

P7

THE BEAUTY OF SILENCE ON CANVAS



P12

KHAZAEN SIGNS DEAL FOR SMART BRICKS FACTORY



MUSCAT

HM CONGRATULATES MALAYSIAN PM

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Anwar Ibrahim on the occasion of him taking oath of office as Prime Minister of Malaysia. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success in carrying out his assignments to achieve further aspirations for the friendly Malaysian people. — ONA

HM GREETINGS TO KING OF THAILAND

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Maha Vajiralongkorn of Thailand on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to King Vajiralongkorn. His Majesty wished the people of Thailand further progress and prosperity. — ONA

OMAN EQUESTRIAN FESTIVAL AND RACE

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will preside over the Oman Equestrian Festival and Race, which kicks off on Wednesday. Organised jointly by Oman Equestrian Federation and the Royal Cavalry, the event will take place at Al Rahba Farm's race-course in the Wilayat of Barka. The race and festival reflects HH Sayyid Theyazin's keenness about equestrian sports and his concern about elevating such sports in the Sultanate of Oman. The race covers five rounds.

INSIDE



PRESIDENT MACRON TACKLES IMMIGRATION 'ANXIETIES' P5



FOOTBALL IS MY MOST LOVED GAME P6

MOROCCO REACH HISTORIC WORLD CUP QUARTERS



DETAILS ON PAGE13

Royal Decree promulgates Military Justice Law

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued Royal Decree No 87/2022 promulgating the Military Justice Law. Article (1) states that provisions of the Military Justice Law attached to this Decree shall be enforced. Article (2) annuls Royal Decree No 110/2011 and all that contradicts this Decree or contravenes its provisions. Article (3) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on the day following its date of publication. — ONA

First green hydrogen project likely by 2023

MUSCAT: Oman Green Hydrogen Summit kicked off at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre here on Wednesday.

The conference reviews the strategy of the green hydrogen economy in Oman, infrastructure and the in-country value (ICV) in the sector, as well as partnerships, investment and green hydrogen projects.

Speaking on the occasion, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, stressed that Oman Sustainability Centre specialises in following up the progress made in Oman's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

The minister said that, with the prime aim of reaching zero neutrality by 2050, key sectors like industry, electricity, transportation, oil and gas and urban planning have been included in the emissions reduction policy.

Abdulaziz bin Said al Shidhani, Director-General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen at the ministry, said that the large turnout

With the prime aim of reaching zero neutrality by 2050, key sectors like industry, electricity, transportation, oil and gas and urban planning have been included in the carbon emissions reduction policy

ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUF

Minister of Energy and Minerals

of participants from within Oman and abroad is evidence of the great interest in the country's potentials and that the first opportunity to invest in the field of green hydrogen in Oman came around on November 6 and according to the plan, the first project will be announced in the first quarter of 2023.

SEE ALSO P9

Plan in place for flood prone areas in Muscat

VINOD NAIR @vinot_nair

With some areas of the capital more prone to floods after heavy rains, the Muscat Municipality has embarked on projects to help mitigate the problem.

Over the past few years, areas around Sultan Qaboos Street between Al Khuwair (ministries area) and Al Ghubra (around Extra Showroom and Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque) are inundated with rainwater, often disrupting vehicular movement along the stretch for hours.

Even residential areas in Al Ghubra report flooding, with people unable to venture out of their homes after heavy rains.

On Tuesday, the Muscat Municipality said that it has launched a project to build rainwater canals and drainage systems (with a length of 2,000 metres) in Al Ghubra. The project aims to mitigate the effects of flood risks in the area and its surroundings and to raise the efficiency of drainage system.

The work is being carried out in the areas around Extra Show-



room, Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, and the Supreme Court.

Earlier, the municipality had completed a similar project for rainwater drainage near the Ministries' District. While flooding around Al Nahdha Hospital in Wattayah has been resolved to greater extent, Muttrah Souq is another area which still continues to face constant threat from flooding after rains.

During a workshop to discuss the details of the Greater Muscat Masterplan, it was revealed that nearly 45 per cent of the areas in the capital are vulnerable to floods from wadis, while another 20 per

cent are subject to coastal floods.

The project directors of the masterplan said that there was a need to identify areas of high strategic risk, and take precautions to counter worst-case scenarios for the local population, such as easy access to hospitals and facilitating localised safety areas.

The National Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change for the Sultanate of Oman (2020-2040) of the Civil Aviation Authority called on urban planners to consider the impact of heavy rainfall that usually follows the low-pressure systems developed in the sea.

Scientists find why people catch more colds in winter

LONDON: Scientists behind a new study may have found the biological reason we get more respiratory illnesses in winter. It turns out the cold air itself damages the immune response occurring in the nose.

In fact, reducing the temperature inside the nose by as little as

5 degrees Celsius kills nearly 50 per cent of the billions of virus and bacteria-fighting cells in the nostrils, according to the study published in The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology.

"Cold air is associated with increased viral infection because you've essentially lost half of your



immunity just by that small drop in temperature," said rhinologist Dr Benjamin Bleier, director of otolaryngology at Massachusetts Eye and Ear and an associate professor at Harvard Medical School in Boston. A respiratory virus or bacteria invades the nose, the main point of entry into the body.

Immediately, the front of the nose detects the germ, well before the back of the nose is aware of the intruder, the team discovered.

At that point, cells lining the nose immediately begin creating billions of simple copies of themselves called extracellular vesicles. — Agencies



149 projects in race for Belarab Award for Architectural Design

MUSCAT: The second edition of Belarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design (BHA) has received 149 entries to design Maritime History Museum in the Wilayat of Sur in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah.

From among entries that met the conditions set previously for the contest, 84 are submitted by individuals and 65 by groups.

The award jury is studying and sorting the entries with a view to picking up the top 30 project designs, which will later be shortlisted into 10 qualifiers to contest the final stage.

Once the best 30 projects are selected, a workshop will be held for the finalists to help them fine tune their designs before resubmitting them for the knockout stage.

The jury of the award affirmed that assessment criteria include the technical features of the submitted projects, their applicability in solid form and their compatibility with standard international projects in the museum sector.

It added that other aspects to



The competition is to design Maritime History Museum in the Wilayat of Sur in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah.

be taken into account include the submitted projects' long-time environmental, social and economic impacts, as well as the extent to which the designs celebrate and enrich Oman's historical journey.

Earlier, the award's organisers prepared a general guide and a technical guide on assessment criteria, the competition's stages and other particulars pertaining to the design of galleries of the museum.

The period for entries' submission via the award's website (bha.om) lasted 53 days from October 10 to 1 December 1.

The first Belarab Award was for designing an edifice symbolising the 50-year accomplishments of Oman Renaissance under the leadership of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, and envisaging the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in the Mina port enclave of Wilayat of Muttrah, Governorate of Muscat.

Maidan Muttrah project by Abdullah al Bahri, Omaimah al Hinai and Ahmed al Jahdhami won the first place. Foundation Monument project of Nasser al Haimli came second and Oman Future Wing of Tahra al Bousafi won the third place.

The award seeks projects and designs that best suit Oman's environment and civilisational identity. It is the only award in Arab world where winners get shields designed with non-fungible token technology (NFT).



Oman and Singapore to set up embassies

SINGAPORE: The first strategic dialogue between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Singapore was held at the headquarters of the Singaporean Interior Ministry on Tuesday.

The Omani side was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Major General Idris bin Abdulrahman al Kindi, Secretary-General of the National Security Council of Oman. The Singaporean side was headed by K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law, and Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs.

They affirmed the solid friendship between Oman and Singapore and their desire to strengthen relations between the two countries to serve their common interests.

As a reflection of the development in relations between the two countries, the two sides agreed to raise the level of diplomatic representation between them by upgrading the general consulates in both countries to resident embassies from January 1.

They also reviewed discussions held in the bilateral and security working groups, covering economic, investment and cultural cooperation, especially in renewable energy, transportation, food security and the logistics. They also discussed enhancing cooperation in maritime security.

At the end of the meeting, Oman and Singapore signed two memoranda of understanding, the first in information technology and the second in fish farming and aquaculture.

RAFO to celebrate graduation of new recruits

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman will celebrate on Wednesday the graduation ceremony of new batches of military courses, including air officers, pilot officers, limited service officers and college officers.

His Highness Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Central Bank of Oman, will preside over the celebration, during which the cadets will stage a parade at Ghala Air Base and Sultan Qaboos Air Academy. The military performance of the officers is expected to reflect the field skills that the cadets enjoy. The RAFO bands will perform various music shows along with other programmes.

— ONA

Minister of Education meets school students

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, on Monday received school students from the governorates of Muscat, Al Batinah and Al Dakhiliyah on the occasion of International Children's Day, which falls on November 12 each year.

Sumayra Choudhury, Representative of UNICEF in the Sultanate of Oman, and Shanuna al Habsi, Assistant Director-General of Special Education, attended the meeting which took place in Oman Hall in the Ministry's General Diwan.

During this meeting, a dialogue session was held, moderated by Lujain bint Aref al Amri of Sima and Muqzah School for Basic Education in Al Dakhiliyah. The minister welcomed the attendees and the participants and said, "The holding of such sessions is an interactive platform during which



the ministry learns about students' opinions and ideas to build upon and take into account when formulating educational policies. They have new energies, ideas and initiatives that contribute to the development of the ministry's work, which enhances community building and the development of the educational environment."

She also indicated that "these dialogue sessions encourage students to ask questions and

present their ideas on many issues, allowing them to access a safe space and communication between them and officials, and that listening to them has a positive impact on making many decisions related to their issues and their future aspirations, their curricula, and the innovative and mathematical aspects, especially in the development and modernisation of the educational system in the Sultanate of Oman

in all its sectors to translate the goals of Oman Vision 2040, and encourage them to participate in various competitions at the local, regional and international levels."

During this dialogue session, the students discussed the compatibility of the curricula adopted by the Ministry of Education for students with hearing and visual disabilities, and that the ministry believes in the abilities that these students possess, and that they are treated as much as possible in terms of knowledge like their healthy peers, with the difference in the teaching mechanism, in view of what some of them aspire to, after completing general education, to join higher education institutions, or the labour market, and the cognitive aspects they require. The ministry also seeks, through the digital transformation programme, to find educational technologies that help teachers and students of all categories in the educational process.

The importance of diversifying school activities, especially in grades 1-4, was also discussed. The ministry has also recently put forward a strategy for school sports through the School Sports Federation. The ministry has expanded in the past years in scientific activities through the participation of school students in various competitions, whether at the local, regional or global levels. The ministry also has a framework and plan for cultural activities to give freedom for school administrations to activate these activities, and the ministry is looking forward, during the upcoming plans, to enhance these activities in partnership with the private sector. The ministry as well is about to implement a symposium in cooperation with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to study the future requirements for school buildings and enhancing them to be an attractive school environment for students.

Oman shifts towards healthy food consumption: Study

SAMUEL KUTTY
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The Covid-19 pandemic has improved Oman's transition to more sustainable and healthy consumption practices alongside decreased food waste.

These observations are made in a new study titled 'Observations on food consumption behaviours during the Covid-19 pandemic in Oman' through a cross-sectional online survey of 356 consumers aged 18 years and above.

"The pandemic has improved Oman's transition to more sustainable and healthy consumption alongside increased

intake of local products and growing awareness of food waste practices," the study done by the US-based National Library of Medicine finds.

Many questions were raised in the survey about the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on food-related activities, such as food shopping, cooking, diet and waste.

Unlike other countries in the Middle East region, which saw a spike in excessive consumption of energy-dense 'comfort foods' amid the crisis, the Omani population displayed a shift towards healthier dietary habits, according to the survey findings.

"Since the outbreak of the

Covid-19 pandemic started, we have seen a significant shift in respondents' food and health-related behaviour and attitudes. There have been noticeable shifts in the ways how people eat, purchase and interact with food," the authors of the study revealed.

According to the study, intakes of unhealthy foods such as sweets and junk food during the epidemic have been reduced by most respondents. More fruit and vegetables have been consumed in a healthier diet. In addition, due to food safety concerns, the consumption of local food products rose.

A preference for local products



The pandemic has improved Oman's transition to more healthy consumption alongside increased intake of local products and growing awareness of food waste practices

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was generated by the unfounded belief of consumers that imported items represent a safety concern. A locally produced item is thought to be handled fewer times and therefore has a higher perception of safety.

"This created a favourable transformation compared to the pre-Covid-19 state towards better eating habits and may assist in achieving the nation's health and nutrition vision for 2050," the research points out.

A vast majority of respondents did not stockpile food. This is owing to the limited dissemination of negative emotions such as fear, anxiety and despair.

More than 60 per cent of the participants said that they did not hoard food items. The absence of panic buying resulted in decreased food waste as consumers became more conscious of the amount of food that was being discarded.

"This is a positive change since food waste in Oman is a significant issue, where food is primarily wasted at the level of consumers," comment the researchers.

As much as 45.5 per cent of respondents in the survey ate more fruits and vegetables, while 43 per cent reduced intake of unhealthy snacks and 35.6 per cent consumed fewer frozen foods.



Five-year national plan to protect marine turtles begins next year

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

A national plan to protect turtles will be implemented next year, the Environment Authority said on Tuesday.

Dr Abdullah al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, said Oman is one of the two most important sites in the world for turtle nesting, and the five-year plan will enter into force at the beginning of 2023. He was speaking at a workshop to discuss the National Action Plan for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles.

“There is no doubt that turtles are threatened with extinction. They play an important role in the balance of marine life, maintaining beaches and coral reefs, and preventing their erosion, and help other small fish.”

The workshop is organised by the Environment Authority in cooperation with a number of governmental and international agencies and institutions.

The seminar aims to assess the challenges for the protection of sea turtles and their nesting places.

Sulaiman al Akhzami, Director-General of Nature Conservation at the Environment Authority, said in his speech during the opening of the workshop that the authority sought, with the participation of the relevant authorities, to make tangible efforts in protecting sea



Dr Abdullah Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, and other officials at the workshop in Muscat on Tuesday.

turtles by enacting laws to protect them and mitigate the impact of various human activities.

He added that the Authority is keen on scientific research and publication related to the study of sea turtles. The Authority signed an agreement with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to study the nesting turtles in the Wilayat of Masirah. The study is for five years.

He pointed out that this year the Environment Authority installed satellite tracking devices on 10 green turtles in the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate to learn more about their movement, feeding patterns and migration paths.

He stated that the Environment Authority has formed a national

working group to study the causes of sea turtle mortality, respond to reports of deaths or injuries and deal with them according to the specified procedures.

Al Akhzami said the workshop is aimed at ensuring the safety of the natural habitats of sea turtles in the Sultanate of Oman, expressing his hope that the workshop will come out with proposals that enhance the implementation of plans to protect and preserve turtles.

Earl Possardt, marine turtle programme officer for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, in his presentation urged the need for more international efforts to protect sea turtles from all sorts of risks.

The workshop on the opening

day included a presentation of the Environment Authority's measures to protect sea turtles, especially the Turtle Commandos initiative. The work of the Environment Society of Oman was highlighted.

The workshop also discussed the impact of artificial lighting and fishing on sea turtles.

The session concluded with a presentation of the draft national plan for the protection and conservation of sea turtles, and feedback of the attendees.

The workshop was opened under the auspices of Yaqub bin Khalfan al Busaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Now you can visit Qatar without Hayya card

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

Omani citizens and residents can visit Qatar without Hayya card. However, for those who wish to watch matches must register in the portal.

The Qatari Ministry of Interior announced that the citizens and residents of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries would be allowed to enter through the airports without Hayya card. This is also applicable for land routes with the allocation of free parking.

Omani citizens can also enter through the land port using private vehicles as of December 8, after applying for an entry permit on the Ministry of Interior website 12 hours before the travel date, without the condition of paying the vehicle entry permit fee.

However, those wishing to attend matches must still register through Hayya portal.

This step comes in the context of the efforts of Qatar to provide an opportunity for visitors, citizens and residents of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, to enjoy the Qatar World Cup, and the various entertainment activities held there. It is worth noting that Qatar received great praise for its efforts in organising the 2022 World Cup, which many experts, specialists and football legends described as the best in history.



Also, in this context, the Sultanate of Oman has provided many facilities for Hayya card holders. The Sultanate of Oman is the best in terms of facilities for issuing visas for World Cup fans and holders of the Hayya card, especially since the visa is free and includes many available features, unlike some countries that have reviewed fees.

These facilities are in line with the programme of the Sultanate of Oman accompanying the Qatar World Cup 2022 and in support of the efforts of the brother country of Qatar in making the World Cup a success. It also promotes Muscat as a main city to receive the World Cup fans and provide an easy and exceptional experience for the fans coming to the Sultanate of Oman.

RO 2 million for 349 research proposals

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) has announced it funded 349 research proposals with RO 1,953,272 under Block Funding Programme 2022.

The Block Funding Programme 2022 supported research under following categories: research grants for PhD holders or its equivalent; graduate research grants (GRG) for master's or bachelor's degree holders; undergraduate research grants (URG) for students of higher education institutions; and graduate research grants for students studying abroad at their own expense.

For the RG category, the number of funded research projects has reached 120 with RO 20,000 per project a maximum period of two years, while 103 research projects were funded in the GRG category with RO 3,000 per project as a maximum. Student research projects number

126 with a maximum amount of RO 1,500 per project in the URG category.

As for the GRG-Abroad category, 16 research proposals have been funded with an amount of up to RO 3,000 per project as a maximum.

The number of governmental and private academic and non-academic institutions benefiting from this year's support has reached 31 institutions, and this support comes with the aim of building local research capacity, providing a stimulating research environment for research and researchers, and building their capacities at various academic levels.

The Block Funding Programme seeks to activate the role of academic and research institutions and support research that contributes to the implementation of the national priorities and achieve practical, applicable results that raises the standards of the Sultanate of Oman in the fields of research and innovation.

Oman hosts 20th meeting of AWO council



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, hosted the 20th regular meeting of the Executive Council of the Arab Women Organisation (AWO) in Muscat on Tuesday.

The meeting was chaired by Sayyida Maani bint Abdullah al Busaidi, Director-General of the Family Development Department at the Ministry of Social Development, and Chairperson of the Executive Council of the AWO.

Sayyida Maani said that the meeting touched on developments in the status of Arab women in terms of laws, policies, mechanisms and initiatives serving women.

She pointed out that the meeting will address the recommendations of the Executive Council's committees and the endorsement of the new configuration of the AWO's advisory committees, including the panel for policies and technical affairs, the advisory committee for administrative, financial and legal affairs and the advisory committee for Arab youth.

Engineers' accreditation aimed at high professional standards

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The accreditation of engineering professionals is aimed at maintaining high standards and regulating unfair practices.

The Ministry of Labour recently issued a notice to all establishments working in the construction field of the need to start implementing the professional accreditation system for all job titles included in the engineering profession.

The ministry instructed all working engineers, or those to be appointed, to apply to the Oman Society of Engineers (OSE) for professional accreditation, which will be a prerequisite for issuing and renewing work permits from February 1.

As of October 22, there are 696,804 expatriates working in the principal auxiliary and engineering occupations compared to 50,087 Omanis.

According to details provided on the OSE website, the Engineering Professional Accreditation is a classification system to bring up engineering expertise to high professional levels.

It will also seek to raise Omanisation rates in the engineering profession by eliminating the number of expatriate engineers who are not qualified to perform engineering work.

It will also enable the Ministry



The ministry instructed all working engineers, or those to be appointed, to apply to the Oman Society of Engineers (OSE) for accreditation, which will be a prerequisite for issuing and renewing work permits from February 1.

of Labour to issue appropriate permits to individuals and institutions.

The classification system will help companies and organisations assess the engineers' levels and expertise, maximise the utilisation of their capabilities,

and prevent forged engineering practices.

The Professional Accreditation System seeks to verify the academic qualifications of the engineers through verification partners, evaluate their capacities, experience and levels of professionalism and classify them accordingly into different professional grades.

The system will validate the qualifications of engineers wishing to work in the Sultanate of Oman, decide the field of engineering qualification and engineering expertise accordingly, evaluate the practical experiences, knowledge and skills acquired by workers in this profession, and then define the duties, responsibilities and standards for practicing the profession.





Para sailors’ achievements celebrated



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

During an event to celebrate International Day of Disability, Oman Sail in collaboration with bp Oman and the Oman Paralympic Committee reflected on the progress made by the region’s first para sailing programme ‘SailFree’. It also highlighted the recent achievements of the para sailing national team launched on the same day last year – a milestone achieved through the programme. Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, the Minister of Social Development, was in the audience.

The SailFree programme –

launched in 2019 - introduced over 114 men and women aged from 16 to 30 from people with disabilities across the country to the sports of sailing. It also works on enhancing their professional and inter-personal skills.

Thuraya al Taei, Communications and external affairs manager for Oman, Kuwait and Qatar, commented: “Empowering people with disabilities and providing equal opportunities is important to us at bp. The Sail Free programme has given para sailors the opportunity to succeed and follow their passions, despite their differences. We are grateful to have supported

a programme that has encouraged such inclusivity and launched Oman’s first para sailing team.”

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said: “This sport is able to provide a positive example of an inclusive environment where nobody is excluded. We have shown that there are opportunities for everyone, and together with our partners bp Oman and the Oman Paralympic Committee we are incredibly proud to be able to change lives and promote diversity. We are confident that the future for para sport is bright in Oman and look forward to being part of the growing movement to be fully inclusive throughout

sport and across society.”

Dr Mansoor al Touqi, President of the Oman Paralympic Committee, commented: “It brings me joy to witness an increase in the number of para athletes and para sailors in counties all over the world. Over the last few years, we were able to achieve more medals and achievements through national and international championships. This success comes through the strategy of cooperation and partnership with Oman Sail and bp Oman as Sail Free has now become a gold standard and is regarded as one of the most successful programmes for people with disabilities as well

as an example and source of pride for the Omanis and athletes.”

World Sailing, the global governing body for the sport of sailing, has recorded that the number of nations with para sailors competing internationally increased by 30 per cent over the last five years, reaching up to 41 countries participating. Oman Sail organised the recent RS Venture Connect World Championships, the first exclusively para sailing event to be staged in Oman which included the World Sailing Para Sailing Development Program (PDP) and certifying four new International Classifiers to continue the growth of the sport in the region.

OPAZ signs contract for governance guide

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed a contract for preparing a governance guide with Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability, seeking to benefit from the services provided by the Centre, including technical and administrative consulting, research and studies in areas related to corporate governance and the preparation of charters and systems of their governance.

The contract was signed by Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, OPAZ Deputy Chairman, and Hamid bin Sultan al Busaidi, Executive Director of the Centre, signed on behalf of Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability.

The implementation of this project aims to prepare a guide for the governance of the Authority’s activities and works, to frame and clarify the relationship between OPAZ and its affiliated zones, and to define a specific mechanism in which the relevant parties apply their powers in their zones in accordance with the objectives and vision of Oman 2040. The terms of the contract include defining the relationship of the Authority with the community in its affiliated zones, investors and stakeholders in general, and define the control tools and their enforcement mechanisms within its affiliated zones, in addition to promoting the norm of accountability and transparency in order to achieve the optimal implementation of the one-stop-shop principle, and to define the authority’s relationship with its subsidiaries, or those operating and managing government assets within the borders of its affiliated zones, and regulating the relationship with them.

The contract involved defining the terms of reference, powers and decision-making mechanisms between the Authority’s management and the management of its affiliated zones. The project works also include the powers of the executive management, members and committees emanating from the board of directors.

The Authority seeks to conclude strategic partnerships with public and private institutions with specialised expertise that the Authority needs in carrying out its duties.

Students discuss child rights with Minister of Social Development



AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, DEC 6

Students from various schools of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate participated in the meeting hosted by the UNICEF office of Oman with Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development, on Monday.

The meeting aimed to discuss the rights of the children and children with disabilities. The team was led by Bashar bin Ali bin Nasser al Busaidi of Malik bin Fahm School for Basic Education and Jihan bint Saif bin Mohammed al Hinai of Besiya School for Basic Education.

Jihan al Hinai said: “We had the

honour to participate with my fellow students in a dialogue session with the Minister of Social Development as part of the celebration of the International Children’s Day. In this meeting, we discussed the rights of children with disabilities, the values of citizenship, and child protection rights.”

Al Hinai added: “I was pleased

to meet a group of distinguished students who expressed their opinions during the meeting and represented the children of the Omani society. The minister answered our questions. I confirm that such dialogues are a successful step for the children of Oman to share their views.”

Bashar al Busaidi said: “The

most important issues raised in the session were the rights of the child in Oman, the rights of children with disabilities, the ministry’s vision for the child for the year 2040, and the Child Protection Law. The session was enriching and successful, as we benefited greatly from it. It was an opportunity to discuss issues that concern us.”

Two students of ISG shine at Cambridge exam

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

Two students of Indian School Al Ghubra International have received prestigious awards from the Cambridge Assessment International Education to acknowledge their outstanding performance in the June 2022 Cambridge examination series.

Chitrangada Siddharth Chaturvedi and Mankodi Anushka Unnit, two learners at Indian School Al Ghubra

International received top in the Country awards in “Top in Oman in Business Studies and Economics, Cambridge IGCSE, June 2022 and High Achievement Award in Business respectively.

Chitrangada also bagged the High Achievement Award in Environmental Management.

The Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards programme celebrates the success of learners taking Cambridge examinations in over 40 countries around the world. Cambridge places learners



Chitrangada Siddharth Chaturvedi

at the centre of their international education programmes and



Mankodi Anushka Unnit

qualifications, which are inspired by the best in educational

thinking.

The Principal of Indian School Al Ghubra International said that the awards recognised the talent, dedication and commitment of both learners and staff. She extended her sincere congratulations to these brilliant achievers and also noted that she is proud to head the team of such dedicated teachers.

Top performing learners will receive their Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards at a school ceremony on a later date.

“It is extremely rewarding to congratulate Cambridge learners and teachers at ISG I who have worked so hard to achieve tremendous success in Cambridge [qualification] examinations. The results are a reflection of the enormous talent in Oman not only amongst learners but also within the teaching profession. Learners from ISG International have a bright future ahead of them, and I wish them every success in their future,” said Pyarija Cidar, Vice Principal, ISG International.



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5

China's Xi to arrive in Riyadh to meet Arab leaders

RIYADH: Chinese President Xi Jinping will arrive in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday for a two-day visit that will include meetings with several Arab leaders, the Saudi state news agency SPA reported on Tuesday.

The visit is aimed at developing economic ties and strengthening what SPA described as a “strategic partnership” between China and Saudi Arabia, its main oil supplier, with dozens of agreements expected on energy and investments.

However, Xi may also discuss regional security with King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in his first visit to the

kingdom since early 2016.

The Chinese leader will also attend a summit with Gulf Cooperation Council countries and a wider gathering of Arab leaders hosted by Riyadh, SPA reported.

China sees Saudi Arabia as its key ally in the Middle East due to its importance as an oil supplier.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in October that Saudi Arabia was a “priority” in China’s overall and regional diplomatic strategy.

China, the world’s biggest energy consumer, is a major trade partner of Gulf oil and gas producers and while economic ties remain anchored by energy



President Xi Jinping

interests, bilateral relations have expanded under the region’s infrastructure and technology push.

Saudi Arabia is China’s top oil supplier, making up 18 per cent of

China’s total crude oil purchases, and state-run Saudi Aramco has annual supply deals with half a dozen Chinese refiners.

Riyadh has said that strengthening trade ties and regional security would be priorities during Xi’s visit, during which the kingdom will host a China-Gulf summit and a China-Arab summit that diplomats say will involve dozens of agreements and MoUs.

Outside energy, GCC states provide markets for Chinese goods, construction contracts and investment opportunities in infrastructure, manufacturing and digital economies that fit Beijing’s

Belt and Road Initiative.

“The GCC wants FDI (foreign direct investment) which not only caters to local demand, but also allows these economies to integrate into global supply chains,” said Fareed Mohamedi, Managing Director at SIA Energy International.

INVESTMENTS

“The Chinese companies will help do that, first on an Asia regional level, then beyond.”

GCC-China trade has doubled between 2010 and 2021, London-based think tank Asia House said in a report. However, discussions on a free trade deal have dragged since 2004 and sources say talk of

an agreement in the near future appears premature.

Beijing’s primary motivation for greater cooperation with the Gulf remains embedded in its dependence on energy imports while Arab producers are still heavily reliant on hydrocarbon revenues to deliver on their diversification drive.

Russia, a member of the Opec+ oil producer alliance alongside Saudi Arabia, has been increasing its sales volumes to China with discounted oil after facing Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine, which Moscow calls a “special military operation”.

— Agencies

Macron tackles immigration ‘anxieties’ with new law

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron is set to make a second attempt at increasing expulsions of illegal immigrants after a series of scandals and under fierce pressure from his far-right opponents.

Macron’s centrist government is set to unveil the outlines of a new draft immigration law on Tuesday that will be debated formally in parliament in early 2023. It comes just four years after a 2018 law with similar objectives, passed during Macron’s first term in office, which was also aimed at taking the heat out of an explosive political issue.

“It’s about integrating better and expelling better,” Macron’s hardline interior minister, Gerald Darmanin, told France Inter radio on Tuesday of the new proposals. “We want those people who work, not those who rob.”

Darmanin and Macron have clearly linked immigration to crime in recent weeks, with both saying that around half of petty crimes committed in Paris are by foreigners. Speaking to the Parisien newspaper at the weekend, Macron pitched the new law as a means of addressing the historic rise of the far-right



French President Emmanuel Macron makes a statement as he arrives for the EU-Western Balkans summit in Tirana, on Tuesday. – AFP

National Rally, which since June is the biggest opposition party in parliament.

“We need a policy that is firm and humane in line with our values,” the 44-year-old said. “It’s the best antidote to the extremes which feed off anxieties.”

Figures from the interior ministry show that France currently expels around 10 per cent of migrants who have been ordered to leave the country and the rate has never been higher than 20 per cent. Around 13,000 were expelled in 2021, a year when around 120,000 asylum claims were lodged.

The country’s lengthy legal

appeals process, bureaucracy and a lack of state resources are seen as reasons for the low expulsion rate, which Darmanin has pledged to increase.

Like many European countries, France also struggles to persuade countries in North and West Africa to re-admit their citizens once they are subject to an expulsion order.

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, who scored 41 per cent in the second round of April’s presidential election, regularly accuses the government of laxity and “submerging” France with foreigners.

In her third bid for the presidency this year, she proposed changing the constitution via a referendum to speed up expulsions, set immigration targets and ensure French people got priority over foreigners for all state services.

“I don’t expect anything (from the new law),” she said on Tuesday. “They will talk to us again about balancing firmness and humanity. We’ve heard that for decades. “Nothing will change... immigration in our country is completely out of control.”

— Reuters

Russia, Ukraine swap 60 PoWs

MOSCOW: Russia and Ukraine said on Tuesday they had exchanged 60 prisoners of war on each side in the latest of a series of such swaps. Russia’s defence ministry said the 60 freed Russian soldiers would be flown to Moscow to receive medical care and psychological support.

Ukraine’s presidential chief of staff Andriy Yermak hailed the returning Ukrainians as heroes and said they included dozens who had held out in the city of Mariupol - including the besieged Azovstal steelworks - until Russia forced its surrender in May.

“We continue to return the defenders of Mariupol - in today’s ‘list of 60’ there are 34 of them, including 14 from Azovstal. Some are wounded, and will receive all the necessary help in Ukraine,” Yermak said. Some of those released had been held on Russian territory and others in Olenivka, a prisoner-of-war camp in the Russian-occupied Donetsk region of Ukraine, he said. – Reuters



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Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Defence ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors/consultant specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
36/2022	Fire Fighting System Works - WUDAM	First and above or specialization in Fire Fighting System	15 th December 2022	16 th January 2023	200/- RO

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 1. Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 2. Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 3. Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY (USB)** in two separate files:
 - A. financial (bill 1&2 separated file from bill3)
 - B. Technical files.
 4. Confirmation of site visit.
 5. All addendums and circulars.
 6. List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 7. List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 8. Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 9. Financial Statement for the last Three years.



Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Defence ENGINEERING SERVICES

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Tender No	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
35/2022	Building works- Masirah	Excellent	15 th December 2022	16 th January 2023	1,500/- RO

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
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- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 1. Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Manpower (Updated Copy).
 2. Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 3. Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY (USB)** in two separate files:
 - A. Financial (bill 1&2 separated file from bill3)
 - B. Technical files.
 4. Confirmation of site visit.
 5. All addendums and circulars.
 6. List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 7. List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 8. Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 9. Financial Statement for the last Three years.

The ego is afraid of rejection...

We often stop ourselves from trying something new because we are afraid of making mistakes. We think this will upheave judgement from others, in turn this will deem us a failure with a heavy potential aftermath of rejection. Our powerfully imaginative mind often stops us before we have even fathomed a possible positive conclusion. It seems so out of our reach, that we impede ourselves from even trying. It's our ego which stops us from taking that next step towards achieving our goals because it could potentially harm us, make us not look "perfect", undermine our capabilities and so as a protective mechanism keeps us in that very familiar comfort zone.

We prefer to cut ourselves short before even starting due to the belief that we need to have it all planned out perfectly from the onset. We project a fabricated result based on a limiting thought entrapped around the burden and fear of past experiences repeating themselves. As we don't want to ever feel that way again, we put up walls and enter shutdown mode. The remote chance of any possibility crushed by the heavy head space of criticism, disappointment and dismissal.

Our brains can make us hyper-vigilant, hypersensitive and hyper-reactive. The positive intention is in essence for our benefit however, this safety mechanism can often backfire leaving us feeling empty, unworthy and unproductive.



Hyesha Barrett @coach_hyesha

Hyesha is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat. She is affiliated with the Whispers of Serenity Clinic

This is where the inner battle ensues. Our spirit craves the opposite of what the ego desires. Our soul yearns for our creativity to shine. For us to be the person we are meant to be. It is not concerned with how we look nor how we sound. It has no apprehension about its purpose, which is solely to fulfil our desires and needs to it's best capacity.

It knows that the mistakes we make are part of the journey of discovery, creation and growth. Without which we simply cannot become the person we wish to be.

Although the ego stops us from making mistakes, the feeling of regret for not having even tried is far worse. Regret is a tremendously powerful feeling that can render a person so unhappy, full of remorse and ridden with a deep sense of guilt.

How often do you feel upset having tried something new? We usually feel empowered, content or proud, regardless of the outcome. This is due to the alignment with our heart's desires, without the hefty burden of eternal stimuli influencing our thoughts.

Turning down the noise of the ego and raising the volume of the soul can only ever bring about true happiness. When we are able to let go of the weight that we make mistakes mean about us and focus on the clarity of our vision, then wonders will happen.

Let's tune into our hearts and intuition more, take that leap of faith that there might be some stumbling blocks along the way and know that they are the path to our success.

ALTHOUGH THE EGO STOPS US FROM MAKING MISTAKES, THE FEELING OF REGRET FOR NOT HAVING EVEN TRIED IS FAR WORSE

DOUSING THE FIRE



A firefighter works to extinguish fire at market stalls hit by shelling in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict in Donetsk, on Tuesday. – Reuters

Football is my most loved game

Although every sport is different, each has its own beauty. I like and watch football as it gives me immense pleasure. The game is intense, it's gripping, and perfect in every aspect. There is no other sporting event that is more global than football because of its wide popularity.

Watching football means we'll be spending more time with friends and loved ones. At the same time, it is always better to watch matches with others than to spend that time alone. Perhaps more than any other pastime it rewards the time we spend on it!

Now don't get me wrong for using the word football alone albeit soccer is widely used, especially by the media. I prefer to call it football because it is more descriptive of the game like kicking a ball with the feet!

According to a 2014 paper by University of Michigan professor Stefan Szymanski, the word soccer is a British invention that the people of Britain stopped using only around 40 years ago.

To Szymanski, soccer was a term coined in late 19th century England as a means to distinguish variations of the game that didn't have a fully agreed on set of rules. The word soccer comes from the use of the term "association football" in Britain. In 2005, Australia's association



Samuel Kutty @samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

WITH AN EVER-GROWING FAN BASE, FOOTBALL IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST ADMIRABLE GAME WHICH IS AN EMOTION FOR MANY PEOPLE. IT IS A GAME THAT DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR

football governing body changed its name from soccer to football to align with the general international usage of the term. In 2006, New Zealand decided to follow suit. There are also many other languages where the common term for association football is phonetically similar to the English term football.

Now, out of the total 45 national Fifa affiliates in which English is an official or primary language, 43 use football in their organisations' official names, while Canada and the United States use soccer. In those two countries, other codes of football are dominant, and soccer is the prevailing term for association football.

However, Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America are considered to be the most popular regions for football.

Coming to football as a game, as I have already mentioned, it is my favourite sport and along with millions of people, I too watch this sport of beauty played by international teams or by local clubs.

Whether it's Brazil against Argentina or Manchester United versus Chelsea, we don't want

our favourite team to lose. Not only that, these big matches tend to be something special that everyone can enjoy. Especially games in which we have Lionel Messi square off against Cristiano Ronaldo.

Look at the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, which is continuing to engage audiences around the world with record-breaking numbers. Since the inaugural edition in 1930, the current tournament has also benefited fans, teams, and media representatives, with the option of attending several matches

and entertainment activities everyday.

According to Fifa, football has about 3.5 billion followers across the globe. For instance, Fifa audit shows that 3.572 billion people watched the 2018 Fifa World Cup held in Russia.

Over 111 million viewers watched the Qatar opening ceremony and 900 million watched the first 16 group-stage games. The figures indicate a 113 per cent increase over the same period in comparison to the Fifa World Cup Russia 2018. With an ever-growing fan

base, football is undoubtedly the most admired game. It is no secret that football is not just a game but an emotion for many people. It is a game that does not discriminate between the rich and the poor.

Football can bring warring communities together. We have the example of British and German soldiers playing football as part of a Christmas truce during the Great War. So, the reach of football is beyond national borders. It is beyond language or culture. The craze for football is eternal!



Fans in Rio de Janeiro watch Brazil vs South Korea match. – Reuters



The beauty of silence on canvas

KABEER YOUSUF

Silence has immense beauty when it is observed at the perfect time it is truly needed or else it would seem displeasing and perilous that irritates the people around. When silence is applied in art, the result will be a repertoire of creations that are voluminously vocal and preponderant in transporting the messages across.

A suite of paintings of Yeldo Thannikottu, a contemporary painter, curator and visual arts teacher who has been active for the last thirty years, unveiled at the Art and Soul Gallery and Academy at the Waterfront on Tuesday, is nothing short of 'Silence' became vocal and effectively communicates with the audience.

Titled 'The Silence', the week-long-art expo was opened by Matti Sirvio, an acclaimed artist, curator and art gallerist in the presence of a number of people.

Born in India, settled in Oman, and working as a Visual Arts Coordinator with the Indian School Muscat, Yeldo is 'contemporary' in terms of his attitude towards his works and has been relentless in his pursuit.

Most of his works, acrylic painting on canvas, are expositions of emotional imprints of the physical and metaphysical nature of our milieu.

A cursory glance at Yeldo's oeuvre reveals more than what the viewers expect as his art has gone through various phases, styles and approaches only to find its ultimate resting place in the individual human being's existential matters.

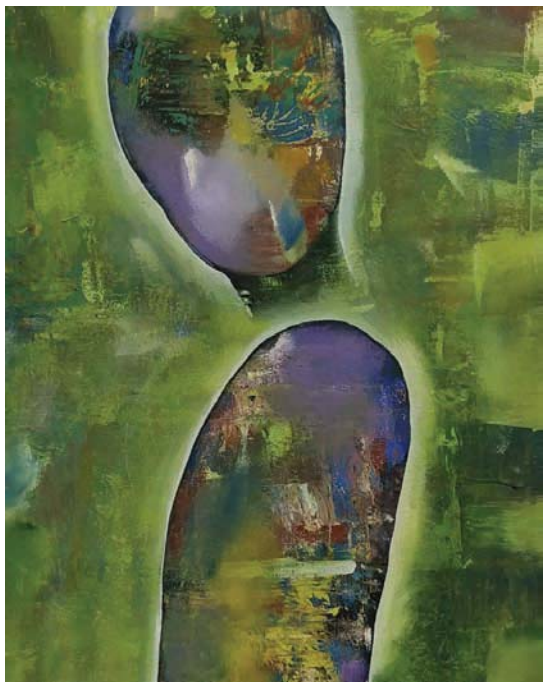
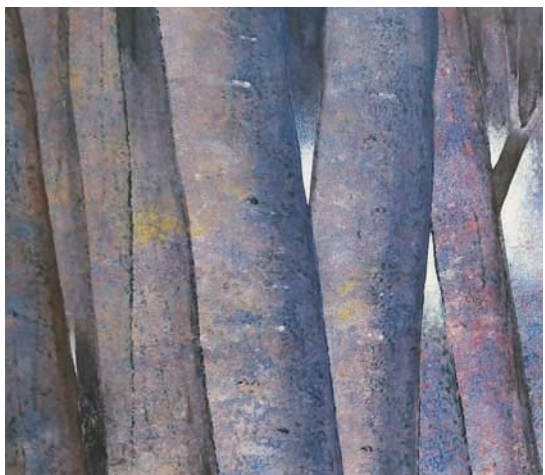
Through his works, he tries to strip the images off their varying colours and brings down to a few basic shades ranging between whites, browns, greys and yellows. He decidedly avoids using strong colours such as green and red, the colours that had strong presence in their varying intensities in the early works, mainly because of the awareness of the times and context of the production of these works.

With less human content and more realistic images, Yeldo's paintings are a kaleidoscopic view of the reality and beauty of the forest, river, wild animals, domesticated animals, agriculture and pasture. Yeldo has folk knowledge of forest, village, river and is very much committed to different branches of indigenous knowledge of the methodology of Hermeneutics with his soft

colours.

As an artist with a strong philosophical foundation, Yeldo believes in the constant evolution of the human beings and he sees it as a phase; a transition, like his paintings so far. The grids that one comes to witness in his works and the silhouetted figures behind the lit areas of those structures doubling up as housing complexes, depending on the viewer's associations, not only hold the pictorial space intact, but also hold the attention of the people. Yeldo has not deprived his protagonists of their due space. In some of the works they come forward to declare their existence.

"The language that Yeldo uses is fresh and suitable to his purpose, and also capable of underlining the transition from the earlier style to the present

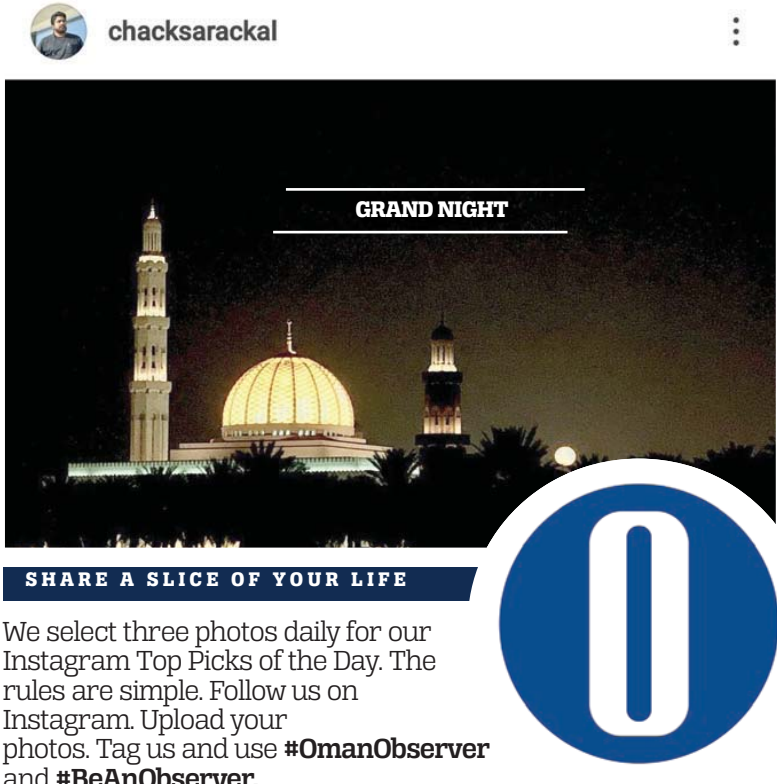


one. The contemporary, as understood generally is not a trend or a style with glossy surfaces, shining facades, glittering looks and eye-catching sophistication, on the contrary, it is the ability of the artist to deal with his living experience in a meaningful way and convey it to his contemporaries with a convincing argument," Johnny ML, an art critic, commented.

Yeldo holds an NDFA, a National Diploma in Fine Arts Painting with first class, from RLV College of Music and Fine Arts and MFA in Applied Art from SALA Mysore, Karnataka. He has won the Raja Ravi Varma Award in 1997, Kalabushan Award for Best Art Teacher in 2006, Kerala Lalithakala Akademi Scholarship for Graphics in 1995 and has also won the Kerala Lalithakala Akademi Grant for Solo Art Exhibition in the years 1996, 2003 and 2018 consecutively. He has conducted 19 solo art exhibitions and participated in numerous group exhibitions and art camps, besides curating many groups and solo exhibitions and artist camps.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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AROUND THE WORLD

LIFESTYLE

Harry Potter themed coin featuring the Hogwarts Express is launched



HARRY POTTER THEMED coins featuring the Hogwarts Express have been launched by Britain's Royal Mint.

The Hogwarts Express collectable coin is also the final individual 50p (\$0.61) coin to have Queen Elizabeth II's portrait appear on the obverse, or "heads" side of the coin.

The coin forms part of a larger collection celebrating 25 years since the novel "Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone" by JK Rowling was first published in Britain in 1997 by Bloomsbury Publishing.

As well as the Hogwarts Express, coins in the collection feature Harry Potter, Professor Dumbledore and Hogwarts School of Witch craft and Wizardry on their own individual coin.

The Royal Mint's Harry Potter collection will be one of a small number that will have a change of portrait during the series, the Royal Mint said.

The first two coins in the collection will feature the portrait of the late queen, and the final two coins will feature the portrait of the king.

A change of portrait during the series is rare, the Royal Mint added.

Rebecca Morgan, director of collector services at the Royal Mint said: "A change in portrait makes this collection a highly sought after one.

"For 70 years, Queen Elizabeth II's portrait has appeared on every official UK coin struck by the Royal Mint.

"This collection of coins serves as a permanent reminder of the fascinating transition from Britain's longest reigning monarch to his majesty the king's first appearance on UK coins."

Combining traditional minting techniques with technology, Jim Kay's illustrations have been reproduced in colour on some of the coins. Many of the coins in the range also feature a "latent feature" which rotates in the light to reveal a lightning bolt and the number "25" to mark the anniversary year.

A laser was used by The Royal Mint to imprint the intricate design onto coin making tools to ensure accuracy.

Prices for the Hogwarts Express coins range from £11 for a brilliant uncirculated 50p denomination version to £5,215 for a £200denomination gold coin.

The coin series has been created in partnership with Bloomsbury Publishing, The Blair Partnership and Warner Bros, Consumer Products.

Mandy Archer, editorial director at Bloomsbury Children's Books said: "We are delighted to see the latest coin in the Royal Mint's Harry Potter collection.

"Jim Kay's evocation of the Hogwarts Express instantly whisks you away to platform nine and three-quarters - the very start of Harry's magical journey. — dpa

FASHION

Egypt dusts off pyramids for fashion, pop and art shows



EGYPT IS USING the ancient grandeur of its pyramids as a backdrop for modern pop concerts and fashion shows, hoping to boost its image, tourism and the luxury brand sector beloved by its moneyed elite.

French fashion house Dior debuted its latest collection on Saturday at the Giza pyramids, after Italian designer Stefano Ricci held a show at Luxor's dramatic Temple of Hatshepsut in October.

Dior CEO Pietro Beccari said the fashion house chose the pyramids as far more than "just a useless background", drawing on Egyptian astrology for the collection named "Celestial".

Before that, American pop bands Maroon 5 and the Black Eyed Peas performed at the Giza Necropolis, where contemporary art was also recently shown at the latest Art d'Egypte exhibition.

The modern cultural push is a new direction for Egypt's image.

Long a cultural powerhouse in the Arab world, with wildly popular singers and movie stars especially in its heyday in the 1950s-70s, Egypt has set its sights on its ancient heritage to attract the global spotlight once more.

A harbinger of the new embrace of ancient culture and history was a "golden parade" last year of 22 pharaohs that crossed Cairo from an old to a new museum in a carnival-style grand spectacle.

It was part of a push by President Abdel Fattah al-

Sisi's government to revive tourism, which accounts for 10 per cent of GDP and some two million jobs but has been hammered by political unrest, economic upheaval and the Covid pandemic.

VITAL' GLAMOUR

Showcasing Egypt's heritage in a new context "will encourage other brands and international cultural figures to come to Egypt," said art historian Bahia Shehab.

Fashion photographer Mohsen Othman agreed that such glamorous events are "vital".

Big brands like Dior "come in with a huge budget," employ local talent and "support young creators who can put Egypt on the global fashion map".

Iman Eldeeb, whose agency cast two Egyptian models for Saturday's show, said it was a "long-awaited step for the fashion world in Egypt".

Egypt's luxury goods sector has grown despite years of economic turmoil that saw the pound lose half its value in a 2016 currency devaluation.

Despite the downturn, Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country, is home to 86,000 millionaires, according to the bank Credit Suisse.

"The richest one per cent are enough to create demand," said public relations specialist Ingy Ismail, who advises luxury brands.

The boutiques in the shopping centres of Cairo's

chic new satellite cities, she said, are "up to the standards of international luxury brands".

'YOUNG TALENT' CREATIVE

Egypt's bubble of super rich has helped create a home-grown fashion design scene whose pioneers have recently ventured onto the catwalks of Milan and Paris.

At this year's Paris Fashion Week, Cairo-based luxury brand Okhtein showed a resin-made bustier that evoked Egyptian alabaster at French fashion house Balmain's show.

It was a rare success story for Egypt's creative sector, where "most people are self-taught, working hard with scarce resources to try and meet international standards," said Othman, the photographer.

Ismail said the country's luxury clothing and jewellery market "has gone from under 100 Egyptian brands to more than 1,000 today", fuelled by "a huge pool of young creative talent".

International events offer rare exposure, but getting them to the country is still a challenge.

"It is a big step for the government to authorise Art d'Egypte and Dior to organise events at the foot of the pyramids," the art show's curator, Nadine Abdel Ghaffar, told.

Red tape and tight restrictions can still get in the way, she suggested, conceding that "the legislative framework is complicated". — AFP

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Mental health vacation!

TWO AND A HALF years after the spread of the Corona virus pandemic, we notice that fatigue still exists among people and between workers and employees, until the pressure increased in the workplace, despite the fact that the daily routine has become somewhat (normal). What really caught my attention here is how some of the young generations , beginning to look for a special day – for their mental health!:- Is that the occasional holiday justified as necessary to maintain happiness. I think here, in principle there might be a day off for mental health or stress rest!

Yet this mental health day, while well-intentioned, is not a permanent solution to the chronic fatigue, pessimism and feelings of ineffectiveness that are signs of burnout. If we really want to improve the mental health of workers – for example – or any employee and address widespread fatigue, we need to make much greater changes to the way the work is done in those institutions, whatever they are.

It's true that reducing work In general can help prevent burnout. This is probably because workload is one of the main aspects of a job in which (mismatch) between a person and his work can lead to burnout! Not to mention, several medical studies confirmed that taking more rest days per month was associated with a lower prevalence of burnout in healthcare workers-for Instance-.

But honestly, does anyone agree on the details of what mental health day is? For some employees, it may be a formal pool of paid leave that they can take advantage of whenever they like. Others, for whom their employer's policy may not provide such leave, call for the occasional mental

health day as a kind of de facto sick leave. Either way, the issue is the basic is that a single day off is not the same as a consistently lighter schedule. It's a temporary Band-Aid fix, not a long-term solution that will make an employee's daily life more manageable.

Hence, I assert here that the occasional mental health days are good things, but they have little effect on burnout. If people return to the same inconsistencies that drove them to burnout, then only a little time will be a relief. What I mean is that mental health days are not a (quick fix) for people with anxiety or obsessive-compulsive disorders. In fact, if they avoid their job out of fear without taking other steps to treat their condition, returning to the workplace may become more difficult. Even going to therapy can be a healthy reason to take regular time away from work. But treatment, not vacation, is what helps a person improve!

In the end, to fix fatigue on a large scale, we'll need to look at the work itself. Employers should allocate manageable workloads with plenty of vacation days combined – if I may say so-As a society, we should also be open to trying new work structures. Four workdays per week, for example, can reduce burnout without sacrificing productivity. So time off work is useful, but inevitably employees deserve something much better than a mental health day: it Jobs that do not strain their mental health in the first place!

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and writer.

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Japanese resort brand to launch in Oman in 2027

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, DEC 6

A well-known Japanese resort brand is establishing the first luxury property in the Sultanate of Oman. The Okura Resort Muscat – part of the Hotel Okura chain with over 80 properties distributed globally – will be constructed at Al Mouj Muscat and open its doors in 2027, the Japanese chain said in a press statement.

The new hotel will offer a total of 150 guest rooms, each with a standard area of approximately 50 square metres. The rooms will feature breathtaking views of the vast golf course of Al Mouj Golf, a world-renowned European Tour venue, and the Sea of Oman. The lobby and other public spaces will be designed in a fusion of Omani and Japanese styles and traditions.

A variety of dining options will be available, including all-day dining, teppanyaki and other Japanese cuisine, and western-style fine dining.

Oman targets industry, hydrocarbons, electricity and housing for decarbonisation

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, DEC 6

The Green Hydrogen Summit continues on its second day at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat. The conference, under the patronage of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, aims to address the various aspects of the hydrogen value chain.

In his keynote speech, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, shared a recap of last year's summit. "Since we met last year in this very same place, there was of course the very historic announcement of the 2050 net zero by His Majesty, which gave us a huge boost because that got the decarbonisation momentum going in a very big scale. It is not something that we talk about anymore, it is something that we have to deliver against," he said.

"We established four or five basic sectors that contribute to around 95 per cent of our total



CO2 emission, added Al Aufi. Those sectors include industry, electricity, gas and oil, mobility and urban planning.

The minister reaffirmed Oman's commitment to the policy. "For each of these sectors we have set up ambitious targets. We know that some of them would be challenging to achieve today, because if it was easy we would have done it a long time back. It is definitely not easy, but we are committing to follow

through and achieve."

Chief Executive Officer of Energy Development Oman and Chairman of the Summit Eng Mazin al Lamki emphasised the importance of clean energy in his opening remarks. "We are in a decisive crossroad of historic proportions, our resilience is being tested with energy price volatility and environmental pressures," he said.

"The reality is, producing more energy reliably and

affordably at lower costs with less emission has become an unmistakable expectation from our leaders," he added.

Al Lamki elaborated the role of Hydrogen Oman, a subsidiary of Energy Development Oman, in this process. "Energy Development Oman plays the role of an overarching orchestrator and facilitator of Oman's energy transition.

HYDROM for instance is the first company of its kind in the Middle East which [operates] as an orchestrator and one of a kind of very few facilitators for green hydrogen globally, which is a testament to man's commitment to sustainability moving forward.

Al Lamki also emphasised the role of younger generation in this transition. "All of these plans would not make any significant progress for Oman without creating high skilled and sustainable jobs for our youth with their intellectual development being a primary

objective to achieving our sustainability goals."

The summit's strategic sessions of the day focused on Oman's role in the Hydrogen Economy in terms of infrastructure, production and strategy.

Present at the summit were Deputy Vice-Minister for Climate and Energy at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, Netherlands, Dr M G Michel Heijdra, Deputy Director of Bilateral Energy Cooperation at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) Ellen von Zitzewitz, Managing Director of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) Steve Phimister, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) Dr Fatih Birol attended the summit.

The summit also ran parallel technical workshops, in addition to an accompanying exhibition with over 30 local and global participants in the field of hydrogen.

Contribution of manufacturing sector to Omani economy climbs to RO 2.3 bn

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates "Madayn" organised on Tuesday 'Building and Construction Business Meet' at Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC, which aimed at highlighting the latest developments and technologies at the local and global scale in the building and construction industry, the key role played by the building and construction industry in the manufacturing sector, as well as the dynamic role of related businesses in supplying high-quality products for infrastructure projects.

Speaking at the event, Mundhir bin Ali al Nasser, Acting Director-General of Marketing and Commercial Affairs at Madayn, stated that statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicate that the total contribution of the manufacturing industries in the Sultanate of Oman has touched RO 2.3 billion by end of the first half of this year compared to RO 1.4 billion during the same period last year.

Al Nasser added that Oman Vision 2040 has placed the manufacturing industries as one of the key drivers that lead the industrial sector supported by the availability of natural resources and



the strategic location of the Sultanate that facilitates the export of these industries.

Delivering his presentation at the event, Jalal al Hadhrami, Director of Local Content and Business Opportunities at the Industrial Innovation Academy, said that the academy is developing innovative programmes aimed at empowering the industrial sector and the SMEs through focusing on the local content and capacity building, and adoption of automation and Industry 4.0 technologies through the associated supply chain.

Al Hadhrami then elaborated on 'Rabt Programme', which is being implemented by the academy to link the existing industries in the

industrial cities with the government tenders. He also informed that a platform is being developed for 'Rabt Programme' to serve the industrial sector in the Sultanate of Oman through encouraging investments, facilitating purchases at the sector level and enhancing the local value.

Eng Bader al Haddabi, Founder of Keystone Architectural Consultancy, delivered a presentation on 'Adobe Construction', which utilises affordable, fireproof, recyclable and environmentally friendly materials as adobe bricks can be easily cut for fitting and can be provided with holes for reinforcing and services. Al Haddabi added that intensive R&D has to be

conducted on Adobe to improve its properties and recommended that national awareness campaign to be implemented in this regard.

On his part, Dr Hilal al Dhamri, General Manager of Manufacturing at Oman Cement Company, elaborated on stages of cement manufacturing, cement types and specifications, and the challenges and future of cement industry in the Sultanate.

The event included a panel discussion moderated by Ayman al Hasani, Managing Director of Modern Dairy Factory, and featuring Rashid al Jabri, Chairman of Speed House Building and Construction, Faisal al Hajri, Shareholder Representative at Oman Aluminium Rolling Company, Khalid al Hosni, Founder and CEO of Titronic Middle East, Eng Salim al Shanfari, CEO of Global Mining Company, and Dr Hilal al Dhamri, General Manager of Manufacturing at Oman Cement Company.

The panel discussion highlighted the importance of manufacturing industries locally and globally, role of manufacturing industries in economic growth and competitiveness, obstacles facing manufacturing industries, future of manufacturing industries in general and building and construction industry in particular.

Khazaen signs agreement for smart bricks factory

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Khazaen Economic City signed an investment agreement with Al Awael Smart Building LLC to build a smart bricks factory in Khazaen.

The agreement was signed by Fares al Khaldi of Al Awael Smart Building LLC and Eng Salim al Thuhli, CEO of Khazaen Economic City. The factory, with an investment value of RO 1.50 million, is to be built on an area of 10,000 square metres in Khazaen.

Al Awael Smart Building LLC is a company that specialises in manufacturing bricks, interlocking and fully advanced concrete products. In a presentation, Al Khaldi said that smart bricks are not ordinary invention as its advantages lie in the materials, method of installation, without the need of a cement mortar and specialised masons or finishers.

Smart bricks, aside from being made of ordinary sand, gravel and cement, also contain insulating rocks which are fire resistant and act as heat insulators; fibreglass which is a light material but stronger than steel and does not burn, stretch, rust or fade; and reinforcing materials like sand extracted from finest stones.

Al Khaldi said that smart bricks are 60 per cent lighter than conventional bricks thus reducing the cost of manpower. This also allows for faster construction and ease of handling and one can make four times faster than traditional bricks. Also, smart bricks are eco-friendly as no materials are wasted with the making of the bricks. Finally, Al Khaldi said that all the materials for the making of smart bricks are sourced locally thus helping the local industries as well.



BankDhofar AGM wins financial services award



MUSCAT: As one of the outstanding Omani leaders at BankDhofar, Majida Issa al Balushi, AGM — Large Corporate & Corporate Branch at BankDhofar, received the Financial Services Award at *Al Mar'a* Magazine Excellence Awards 2022.

The award recognises her efforts and successful leadership of the corporate banking services at BankDhofar. On receiving the award, Majida bint Issa al Balushiya, AGM — Large Corporate & Corporate Branch at BankDhofar noted: “I am pleased to be one of the winners of this prominent award that recognises Omani women in various roles and sectors. Banking sector has recently seen a number of Omani women who have exploited the opportunities, proven their capabilities and ascended the ladder to leadership positions. I am proud with the achievements of Omani women, and I am confident that such awards will motivate other women to persevere for success and achievements.”

Since joining the banking sector, Majida al Balushi worked her way up the organisational levels to become the AGM for Large Corporates & Corporate

Branches. Majida al Balushi holds a Master’s Degree in Business Administration from the University of Bedfordshire in the UK. She has attended a number of professional development programmes in leadership and management, including the Leadership Programme at Harvard Business School, as well as programmes in Omega Credit, Master-Class for Senior Relationship Managers, Syndication Techniques, Corporate Strategies and Executive Development, Credit Analysis, Financial Maths, Decision Making & Problem Solving, Shareholder’s Equity, Capital Market Instruments, Supervisory Skills Development and Human Resources Management. The awards ceremony was held at Sheraton Oman Hotel, under the patronage of Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Darwish. *Al Mar’a* Excellence Awards is a platform to recognise the achievements and entrepreneurial zeal of women in the Sultanate of Oman. The awards recognise and encourage Omani women who have conquered the odds and have reached challenging positions in diverse areas like business, government, industry, education and other relevant fields.

Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition opens door to public

MUSCAT: Starting yesterday until the December 10, 2022, Muscat and Oman’s premier events venue, Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC), is organising the 11th edition of one of the GCC region’s most prestigious luxury goods events – the Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition (MIJEX).

For the 2022 exhibition, the OCEC – a Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran) project – welcomes an eclectic line-up of local, regional, and international exhibitors who will put on a showcase of spectacular jewellery, authentic gemstones and pearls, gold ornaments, a fabulous array of diamonds, fashion, and other luxury items for visitors.

A total of thirty-five exhibitors will be present for the five-day exhibition from more than 10 countries including brands such as Devji, Emel Diamond, 4C’s Jewellery, and Oud Boutique.

Each exhibitor will have on



display their latest collections for the season, as well as many iconic designs and timeless classics.

Commenting on the upcoming exhibition, Eng Said al Shanfari, Chief Executive Officer, OCEC, stated: “Over the five days of this prestigious exhibition, the jewellery-passionate public will have a chance to view & purchase a truly splendid array of the finest jewellery and luxury goods from leading brands in the region. At the same time, visitors will be able to meet and network with the designers, innovators, influencers,

and brand representatives who are setting new trends in this exciting industry.”

Exhibitors present at MIJEX can look forward to displaying and selling products to high net-worth consumers, while reinforcing their brand’s position in the regional market, expanding their networks, and tapping into the growing demand for fashionable jewellery and luxury accessories.

It is worth noting that this year’s Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition will coincide

with the OCEC’s Football Fan Festival, which is on the go until 18 December at the OCEC Gardens in celebration of this year’s football world cup in Qatar.

With thousands of football fans attending the festival daily to watch live broadcasts and to enjoy a fun-filled festive atmosphere, the event is proving to be hugely popular. While jewellery and luxury goods enthusiasts immerse themselves in the wonders on display at the exhibition, their football-passionate family members or friends can make their way to the Football Fan Festival to witness the world cup action.

The 2022 Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition is set to take place from December 6-10. Daily timings will be from 1pm to 10pm, and more information is available at <https://www.events.ocec.om/mijex> or <https://ocec.om/Whatson/Detail/1567> or via the Instagram handle @mijex_om.

The season of winning continues at Kia

MUSCAT: The season of winning continues at Kia! Kia is offering the perfect opportunity to end the year 2022 and begin the new year on a winning note! Now buy any of your favourite Kia vehicles and get a chance to win a brand new Kia Niro Hybrid Electric Vehicle thru raffle. Apart from that customers will also get comprehensive service up to 50,000 kms, 1 year insurance and cash gift. Catch the excitement with our latest range of vehicles and make the most of the season of winning with Kia.

The Sportage is equipped with comprehensive range of powerful, responsive and efficient powertrains. A 2.0 RVC 4WD with Nu 2.0 MPI churning 157 hp at 19.5 kg.m torque. This is paired to a 6-speed AT. The Sportage is also available as 1.6T 2WD SRF, 1.6T 2WD SPL and 1.6T 4WD SPL with Gamma 1.6T GDI with 176 HP and 27 kg.m torque. These are paired to a 7-speed DCT.

The Sportage interior is as fascinating as the exterior. It offers a unique high-tech



environment that is visually impressive, as well as spacious and intuitive. Throughout the cabin, the highest quality materials that are opulent to touch have been used, while dynamic and vibrant colour options add vibrancy and energy.

Fully immersive, in-car sound is delivered to the occupants of the Sportage via an 8” audio display system and steering audio control.

The Sportage is also equipped with rear AC vent, Bluetooth with voice recognition, Android auto and car play, drive mode select, remote engine start, paddle shifter and more.

The Kia Sonet is equipped with a powerful 1.5L engine that is paired to a CVT transmission. Offering comfortable space to passengers with its 5-seater capacity, this SUV goes the distance giving an impressive average of 17.5 kmpl.

Offering absorbing moments on every drive is well laid-out, intuitive infotainment and cluster interface, the Sonet was built taking into consideration the end user’s experience.

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Bank Muscat launches first Visa virtual corporate credit card in Oman

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision and strong commitment to e-payments, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman has announced the launch of its new Visa Virtual Corporate Credit Card Solution facilitated through a state-of-the-art platform, Visa Commercial Pay.

This is the first Visa Virtual Credit Card to be launched in Oman and is meant to empower its Corporate customers with real-time transaction security and control. Through this solution, corporates can issue single or multiple use virtual card numbers and specify spend parameters for better security, control and easy reconciliation.

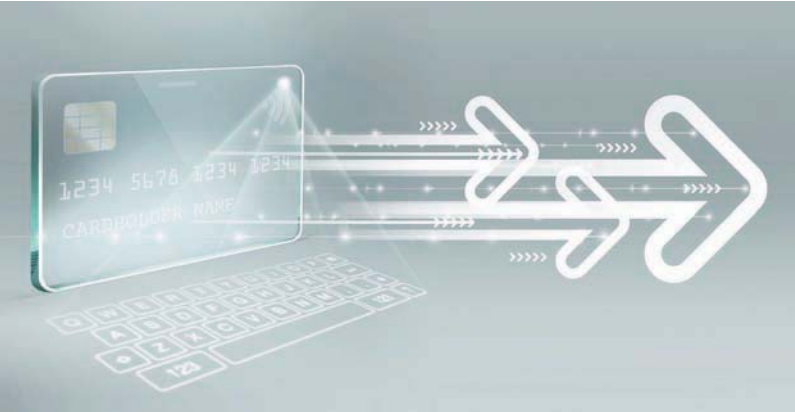
The addition of the Virtual Corporate Credit Card adds further options to business to business (B2B) electronic payments and helps reduce the reliance on more traditional and labor-intensive payment modes.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah bin Tamman al Mashani,

General Manager – Products, Bank Muscat, said: “As the leading bank in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat is committed to building ever stronger partnerships with its customers as it continuously improves customer experience by offering corporate banking solutions built on top of state-of-the-art technology and in tune with the latest customer needs.

Today, we are pleased to launch the Bank Muscat Visa Virtual Corporate Card, which combines the power of the widely-accepted Visa platform and the highest levels of transaction security with flexibility in implementation depending on a corporate’s unique needs. This will further empower our corporate customers in an ever-changing and dynamic digital environment.”

Manish Gautam, Visa’s Country Manager for Oman, said: “As the shift to digital gathers more pace, Visa strives to provide innovative solutions that address the evolving payment needs of businesses everywhere. We are delighted to launch the first Visa Virtual Credit



Card in Oman in partnership with Bank Muscat to support the ongoing digital transformation of businesses in the Sultanate of Oman.”

The Bank Muscat Visa Virtual Corporate Credit Card, which is facilitated by Visa Commercial Pay combined with Visa Spend Clarity for Enterprise offers end to end visibility and control to Corporates through enhanced reporting and ERP integration.

As a B2B solution, the card will especially benefit large corporates and businesses making local and international payments / fund transfers on a regular basis.

Corporates have a choice of implementing this solution as a web-based application, accounts-payable batch file or fully integrate it into their ERP, e-procurement or financial system.

These three options can address corporate needs, whether the card is meant for ‘ad hoc’ accounting needs, high volume accounts payable operations, high volume regular payments or payments to a fragmented payee-base in industries such as insurance claims processors or travel intermediaries.

The Virtual Card is an extension of the Bank’s Corporate Standard

Credit Card.

It provides payment support for “card-not-present” transactions while featuring increased security against unauthorised and fraudulent transactions through customised controls including being restricted to a single use or multiple use as required by the corporate.

Being virtual cards, they can be generated for a supplier category or a specific supplier as and when needed through a well-defined maker-checker approval system. Credit lines can be assigned to individual transactions and payments will be automatically blocked if it does not meet the Corporate’s control criteria.

Since the virtual cards feature traditional 16-digit card numbers and come with valid expiry and CVV details, there is no learning curve for the end user, who can easily input the details as required to complete transactions.

Corporate banking customers may contact their Relationship Manager or go to the following link for more details on how to

apply for a card: https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/Business/Everydaybanking/Pages/Visa_Corporate_Cards.aspx Bank Muscat’s Visa Virtual Corporate Credit Cards continue to build on the bank’s customer-centric vision of keeping pace with global trends and customer feedback by launching the latest products, services, and solutions.

Earlier in August, the bank launched its Visa Pre-Load Payment Card aimed at Government and Semi-government institutions, SMEs and corporate customers to give a boost to electronic payments and help reduce reliance on cash in line with the Government’s overall strategy of moving towards a digital economy.

The bank has announced plans to keep introducing innovative digital services and features that further enhance banking convenience and security even as it seeks to support stronger economic development and financial inclusion in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

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London among three best crypto hubs globally



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

London has confirmed its position as a global hub for the crypto industry after being named in the top three cities for FinTech along with San Francisco and New York.

London does, however, claim the outright top spot as having more FinTech events and job opportunities within the sector than any other city. Data compiled by leading firm Fluro names San Francisco as the FinTech capital of the world with the highest amount of available funding at nearly £204 billion, as well as 4,326 investors and 46 FinTech unicorns – more than any other.

New York ranks in second place and actually beats San Francisco when it comes to the number of Fintech companies, with 1,515 registered. However, its total funding amount of £122 billion, 3,521 investors and 35 unicorns fall just short of the top spot.

London stands at third, boasting the greatest number of FinTech companies at 1,866 – 25 of them being unicorns. The capital also has more funding available than New York at just short of £140 billion, making it second only to San Francisco.

London is ahead of both when it comes to FinTech events. New York hosts 49 a year, San Francisco 41, but London stages 52 major events. While Singapore came fourth on Fluro's list of FinTech hubs, it has been crowned the best city for those looking to launch a career in the industry.

There are 3,211 FinTech job opportunities at an annual salary of £54,312 on average, and the cost of living (before rent) is an estimated £840 per month.

London still has the highest number of job opportunities at 3,441, but scores lower because of the cost of living. Berlin surprisingly comes a second, with a slightly higher average salary of £55,462, as well as a lower cost of living (£776) and a better quality of life score (169.95 vs 158.34 in Singapore).

And there is plenty of talent to fill the 1,148 FinTech job opportunities available in Berlin, with Germany having the highest percentage of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) graduates – 71 per cent.

FinTech companies have filled the gap left by traditional institutions which struggled to keep up with changing consumer behaviour,” said Fluro CEO Nick Harding. He added: “As the industry continues to grow across the globe, now might be the time for businesses, consumers and future talent to get on board with digital finance.”

Meanwhile, crypto exchanges have looked to cool investors' fears of contagion as the industry is shaken by the collapse of FTX, which at its peak last year had over a million users and was the third-largest cryptocurrency exchange by volume. The boss of Singaporean-based exchange Crypto.com, Kris Marszalek, insisted the firm had a strong balance sheet and was not exposed to the ripples of the FTX collapse.

Marszalek faced questions from customers over his transfer of over \$400 million worth of Ethereum to a secure 'cold storage' address, which was mistakenly sent to another exchange address. He said: "At no point were the funds at risk of being sent somewhere they could not be retrieved. It had nothing to do with any of the craziness from FTX."

Crypto is among a host of firms to commit to releasing audited proof of reserves to try and bolster confidence and convince the market it is not susceptible to a run on its assets. FTX was brought down by a rush of customers looking to pull their assets from the exchange last month. Marszalek said the sector had been set back “a good couple of years” by FTX’s collapse and the market now needed to win back the faith of investors and customers.

Oman to incentivise rollout of EV charging infrastructure

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 6

Oman's decarbonisation strategy envisions the roll-out of nationwide Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure that will make EV ownership and operation an attractive proposition in the country.

According to Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, zero-carbon mobility is a key part of the nation's integrated strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 as mandated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik recently.

Speaking on the second day of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2022 Conference & Exhibition, Al Aufi stated that recent deliberations with various stakeholder agencies working



collaboratively to deliver on Oman's Net Zero commitment have produced a number of "aggressive incentives" to help put zero-emission mobility on the right path.

They include a plan to incentivize the installation of EV charging stations across the country with a view to boosting the uptake of EV use in Oman. “So in terms of the number of charging

stations that we will be installing throughout the country, our ambition is that you should be able to drive from Muscat to Salalah and back without having to worry about whether you will find a recharge station to fuel your car.

So you should be extremely comfortable driving your electric vehicle with the assurance that you can still drive your car back and it's not going to stop halfway through," Al Aufi said.

To this end, charging stations are proposed to be set up in every governorate in the country to support the widespread adoption of electric vehicles in Oman, he said. Al Aumi however noted the need for electric vehicles to be reasonably affordably to the majority of motorists to help drive a large-scale switch to low-carbon transportation.

India woos Omani investment

KABEER YOUSUF
 @kabeeryousef

From a GDP growth rate of 11th largest in the world some 10 years ago to the 5th largest today, India offers a plethora of opportunities for the investors from the Sultanate of Oman, according to Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman. Speaking at the 'India Connections' part of the TAS Conclave 2022, Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, said, as we emerge from the pandemic and entering a new era, uncertain and promising at the same time, the world is looking for new opportunities and Oman is standing at a new take-off point towards His Majesty's salutory 'Vision 2040' with strong fundamentals and wise leadership, at the cusp of a new phase of socio-economic progress. "India is a 1.3 billion strong opportunity, a \$3.5-trillion worth opportunity and it is an opportunity called 'India'"

He further said that India is expected to

become the world's 3rd largest economy, surpassing Japan and Germany, and have the 3rd largest stock market by 2030 in the next five years.

“For Oman, India presents not one, not two, but five distinct opportunities. Investment, trade, digital, energy transition and tourism opportunities,” Oman is home to over 6,000 India-Oman joint ventures with an estimated investment of over \$7.5 billion. Indian investments have created local jobs and have played a key role in transitioning the Omani economy to a higher trajectory.

Jindal Shadeed, a prominent Indian company, has announced a new \$3.5 billion investment in Duqm for a green-hydrogen-ready which will produce 5 million tonnes per annum steel plant.

Jindal Shaded steel plant in Suhar has already acclaimed to be the country's biggest, estimated to have added \$5.5 billion to Omani GDP in the last 5 years. Jindal will be just one of many Indian investors that are keen to invest in Oman

tapping into the huge potential here for producing renewable energy.

"As Oman now seeks to double down on the priorities of Oman Vision 2040, tapping investments from a capital rich Indian corporate sector could provide it with the resources needed to make this vision into a reality," he adds.

He said India today is an exporting powerhouse and its merchandise exports crossed \$400 billion for the first time earlier this year. Renewed energy in discussions on FTAs has given new momentum to India's trade links with the world.

A landmark India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has galvanised India-GCC negotiations on a region-wide FTA.

India-Oman two-way trade in 2021-22 was nearly 90 per cent higher than previous year touching nearly \$10 billion.

In the first 6 months of this financial year, the bilateral trade is already higher than annual figures recorded in 2021, 2020, 2019 and 2018.

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WEDNESDAY | DECEMBER 7 | 2022 | JUMADA AL ULA 13 | 1444 AH



MOROCCO DUMP SPAIN OUT ON PENALTIES

DOHA: Achraf Hakimi struck the decisive penalty to send Spain crashing out and Morocco into the World Cup quarterfinals for the first time, winning 3-0 in a shoot-out on Tuesday after a 0-0 draw.

Spain coach Luis Enrique had claimed his players prepared by taking 1,000 penalties as homework but Pablo Sarabia, Carlos Soler and Sergio Busquets all missed from the spot and Madrid-born Hakimi dinked his home to the delight of Morocco's raucous support.

Walid Regragui's side will face Portugal or Switzerland in what is uncharted territory for them, with their previous best a last-16 exit in 1986.

Spain had been hoping they could repeat their 2010 World Cup triumph after reaching the semifinals of Euro 2020, where they were also beaten on penalties by Italy.

The teams were closely matched through a nail-biting clash, with Spain having more of the ball but Morocco creating the better openings, few though they were.

Luis Enrique trialed his third right-back of the tournament in Marcos Llorente, and benched the team's top scorer Alvaro Morata for Marco Asensio, after the shock defeat by Japan.

Spain monopolised the ball, with Morocco's fans furiously whistling with their side out of possession.

Morocco, who are the last African and Arab side left standing at the first World Cup held in an Arab country, were intensely backed and their fans greatly outnumbered Spain's.

With La Roja playing in a pale blue second strip, they resembled the away team on hostile territory.

Gavi, who at 18 years and 123 days old became the youngest player to start a World Cup knockout game since Brazil great Pele in 1958, rose to the occasion.

The Barcelona midfielder terrier was at his most intense, smashing into challenges left, right and centre, even diving to make one with his head.

Morocco goalkeeper Yassine Bounou tipped a Gavi strike on to

the crossbar, though it would have been ruled offside, while Asensio drilled into the side-netting, although Spain created little.

Regragui's side sat deep defensively and threatened on the counter, with Unai Simon beating away a long range effort from Noussair Mazraoui.

TOOTHLESS SPAIN

Sofiane Boufal, who bypassed Llorente like sand slipping through the Spaniard's fingers early on, carved the best chance of the half for Nayef Aguerd, who headed inches over.

Bounou pummelled away a Dani Olmo strike from an angle as the tension cranked up after the break.

Luis Enrique raged at Rodri for choosing the wrong option on the ball, and withdrew the dogged and muddled Gavi for Carlos Soler.

He threw Morata on too, giving Spain a focal point up top, but they struggled to supply him as Morocco sat deeper and deeper.

Another substitute, Nico Williams did find the Atletico Madrid striker on one occasion but the angle was too tight and he scraped a shot across the face of goal. Bounou made a fine save from Olmo's free-kick as it almost snuck all the way through, with Spain finally creating stronger chances as the game frayed in the moments before extra-time.

Morocco responded in the additional period by finding

stability and testing Simon, who made a fine save with his legs to deny Walid Cheddira after he broke in down Spain's left flank.

Despite heavy pressure by Spain in the final moments before penalties, they could not trouble the Sevilla goalkeeper again, with Pablo Sarabia clipping the outside of the post, although he might have been offside.

Having been sent on apparently for the shoot-out, Sarabia struck the post again from Spain's first penalty, after Abdelhamid Sabiri had sent Morocco ahead.

Soler and Busquets missed, while Hakim Ziyech scored, before Hakimi netted against his birth country to ignite wild celebrations. — **AFP**

B R A Z I L I A N S B R I N G A B E A C H S O C C E R S W A G G E R T O S T A D I U M 9 7 4

Brazil's Vinicius Junior celebrates scoring their first goal with teammates. — Reuters



Imperious Brazil smash Koreans

DOHA: An irrepressible, irresistible Brazil lit up the night sky on Monday with one of the performances of the World Cup to shred South Korea 4-1 and set up a quarterfinal clash with Croatia.

The Brazilians brought a beach soccer swagger to the iconic Stadium 974 with a display that simply overwhelmed the Koreans, and likely struck fear into potential opponents.

“We’re dreaming of the title, of course,” Brazilian talisman Neymar said. “Today was the fourth game, there are three left. We’re very focused on getting that title.”

After Japan’s penalty shoot-out loss to Croatia earlier, and Australia’s loss to Argentina, South Korea’s defeat means that all three Asian Confederation teams were eliminated in the first knockout round.

Having failed to score in the first half of any match so far this tournament, five-time champions Brazil corrected that with

four goals before the break, to end the match as any meaningful contest early on.

They took only seven minutes to breach the Korean defence for the first time. Raphinha sliced through the red wall — leaving several of its bricks flailing on the ground -- and, when his cross eluded the closely-marked Neymar, Vinicius Jr was at the far post to gently lift the ball over scrambling defenders and the desperately reaching goalkeeper.

EFFERVESCENT IN ATTACK

If the Koreans were winded by that early blow, worse was to come. Five minutes later Richarlison was hauled down in the penalty box and the referee instantly pointed to the spot.

Up stepped Neymar for a game of cat-and-mouse with Kim Seung-gyu. The Korean stood to the far right of his goal. Neymar waited, smiling. Finally, he trotted towards the ball in his faltering

run-up and left the wrong-footed keeper sitting in the middle of his goal as he stroked the ball home for his 76th Brazil goal -- one shy of the great Pele’s international haul.

Brazil were effervescent in attack and organised in defence, restricting the South Koreans to long shots. By the half-hour mark it was 3-0, thanks to one of the best goals of the tournament.

Richarlison won the ball back in an aerial duel, juggled it on his head and foot before laying off and, in an astonishing move which scythed the Koreans to shreds, ran onto an incisive pass from captain Thiago Silva to easily beat the goalkeeper.

Lucas Paqueta got in on the act, firing home in the 36th minute for 4-0. Brazil had too much quality up front, and were being given far too much space.

That Brazil went in only 4-0 up was as much to do with their profligacy as

anything the Koreans could muster in terms of defence.

With their elaborate goal celebrations, the Brazilians had done more dancing than defending in the opening 45 minutes and the second half followed a similar pattern, with goalkeeper Kim single-handedly denying Brazil another hatful of goals.

CARRY ON DANCING

A more prosaic side would have added several goals early in the second half, but seemingly you cannot turn Brazil on and off, and chances went begging due to overly elaborate flicks or backheels when the simple solution would have worked best. It came back to bite them when Korean substitute Paik Seung-ho thundered home a long distance screamer, aided by a slight deflection, to reward the red team for their endless industry with a consolation goal. — Reuters

DUTCH FLIER
DUMFRIES
DAZZLES
AHEAD OF
ARGENTINA
SHOWDOWN



Netherlands' defender Denzel Dumfries celebrates scoring his team's third goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Round of 16 match against USA at Khalifa International Stadium in Doha. — AFP

DOHA: Denzel Dumfries had a slow start at the World Cup but the Netherlands wing-back hit his stride in spectacular style in the last-16 match against the United States.

The Inter Milan defender -- one of the breakout stars at last year's Euro 2020 -- provided two assists and scored the third goal in a 3-1 win to help set up Friday's quarterfinal clash with Argentina.

The Dutch will need to find a way of stopping Lionel Messi as the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner continues his quest for a maiden

World Cup title.

But coach Louis van Gaal will be hoping that his side can expose gaps behind the Argentina defence on the counter-attack, for which Dumfries and fellow wing-back Daley Blind will be crucial.

The pair assisted each other's goals in the victory over the Americans as Van Gaal's 3-4-1-2 formation paid dividends.

"He is (important). He got a lot of criticism in the first games but we know what he can do and he showed it today," midfielder Davy Klaassen said after the last-16 tie.

"In this system the wing-backs are really important and if you see them assisting each other today, this is what you want."

Kylian Mbappe is the tournament's leading scorer with five goals, while other wingers to impress include England pair Marcus Rashford and Bukayo Saka and Brazil's Vinicius Junior.

Wide players have been more important than usual in Qatar, according to Arsene Wenger, now Fifa's football development chief.

"The sides with the best wingers are those who have the best

chances to win because the game is changing towards the wings," said Wenger.

"Teams are blocking the centre, and attacks are going towards both sides."

The Netherlands' width comes from Blind and Dumfries, with Memphis Depay and Cody Gakpo starting in a narrower front two ahead of Klaassen.

The positives of that system were best shown by their opening goal when a sweeping 20-pass move was finished off by Depay from Dumfries' cut-back.

"In that goal you see all the facets of the system that we play," said Dumfries.

"We really attack the spaces and change sides really well. It was a fantastic team goal. This is where you see the core of the system being executed."

DUTCH ON RIGHT TRACK

The Netherlands laboured at times in the first round but still finished top of Group A after wins over hosts Qatar and Senegal and a draw with Ecuador.

"We knew before that we could

play better. In the group stage we didn't lose but we felt that we could play better," said Dumfries.

The three-time runners-up are hoping to peak at the right time in their bid to win the title for the first time.

"We're growing in the tournament, we're improving every game and this was another step," said captain Virgil van Dijk.

"We came here with one goal and that's to become world champions and we have to win every game and that's what we're trying to do." — AFP

Captain Son apologises after South Korea's meek exit

DOHA: Son Heung-min apologised after his South Korean side exited the World Cup following a sobering 4-1 defeat to favourites Brazil in the last 16 in Qatar.

The captain and talisman was powerless as Brazil scored four times in the first half on Monday, before Paik Seung-ho netted a 76th-minute consolation for the outclassed Koreans.

South Korea have still never won a World Cup knockout tie outside of their home country.

"I can only apologise to our fans for not living up to their expectations," said the 30-year-old Tottenham forward, who played in a mask in Qatar following facial surgery last month.

"We did our best but I think we played a very difficult game," he told TV reporters.

"Still, there is no doubt that all the players battled proudly, devoted themselves and worked hard to get this far.

"The players and staff really

did their best to prepare for this match, so I hope you understand."

South Korea coach Paulo Bento announced in the immediate aftermath of the heavy defeat that he would not be staying on, a decision he said was made in September.

The 53-year-old former Portugal international had been in charge since 2018.

Son, who failed to score at the tournament and showed only fleeting glimpses of his best form, said he was sorry to see the boss go.

"I never once had any doubt about the style of football he pursued," Son told Korean media in a reference to critics, who said Bento was too cautious at times.

"A lot of people had reservations about it but they all cheered for us when we played well at the World Cup here. We were able to execute things we'd worked on for the last four years."

"It's really sad to see him go," Son added. — AFP



South Korea's midfielder Son Heung-min applauds supporters after his team lost the Qatar 2022 World Cup Round of 16 match against Brazil at Stadium 974 in Doha. — AFP

FAN



Morocco fans outside the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan. – Reuters



Spain fans inside the Education City Stadium. – Reuters



Morocco fans outside the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan. – Reuters



Supporters of Brazil cheer on the stands ahead of the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 match against South Korea at Stadium 974 in Doha. – AFP



Spain fans outside the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan. – Reuters

Z O N E



Morocco fans inside the Education City Stadium. – Reuters



Morocco fans inside the Education City Stadium. – Reuters



Morocco fans inside the Education City Stadium. – Reuters



Morocco fans outside the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan. – Reuters



Morocco fans are pictured in fancy dress inside the stadium. – Reuters



Morocco fans are pictured outside the stadium. – Reuters



Brazil and Swiss fans feted

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef



In a different gesture of unity and harmony amid differences, the Embassy of Brazil in Muscat hosted the fans of Swiss team as well as Brazil when the teams came face to face on Monday at the Fifa World Cup in Doha last week.

It was an action that underlined the fact that sports acts as a bridge to fill the gaps of differences.

"It was a unique way of cheering for both teams which underlines the fact that as teams we may be different but as humans, we are just one," a fan cheering the Brazil team said.

As many as 70 football fans

were hosted by the embassy. They cheered for the Switzerland and Brazil teams. They were given food and beverages through the match making it an unforgettable experience for the sports-minded fans. The embassy was well decorated with flags of both teams and festoons and dangles were on display.

"We just wanted to send out the message that sports unites people and not divides us. We are happy to have hosted the first of its kind sports event complementing the mega fest in Doha," Milton Coutinho Filho, Embassy of Brazil, Charge de Affaires said.

Hopman Cup to return next year in France

PARIS: The mixed-gender Hopman Cup team tournament will make a return in 2023 after losing its New Year slot on the tennis calendar, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) said on Tuesday, with the next edition to be played in Nice, France from July 19-23. The Nice Lawn Tennis Club will host the event up to 2027 as part of a five-year contract between the ITF and Barcelona-based company Tennium, which operate multiple ATP and WTA tournaments.

"The Hopman Cup, as a unique mixed-team event, has always enjoyed a special place in the hearts of tennis fans, and I am sure that spectators in Nice will relish the chance to see some of the world's top men and women players on the same court," ITF President David Haggerty said.

As in previous editions, teams will have one male and one female player, with ties featuring a men's singles match, a women's



singles and a mixed doubles.

The ITF said six nations will compete in the 2023 and 2024 editions, with the competition expanding to eight teams from 2025 onwards. France will take part each year as hosts.

A new mixed-sex \$15 million tournament — the United Cup — featuring teams from 18 nations playing matches across three Australian cities will kick off the 2023 tennis season.

The inaugural United Cup will start on December 29 and run through to the final in Sydney on January 8. — **Reuters**

Team Asyad Shipping to compete in 44Cup Grand Final



MUSCAT: Oman Sail's professional sailors will compete in the upcoming 44Cup Grand Final, taking place at Al Mouj Muscat from December 7-11. Supported by the shipping arm of Asyad Group, the Omani Team Asyad Shipping will join the 10 teams representing Great Britain, Monaco, France, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland as the five-stop international RC44 tour comes to a close.

Representing Oman will be: Nasser al Mashari (skipper), Musab al Hadi, Hussain al Jabri, Ali al Balushi, Waleed al Kindi, Yasser al Rahbi, Abdulrahman al Mashari, Ahmed al Hasani, Raad al Hadi, Haitham al Wahaibi and Akram al Wahaibi.

Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi, CEO of Asyad Shipping and Asyad Drydock, said, "It is our pleasure to be the official supporter of Oman Sail's professional sailors participating in the 44th International Cup on board of Asyad Shipping's boat and we wish them success and raise the flag of the Sultanate of Oman high." Al Nadhairi added that Asyad Group and Oman Sail share a common goal: to connect the world with the Sultanate of Oman through the sea, whether through shipping services or competing in major international sailing championships. It is a



Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi



Hashim al Rashdi



great honour for Muscat to host the grand final of this year's RC44 Tour, and to bring so many excellent teams to our shores to race.

Hashim al Rashdi, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, said, "This is an exciting opportunity for our sailors to gain more experience at the very highest levels of sailing,

The RC44 Cup has historically featured some of the world's best sailors, competing on identical boats which means skill and tactical awareness is the deciding factor. We are grateful to Asyad Shipping, the shipping arm of Asyad Group for supporting the team and the entire team is looking forward to being part of such a prestigious international event on home waters." This is the first time that the RC44 Tour has visited Oman since 2014 when Oman also hosted the final round. The championship has already been decided, with Monaco-based Charisma, skippered by Dutchman Nico Poons, bringing an unassailable lead into the final round of races following three successive wins, but there is still a lot to race for over the weekend at Al Mouj Muscat. The fleet is congested behind the leaders and all of the teams will be looking to finish the season strongly, while the addition of Team Asyad Shipping offers incentive for the local team to perform to the best of their ability.

The 44Cup Oman is organised by Oman Sail and supported by official event partners Oman Air, Al Mouj Muscat, Kempinski Hotel Muscat, Tanuf Water, and the new EQ range from Mercedes-Benz Oman.

ISWK Lions beat BSC D, BSC E trump ISM

MUSCAT: ISWK Lions U13 thrashed Bausher Sports Centre D U13 by 256 runs and Boshers Sports Centre E U13 beat Indian School Muscat U13 by 10 wickets in the Oman Cricket U13 Junior League Season 2022-23 powered by Mazoon Dairy.

Winning the toss and electing to bat first, ISWK Lions U13's got off to a flying start.

Openers Ayush Shetty and Aryan Joshi bolted 86 runs in the powerplay to give the Lions a lead in the contest. Both openers went on to dominate the BSC D bowling attack with Aryan Joshi hitting 18 boundaries and Ayush Shetty hitting 11 boundaries. They

created a record partnership for the first wicket in an U13 match scoring 255 runs in just 15 overs, both of them retiring out together.

ISWK Lions ended the innings scoring 346 runs. In return, BSC D U13's started well with a quick 32 run partnership but falling off as dominoes to Jaideep Sai and Akeel Mohammed who bagged 3 wickets and 2 wickets respectively. BSC D were all out for just 90 runs in 18.5 overs.

BOSHER PREVAIL

In the other match, ISM U13 won the toss and elected to bat first. ISM lost their first wicket in the



Aryan Joshi of ISWK Lions U13



Vignesh of BSC E U13

form of a run out halfway through the powerplay although a 68 run partnership between Suvarn AK and Swagath NK brought them back into the game.

Swagath went on to score a half century remaining not out scoring 61 of 47 balls hitting six fours. ISM U13 set a target of 147 for the BSC E U13 boys. BSC E U13 openers Vignesh Karthikeyan and Aditya Chaudhari determined to chase down the target, scored 36 preserving their wickets in the powerplay.

BSC's skipper Vignesh taking the responsibility, drained down

the ISM U13 bowlers scoring 94 off 56 balls with 15 fours well supported by Aditya scoring 46 off 37 balls ensuring BSC E U13 get over the line with a dominating 10 wickets win. It was Boshers Sports Centre E's third consecutive win of the league this week.

BRIEF SCORES

ISWK Lions U13 346-3 in 20 overs (Aryan Joshi 112 (49b,18x4), Ayush Shetty 102 (55b, 11x4) beat BSC D U13 90 all out in 18.5 overs (Aryan Nair 18 (15b, 1x4); Jaideep Sai 3-7, Akeel Mohammed 2-5) by 256 runs.

ISM U13 146-4 in 20 overs (Swagath NK 61 (47b, 6x4); Rayyan Junaid 1-24) lost to BSC E U13 147-0 in 15.3 overs (Vignesh K 94 (56b,15x4), Aditya C 46 (37b, 4x4) by 10 wickets.

Dhofar take on Al Oruba, Sohar face off Oman Club

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 6

Salalah giants Dhofar, Al Rustaq and Sohar will eye in moving closer to the league toppers Al Nahda as they will open the matches of the 12th week of Omantel League on Wednesday. The 11-time champions will meet Al Oruba at Al Saada Stadium and the match will start at 5:05 pm. Oman club will host Sohar in Seeb Stadium and the game will begin at 4:40 pm. Al Rustaq will take on Al Bashayer at Al Rustaq Sports Complex and the fixture will kick off at 7:10 pm.

Dhofar, placed in sixth place with 18 points, will aim to register their second successive win after their crucial triumph in the previous round against Al Rustaq 1-0. Awadh al Shahri, Yazeed al Mashani, Ali Salim, Abdullah al Musharafi and their team-mates will be the key players of Dhofar team to clinch another three winning points. Rivals Al Oruba would want to stop dropping the points after two defeats against Sohar and Bahla in the 10th and 11th weeks. The promoted club from first division league this



season are suffering at the bottom as they have five points and placed in a danger zone in 13th position.

Third-placed Al Rustaq will meet Al Bashayer club at the former's home. The southern Batinah team will seek to bounce

back to the winning loop as they suffered a 1-0 defeat against Dhofar in the previous week. A win on Wednesday will take them to 24 points and any negative result for Al Nahda will make the gap between the teams to one point. Al

Bashayer, on the other hand, will aim to leave the relegation zone in their debut season in Omantel League. The team suffered two losses in the previous rounds against Sur and Al Nahda. Any more defeats will put the team



stuck to the danger zone.

Sohar will chase another triumph as they will meet Oman club in Seeb Stadium. The northern Batinah team's win will raise them to 23 points and get closer to the league topper. On

the other side, Oman club players will work hard to return back to the winning circle as they registered a thrilling win over Al Suwaiq in the 10th week before holding to a goalless draw against Al Nasr in the past week.



India's Shikhar Dhawan speaks during a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka, ahead of their second one-day international (ODI) match against Bangladesh. — AFP

Dhawan confident India will bounce back in Bangladesh

DHAKA: India's opening batsman Shikhar Dhawan believes his side will bounce back in the three-match one-day international series against Bangladesh despite a shock defeat in the opening match.

"We are very, very confident about tomorrow's game. This is not the first time we have lost the first game in a series. It's quite normal so we know how to bounce back from these situations," Dhawan said in Dhaka ahead of the second match on Wednesday.

Tail-enders Mehidy Hasan Miraz hit an unbeaten 38 and put on a record tenth-wicket stand as Bangladesh edged out India by one wicket to take a 1-0 lead in Sunday's thriller match in Dhaka.

Chasing 187 for victory, the hosts slumped to 136-9 before Mehidy and Mustafizur Rahman put together a 51-run partnership — Bangladesh's best ever for the final wicket in a successful run chase — to achieve their target with 24 balls to spare.

"It was a low total and at the end they pulled the game back from us which doesn't happen very often. They played really well so give credit to them," Dhawan said. "Where we need improvements were analysed and rectified in a meeting and surely will be creating much more impact in the coming game as well," he added.

Dhawan said that bowling all-rounder Shardul Thakur, who was in discomfort in the first match, will be available for Wednesday's match at the same Dhaka venue.

"He had a cramp but it was nothing serious," he said.

Bangladesh coach Russell Domingo said they were unlikely to risk pacer Taskin Ahmed despite his returning to training after recovering from a back injury.

"I'm not sure we want to risk playing him yet. There is a lot of cricket to be played, there are a few Test matches and also (we want to) have the opportunity to keep developing the other fast bowlers," Domingo said.

The South African added that they were aware of the backlash they might face against India in the second match.

"There's also a sense that India will come back strong. We have to play better cricket than the first game, particularly with the bat. We can't get away with it again," he said.

A win in Wednesday's game will give Bangladesh their second successive ODI series victory over India, having taken the honours 2-1 the last time India visited Dhaka in 2015.

The third and final match will be held in Chittagong on December 10, followed by two Tests in Chittagong and Dhaka respectively. — AFP

McLaughlin-Levrone, Duplantis win World Athlete of Year awards



Sweden's Armand Duplantis in action during the men's pole vault. — Reuters

PARIS: World champion American hurdler Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone and Swedish pole vaulter Mondo Duplantis won the World Athlete of the year awards on Monday.

McLaughlin-Levrone broke the world women's 400m hurdles record twice while Duplantis set three new world highs this year.

US-born Swede Duplantis claimed the award for the second time in three years with three world records in 2022 plus the men's world indoor title in March and the world outdoor gold in July.

"Going into the year, I had really high expectations of myself and I had some really big goals," 23-year-old Duplantis said.

"I wanted to win the world indoors, the world outdoors, the Europeans, the Diamond League final, and I wanted to break the world record a few times," he added.



Sydney McLaughlin of the US wins the women's 4x400 metres final. — Reuters

Both titles were claimed in world record heights of 6.20 and 6.21 metres respectively and he also sealed European gold in Munich.

He won 18 of his 19

competitions, and vaulted six metres or higher 23 times.

It was a first World Athlete of the year award for McLaughlin who clocked an astonishing 50.68 seconds in July obliterating

her own world record by more than half a second.

"All of my goals were accomplished this year," McLaughlin-Levrone said.

"We were able to accomplish everything we set out to do. "It couldn't have been any better," she added.

'SKY'S THE LIMIT'

The 23-year-old is billed as a once-in-a-lifetime talent and has hinted she could change discipline to the 400m flat.

She will be one of the most closely watched performers at the world athletics championships in Budapest in August. "My coach thinks there's a lot more to be done," she said.

"The sky's the limit for sure," she said in July.

McLaughlin also won Olympic gold last year in Tokyo in a then-world record time.

— AFP

C O N T E N D E R S F O R T H E

GOLDEN BOOT

The 2022 Fifa World Cup in Qatar has entered the knockout phase, and one of the top honours players will be competing for is the Golden Boot, awarded to the player with the most goals in the tournament. The number of assists by a player is considered in the case of a tie for goals scored. If players are tied on both counts, the winner is decided by who played the fewest minutes. England captain Harry Kane bagged the prize at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where he scored six goals and led his team to the semifinals. Below is an overview of contenders in the race for top scorer at the 2022 World Cup.



ALVARO MORATA

The Atletico Madrid marksman scored in all three of Spain's Group E games, including one off the bench against 2014 champions Germany.

Morata, who was edged out of the starting line-up by Marco Asensio in his side's first two World Cup games, set up Spain's fifth goal in their 7-0 thrashing of Costa Rica before getting off the mark himself to round off a one-sided opener.

He put Luis Enrique's team ahead in their final group game but the 2010 champions were beaten as Japan staged their second stunning turnaround of the tournament to surge into the last 16 in top spot.



CODY GAKPO

The Dutch forward has managed to find the net regularly in Qatar so far, as the Netherlands progressed to the last 16 after finishing top of Group A.

However, Gakpo was unable to add to his tally in the Netherlands' 3-1 win over the United States in the last 16.

The 23-year-old has been influential in his club PSV Eindhoven's run to the Europa League knockout stages and has been the subject of transfer speculation with top European clubs said to be vying for his signature when next summer's transfer window opens.

KYLIAN MBAPPE

The 23-year-old scored against Australia in his side's opening Group D match and bagged a second-half double against Denmark as France booked their knockout spot.

France's talisman failed to find the net as Tunisia recorded a famous upset in their final group match.

He added two more goals to his tally in a 3-1 win against Poland in the last 16.

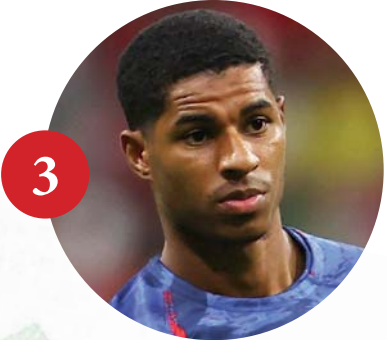
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BRUNO FERNANDES

* Portugal's run in the World Cup in Qatar has been clouded somewhat by the controversy surrounding Ronaldo and his acrimonious departure from Manchester United.

* But his erstwhile club team-mate 28-year-old Bruno Fernandes has stepped out of Ronaldo's shadow by scoring twice against Uruguay after setting up two goals in Portugal's 3-2 win against Ghana.



MARCUS RASHFORD

The England striker enjoyed a dream start to his World Cup campaign in Qatar.

Rashford's place in the squad was uncertain a few months ago due to form and fitness, but the Manchester United forward has moved up the Golden Boot standings after he netted twice in England's rout of a Gareth Bale-led Wales side.

Rashford's team-mates Phil Foden, Jack Grealish (both Manchester City), Bukayo Saka (Arsenal), Raheem Sterling (Chelsea) and Jude Bellingham (Borussia Dortmund) also featured on the scoresheet during the group stage.

Rashford started on the bench in England's 3-0 victory over Senegal in the last 16, coming on in the 65th minute to replace Saka but failing to score. Saka's goal against Senegal drew him level with Rashford on three goals for the tournament.



LIONEL MESSI

The Argentina great is playing in what he has said is probably his last World Cup. The 35-year-old opened his account by burying a spot kick in a shock Group C loss to Saudi Arabia, before scoring and assisting Enzo Fernandez in an emotionally charged win over Mexico.

Messi also scored in Argentina's 2-1 win over Australia in the last 16, putting his side ahead after 35 minutes with a coolly taken low strike for his 94th international goal.

The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner has enjoyed a trophy-laden career at club level, and his fans around the world are hoping he can finally help deliver a World Cup for his country this time around.

Messi's rival Cristiano Ronaldo of Portugal became the first.



WORLD CUP TOP
GOAL SCORER 2022
GOLDEN BOOT
STANDINGS

- Kylian Mbappe France - 5
- Alvaro Morata Spain - 3
- Lionel Messi Argentina 3
- Richarlison Brazil - 1
- Marcus Rashford England - 3
- Bukayo Saka England - 3
- Cody Gakpo Netherlands - 3
- Olivier Giroud France - 3
- Bruno Fernandes Portugal - 2
- Andrej Kramaric Croatia - 0
- Ferran Torres Spain - 2
- Breel Embolo Switzerland - 2
- Julian Alvarez Argentina - 2
- Note: Stats as of December 5

