his predecessor, Aviv Kohavi, until taking the helm.

Netanyahu said Israel will not



get dragged into "pointless wars, but on decisive days we will fight." The appointment of Halevi, who led forces along the Gaza border, comes as violence surges in the occupied West Bank.

GAROWE

Somalia seizes key town from al Shabaab

Somalia's government-led forces have captured an al Shabaab stronghold on the Indian Ocean, the defence minister said on Monday, in one of their most significant victories since launching an offensive against the Islamist group last year.

The forces took the port town of Harardhere as well as the nearby town of Galcad, Defence Minister Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur said in a broadcast on state-owned television.

Harardhere was a major base



for pirates hijacking merchant ships until 2011. It was later taken over by al Shabaab, which first rose up against the government in 2007 before pledging its allegiance to al Qaeda.



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In brief

■ EDINBURGH



SCOTLAND WARNS OF SHOWDOWN WITH UK OVER LAW

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon on Monday warned London against any bid to block a controversial Scottish gender recognition law, adding her devolved government is prepared to "rigorously" defend its powers all the way to the UK's top court.

The looming standoff over the law to make it easier for people to change gender ratchets up London's tense relations with Scotland's regional government.

Sturgeon told a press conference in Edinburgh that her government is prepared to "rigorously" defend the gender legislation all the way to the UK's top court if Prime Minister Rishi Sunak steps in to block it.

■ MOSCOW



POLISH-BELARUSIAN JOURNALIST'S TRIAL OPENS IN BELARUS

The trial of a Polish-Belarusian journalist opened in authoritarian Belarus on Monday, with the reporter facing up to 12 years in prison for criticising President Alexander Lukashenko's regime.

The same day Belarusian investigators announced new charges against opposition leader Sergei Tikhanovsky, who in 2021 was found guilty of organising riots and inciting social hatred and sentenced to 18 years in prison.

Andrzej Poczobut, a correspondent for top Polish daily Gazeta Wyborcza and a representative of the Polish minority in Belarus, was arrested in March 2021.

■ LONDON



CAMPAIGNERS LAUNCH LEGAL BIDS AGAINST COAL MINE

Environmental campaigners have launched legal bids against the UK government's approval of the nation's first new coal mine in decades, they said on Monday citing climate change fears. The project, located in Cumbria in northwest England, has long faced opposition from activists who argue it contradicts Britain's pledge to become carbon nEUtral by 2050.

Friends of the Earth said it filed legal paperwork at the High Court in London on Friday. Another charity, South Lakes Action on Climate Change (SLACC), said separately it has filed legal papers at the High Court in Manchester.

German minister resigns after months of criticism

BERLIN: German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht resigned from Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government on Monday, the culmination of growing doubt about her ability to revive Germany's armed forces against the backdrop of the Ukraine war.

Her decision dealt a blow to Scholz at a time when Germany is under pressure to approve an increase in international military support for Kyiv, and Germany's defence capabilities have been called into question after several Puma infantry tanks were put out of service during a recent military drill.

The pressure to find a successor is mounting also because US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is expected in Berlin on Thursday and will attend a conference on Friday at the US military base in Ramstein, in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate, to discuss further support for Ukraine, including whether to send German-built battle tanks.

Lambrecht asked Scholz to dismiss her, as formally required, and he has approved, a government spokesperson said.

"The chancellor respects Ms Lambrecht's decision and thanks her for the good work that she did during this difficult and challenging time as defence minister," the spokesperson said.

The Social Democratic (SPD) chancellor will propose a successor quickly, the person added, refusing comment on names. Citing government sources, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper said a successor would be announced on Tuesday.

Among the candidates mooted by German media are Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces Eva Hoegl,



junior defence minister Siemtje Moeller, SPD party chief Lars Klingbeil and Labour Minister Hubertus Heil.

Scholz has promised to staff his cabinet with equal numbers of men and women.

If a man should succeed Lambrecht, this could result in further reshuffling.

Lambrecht was blamed by critics for failing to get the German armed forces, known as the Bundeswehr, back in shape quickly, despite a 100-billion-euro (\$108.11 billion) special fund being agreed for that purpose after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Economy Minister Robert Habeck praised Lambrecht for her ambition to reform the Bundeswehr and said her decision would not have been taken lightly.

"It shows the kind of pressure she is under, but also how she is trying to keep the office from being damaged," Habeck said at an energy conference in Berlin.

Lambrecht was most recently criticised by media and opposition figures for posting a New Year's message on social media in which she thanked servicemen

Her decision dealt a blow to Scholz at a time when Germany is under pressure to approve an increase in international military support for Kyiv, and Germany's defence capabilities have been called into question after several tanks were put out of service during a drill

and women, but struggled to be heard against background noise from firecrackers and seemingly mixed up the war in Ukraine with pleasant personal encounters.

"What kind of a year was 2022? It confronted us with many incredible challenges. There is a war raging in the middle of Europe. Associated with this were for me many special impressions, many encounters with interesting, great people," Lambrecht said.

Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, head of Germany's parliamentary defence committee and a member of Scholz's junior coalition partner, the Free Democrats, called for her successor to be installed quickly.

"I now expect the Social Democrats to name a successor as soon as possible who is assertive towards the ministry, does not abuse the defence ministry for other political ambitions and, above all, brings with them an understanding and heart for the soldiers," she said in remarks carried by the Funke media group. — Reuters



Rescuers work on a residential building destroyed after a missile strike, in Dnipro on Monday. — AFP

President Putin slams growing Western arms deliveries to Ukraine

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin on Monday slammed Kyiv's "destructive" policies and growing Western arms supplies to Ukraine in a phone call with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Kremlin said.

"Vladimir Putin drew attention to the destructive line of the Kyiv regime, which has bet on the intensification of hostilities with the support of Western sponsors, who are ramping up the supplies of weapons and military equipment," the Kremlin said after the phone talks.

Meanwhile, the toll from a devastating Russian strike on Dnipro rose to 40 on Monday, as more bodies were pulled from the debris of one of Russia's deadliest attacks since its invasion.

Residents gathered to watch as cranes removed collapsing sections of the Soviet-style residential building that was ripped open by the strike in central Ukraine on Saturday.

The emergency services gave the new toll specifying that three children were among those dead and that 34 people were still unaccounted for.

The Kremlin claimed to reporters its forces were not responsible and pointed to an unsubstantiated theory circulating on social media that Ukrainian air defence systems had caused the damage.

"The Russian armed forces do not strike residential buildings or social infrastructure. They strike military targets," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Ukraine leader Volodymyr Zelensky said late Sunday that search operations would go on as long as necessary and condemned Russia's "cowardly silence" over the attack.

EU presidency holder Sweden condemned "in the strongest terms" the attack, with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson telling reporters that "intentional attacks against civilians are war crimes". The rising cost of the strike came as Russia and its close ally Belarus announced the beginning of new joint military drills. Belarus, which has been a key ally to Russia throughout the conflict, allowed Moscow's forces to launch their invasion from Belarusian territory last February. — Reuters

Europ's royals attend Greece's last king's funeral

ATHENS: Greece's last king, Constantine II, was laid to rest on Monday at the royal cemetery of Tatoi near Athens, after a private funeral service that drew dozens of European royals and a crowd of several hundreds.

Constantine, who died last week aged 82, was a divisive figure in the country's history, and the government drew criticism from conservatives after deciding not to grant him the honour of a state funeral.

Former prime minister Antonis Samaras was among those who said Constantine, a former Olympic gold medallist for Greece, deserved to be buried as a former head of state.

In his eulogy, Constantine's eldest son Paul said his father ascended to the throne during a "difficult period" and had left the country to avoid causing "fresh bloodshed".

"This is not the end, father. You will live forever in our thoughts and hearts," he said, adding that the former monarch had helped Athens secure the 2004 Olympics.

At least 2,000 people had queued outside the Athens Metropolitan Cathedral from dawn on Monday to pay their respects, according to state television ERT.

Police declined to give an estimate of the numbers.

Some gatherers clutched flags of



Pall-bearers carry the coffin in front of Greece's former Queen Anne-Marie (CtopR) and Pavlos, Crown Prince of Greece as they leave after the funeral service of former King of Greece Constantine II in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens, on Monday. — AFP

the royal era, flowers and portraits of the ex-king and his wife, the Danish princess Anne-Marie.

Many bowed and kissed the coffin, which was covered with the Greek flag.

"He was an honourable man, a proper family man who never harmed Greece," pensioner Fotis Stamatiou, 85, told AFP.

"We are here to accord our king the honour he deserves... We

love him," added fellow pensioner Arietta Papadaki.

The private service, officiated by Archbishop Ieronymos, head of the Orthodox church of Greece, began shortly after noon with almost 200 guests attending.

Royals from Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain flew in for the service.

The British Crown was

represented by Princess Anne, daughter of the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and President Katerina Sakellaropoulou — whose official residence is a former royal palace — did not attend the funeral.

The government was represented by Deputy Prime Minister Panagiotis Pikrammenos and Culture and Sports Minister

Lina Mendoni.

Surveys in past decades have shown most Greeks feel either indifference or resentment towards the former king.

The last member of a century-long dynasty, Constantine had reigned for just three years when an army dictatorship seized control of the country in 1967.

Declassified US diplomatic cables say Constantine may have been mulling martial law himself prior to the coup.

Nearly eight months after the junta seized power, Constantine organised a military counter-coup that failed.

He fled to Rome with the rest of the royal family, and later to London.

The junta abolished the monarchy in 1973, and Greeks voted not to restore the royal family after the restoration of democracy in 1974.

Later locked in a bitter property dispute with the Greek state, Constantine had his Greek citizenship revoked in 1994.

The ex-king returned to Greece in 2013, selling the 9,500-square-foot (880-square-metre) London mansion where his family had lived for four decades.

Constantine was married to Anne-Marie — sister to Denmark's Queen Margrethe — and they had five children. — AFP

Sultanate of Oman in the space race



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi
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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

Early January is always special, not only because it brings hopeful vibes for beautiful beginning but also because it's associated with global and national major events.

Nationally, the Sultanate of Oman commemorates the late Sultan Qaboos, the founder of modern Oman and celebrates the promise of renewed growth and progress with Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

January 2023 is extra special because we are witnessing an exciting venture into a brave new world - Space.

This development is worth our close attention, not only because it's a whole new industry but also because it invites us to think: What is the value of entering a hotly contested area such as the space race that requires significant

human and financial capital?

To infinity and beyond!

Developing a competent human capital is the base of progress for society and the project.

Only visionary minds dare of venturing in valuable spaces to infinity and beyond.

Such visionary minds in global powers from East and West all started with educating and building the capabilities of its teachers, crafts professionals, entrepreneurs, engineers, doctors, and scientists to become the powers they are today.

Two examples that come to mind is China in advanced manufacturing and the United States in the space industry.

Just imagine the impact on younger generations when they hear and see people in their wider community who identify

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN IS ON A ROADMAP TOWARDS TRANSCENDING THE EARTHLY GEOGRAPHICS SPACE TO ALSO BECOME A PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS NATION IN SPACE IN GENERATIONS TO COME

themselves satellite designers, or space engine engineers or space mission planners.

Investing in space

There are many lessons learned from the Sultanate of Oman's first space mission that took place in January 2023, spearheaded

by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in collaboration with international space companies such as Virgin Orbit and United Kingdom Space Agency, in addition to new national space players such as International Emerging Technology Company (ETCO).

The most significant lesson in my mind is how an ambitious vision and plan to transform traditional infrastructure such as Cornwall Airport to become a Space Port generated thousands of direct and indirect jobs and attracted billions of dollars of investment from the space launch industry players.

Clearly, venturing into space is a marathon and not a sprint and requires long term determination and patience more than anything else.

The moonshot

I believe a life with a meaningful moonshot leave something to be desired.

History has shown that groups, no matter how small, when they take calculated risks and walk together in purposeful path, they become unstoppable, as the case is with the Oman maritime empire.

Seeing visions, such as Oman Vision 2040, being translated into bold steps such as the National Digital Economy Programme, fills me with hope that ambitions nations, such as the Sultanate of Oman, are on a roadmap towards transcending this earthly geographics space, to also become a peaceful and prosperous Sultanate of Oman in space in generations to come.

AI, do my homework! How ChatGPT pitted teachers against tech

JULES BONNARD

Know-it-all chatbots landed with a bang last year, convincing one engineer that machines had become sentient, spreading panic that industries could be wiped out, and creating fear of a cheating epidemic in schools and universities.

Alarm among educators has reached fever pitch in recent weeks over ChatGPT, an easy-to-use artificial intelligence tool trained on billions of words and a ton of data from the web.

It can write a half-decent essay and answer many common classroom questions, sparking a fierce debate about the very future of traditional education.

New York City's education department banned ChatGPT on its networks because of "concerns about negative impacts on student learning."

"While the tool may be able to provide quick and easy answers to questions, it does not build critical-thinking and problem-solving skills," said the department's Jenna Lyle.

A group of Australian universities said they would change exam formats to banish AI tools, regarding them as straight-up cheating.

However, some in the education sector are more relaxed about AI tools in the classroom, and some even sense an opportunity rather than a threat.

That is partly because ChatGPT in its current form still gets stuff wrong. To give one example, it thinks Guatemala is bigger than Honduras. It isn't.

Also, ambiguous questions can throw it off track.

Ask the tool to describe the Battle of Amiens and it will give a passable detail or two on the 1918 confrontation from World War I.

But it does not flag that there was also a skirmish of the same name in 1870. It takes several prompts to realise its error.

"ChatGPT is an important innovation, but no more so than calculators or text editors," French author and educator Antonio Casilli said. "ChatGPT can help people who are stressed by a blank sheet of paper to write a first draft, but afterwards they still have to write and give it a style."

Researcher Olivier Ertzscheid from the University of Nantes agreed that teachers should be focusing on the positives. In any case, he said, high school students were already using ChatGPT, and any attempt to ban it would just make it more appealing. — AFP



Roger Cohen

The writer is a journalist and author

Davos confronts a new world order

The World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, finds itself navigating troubled waters.

Long the affluent symbol of a globalising world where the assumption was that more trade would bring more freedom, it now confronts international fracture, ascendant nationalism and growing protectionism under the shadow of war in Europe and sharp tensions between the United States and China.

The post-Cold War era, dominated by the idea that Western liberal democracy and free-market capitalism held all the answers, is over. This was the very ethos of Davos. It must now pivot to the new reality provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the growth of extreme inequality and aggressive autocracies.

If the old is gone, the new order is not yet born. Power is shifting away from the United States as China's military and economic heft grows, but the shape of an alternative international system is unclear.

One measure of a world transformed is that when thousands of Brazilian protesters, convinced without evidence of a stolen election last year, stormed the Brazilian Congress this month, their action felt like a copycat attack modeled on the assault on the US Capitol of January 6, 2021.

It is one measure of Donald Trump's legacy that many people now make this association.

The gathering in the Swiss mountains this week of politicians, business leaders, technology gurus,

THE GATHERING IN THE SWISS MOUNTAINS OF POLITICIANS, BUSINESS LEADERS, TECHNOLOGY GURUS, ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND OTHER DAVOS PATRONS, ONLY THE SECOND IN PERSON AFTER A TWO-YEAR PANDEMIC-INDUCED HIATUS, WILL WRESTLE WITH QUESTIONS ONCE UNTHINKABLE

environmentalists and other Davos patrons, only the second in person after a two-year pandemic-induced hiatus, will wrestle with questions once unthinkable.

To what degree is the world de-globalising as the threat to supply chains has become evident through Covid-19 and war?

Is it possible to end the trench warfare in Europe that has already taken tens of thousands of Ukrainian and Russian lives and led to talk,

far-fetched but insistent, of possible nuclear "Armageddon," a word used by President Joe Biden last year?

If the conflict in Ukraine persists through 2023, as now appears plausible, how can a war-induced global recession be avoided as investment-curtailed uncertainty persists and prices soar?

These are some of the issues that will confront the assembled crowd. China is sending a vice premier, Liu He, to Davos, the first time a Chinese leader has attended the forum since the pandemic began.

The American delegation will include Katherine Tai, the trade representative; John Kerry, Biden's special envoy for climate; and Samantha Power, the administrator of the United States Agency for International Development. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian president, has indicated that he will attend, although whether through video link or in person is unclear.

They will talk and they will exhort but Davos is about bringing people together, at least a certain class of people, and for now divisive pressures are strong.

The politics of recent years have been dominated by nationalist revolts against elites by the very people Davos overlooked, from the American heartland to what the French call "the periphery."

Convergence has gone out of fashion. There is no political consensus any longer over how to deliver prosperity to a networked world.

Great power rivalry on a warming planet is the new reality. Economic opening did not lead to political opening in Russia or China, as had been widely predicted, with the result that rival democratic and autocratic blocs confront each other.

China's Belt and Road Initiative has secured the allegiance of many countries through loans, infrastructure construction and trade accords. America now makes its own economics-must-serve-politics approach very clear.

On a recent visit to India, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said that the United States wanted to "diversify away from countries that present geopolitical and security risks to our supply chain." — *The New York Times*



Ukrainian soldiers run to their Krab self-propelled howitzer as they come under artillery bombardment from Russian forces responding to their volley in the Donetsk region of Ukraine

A promising day on the throne

Over the past three years, the day, January 11, brought simultaneously mixed feelings of deep sadness and happiness. Though all Omanis were mourning the death of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who passed away just a day before, it marked the day of ascending to the throne the new Sultan.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik was announced as the new Sultan of Oman after the passing away of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

Leaving all on a complete sorrow was of course maddening, but ascending to throne HM Sultan Haitham bin Tarik was a rewarding relief to the whole nation indeed.

The quick announcement of a successor to the late Sultan Qaboos was a kind of reassurance to confirm the smooth transformation of leadership in the Sultanate of Oman.

The speed and manner in which a successor was named projected the unique sense of unity, continuity and stability of the nation.

Thanks to the visionary late Sultan and the Royal Family for road mapping the future of Oman in such an honest and clever way.

Announcing the successor, His Majesty Haitham bin Tarik, was based on the late Sultan's recommendation; a very critical decision that comforted people, released their stress and eased their grief.

They believed in the new Sultan as a great successor and he would carry on Oman's Blessed Renaissance.

All had impatiently looked forward to the moment to see the new Sultan ascending to throne and deliver his first speech.

Everyone's aspirations and anticipations were extremely high and undoubtedly optimistic.

In his first speech, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik addressed the Council of Oman. It was a heartening and promising.

His Majesty's speech was honest and as well as a compassionate



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THE SPEED AND MANNER IN WHICH A SUCCESSOR WAS NAMED PROJECTED THE UNIQUE SENSE OF UNITY, CONTINUITY AND STABILITY OF THE NATION

reassurance to the people of Oman. "Dear people of Oman, words fall short of articulating a eulogy for a Sultan as great as him (Qaboos bin Said), or describe his good deeds and accomplishments", His Majesty stated.

What was thrilling was His Majesty's promise to continue the path of his successor stating, "Our only relief, the best with which we can eternalise his achievements, is to pursue his rightful legacy and derive impetus for the brilliant steps that he treaded in full confidence and determination, to preserve the gains that he made and to build upon them."

He further said, "This is what we are resolved to execute, God willing.

We shall march forward on this road so that Oman could attain and maintain its prominent place in which (His Majesty Sultan Qaboos) wished to position it and for which he stayed on vigils to realise that goal, and, alas, he was granted success in his endeavours".

His Majesty called the people to join hands to continue the march and shoulder the responsibility.

"People of Oman, the trust thrust on our shoulders and the resultant immense responsibilities require us all to work together for the sake of our country's magnificence, with a persistent resolve to promote it to the loftiest levels.

This cannot be realised without your support and cooperation and combination of all efforts to achieve the desired supreme national goal.

Your contribution to enrich all efforts of progress, development and prosperity will be highly appreciated".

This reflects the great personal confidence of His Majesty on his people and urging them to stand all together to sustain the country's worldwide standing and nation-building march.

If truth be told, at such a memorable moment, history repeated itself when the same shoulder-the responsibility-call was addressed by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Both Sultans are stressing, building the nation is a responsibility of all.

TAMING THE BULL



A participant tries to control a bull during an annual bull-taming festival 'Jallikattu' in Palamedu village on the outskirts of Madurai on Monday. At least one person was gored to death and dozens were injured during Jallikattu, a controversial bull taming competition in India, officials said. – AFP

Human values for artificial intelligence

This may be the year when artificial intelligence transforms daily life. So said Brad Smith, President and Vice Chairman of Microsoft, at a Vatican-organised event on AI last week. But Smith's statement was less a prediction than a call to action: the event – attended by industry leaders and representatives of the three Abrahamic religions – sought to promote an ethical, human-centred approach to the development of AI.

There is no doubt that AI poses a daunting set of operational, ethical, and regulatory challenges. And addressing them will be far from straightforward. Although AI development dates back to the 1950s, the technology's contours and likely impact remain hazy.

Of course, recent breakthroughs – from the almost chillingly human-like text produced by OpenAI's ChatGPT to applications that may shave years off the drug-discovery process – shed light on some dimensions of AI's immense potential. But it remains impossible to predict all the ways AI will reshape human lives and civilisation.

This uncertainty is nothing new. Even after recognising a technology's transformative potential, the shape of the transformation tends to surprise us. Social media, for example, was initially touted as an innovation that would strengthen democracy but has done far more to destabilise



Ana Palacio

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of Spain and former senior vice president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University

UNLESS WE ACT NOW TO ENSURE THAT THE TECHNOLOGY'S DEVELOPMENT IS GUIDED BY HUMAN-CENTRIC PRINCIPLES, WE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY REGRET IT

it by facilitating the spread of disinformation. It is safe to assume that AI will be exploited in similar ways.

We do not even fully understand how AI works. Consider the so-called black box problem: with most AI-based tools, we know what goes in and what comes out, but not what happens in between. If AI is making (at times irrevocable) decisions, this opacity poses a serious risk, which is compounded by issues like the transmission of implicit bias through machine learning.

The misuse of personal data and the destruction of jobs are two additional risks. And, according to former US Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, AI technology may undermine human creativity and vision as information comes to "overwhelm" wisdom. Some worry that AI will lead to human extinction.

With stakes this high, the future of the technology cannot be left to AI researchers, let alone tech CEOs. While heavy-handed regulation is not the answer, the current regulatory vacuum must be filled. That process demands the kind of broad-based global engagement that is increasingly shaping efforts to combat climate change.

In fact, climate change offers a

useful analogy for AI – far more useful than the oft-made nuclear comparison. The existence of nuclear weapons may affect people indirectly, through geopolitical developments, but the technology is not a fixture of our personal and professional lives; nor is it shared globally. But climate change, like AI, affects everyone – and action to limit it could put a country at a disadvantage.

Already, the race to dominate AI is a key feature of the US-China rivalry. If either country imposes limits on its AI industry, it risks allowing the other to pull ahead. That is why, as with emissions reduction, a cooperative approach is vital. Governments, together with other relevant public actors, must work together to design and install guardrails for private-sector innovation.

Of course, that is easier said than done. Limited consensus on how to approach AI has resulted in a hodgepodge of regulations. And efforts to devise a common approach within international forums have been stymied by power struggles among major players and the lack of enforcement authority.

But there is some promising news. The European Union is working to forge an ambitious principles-based instrument

for establishing harmonised AI rules. The AI Act, expected to be finalised this year, aims to facilitate the "development and uptake" of AI in the EU, while ensuring that the technology "works for people and is a force for good in society." From adapting civil-liability rules to revising the EU's product-safety framework, the act takes the kind of comprehensive approach to AI regulation that we have been missing.

It should not be surprising that the EU has emerged as a frontrunner in AI regulation. The bloc has a history of leading the way in developing regulatory frameworks in critical areas. The EU's legislation on data protection arguably inspired similar action elsewhere, from the Consumer Privacy Act in California to the Personal Information Protection Law in China.

But progress on global AI regulation will be impossible without the United States. And, despite its shared commitment with the EU to developing and implementing "trustworthy AI," the US is committed to AI supremacy above all. To this end, it is seeking not only to bolster its own leading-edge industries – including by keeping the red tape to a minimum – but also to impede progress in China.

As the National Security

Commission on Artificial Intelligence noted in a 2021 report, the US should be targeting "choke points that impose significant trickle-down strategic costs on competitors but minimal economic costs on US industry." The export controls that the US imposed last October, which target China's advanced-computing and semiconductor sectors, exemplify this approach. For its part, China is unlikely to be deterred from its quest to achieve technological self-sufficiency and, ultimately, supremacy.

Beyond opening the way for AI-generated risks to manifest, this technological rivalry has obvious geopolitical implications. For example, Taiwan's outsize role in the global semiconductor industry gives it leverage, but may also put yet another target on its back.

It took more than three decades for awareness of climate change to crystallise into real action, and we still are not doing enough. Given the pace of technological innovation, we cannot afford to follow a similar path on AI. Unless we act now to ensure that the technology's development is guided by human-centric principles, we will almost certainly regret it. And, as with climate change, we will most likely lament our inaction much sooner than we think.

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25th Arabian Gulf Cup



omanobserver.om JANUARY 6 - 19

OMAN POWER PAST BAHRAIN

JAMEEL AL YAHMADI NETS ALL-IMPORTANT GOAL IN SEMIFINAL



ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 16

Oman stormed into the final of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup edging Bahrain 1-0 in the second semifinal at the Al Minaa Olympic Stadium in Iraq on Monday night.

Oman will take on hosts Iraq, who beat Qatar 2-1 in the first semifinal earlier, in the final on January 19.

The moment for Oman came in the 83rd minute when Jameel al Yahmadi smashed a powerful shot to the top right corner of Bahrain from outside the penalty box after a nice assist by Salah al Yahyaei.

Bahrain earned the first corner of the match in the seventh minute and got another one in the next minute.

Zahir al Aghbari gave a dangerous cross for Oman with nobody to connect in the ninth minute as Oman made their first move.

In the next minute, Oman missed a close chance as Issam al Subhi's shot was blocked by the Bahrain defence for a corner after a good pass by Salah al Yahyaei.

Jameel al Yahmadi headed the resultant corner towards goal but straight to Bahrain goalkeeper.

In the 22nd minute, Oman goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini saved a left-footed shot from Bahrain's Mahdi al Humaidan on the left side of the box after an assist by Jassim al Shaikh.

Bahrain advanced in the 33rd minute with Ali Madan's left-footer blocked by the Omani defence after a headed pass by Abdulla Yusuf Helal.

In the second-half, Oman captain Mohammed al Musallami cleared a Bahrain move conceding a corner in

the 53rd minute.

In the 54th minute, Bahrain's Abdulla Yusuf Helal gave a through ball, but Ali Madan was caught offside.

KEEN TUSSLE

Oman made an attempt in the 61st minute with Zahir al Aghbari's right-footed shot going straight to Bahrain goalkeeper Sayed Jaafar.

In the next minute, Jameel al Yahmadi's shot from the centre of the box missed to the right after a cross from Zahir al Aghbari.

Bahrain coach Helio Filipe brought in Komail al Aswad in place of Abdulwahab al Malood in the 63rd minute.

In the 78th minute, Ali Madan's right-footed shot from outside the box missed the target for Bahrain. Oman had threatened the Bahrain defence earlier but none of the Omani forwards could not manage a touch to a dangerous cross by Al Mundhir al Alawi.

Jameel al Yahmadi struck home in the 83rd minute to put Oman in front.

In the 88th minute, Bahrain's Amine Benaddi's header from the centre of the box missed the target to the left after a headed pass by Abdulla Yusuf Helal.

After a goalmouth tussle at the Omani box involving goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini coach Branko Ivankovic made a double change.

Khalid al Braiki replaced Zahir al Aghbari while Arshad al Alawi came in for Al Mundhir.

In the additional time, Bahrain made a last-ditch effort through Abdulla Yusuf Helal but the Omani defence blocked the shot.



CONFIDENT IRAQ MARCH INTO FINAL

HOSTS EDGE OUT FIGHTING QATAR IN FIRST SEMIFINAL

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 16

A confident Iraq marched into the final of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup with a 2-1 win over a competent Qatar in a pulsating first semifinal at the Basra International Stadium in Iraq on Monday.

Ibrahim Bayesh put Iraq ahead in the 19th minute from a close range after Mustafa Nadhim's header from the centre of the box was punched away by Qatar goalkeeper Meshaal Barsham. The ball fell in place for Bayesh who hit it powerfully to the roof of the Qatar net.

Qatar, who were playing aggressively from the start, didn't have to wait long for the equaliser.

Ahmed Alaa made a good advance to the right side of the Iraq penalty box and made a clever back-heel lob back to play. An onrushing Amro Abdelfatah made no delay in unleashing a firm right-footer to the bottom right corner of the Iraq net in the 28th minute to make it 1-1.

Iraq pushed ahead after the equaliser and Qatar were not behind in threatening counter attacks.

In the 41st minute, Qatar's Mohammed Waad received an assist from Amro Abdelfatah and tried a long-ranger which missed to the left.

The next move put the Iraqi fans ecstatic again. Amjad Attwan gave a good pass to Aymen Hussein in



Iraq's midfielder Aymen Hussein (C, #18) celebrates after scoring his team's second goal during the Arabian Gulf Cup semifinal match between Iraq and Qatar at the Basra International Stadium in Iraq's southern city on Tuesday. – AFP

front of the Qatar penalty box and Hussein struck with a firm shot to the centre of the goal as Iraq regained the lead 2-1.

In the 45th minute, Qatar's Tarek Salman tried a through ball, but Khalid Muneer was caught offside.

Qatar's Ahmed Alaa was booked for a rough tackle in the 17th minute.

Qatar made a promising move in the 15th minute. Khalid Muneer got near the box and his right-footed shot was blocked after an assist by Ali Asad.

Earlier, Qatar defence was able to block a left-footer by Iraq's Ali Faez in the 10th minute from the centre of the box after a cross by Dhurgham Ismail.

Qatar's Ismaeel Mohammad got a yellow card for a bad foul on Ibrahim Bayesh in the ninth

minute.

Iraq's Mohammed Ali Abbood was shown a yellow in the sixth minute for a rough tackle on Ali Asad.

The match started with a good attempt by Amjad Attwan for the hosts. Attwan's right-footed long-

range shot on the left was put away by the Qatari defender.

The second-half began with Qatar making efforts for a second equaliser.

Qatar made a strong move in the 49th minute. Mohammed Waad's measured pass was well received by Amro Abdelfatah to hit the right post with a right-footed shot from the centre of the box.

BUSY MOMENTS

Iraq made good pressure in the 70th minute to earn a free kick outside the Qatar box after a foul on hardworking Aymen Hussein by Qatari defender Jassem Gaber.

Qatar keeper Barsham was busy for the next few moments. At first, he saved a Dhurgham Ismail free kick in the right corner. Attwan tried with a left-footer, which was blocked by the Iraqi defence.

Barsham rose high next to put the Aymen header over the bar.

Iraq coach Jesus Garcia replaced Mohammed Ali Abbood with Sherko Kareem in the 64th minute after Qatar coach Bruno Pinheiro substituted Khalid Muneer with Tameem Al Abdullah.

Qatar's Tarek Salman was booked for a rough tackle on Amjad Attwan in the 60th minute.

In the fourth minute of the eight-minute injury time, Iraq came close to a third goal. Amjad Attwan's right-footer from the centre of the box missed the target narrowly to the left after a pass by Dhurgham Ismail.

FAN ZONE



Iraq's supporters display a large national flag in the stands ahead of the Arabian Gulf Cup's semifinal match between Iraq and Qatar at the Basra International Stadium on Tuesday. – AFP



Iraq's supporters take their seats ahead of the Arabian Gulf Cup's semifinal between Iraq and Qatar. – AFP



(LEFT) Iraq's supporters with national flags as they take their seat ahead of the Arabian Gulf Cup's semifinal between Iraq and Qatar. – AFP



(RIGHT) An Iraq supporter holds a national flag as in the stands ahead of the Arabian Gulf Cup's semifinal between Iraq and Qatar. – AFP

GAVI

SHINES AS BARCA BEAT MADRID TO WIN SPANISH SUPER CUP



RIYADH: Barcelona convincingly beat Real Madrid 3-1 in Saudi Arabia on Sunday to win the Spanish Super Cup, their first

trophy since coach Xavi Hernandez took over. Inspired by teenager Gavi, who scored himself and set up

goals for Robert Lewandowski and Pedri Gonzalez, the Catalans produced one of their best performances in years against



their bitter Clasico rivals.

Having enjoyed great success as a player at Barca, Xavi returned in November 2021 and after a summer

of heavy spending this emphatic victory is a sign his project is moving in the right direction.

Karim Benzema netted a late

consolation for Madrid, who have been far from their best since the World Cup break and also fell three points behind Barcelona in La Liga last weekend.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti suffered his first defeat in a final since 2014, with Los Blancos surrendering the trophy they earned last season to Barcelona, who have now won the Super Cup a record 14 times.

"We knew it was a chance we had to take, we have lived through an era of changes at the club and in the dressing room, and this will reinforce us to keep fighting for more titles," Barca captain Sergio Busquets told Movistar.

"You know how (Gavi) competes, he's very young -- most players at his age would be in the youth team -- and he's playing at an incredible level, giving assists, getting goals.

"He has a brilliant future ahead of him and a lot of room to improve. I hope he's a player who marks an era at Barca."

Xavi crucially deployed four central midfielders, with 18-year-old Gavi drifting inside off a nominal starting position on the left and frequently giving Madrid right-back Dani Carvajal the slip.

Toni Kroos played as Madrid's deepest midfielder with Aurelien Tchouameni out injured, and he was overruled.

Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois made a brilliant early save to deny Lewandowski, tipping his low drive against the post, while Benzema headed narrowly off-target.

Barcelona broke the deadlock when Busquets pressed well after a loose Antonio Rudiger pass, leading to Lewandowski feeding Gavi, who slotted home confidently. — AFP

Singles competitions begin in World Veterans TT Muscat

MUSCAT: The World Veteran Table Tennis Championships Muscat 2023 are officially open after a glittering opening ceremony at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC). Abdullah Bamakhalif, President of the Oman Table Tennis Association, Petra Sörling, President of International Table Tennis Federation, and His Highness Sayyid Fahar bin Fatik Al Said, welcomed the 1600+ players aged 40 to over 90 years of age to Muscat and wished them the very best as they compete for 44 world titles during the coming week.

Also in attendance was Basil bin Ahmed al Rowas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth and Chairman of Organising Committee, representatives of the Oman Table Tennis Association, Oman Sail, the Asian Table Tennis Association.

Distinguished guests were treated to a traditional Omani welcome performance featuring LEDs and Oman's Royal Guards before the focus turned to competition on Monday.

Abdullah Bamakhalif, President of the Oman Table Tennis Association, said, "I am honoured to welcome all of you to the opening ceremony of the World Veteran Table Tennis Championship in Muscat 2023. We have participants from all corners of the globe in attendance and I wish them a pleasant stay in Oman. The World Veteran Table Tennis Championship 2023 is a



significant international sports event in Oman's calendar. We are proud to have 1,600 participants from 69 countries in attendance.

"We look forward to sharing Oman's unique culture and warm hospitality with all of you," he added.

Petra Sörling, President of International Table Tennis Federation, said, "It is an honour to be here today, in the beautiful city of Muscat, speaking to all the guests and the talented players who have come from all corners of the world to participate in this prestigious event. Five long years. This is the time we have been waiting to compete again in a World Veteran Championships, and I am so excited that as per tomorrow we are all returning to action again.

It is truly inspiring to see the passion and dedication of all the players here, with the oldest participant being 90 years old. This is an event for all, and it really shows the close link between



sport - health and well-being. So let us all embrace the spirit of the World Veterans Championships and the motto of our sport: Table Tennis. For All. For Life. Forever," she added.

The first round of matches started on Monday and saw more than 80 tables in action across 21 age categories with the largest age category being the 90+ group.

Bruno Thumann of Germany, competing in the 80-85 category, said, "The venue is really good, with all new tables. Everything is perfect. It's great to see old friends again and meet up with players from the last World Championship in Las Vegas."

Geeta Kumthekar, representing India in the 60+ age group in singles, doubles and mixed doubles competition, added, "This is the first time I am participating in international competition. I only began playing at a later age and enjoyed the game very much, so to be here is a great feeling."

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Asyad Shipping inks pact for two new LNG carriers

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 16

Asyad Shipping, a subsidiary of Asyad Group, signed an agreement with world-leading Hyundai Samho Heavy Industries to build two modern LNG carriers dedicated to meeting the growing demand of the group's customers for energy logistics services in anticipation of an uptick in the global demand for gas transportation. With the two new tankers,

Asyad Shipping's ocean going fleet with rise to a total of 70 vessels catering to different cargoes. The two modern fifth-generation tankers will be built at the Samho Shipyard in the Republic of Korea, one of the best shipyards in the world, and will be delivered in 2026.

By building the two tankers, Asyad Shipping aims to enhance its diversified fleet and support it with the latest gas carriers, and increase its capabilities in maritime transport to cover the



expected growth in demand for natural gas, specifically to meet the export and transportation needs of its local and global customers.

Dr Ibrahim bin Bakhit al Nadhiri, CEO of Asyad Shipping, confirmed that strengthening the company's fleet with the latest international models is a new step in achieving the expansion plans of the Asyad Group, and

enhancing its competitiveness by providing reliable solutions to its growing customers locally and internationally.

He said, "Given the expected trends in the energy market today, which indicate a higher demand for LNG compared to traditional fossil fuels, Asyad Shipping has chosen to expand its logistical capabilities in this sector and to

bring in advanced LNG carriers with a capacity of 174,000 cubic metres."

The two tankers will be managed by the Oman Ship Management Company, a subsidiary of the group, which was recently crowned among the best international ship management companies.

Dr Al Nadhiri pointed out



that the fifth generation carriers were chosen in line with the highest international standards of environmental and commercial sustainability, as they are characterised by a high level of fuel efficiency and a low carbon footprint compared to other carriers.

In addition, Asyad Shipping seeks through these new assets to increase the local added value in the liquefied natural gas sector, by integrating with Omani production and export companies and providing them

with comprehensive logistical solutions that cover all stages of the value chain and support the national economy in general.

These advanced tankers will join the Asyad fleet, which includes various types of tankers and ships, including oil and gas VLCCs, bulk carriers and container ships, which will increase the presence of the Asyad Group as a provider of integrated logistics services in global and regional energy markets, and establish the Sultanate of Oman as a vital global logistics hub for energy.

DAVOS 2023

Global recession in 2023 seen as likely

DAVOS: Two-thirds of private and public sector chief economists surveyed by the World Economic Forum (WEF) expect a global recession in 2023, the Davos-organiser said on Monday as business and government leaders gathered for its annual meeting.

Some 18% considered a world recession "extremely likely" — more than twice as many as in the previous survey conducted in September 2022. Only one-third of respondents to the survey viewed it as unlikely this year.

"The current high inflation, low growth, high debt and high fragmentation environment reduces incentives for the investments needed to get back to growth and raise living standards for the world's most vulnerable," WEF Managing Director Saadia Zahidi said in a statement accompanying the survey results.

The organisation's survey was based on 22 responses from a group of senior economists drawn from international agencies including the International Monetary Fund, investment banks, multinationals and reinsurance groups.

The survey comes after the World Bank last week slashed its 2023 growth forecasts to levels close to recession for many countries as the impact of central bank rate hikes intensifies, Russia's war in Ukraine



The logo of the World Economic Forum 2022 (WEF) is seen at the congress center in the Alpine resort of Davos, Switzerland. — Reuters

continues, and the world's major economic engines sputter.

Definitions of what constitutes recession differ around the world but generally include the prospect of shrinking economies, possibly with high inflation in a "stagflation" scenario.

On inflation, the WEF survey saw large regional variations: the proportion expecting high inflation in 2023 ranged from just 5% for China to 57% for Europe, where the impact of last year's rise in energy prices has spread to the wider economy.

A majority of the economists see further monetary policy tightening in Europe and the United States (59% and 55%, respectively), with policy-makers caught between the risks of tightening too much or too little.

While a global slowdown would risk hitting investment in areas from education and health to tackling poverty and climate, some see it driving inflation down and forcing the US Fed and others to hold back from further rate hikes. — Reuters

OIA welcomes \$5 billion Saudi investment allocation to Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 16

Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), revealed that the Saudi Public Investment Fund, on the directives of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has allocated \$5 billion for investment in the Sultanate of Oman.

Al Murshidi, in an interview with *Asharq Al Awsat*, an Arabic international newspaper headquartered in London, said that the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia have come a long way towards integration and strengthening the partnership between the two countries, saying "what happened during the last two years, after the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom (of Saudi Arabia), exceeds what happened during the past twenty years."

He also revealed the appointment of an attaché to the investment body at the Oman embassy in Riyadh who will act as a focal person to link the Sultanate of Oman with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Al Murshidi revealed that the OIA took the initiative to bring investments in the clean energy sector, especially green hydrogen, to the Sultanate of Oman, with four big projects in partnership with international firms including



In addition to these four projects, we have a large number of investment requests in this field, which confirms our success in marketing the Sultanate of Oman as a fertile environment for investment in clean energy.

ABDULSALAM
AL MURSHIDI

President, Oman Investment Authority

DEME, Uniper, InterContinental Energy, EnerTech Holdings, Marubeni, Linde, Dutco, Air Products and Saudi company ACWA Power. These projects are:

■ Green Energy Oman: An Omani-Saudi-American

consortium and represents an extension of the Saudi investments of ACWA Power and its presence in Oman for a decade. It is a twin project of what is happening in NEOM in Saudi Arabia.

The project, which will consist of approximately 25 gigawatts (GW) of renewable solar and wind energy producing over 1.8 million tonnes of zero-carbon green hydrogen per annum, will make the Sultanate of Oman the largest producer of clean energy in the world.

■ HYPOT: A project to develop a green hydrogen and green ammonia production facility in Duqm Special Economic Zone. The project will have a capacity of 1.3 gigawatts of wind and solar energy.

■ H2Oman: A project to develop a green hydrogen and green ammonia production facility in the Salalah Free Zone. The project will have a capacity of 1.3 gigawatts of wind and solar energy.

■ Salalah Hydrogen (SalalahH2): The project will see the development of a second green hydrogen and green ammonia production facility in the Salalah Free Zone. The project will have a capacity of 3.8 gigawatts of wind and solar energy.

Al Murshidi stressed that these investments reflect the economic diplomacy pursued by

the Sultanate of Oman. In order to enhance the country's global position in the energy sector and contribute to achieving economic diversification and developing the national economy in accordance with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040, these four projects are expected to generate more than 30 gigawatts of renewable energy in Oman to produce green hydrogen, with a value exceeding \$40 billion.

He added: "In addition to these four projects, we have a large number of investment requests in this field, which confirms our success in marketing the Sultanate of Oman as a fertile environment for investment in clean energy."

"The Omani-Saudi Coordination Council has yielded a number of projects, and we had the honour to be the focal point with the relevant authorities in Saudi Arabia," Al Murshidi said, "including the Public Investment Fund and the Saudi Investment Authority and other companies such as SABIC, Naqua and others."

The partnership between the Oman's Asyad Group and Saudi shipping giant Bahri in the field of maritime transport and the entry Saudi Public Investment Fund as a main partner in Rakiza Fund — whose main purpose is to attract capital from international investors — are models for Gulf and Arab cooperation.



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The vehicle is also available with a naturally aspirated 4.0-liter V6 petrol engine that produces 271 hp and up to 39.25 Kg.m mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission.

Additionally, the vehicle is available with Adaptive Variable Suspension System (AVS), the All-Wheel Drive Integrated Management (AIM) concept, which delivers integrated control of the vehicle's drive force, AWD, suspension, braking and steering systems according to driving conditions to enhance driving pleasure.

The Land Cruiser is equipped with the latest off-road driver assistance features, including the new 3D-Multi Terrain Monitor (3D-MTM) assists the driver in determining the road conditions around the vehicle, a first for Toyota that facilitates safer and more confident low-speed manoeuvring. A

new AUTO mode enhances the capabilities of Multi-Terrain Select by adjusting according to

road conditions such as sand, rock, dirt, and mud. The vehicle also features crawl control and turn assist functions.

The interior cocoons passengers in a sophisticated and comfortable space unaffected by the external environment. The cabin offers a range of advanced features such as wireless charging for smartphones, Active Noise Control, and a 4-zone automatic air conditioning system with rear control switches.

The cluster gauge features a 7-inch colour Multi-information Display (MID) and a 12.3-inch Multimedia display. Additional features available include a 14-speaker JBL sound system, Rear Seat Entertainment (RSE) system with 11.6-inch touch-screen displays that are Wi-Fi and HDMI connection enabled, ventilation for the first and second-row seats, a multi-adjustable power driver seat, 40:20:40 split-folding second-row seats, fully flat-folding third-row seats, a kick-sensor operated power tailgate, and smart entry and start systems.

Safety remains a top priority for the Land Cruiser, which comes with an advanced safety system.

In Oman, the nationwide parts and service network of Saud Bahwan Automotive supports Toyota's outstanding product quality. No wonder that today, Toyota is one of the most trusted and well-known brands.

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10 winners honoured with 2023 Zayed Sustainability Prize

QASIM AL MAASHANI
ABU DHABI, JAN 16

Ten international organisations were named winners of the prestigious 2023 Zayed Sustainability Prize, which was awarded on Monday against the backdrop of the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) underway in the UAE capital.

UAE President Shaikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan presented awards in the presence of local and international dignitaries.

The \$3 million Prize is the UAE's pioneering global award in sustainability that recognises and rewards small and medium-sized enterprises, non-profit organisations and high schools around the world that are delivering impactful, innovative and inspiring solutions in health, food, energy and water.

Speaking at the event, Shaikh Mohammed said: "Over the last 15 years, the Zayed Sustainability Prize has successfully built upon the legacy of the UAE's Founding Father, Sheikh Zayed, and carried forward his bold humanitarian vision, ensuring that the resources of our great nation are fully used to the benefit of all people. Today, the Zayed Sustainability Prize stands an internationally recognised award that mobilises innovators, social entrepreneurs and young people to accelerate positive change for our planet and all people."



In the Health category, Brazil's Associação Expedicionários da Saúde (EDS) was awarded the Prize for its Mobile Hospital Complex, which provides specialised medical and surgical care for indigenous communities geographically isolated within the Amazon.

Ynsect from France was the Food category winner for its important work in insect-based protein and natural fertilisers. The SME produces insect protein and natural insect fertilisers at Europe's first-of-its-kind insect factory equipped with innovative vertical farming and integrated biorefining setup.

In the Energy category, the Jordan-based NeuroTech developed AI-based algorithms with a blockchain-based transaction system to bring reliable energy access to refugee

camp. The SME employs the concept of energy sharing by separating electrical loads into low- and high-priority streams.

LEDARS (Local Environment Development and Agricultural Research Society), an NPO from Bangladesh, secured the Water category win for its integrated water resource management model that solves water scarcity issues in disaster-prone areas.

Their combination of technologies help transforms communities in Bangladesh, so people can have access to safe drinking water and climate smart livelihoods.

The recipients of the 2023 Global High School awards are Fundacion Bios Terrae - ICAM Ubaté (Colombia), representing The Americas; Romain-Rolland-Gymnasium (Germany), representing Europe & Central

Asia; Gifted Students School (Iraq), representing the Middle East & North Africa region; UWC East Africa — Arusha Campus (Tanzania), representing Sub-Saharan Africa; Dhaka Residential Model College (Bangladesh), representing South Asia, and finally, Kamil Muslim College (Fiji) from the East Asia & Pacific region.

Through its 96 former winners, the Prize has transformed the lives of more than 378 million people around the world since 2008, including in Vietnam, Nepal, Sudan, Ethiopia, Maldives and Tuvalu.

In the Health, Food, Energy, and Water categories, each winner receives \$600,000, while the Global High Schools category has six winners, representing six world regions, with each winner receiving up to \$100,000.

Asalah customers hail Bank Muscat's exclusive Priority Banking WhatsApp service

MUSCAT: In line with its vision "To serve you better, everyday" and commitment to customer service excellence, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, offers an automated WhatsApp service to its Asalah Priority Banking customers. Launched earlier in 2021, the service has been witnessing increasing usage and has received excellent feedback from a large number of Asalah Priority Banking customers.

Using the service is as simple as saving the dedicated Asalah Call



Centre number (24779999) in the phone contacts list, following which it will automatically appear within WhatsApp as Bank Muscat Asalah Priority Banking.

Customers can send the message "Hi" or "Hello" to the number through WhatsApp to receive the menu list as a reply. Replying with the relevant code from the menu list will enable customers to get more details on the specific topic of their interest through its improved navigation functionality. Customer service executives are available on all days from 8 am to 10.30 pm, while automated WhatsApp chat is available 24/7 to help answer different queries that customers may have. In 2019, Bank Muscat became the first

bank in the Sultanate of Oman to launch a dedicated WhatsApp channel for its personal banking customers through 24795555 and followed this up with the launch of a dedicated Asalah WhatsApp service in 2021.

The implementation of this service offers customers one more channel of communication with the bank so as to quickly get answers to their queries, and demonstrates the bank's keenness to keep abreast with the latest technological developments, so as to better serve its customers.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds opens 300th global showroom

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with a strong retail network of 300 showrooms across 10 countries, inaugurated its 300th global showroom in Dallas, Texas, USA.

Susan Fletcher, Collin County Commissioner and Jeff Cheney, Mayor of Frisco, Texas, jointly inaugurated the showroom in the presence of Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director – International Operations.

The event was virtually attended by M P Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group; K P Abdul Salam, Vice-Chairman, Malabar Group; O Asher, Managing Director – India Operations, other team members, well-wishers and dignitaries.

"It is a moment of great pride for us as we touch the 300th mark with this new showroom in Dallas, USA. We started off with a small showroom in Calicut, Kerala, India and today, in less than 30 years, we have a strong retail presence of 300 showrooms across 10 countries; all thanks to our customers, shareholders, employees and other stakeholders.

We will continue to strengthen our retail presence in the regions where we have established a robust presence, as well as enter new markets with our differentiated products, services and assurances.

The acceptance and patronage received by the brand gives us the confidence to further speed up the expansion process in becoming



the No. 1 jewellery retailer globally," said M P Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds currently operates in 10 countries and has immediate expansion

plans into the UK, Bangladesh, Australia, Egypt, Canada, Turkey, South Africa.

The future expansions are expected to create approximately 6,000 job opportunities in the

retail, manufacturing, technical and management areas related to jewellery trade.

'Malabar Gold & Diamonds has played a vital role in making Indian jewellery more acceptable and trustworthy at the global level in recent years. We are now crafting unique experiences targeting the individual and specific preferences of our customers.

As the design discovery and initial decision-making of most customers are happening online these days, we are focusing greatly on strengthening our omnichannel retail strategy, for which we are making use of the services of global technology giants like Microsoft, IBM, Accenture, E&Y, Deloitte etc," said Abdul Salam K P,

Vice Chairman, Malabar Group. Malabar Gold & Diamonds is renowned globally for offering an unparalleled jewellery buying experience with convenience, and customer-friendly policies along with the 'Malabar Promise' of incomparable quality and service assurance.

Malabar Promise includes assured lifetime maintenance from any of the showrooms across 10 countries, guaranteed buyback, IGI and GIA-certified diamonds ensuring 28-point quality check of global standards, zero deduction gold exchange, complete transparency, 916 hallmarked pure gold, responsible sourcing, fair price policy and fair labour practices.

The Davos party returns, with the shakes



LAUREN SILVA LAUGHLIN

The writer has been a journalist for nearly 15 years and was one of the original members of the US Reuters Breakingviews office, which she joined in 2006.

There's a hangover happening in Davos even though the party hasn't yet started. The World Economic Forum's annual winter shindig in the Swiss mountain resort, which kicks off on Monday, marks a return for glitzy parties and high-minded debates following a three-year hiatus.

A record number of business leaders are set to make the trip, and the passage of commercial, private and government aircraft through Zurich's airport suggests overall attendees are at pre-Covid-19 levels. Yet the direction for the future — and those who will lead it — is more clouded than ever.

Corporate and financial chieftains who skipped last May's

low-key Davos gathering are back. JPMorgan boss Jamie Dimon, a regular at the conference, will be joined by Wall Street leaders including David Solomon of Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley's James Gorman. Chevron Chief Executive Mike Wirth and BP's Bernard Looney will represent resurgent oil majors. All in all, the WEF expects to welcome some 2,700 leaders from 130 countries, including 370 public figures.

Yet the apparent return to business as usual only serves to highlight the changes that have taken place since the last full gathering of the Davos elite. The global pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have added more friction to the already creaking globalised world that

Davos epitomised.

Meanwhile, the political leaders responsible for shaping the new order are mostly staying at home. US President Joe Biden is not making the trip — unlike his predecessor.

Though a smattering of US Congress members are expected to come they are hardly well-known international figures. China's most senior representative is Vice-Premier Liu He. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, grappling with a slowing economy and striking public sector workers, is also staying home.

A stroll down the Davos Promenade, the town's main drag where countries and corporations temporarily take over storefronts, underscores the shift. Poland

and Indonesia have a prominent presence, but other national delegations have quieter messages on display. Saudi Arabia has a few conspicuous banners touting NEOM, its futuristic economic zone. The United Arab Emirates is touting tolerance.

The cryptocurrency firms that were at previous gatherings are mostly muted, replaced by companies promoting technologies like the blockchain. The Medical Psychedelics House has been replaced by the India Inclusivity Lounge. Established technology companies like Workday, Salesforce, Cisco, Qualcomm and Meta Platforms dominate the street scene. Perhaps the most striking new tenant is Manchester United, the English

Premier League club which is seeking a buyer.

The shift is reflective of a world that has become introspective and less joined-up. As big companies diversify supply chains, governments and regions are competing hard for business.

Biden's Inflation Reduction Act is dangling subsidies for American manufacturing, encouraging governors like J B Pritzker of Illinois to lure investment to their state. The WEF and its founder Klaus Schwab acknowledged some of this by renaming the conference "Cooperation in a Fragmented World".

Still, those returning to Davos for the first time in three years may feel like the cocktail is a little less potent. — Reuters

Investors are walking a tightrope as stocks rise

Wall Street notched a second week of gains, a cautious rally that has come as investors anticipate an easing in the Federal Reserve's inflation fight but have to balance that against the prospect that interest rates could remain high for some time.

The S&P 500 rallied back from earlier losses to finish up 0.4% for the day, taking the index to a gain of 2.7% for the week and 4.2% since the start of the year.

After waving goodbye to the worst performance for the S&P 500 since 2008 last year, investors have begun the new year walking a tightrope. Signs of cooling inflation pressure have raised expectations that the Fed may not raise interest rates much further — after they rose from near zero to a target range of 4.25% to 4.5% in just nine months.

But borrowing costs will nonetheless remain elevated, slowing the economy and cutting further into corporate profits. Higher interest rates increase costs for consumers and companies, weighing on the stock market.

Investors have embraced the potential for a shift in the Fed's fight against inflation, with a slowdown in the pace of consumer price inflation this week bolstering expectations that the central bank could raise interest rates by just 0.25 percentage points next month, smaller than the 0.5 percentage point rate increase that it raised in December.

Some analysts expect that increase to be the last such move for now, and investors in the futures markets are betting that a downturn in the economy could cause the Federal Reserve to begin lowering interest rates later this year. Both of those views stand in contrast to what the central bank has said it plans to do.

"Even though the Fed is saying they will not cut interest rates, the market

is saying that in three to six months, we will have recession, we will have moderating inflation and you will be singing a different tune," said Andrzej Skiba, head of US fixed income at BlueBay Asset Management.

"There is a massive difference between what we are hearing from the Fed and what the market is thinking will occur."

Last Friday marked the unofficial start of "earnings season," where Wall Street analysts face off against America's largest companies over their profits for the end of 2022 and their expectations for the year ahead.

Early reports from a number of big financial institutions showed stable profits but rising concerns about the economy.

JPMorgan, the largest bank in the United States, reported higher profits than analysts had expected but warned that the economy was headed toward a "mild recession" later in the year. The bank's stock price initially fell in early-morning trading, before rebounding to a rise of 2.5% for the day.

Just how mild the recession might be depends on how long inflation stays above the Fed's target of 2% and, therefore, how long the central bank feels it needs to keep interest rates high.

Despite the latest reading showing an overall slowdown in inflation, the consumer price index data also pointed to continued price pressure in areas of the economy reliant on consumer demand.

That is worrying for the Fed as it points to the strength of the labour market and wage gains that are impeding the central bank's job of lowering inflation more quickly.

"The last couple of days have shown the tug of war now characterising market sentiment," said David Donabedian, chief investment officer of CIBC Private Wealth US.

— The New York Times

China and the sovereign debt bomb



ANNE O KRUEGER

The author, a former World Bank chief economist and former first deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, is Senior Research Professor of International Economics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and Senior Fellow at the Center for International Development at Stanford University.

International capital flows have long been a major source of economic growth. Savings in higher-income countries have financed high-yielding investments in low-income countries, generating benefits for all.

After World War II, capital flows under the Marshall Plan drove the rapid reconstruction of Europe, and after those countries recovered, they extended their own foreign aid and other official financial flows to the developing world.

Private financing also increased substantially; by the 1990s, it accounted for over half of total capital flows to developing countries. Some of these flows led to spectacular results. South Korea was one of the poorest countries

in the world in the 1950s, with a savings rate of only three per cent of GDP.

But after implementing major policy reforms, it was able to avail itself of large capital inflows to finance investments with very high rates of return. It has since become an advanced economy. High savings and investment rates mean it has no difficulty servicing its debt.

But not all low-income countries have pursued macroeconomic and other policies that are conducive to growth. Many have borrowed to cover balance of payments deficits and other problems, depleting their foreign exchange reserves and jeopardising their access to private capital markets.

For decades, the international community addressed these problems through the International Monetary Fund and an informal arrangement among official (government) creditors known as the Paris Club. When an indebted country ran into trouble, the IMF stepped in to provide short-term financing and recommend policy reforms designed to put the economy back on a sustainable growth path.

Once the IMF and the debtor-country government had agreed on a reform programme, the Paris Club creditors could negotiate a reduction of the existing official bilateral debt to make it sustainable.

Implicit in this process was that private creditors also must agree to a similar 'haircut'. Otherwise, the IMF's bailout funds would end up being used to service the country's debts to the private sector, rather than for restoring economic

activity.

Although this system for managing crises was far from perfect, it generally worked. But the situation has changed markedly in the past two decades, during which China has become a major lender to developing countries.

As of 2022, the world's 74 lowest-income countries had debt service obligations totalling \$35 billion, with \$13.1 billion — 37 per cent — owed to China. According to a May 2021 Peterson Institute for International Economics policy brief, China accounts for over 50 per cent of all debt owed by poor countries to official creditors.

China's emergence as a leading creditor has created problems, not least because it has refused an invitation to join the Paris Club.

While Paris Club members share information about the sums owed to them, China does not. Nor has it been willing to participate meaningfully in multilateral debt restructuring arrangements. Instead, it has operated as a black box, attaching non-disclosure agreements to many of its loans, and funnelling credit through a wide range of agencies.

In 2020, the G20 — which includes China — agreed on a Common Framework for addressing debt distress in developing countries. But there has been little additional progress since then. This month, Ghana became only the fourth country to apply for support under the facility.

Meanwhile, the number of countries facing serious debt-servicing issues has continued to grow. Zambia and Sri Lanka have

already defaulted on their loans, and their economies are in deep recession.

While Sri Lanka — along with Malawi — has tentatively accepted the terms of a new IMF programme, the agreement cannot be signed (or the funds disbursed) until the debt is made sustainable. But when the existing debt level is unsustainable, the IMF cannot approve the loan without all significant creditors agreeing to a restructuring.

The resulting paralysis has put many other poor countries in danger. Tunisia cannot meet its budget without international bond financing.

Ghana, already struggling under a heavy debt load, was forced in November to issue a six-month treasury bill with a ruinous 36 per cent interest rate.

Pakistan, after being devastated by floods last summer, has foreign exchange reserves equal to only a month's imports — well below a level deemed safe. And these are just a few of the countries with debt levels that are, or are likely to become, unsustainable.

Without international help, these highly indebted countries will be confronted with ongoing shortages of electricity, fuel, and other essentials (as we saw in Sri Lanka last year), leading to economic stagnation or decline.

As more countries fall into this trap, humanitarian crises and sharp increases in poverty will follow. It is in everyone's interest to find ways to ensure debt restructuring, along with the necessary economic policy reforms, for countries in dire need. ©Project Syndicate, 2023



People wait to buy gas cylinders near Colombo, Sri Lanka. — Reuters

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Be Careful. Be Responsible! #Living_with_Covid19

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

NEW YORK: Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has commended the role of the Sultanate in supporting international efforts to establish security and peace in Yemen.

In a virtual video call to countries lacking the global ceasefire initiative, Guterres said that the international community is grateful to the Sultanate of Oman for its crucial role in enhancing efforts aimed to establish peace and security in Yemen.

"The United Nations values this vital and positive role," he said.

Guterres added that the "Sultanate represents a unique model, not only in the Middle East, but also in the world." He urged other countries to follow the example of the Sultanate in advocating and supporting peace and stability. — ONA

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

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

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

CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. TURN TO P4

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are filling on deaf ears.

A drive around the downtown Ruwi and its adjoining areas reveals how recklessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder.

While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves.

scare away a group of people at a sidewalk in Ruwi. The Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Health have said it more than enough times that social distancing is the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19.

While expressing his ire, Hamed said, "The attitude of some people is not acceptable that they pave the way for the spread of the infection. Even if we do not have the authority to lay charges on the offenders, at least we can scare them away," he told the Observer.

TURN TO P4

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

and in some cases, it is necessary to police the behavior of other people as well," said Hamed al Wahabi, who stopped his car to

Exploring Wadi Manjal and the meaningful conversations in between

In a trek to Wadi Manjal, a local guide and adventurer, Hamdoon, brought out a misshapen kettle that has seen better days to prepare Omani-style coffee. It became a conversation starter and an important focal point as to why Oman is a great place for outdoor lovers... **P20**

Stars flock to Dakar for All-Africa Music Awards

MUSICAL HEAVYWEIGHTS gathered in Dakar, Senegal on Sunday for the eighth All-Africa Music Awards (AFRIMA) that aim to celebrate and promote the continent's best veteran and cutting-edge musicians.

Globally recognised stars including Senegalese maestro Youssou Ndour, and Nigerian artists P-Square and Tiwa Savage are among those set

to perform during the main awards ceremony at the 15,000-seat Dakar stadium.

Gabonese singer and AFRIMA nominee Espoir La Tigresse was among the extravagantly dressed guests posing on the red carpet before the ceremony.

"I'm wearing a head mask from my tribe in Gabon representing a traditional dance from my village to

show that I'm proud of my culture and wanted to share it with the people here today," she said, wearing a black gown and a headpiece decorated with long straw-like fronds that hid most of her face.

The mass appeal of contemporary genres such as Afrobeats, where artists sing and rap over electronic backing tracks, has translated into record sales and sold-

out concerts for some African artists across the continent and also in the United States and parts of Europe in recent years.

"This is such an exciting moment in African music, and we are proud of the way these artists have been able to cross over to several markets both on the home front and even globally," said AFRIMA President Mike Dada ahead of the ceremony.

Companies are cashing in on rising global interest in African music. Last June, Universal Music Group launched a label for independent African labels and artists, while music streaming platforms, including Spotify, have sought to expand their offerings by African artists. — **Reuters**



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QUOTATIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG



ENTERTAINMENT

Jason Baird poses in the press room with the award for Best Hair and Make-up for "Elvis" during the 28th Annual Critics Choice Awards at the Fairmont Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, California. — **AFP**



LIFESTYLE

Visitors look at plants and flowers on the opening day of the flower markets in Hong Kong on January 16, 2023 ahead of the Lunar New Year of the Rabbit, which falls on January 22. — **AFP**





Gina Lollobrigida

From post-war film legend to artist

PHILIP PULLELLA

Gina Lollobrigida, who has died at the age of 95, shot to fame in the 1950s as a sultry Mediterranean sex symbol, then became a photographer and sculptor after stepping away from the movie world.

At the height of her fame in the 1950s and 1960s, Lollobrigida, who was known simply as "La Lollo," was an internationally recognised epitome of Italian post-war cinema, rivalled only by Sophia Loren.

Tempestuous and impulsive by nature, she made headlines again in 2006, when, at age 79, she announced that she would marry a man 34 years her junior. She later called off the wedding, blaming the media for spoiling it.

"All my life I wanted a real love, an authentic love, but I have never had one. No one has ever truly loved me. I am a cumbersome woman," she told an interviewer when she was 80.

Born to a working class family in a poor mountainous area east of Rome, she studied sculpture then got her break in the film world after finishing third in the 1947 Miss Italia beauty contest. (The winner that year was Lucia Bose.)

One of her earliest performances was as Gemma, the unhappy adulteress in the 1953 film by director Mario Soldati "The Wayward Wife" (La Provinciale).

She burst to fame in Italy with the leading roles in two Italian comedies by Luigi Comencini — "Bread, Love and Dreams," and "Bread, Love and Jealousy".

WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
A role opposite Humphrey Bogart in John Huston's 1954 film "Beat the Devil," sealed her worldwide fame and in 1955 she made what became one of her signature films, "The World's Most Beautiful Woman".



She was also directed by other film luminaries such as Rene Clair and Carol Reed.

But despite playing opposite other American stars such as Frank Sinatra and Burt Lancaster, she never clicked with Hollywood and preferred to work closer to home, making films throughout the 1960s with directors such as Mario Bolognini.

Perhaps her last well-known movie was "Buona Sera, Mrs Campbell," a farce by director Melvin Frank which also starred Phil Silvers, Peter Lawford and Telly Savalas.

In it, she played Carla, an Italian woman who had affairs with three American soldiers during World War Two and meets them all again during a squadron reunion 20 years later.

Born on July 4, 1927, Lollobrigida



pleted her education.

She first earned her living as a model for fotoromanzi, the photographic novels avidly read in Italy, using the stage name Diana Loris.

Lollobrigida accompanied her success on the screen with a hectic, often turbulent life that provided a rich source for Italian paparazzi and gossip writers.

She tried to guard her private life, retreating to an isolated villa on Rome's ancient Appian Way, which was decorated with her own sculptures and paintings as well art she collected on her world travels.

In 1950 she married Yugoslav emigre doctor Milko Skofic, who became her manager. They couple had one son, Milko Junior.

They separated after nearly 17 years, and Lollobrigida said later she had no intention of remarrying. "Marriages are boring and almost always like funerals, and couples so often restrict each other too much," she said. — Reuters

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A LOOK INTO THE ACADEME



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Teaching skills that matter for future educators

FUTURE SKILLS ARE the most conducive instrumental for 21st century learners since it's clear that these skills play a vital role in day-to-day life. Hence, teaching 21st century skills is as important as teaching any other essential skill. In addition, Future skills are much more than proficiency with ordinary skills; indeed, these foundational skills are critical; yet the crux of future skills meaning the ability to exceptionally apply them in specific situations.

Overall, in the 21st century education is becoming complex and challenging. Consequently, to adapt rapidly changing world in the 21st, students should be able to keep up with the latest information, technology, and skills. Likewise, educators today need to use qualitative methods to provide learners with the characteristics and skills that will help them enhance their self and professional competencies to engage in the future.

In light of the importance of teaching in the 21st century, (Cox, 2016), stated that the only way that teachers can do to prepare their students for the future is through a set of strategies, the author indicates five of the most teaching strategies in 21st century that educators should have in today's classroom, as follow:

1. Teaching Strategies to Teach All Learners: Being a 21st century educator means having the facility to teach and reach all learners. Thus, all students can learn using their own unique style and/or by their ability or readiness level. In today's classrooms, educators have learned that students learn best when they are taught to their own unique style and ability.
2. Implement Technology: The ability to not only learn about the new educational gadgets that will help students learn better and faster, but also to know how to use and implement the gadget within the classroom is an essential skill of a 21st century educator. Accordingly, an active educator will have the know-how and the wherewithal how to implement and incorporate technology into the classroom in a way that will be productive for all students.
3. Able to Foster Student Relationships: In a digital world where students can count the number of friends that they have by the likes they get on Facebook and Instagram, it is essential now more than ever for educators to foster healthy relationships among their students.

Educators ought to embrace change and adapt to it, technology changes daily, as do new teaching strategies, testing techniques, and the way we are able to learn and communicate with others.

An effective teacher has facilitated interpersonal relationships within the classroom so that students will have a sense of community and communicate with their peers on a higher level than just social media.

4. Forward Thinking: A 21st century educator can anticipate the future and plan for it. Teachers' competence pushes their students to navigate their way through this ever-changing technological world. They have the efficiency in preparing students for the future based on current trends and technology.

5. Embrace Change: this is an essential characteristic of a 21st century teacher since of the rapid changes in technology and the way that students learn. Educators ought to embrace change and adapt to it, technology changes daily, as do new teaching strategies, testing techniques, and the way we are able to learn and communicate with others.

To conclude, as far as known at present, educating a new generation in the 21st century needs a radical change and comprehensive reform, and teaching strategies that allow them to engage in their learning process in a way that might not otherwise occur: Learning to produce knowledge, running technology and media, and learning to coexistence with others.



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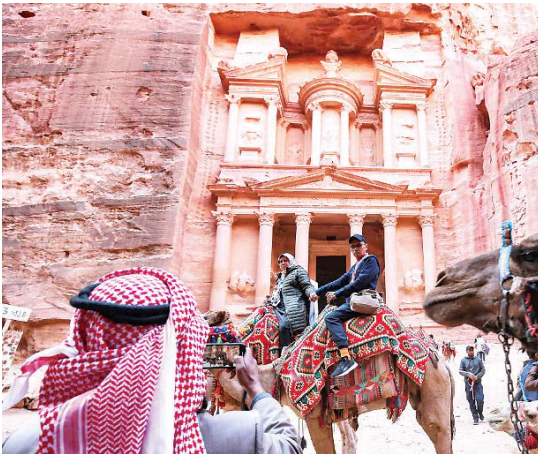


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AROUND THE WORLD

TRAVEL

Tourists surge back to Jordan's desert marvel Petra



TENDING TO HIS CAMELS in Petra, Jordan's spectacular archaeological marvel hidden deep in a desert canyon, Hussein Bdoul is all smiles: the tourists are back.

After years in which the Covid pandemic turned the storied "Rose City" into a ghost town, the father of seven is back at work, offering visitors rides on his decorated animals.

"Tourism has returned and the numbers are even greater," said Bdoul, 35, wearing Bedouin garb with a red keffiyeh scarf over his long black hair, reflecting on a resurgence last year.

"At the time of the coronavirus pandemic, we did not see anyone in Petra," said Bdoul — a disaster for the town where, he said, "90 per cent of people work in tourism".

"We hope from God Almighty that people will stay well."

Jordan tourism authorities confirm that Petra is back in business and drew 900,000 visitors last year, close to the record of one million set in 2019.

Jordan as a whole received 4.6 million visitors in 2022 — almost four times the level from 2020 — earning the country \$5.3 billion.

Top draw Petra, famous for its stunning temples hewn out of the rose-pink cliff faces, is a United Nations World Heritage site and was chosen as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World in a 2007 online poll.

It was built in 312 BC as the capital of the ancient Arab kingdom of the Nabateans, which fell to the Romans in 106 BC.

The ancient city remained unknown in the West until a Swiss traveller visited it in 1812.

"Sigh of relief"

"This place and the colours are incredible," marvelled French student Alia, 16, taking a break from exploring with her mother to check out a souvenir stand.

Around 1,700 people make a living from Petra as tour guides, trinket sellers or by taking visitors through the site on donkeys, horses, camels or electric buggies.

"We breathed a sigh of relief when we saw the return of tourists," said Muhammad Samahin, 16, selling drinks while sitting on woven rugs inside the Moon Cave near the famed Treasury site.

Suleiman Farajat, head of the Petra Development and Tourism Regional Authority, said the post-pandemic tourism comeback had exceeded all expectations.

At the height of the pandemic, "there were days when there were no tourists" in Petra, located 230 kilometres (140 miles) south of the capital Amman.

The recovery was helped by official promotional campaigns in new overseas markets, low-cost airline flights and new hotel rooms, said Farajat.

Petra now has 4,000 rooms, and permits have been granted for three new five-star hotels, so capacity will soon almost double from 2019, he said. "If things continue this way, we may reach, during the next three to four years, the threshold of two million tourists in Petra" every year. — **AFP**

FASHION

Men's fashion week goes live in Milan, Gucci brings back the boys



The return of Gucci to the menswear catwalk calendar, robust sales of Italian fashion and a farewell to the pandemic-imposed trend of virtual shows — it's all systems go for men's fashion week in Milan which opened on Friday.

Promising spectacle and optimism after a year in which sales of Italian fashion showed the strongest growth of the last 20 years, presentations for Fall-Winter 2023/2024 men's collections run until Tuesday.

Of the 79 shows, only four are digital, a holdover from the debilitating pandemic period that sent sales plunging and brought a halt to live runway shows.

Nothing replaces "the live experience, the frenzy, the expectation, the applause, the top models parading on the catwalk and the powerful music," fashion consultant Elisabetta Cavatorta said.

Most anticipated was fashion powerhouse Gucci which put on a menswear-only show for the first time in three years and the luxury label's first since artistic director Alessandro Michele's surprise departure in November.

NEW DIRECTION AT GUCCI?

At its minimalist show on Friday, Gucci said it was celebrating "the aesthetics of improvisation" with a collection inspired by the classic

wardrobe of the gentleman, revisited in a subversive spirit. Combining faded jeans with sequined tops and green and red or pink boots with heels, the collection mixed genres and colours.

Long oversized coats with ample shoulder pads and maxi skirts split to reveal bare legs peppered the collection, while wool hats and rectangular tote bags tossed carelessly over the shoulder added to Gucci's accessory arsenal.

With his colourful collections seeped in the 1970s, Michele provided a new lease on life after being tapped in 2015 to revive sales at the storied brand with the world-famous stripe logo in green and red.

While sales exploded by 44 per cent in 2018 for Kering's flagship brand, growth has lagged competitors in the last two years.

"It remains to be seen whether Alessandro Michele's departure initiates a change of direction for the fashion house," Cavatorta said. As to who will take over the reins at Gucci, the fashion world awaits news of Michele's successor with bated breath.

SOARING REVENUES

Armani, Prada, Fendi, Dolce & Gabbana and Zegna are among the big labels set to unveil men's collections in the Italian fashion capital.

But there have been defections including

Versace, which plans to show its men's and women's collections together in Los Angeles on March 10.

Despite the war in Ukraine and the impact of the energy crisis on an energy-intensive fashion supply chain, sales of Italian fashion last year rose 16 per cent to 96.6 billion euros (\$104.4 billion).

"This is the highest revenue in the last 20 years," said Carlo Capasa, president of the Italian Fashion Chamber, at a presentation ahead of the shows last month. Inflation has had an impact, as Italian fashion prices rose by about nine per cent in 2022, but their increase is "a positive sign that closes a year marked by dramatic events and difficult times," Capasa added.

Exports of "Made in Italy" fashion climbed 18.7 per cent in the first nine months of last year, driven by demand in the United States and the Gulf countries where exports both soared by more than 50 per cent.

Sales to China grew more moderately, at 18.8 per cent, while exports to Russia fell by 26 per cent, in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine.

But one area in which the impact of the Covid-19 crisis will still be felt in Milan is the absence of Chinese buyers.

Despite the lifting of coronavirus-related health restrictions by authorities in Beijing, the number of buyers who will travel to the city for the shows will be "limited", Capasa said — **AFP**

CULTURE

Egypt unveils ancient royal tomb in Luxor



EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES announced on Saturday the discovery of an ancient tomb in Luxor dating back around 3,500 years that archaeologists believe holds the remains of an 18th dynasty royal.

The tomb was unearthed by Egyptian and British researchers on the west bank of the River Nile, where the famous Valley of the Queens and Valley of the Kings lie, said Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities.

"The first elements discovered so far inside the tomb seem to indicate that it dates back to the 18th dynasty" of pharaohs Akhenaton and Tutankhamun, Waziri said in a statement.

The 18th dynasty, part of the period of Egyptian history known as the New Kingdom, ended in 1292 BC and is considered among the most prosperous years of Ancient Egypt.

Piers Litherland of the University of Cambridge, head of the British research mission, said the tomb could be of a royal wife or princess of Thutmoseid lineage.

Egyptian archaeologist Mohsen Kamel said the tomb's interior was "in poor condition".

Parts of it including inscriptions were "destroyed in ancient floods which filled the burial chambers with sand and limestone sediment", Kamel added, according to the antiquities board's statement.

Egypt has unveiled several major archaeological discoveries in recent years, most notably in the Saqqara necropolis south of the capital Cairo.

Critics say the flurry of excavations has prioritised finds shown to grab media attention over hard academic research.

But the discoveries have been a key component of Egypt's attempts to revive its vital tourism industry, the crowning jewel of which is the long-delayed inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum at the foot of the pyramids.

The country of 104 million inhabitants suffers a severe economic crisis.

Egypt's tourism industry accounts for 10 per cent of GDP and some two million jobs, according to official figures, but has been hammered by political unrest and the Covid pandemic. — **AFP**



Exploring Wadi Manjal and the meaningful conversations in between

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As the water boils inside the kettle sitting on a small but consistent flame, Hamdoon moved towards his tiny setup to add a spoonful of coffee into the boiling water. Although everyone was seated far from each other, the others enjoying the beauty of the waterfall nearby, the smell of freshly boiled coffee started to float through the air.

The beautiful waterfall where we decided to stop signalled the end of our Wadi Manjal trek. The area we picked was surrounded by mountains on three sides, the waterfall a beautiful addition to the view and the wadi where the water is collected, a welcome respite as its cool water was ideal for a dip.

When Hamdoon called that the Omani-style coffee was ready, the trekkers formed a circle around the kettle. It didn't escape us that it has been badly deformed and from the wear and tear, it was easy to tell that it has seen better days and with its owner, has gone through many adventures. If only kettles could talk.

When everyone got their tiny cups, we all sat in silence listening to the collective symphony of nature and it was only broken when Hamdoon decided to share the story behind his treasured kettle.

I met Hamdoon a few years back fascinated by the places he has been both in and out of Oman. He has visited nearly all corners of Oman and beyond Oman, he hitchhiked and cycled through places like Zanzibar, Morocco and Qatar and usually visited places on a tight budget.

Because of the nature of his travel where he has no luxury of bringing a lot of things, the kettle is one of the items dear to him that has survived his many trips and had become a consistent companion.

Hamdoon shared that the kettle has been soaked with the waters from the Alps and it was with him when he climbed the top of the Toubkal mountain peak in southwestern Morocco. It has survived the countless journeys he made at the Via Ferrata in the Grand Canyon of Oman. It has experienced the beauty of the tropical Islands of Zanzibar.

His misshapen kettle, therefore, has become a conversation starter and as he told us the many different places he has been, it encouraged the rest of us to share our adventures and misadventures. Some spoke about the kite surfing experiences in Oman, some showed interest to attend

the Umq Bir the longest and toughest wadi in Oman, and few wanted to know more details about the Via Ferrata options.

Hamdoon mentioned "he met plenty of adventure enthusiasts from all over the world while he cycled around Oman", sometimes he has extended his support and provided them with inputs to help and complete their adventure."

At the same time, he added, "it's not easy to hitchhike and his experience in different countries taught him how to handle some challenging situations". Knowing the challenges that hitchhikers face, Hamdoon always extends his best support to the adventurers seeking input or help."

One of the trekkers with us, Elise who came from France shared that she never had any difficulty exploring different places in Oman, even the most remote places of the interiors. Although she admits to the language barrier, she said that with patience and the innate nature of the Omanis to help, she usually manages to do what she's meant to do. For Polish friends Elise and Barbara, Oman was a beautiful place to explore that bring out their inner adventurers.

We took some time to share a few more stories. As there was little coffee left, Hamdoon encouraged some to finish the remaining drops.

We all took a dip in the main pool, which was in emerald colour and crystal clear. Hiking back was relatively easier as we all know the route. While I have ventured all throughout Oman, it was my first time visiting Wadi Mangal. Most of the path was scrambling between the boulders and climbing mountains with a maximum elevation of 50/60 metres. The path to the main pool is hidden between the mountains and before reaching the main pool, there are a few smaller pools scattered all over.

The hiking trail starts from the village, following the Falaj system you can get to the main trail. This trail is not marked but initially one needs to follow the Falaj and then mostly walk straight, which will lead you to the last, and main pool. At some point in the mountain, you will find fossil marks everywhere and there will be small caves along the way too.

On the way back we did enjoy the trek more as we were busy sharing our experiences. The trek is considered as easy to moderate and ideally took us 3 hours to complete both ways. This definitely excludes the coffee time with the team but if there is one thing I learned, the unplanned stops like coffee time, usually open a new door for meaningful interaction.

