

FSA incentives to boost capital market activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's capital market regulator Financial Services Authority (FSA) announced details of the Capital Market Incentives Programme on Sunday. This initiative, based on Royal Directives, aims to offer a package of incentives to develop the investment and business environment in the sultanate, support economic development and achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The Capital Market Incentives Programme is designed to stimulate the capital market's role in the national economy, enabling it to serve as a long-term financing tool for economic projects and providing investment opportunities for both local and foreign investors.

Details of the programme were announced at a press conference on Sunday. It will be implemented through three distinct paths over a period of five years.

Addressing the press conference, Sheikh Abdullah Salem al Salmi, Executive President of FSA, emphasised the fact that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's endorsement of the Capital Market Incentives Programme is significant support for economic growth by diversifying and empowering the private sector to play a larger role in leading business and commercial activities.



Financial Services Authority announced details of the Capital Market Incentives Programme on Sunday (Supplied photo)



Conversion of companies into public joint-stock companies will strengthen the position of MSX and increase its liquidity and size

SHEIKH ABDULLAH AL SALMI

Path 1 – New joint-stock companies

The first path includes a package of incentives provided by various government entities to encourage the establishment of new public joint-stock companies and conversion of private and family-owned companies with market value exceeding RO10mn into public joint-stock companies.

As part of the incentives, the Ministry of Finance will refund two-thirds of the income tax

paid by companies benefiting from the programme for a period of five years after they are listed on Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX). Additionally, Tax Authority will allow these companies to pay income tax in installments and exempt them from taxes resulting from these installments for a period not exceeding six months from the due tax date.

Also, companies listed on MSX will be granted a 10% price

preference in awarding of procurement contracts and tenders issued by the Secretariat General of Tender Board for a period of five years, in accordance with rules currently in force.

Sheikh Salmi informed that conversion of companies into public joint-stock companies will strengthen the position of MSX, and increase its liquidity and size, while improving prospects of upgrading the stock exchange to an emerging market, thereby

offering investors more options and alternatives across various sectors.

Path 2 - Promising Companies Market

The second path involves establishing a sub-market within MSX – called Promising Companies Market – which targets private and family-owned companies, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and emerging companies with market value exceeding RO500,000.

Closed joint-stock companies wishing to list on the Promising Companies Market will receive incentives from the Ministry of Finance, including a refund of two-thirds of the income tax paid after listing on the market. The Tax Authority will also permit the payment of income tax in installments, with an exemption from additional taxes for a period not exceeding six months from the due date. The Tender Board will similarly grant a 10% price preference in procurement and tender contracts under the same rules.

Sheikh Salmi informed that the Promising Companies Market would provide an environment conducive to private companies, family businesses, SMEs and emerging enterprises to grow, gain experience in financial markets, and explore alternative financing options for their projects and expansion.

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Dhofar khareef draws record 413,000 visitors

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Dhofar has seen an increase in visitors during khareef season this year with the number of tourists reaching 413,122 by July 31. This marks a 4.3% increase compared to the same period in 2023, when 396,108 visitors were recorded, according to initial estimates by National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Omanis made up the largest group of visitors, with 305,070 arriving in Dhofar, reflecting a 3% increase from last year. The number of tourists from Gulf Cooperation Council countries also saw an increase to 66,998 compared to 59,555 during the same period in 2023.

Additionally, 41,054 visitors of other nationalities were recorded, up marginally from 40,418 the previous year.

A majority of visitors - 316,434 - arrived via land ports, while 96,688 travelled by air, showing a 7% increase in air arrivals compared to the same period last year.

Ninety-five per cent of visitors arrived during the peak period from July 1 to July 31, with the remaining 5% visiting between June 21 and June 30.

Known for its cool, misty weather and lush green landscapes, khareef continues to be a major draw for tourists from Oman and the wider region, contributing to the growth of the tourism sector.

MoL tightens private sector regulations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Labour (MoL) has introduced new measures aimed at cracking down on violations in the private sector under a new ministerial decision issued on August 6.

In another decision, MoL introduced new provisions for reconciliation and discontinuation of legal proceedings in offences punishable under the Labour Law. H E Dr Mahad bin Saeed bin Ali Baowain, Minister of Labour, issued decision No 450/2024 outlining the procedures and controls for dealing with establishments that violate provisions of the Labour Law, as established by Royal Decree No 53/2023.

Under the new rules, judicial



New rules issued for reconciliation

Muscat - Violators may now request reconciliation by paying a fine equivalent to 1/4 of the maximum penalty for their offence. This fine must be paid within 15 days of approval or the reconciliation will be nullified. For more severe offences, violators must pay a fine of RO1,000 to reconcile.

The decision also outlines conditions under which non-Omani workers who reconcile must be deported and barred from re-entering Oman.

These conditions include cases where the worker was employed in a position reserved for Omanis or if they had entered the country unlawfully.

Reconciliation for offences committed by detainees must be completed within seven working days, with the possibility of a one-time extension. But reconciliation does not absolve the violator of their responsibilities; they must rectify the violation and meet all legal obligations within 30 days.

police officers have been tasked with identifying and documenting violations committed by both employers and employees. These officers are required to present their identification upon request.

When a violation is detected, the officers must prepare a detailed report, including the date,

time, location and nature of the violation. The report should also carry the name and signature of the officer who prepared it, along with details of the individual or establishment involved. A copy of the report must be provided to the person involved, with any refusal to sign or accept it being

duly recorded.

Following this, a memorandum detailing the violation must be submitted to the director of the relevant department or their deputy. The department head may then decide to halt all or some services to the offending establishment. These services in-

clude issuing work permits for non-Omani workers, renewing work permit of violating workers and amending worker data, among others. Suspension of services will only be lifted once the violation has been addressed and fines paid, upon the decision of the department head or their deputy.

Dhofar's Green Belt project to capture 60t of carbon dioxide annually

Our Correspondent
Salalah

An initiative in Dhofar aims to plant 45,000 trees by the end of 2024, a move expected to absorb more than 60 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually over the next few years. The project also seeks to enhance groundwater reserves by collecting rainwater and fog throughout the year.

The Green Belt project, implemented by Environment Authority (EA), is part of Oman's broader national campaign to plant 10mn wild trees.

Ninety per cent of the first phase of the project is now complete.

Mohammed bin Salem



(Supplied photos)

Hardan, Director of Nature Conservation Department in Dhofar, stated, "The project began in 2022 and has already seen the planting of over 40,000 local

trees. Wild trees play a crucial role in feeding groundwater by collecting fog and rainwater."

The project covers 39 sites protected by fences, spread



Mohammed bin Salem Hardan

across approximately 600,000sqm of mountainous area in Salalah, Mirbat, Taqah and Rakhyut. The focus is on areas impacted by desertification

and low vegetation. Wild fig, sagot, tamarind and sidr trees, which are known for adaptability to Dhofar's climate, are being planted.

Further phases are planned with new sites being developed as the project progresses, informed Hardan.

"This initiative is a key part of Oman's commitment to achieving zero carbon neutrality by 2050. The project is expected to make a significant contribution by absorbing carbon dioxide and increasing groundwater reserves."

In addition to the Green Belt project, EA has been working on protecting perennial trees in Dhofar since 2022. The authority has established 107 protective

fences in various wilayats, including Salalah, Taqah, Mirbat, Rakhyut, Dhalkut and Thumrait. These fences help preserve trees threatened by overgrazing, bark peeling and use as firewood, ensuring the survival of species that are vital to the ecosystem and contribute to seed nurseries.

Hatem bin Salem al Mahri, Head of Natural Reserves Department, highlighted ongoing plans to create parks for wild trees in Dhofar. Notable among these is the Frankincense Tree Park in Raysut's Mudam area, which currently has 2,350 trees with plans to expand to 11,000. Additional parks are being developed for baobab trees in Mirbat and myrrh trees in Thumrait.



03

MoE concerned about heavy school bags; issues guidelines



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Bronze-age reed boat sails 50NM off Abu Dhabi coast

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COST VS HYGIENE

One of the favourite and popular quick bites in Oman is the shawarma. Recently, shawarma shops received a new directive from the authorities. Muscat Municipality has instructed these shops to replace conventional knives with electric cutters for shaving shawarma meat to eliminate health issues. What do you think of this new measure? Do you expect prices to increase because of this? Here's what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

Shamim Hussain
Finance manager

Muscat Municipality's decision to replace conventional knives with electric cutters for shaving shawarma meat appears to be a proactive measure aimed at enhancing hygiene and food safety. It'll reduce the risk of contamination; it'll be easier to clean and may reduce the chance of bacteria or other harmful organisms being transferred to the meat. An initial investment is required and maintenance cost could add up but at the same time, waste will reduce and efficiency will increase. So, impact on cost will depend on how vendors choose to handle these changes.

Mohammed al Harthi
Businessman

I believe Muscat Municipality's decision is a positive step towards ensuring food safety. While electric cutters might be more expensive, they reduce the risk of health hazards in our food. This could slightly increase prices, but the health benefits outweigh the costs.

Khalid al Lawati
Businessman

Though Muscat Municipality's decision to replace conventional knives with electric cutters is commendable for public health, I feel that it was not necessary. There already



YOUR SAY

are ample precautionary measures for restaurants and food here is safe. This will add burden on small companies.

Steve Fernandes
Cafe manager

It is a good decision. Price will be a

little affected but it will also make life easier for the person handling it with less energy and more productivity. Electric cutters are a good decision

to avoid physical contamination, but will need good hygiene for the device to be maintained. Spot checks will ensure compliance with the decision.

Ahmed Salti
Cashier

Health and safety should always come first. The use of electric cutters might increase costs for vendors, leading to higher prices, but as a consumer, I'd rather pay a bit more for the peace of mind, knowing my food is prepared safely.

Ayesha al Amri
Housewife

Switching to electric cutters is a smart move for hygiene. It may lead to a small price hike, but it's worth it to avoid potential health issues. Besides, knives are risky for workers if they are not careful or careless. Shawarma is a staple here and ensuring it's safe to eat is crucial.

Fatima al Balushi
Private sector employee

I support Muscat Municipality's decision. While it could mean higher prices, the priority should be on preventing any health risks. Shawarma is a favourite and maintaining its quality is essential, even if it means a small price adjustment.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Oman is one of the best countries for expatriates, according to the Expat Insider 2024 survey. Why do you think Oman is good for expats?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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Sur Marine Sports Festival set to boost tourism in S Sharqiyah

Our Correspondent
Sur

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in collaboration with South Sharqiyah Governor's Office, is gearing up to host Sur Marine Sports Festival from August 18 to 28.

The event is a key part of the programme celebrating Sur being named Arab Tourism Capital for 2024. To be held at Mokha Beach, the festival aims to highlight Sur's appeal as a premier tourism destination through a series of exciting marine sports activities.

Organised by Oman Sail, the festival will feature Oman Sailing Championship 2024, with competitions held in four categories - professional, junior sailors, Elka 4 and Elka 6 class boats.

Additionally, the festival will include kite surfing races, swimming races and traditional rowing boat competitions. Visitors will also have the chance to experience sailing aboard 'Diam' boats, offering a thrilling taste of the sport.



(Supplied photo)

Adding to the festive atmosphere, a separate zone will host an exhibition of small and medium enterprises, showcasing local handicrafts, food trucks and

a variety of entertainment activities, making it a lively place for visitors of all ages. Besides promoting Sur's tourism potential, the festival seeks to highlight the broader significance of South Sharqiyah.

Sur's rich maritime history,

which has long been a hub of cultural exchange and communication, adds a unique charm to the governorate. The festival is expected to draw tourists from Oman and abroad, offering them a unique glimpse of the area's vibrant heritage.

Local community involvement is a key feature of the festival, with residents participating in the organisation of various events. This engagement will not only enrich the festival experience but also help develop the skills of young people in the community, particularly in the fields of sailing and tourism.

The festival's activities are set to benefit South Sharqiyah economically, while also enhancing Oman's reputation on the global sailing stage. By showcasing the country's assets as a top destination for adventure tourism, the festival will play a crucial role in positioning Oman as a preferred host for international races and events, the ministry stated.

Waste management challenges rise in Dhofar during khareef

Salalah - Oman Environmental Services Holding Company - be'ah - has reported an increase in municipal solid waste in Dhofar during the ongoing khareef season.

According to the latest data, be'ah received 34,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste at its facilities across the governorate's wilayats in July 2024, marking a 20% increase compared to the same period last year. In July 2023, the daily average was around 923 tonnes, which rose to 1,107 tonnes in July 2024.

Khareef 2024 is expected to attract over 1mn visitors to Dhofar, a substantial increase from last year's 962,000 visitors, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information. The influx of visitors has led to a surge in waste production, presenting a challenge for municipal waste management operations.

To address these challenges, be'ah's operations team in Dhofar developed a comprehensive waste management plan in

MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE IN JULY

34,000T

WASTE COLLECTED

20%

RISE IN DAILY AVERAGE

3,000

ADDITIONAL BINS

1,400

BINS AT TOURIST SITES

preparation for 2024 khareef. Early preparations involved collaboration with service providers and municipal waste sector management teams. This included provision of 3,000 additional containers to meet the growing demand and replacing damaged ones, with 1,400 of

these containers specifically allocated for tourist sites.

The plan also introduced new waste collection routes for 2024 khareef. In July, additional manpower and equipment, totalling 142 units, were deployed to ensure the smooth and safe collection and transport of waste from containers in all areas of the governorate, including tourist sites.

The waste is transported to a transfer station in Raysut and ultimately to an engineered landfill in Thumrait for disposal according to international environmental standards.

In July alone, the driving distance for waste management operations reached 527,673km, with no reported accidents.

In 2024, be'ah launched an awareness campaign in Dhofar - called 'No' - aimed at raising environmental awareness among visitors and local communities. The campaign is built around the concept of saying "No" to inappropriate environmental behaviours.

CPA launches initiatives to boost service efficiency

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has introduced the second edition of its Consumer-Friendly Enterprises Initiative aimed at improving the quality of services offered to consumers across various sectors, including commercial, industrial and economic goods and services.

The programme seeks to encourage healthy competition among businesses while ensuring consumers receive better services.

In addition to enhancing service quality, the programme fo-



cuses on reducing consumer complaints, raising awareness on consumer rights and clarifying the responsibilities of service providers.

A CPA representative stated,

Our goal is to create an environment where consumers feel confident that their rights are respected, and where businesses are motivated to continually improve their services

CPA REPRESENTATIVE

"Our goal is to create an environment where consumers feel confident that their rights are

respected, and where businesses are motivated to continually improve their services."

As part of its ongoing efforts to modernise operations, CPA has also launched a series of internal and external technical systems. These were unveiled by Sulayem bin Ali al Hakmani, Chairman of CPA.

The new systems are designed to enhance productivity and streamline the authority's operations, contributing to the broader goal of digital transformation in line with Oman Vision 2040. Among the newly launched systems is an internal portal for CPA employees, en-

abling them to submit requests, access news and receive updates - all through a single, unified login system. The portal represents a significant step towards achieving digital transformation within the authority.

Additionally, CPA has introduced a dashboard system to monitor progress of its work, follow up on complaints and track reports. This tool is expected to assist the CPA Chairman in making informed decisions and improving the authority's overall performance.

For external stakeholders, two new systems have introduced: a price increase request

system and an upgraded price index. The price increase request system allows suppliers to submit and track their requests electronically, streamlining the approval process. The price index has been enhanced to include school suppliers, allowing consumers to compare prices by barcode or product name, thus making it easier to find the best deals.

These efforts reflect CPA's commitment to leveraging modern technology to enhance service delivery, foster consumer confidence and support the nation's vision for digital transformation.

MoE concerned about heavy school bags; issues guidelines

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Education (MoE) has taken steps to address the growing concern over heavy school bags, particularly for little children of Grades 1 to 4.

The initiative is part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to ensure the health and well-being of students, recognising the potential long-term consequences of carrying excessively heavy bags.

Scientific studies have shown that heavy school bags can lead to a range of health issues, including back deformities, spinal problems and even difficulty in walking. These physical challenges are often accompanied by mental distractions and a dislike for studying, which can have lasting impacts on a child's academic and psychological development.

To mitigate these risks, MoE has introduced practical measures aimed at reducing the weight of school bags. A recent directive limits students in the specified grades to using just two notebooks of 80 sheets each - one for each main subject. Additionally, the use of extra booklets or external binders has been prohibited, with students required to stick to the books provided by



the ministry.

Lockers have been installed in schools to allow students to keep their books, taking away the need to carry these home daily. The ministry is also encouraging the use of electronic books available on the educational portal, which can further lighten the load for students. Teachers are being asked to coordinate homework assignments to ensure that students do not carry unneces-

sary items.

Parents play a crucial role in this initiative. They are urged to choose appropriate school bags for their children, ensuring the bags are not too heavy and fit well. Parents should also help their children use the school routine efficiently, so they don't end up carrying all their books and supplies every day.

MoE has advised parents to communicate with their chil-

dren's school administration if there are any concerns regarding school bag weight.

Schools are expected to monitor the situation closely. Through parent councils, school administrations are tasked with conducting awareness programmes for both parents and students on how to manage school bags effectively. They are also responsible for ensuring students use lockers properly and follow the school routine to avoid unnecessary strain.

Materials used in school bags have also come under scrutiny. Many bags available in the market are made of heavy, uncomfortable materials that do not meet health standards, adding unnecessary weight even before books are packed. The ministry has outlined specifications for safe school bags - these should be lightweight, made of comfortable materials and should not exceed 10% of a student's body weight when filled. The bags should have wide, padded shoulder straps, multiple pockets to distribute weight evenly, and should cover the upper back without hanging below the waist.

MoE emphasises the need for cooperation between schools, parents and students to ensure these guidelines are followed.



Labour forum on market innovation, growth

Salalah - A labour forum, titled 'Together We Work...Together We Innovate and Prosper,' started on Sunday, bringing together over 400 experts, specialists and investors from Oman and abroad. Organised by Ministry of Labour, the event running till August 29 aims to explore key issues in the labour market and identify strategies for improvement.

Inaugurated by H E Dr Mahad bin Saeed Baowain, Minister of Labour, the forum will address several critical topics, including vocational guidance and its role in achieving sustainable development. Discussions will also focus on new work patterns and the impact of these on enhancing

competitive capabilities across the region.

In his address, Nasser bin Salem al Hadhrami, Director General of Labour in Dhofar, highlighted Oman's commitment to fostering partnerships among government, private and academic sectors. "This forum reflects Oman's dedication to integrating efforts and unifying visions towards sustainable development. Human capital remains our most valuable asset and it is central to our developmental goals," he said.

Hadhrami further stressed on the importance of labour market improvements, noting that these efforts are crucial for boosting production and achieving sus-

tainable development. He informed that the Ministry of Labour is focused on enhancing labour market practices as part of its broader strategy, collaborating closely with both government agencies and private sector organisations.

The forum will also underscore the need for strong professional networks to create safe and decent workplaces. Hadhrami pointed out that the recent Labour Law and Social Protection Law align with international standards and are designed to address the evolving challenges in the labour market.

He added that the ministry is making significant strides through economic, educational

and training initiatives that anticipate the future of work.

H E Dr Baowain will meet with business leaders during the forum to discuss the future of work and strategies for strengthening the market by tapping into human capital. The forum will also focus on artificial intelligence to examine the impact of technological advancements on the labour market, alongside discussions on entrepreneurship, employment policies and job localisation.

The forum's programme includes 12 dialogue sessions with 40 speakers, covering a range of topics such as human resources development, entrepreneurship and social responsibility.



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Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following bidding :

Serial	Bidding No.	Bidding description	Document fee	Deadline for obtaining bidding docs.	Deadline for inquiries submission	Deadline for Submission
1	PRE-24-226	Organizing events for the Muscat Festival (2024-2025)Implementing and managing the consumer exhibition in Al Naseem Park and Al Amerat.	30 Rials	01/09/2024	10/09/2024	22/09/2024
2	PRE-24-227	Organizing events for the Muscat Festival (2024-2025) International Circus. Al Naseem and Al Amerat parks	25 Rials	01/09/2024	10/09/2024	22/09/2024
3	PRE-24-228	Organizing events for the Muscat Festival 2024-2025 Heritage Village - Al Naseem and Al Amerat Park	25 Rials	01/09/2024	10/09/2024	22/09/2024
4	PRE-24-229	Organizing events for the Muscat Festival 2024-2025 Outdoor cinema - Al Naseem Park, Al Qurm and Al Amerat	25 Rials	01/09/2024	10/09/2024	22/09/2024

Registered companies with Muscat Municipality which are Specialized in above bid are invited to participate as per the following procedures:

- Company registration with Muscat Municipality have to be valid as per note number one below, to be able to get the bid document.
- Pay the specified document fee for the requested bid via bank deposit to Muscat Municipality's Bank account as follows:

Bank Muscat	0423010702710024
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- To receive the Bidding document, the Copy of bank receipt must be submitted to the Quantity Surveying and Contracts Department in Muscat Municipality, Darsait, first floor, attaching the following information: (name and bidding number, representative's name, office phone number, mobile phone number, email approved by the bidder, registration number commercial).
- 10:00 A.M** on the above mentioned dates, is the last timing for obtaining Bidding Documents. Any bid's document request received after the specified time will not be considered.

Submitted offers must be accompanied with a bond mentioned in the tender document valid for a period not less than (90) days issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat Municipality. Bidding that do not meet the required bond will not be accepted.

Documents must be enclosed in a plain closed envelope (without any company information) and drop in the box located First Floor , QS Departmenty , in Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsait.

NOTES:

- Companies which are not registered in Muscat Municipality or their registration has been expired shall register through the municipality's website (www.mm.gov.om). For technical support, please contact Muscat Municipality through this email (crm@mm.gov.om).
- If the bidders have any inquiries regarding the scope of the work, they have to sent their inquiries through the following e-mail (SQ.QS@mm.gov.om)
- 10:00 AM on the above submission mentioned dates, is the last timing for receiving bids. Offers submitted after the above mentioned date & time shall not be accepted for any reason.
- Muscat Municipality has the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

Website: www.mm.gov.om

MARKET WATCH

MSX304,659.47

FOREX RATES
(RO1 equals)

India	218.32
Pakistan	723.81
Bangladesh	305.71
Philippines	148.85
Sri Lanka	779.36

*Rates as on August 11

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Russia legalises crypto mining

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a law legalising cryptocurrency mining in Russia.

According to the Russian News Agency (TASS), the law introduces new concepts, including digital currency mining, mining pool, mining infrastructure operator, address identifier, and the individual who organises mining pool activities. Mining itself is recognised as a component of turnover, not the issuance of digital currency.

Only Russian legal entities and individual entrepreneurs included in a register will have the right to mine. Individuals who do not exceed the energy consumption limits set by the Russian government will have the right to mine digital currency without being included in the register.

As per the document, foreign digital financial assets can be traded on Russian blockchain platforms.

Asyad Group launches tender for office complex in MAFZ

Our Correspondent Muscat

Asyad Group, Oman's global provider of integrated logistics services, has launched a tender to design, build, finance, operate and transfer a large office complex covering an area of 4,925 sqm in the Muscat Airport Free Zone (MAFZ).

This call for partnership aligns with Asyad Group's commitment to enable and partner with the private sector on vital logistics projects in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The tender is the second invitation for partnership inviting the local private sector to partner with Asyad in establishing and operating the much-anticipated free zone. With the execution pace accelerating, more opportunities are in the horizon for local companies to play an integral part in establishing this strategic project and contributing to Oman's logistics sector and national economy, Asyad said in a press statement.

Through the second MAFZ tender, Asyad aims to transform the designated project space into an integrated business center ready to provide investors with the infrastructure they need to operate at the highest efficiency.

The anticipated center will offer ready-to-move-in office



The launch of this tender represents a strategic step towards establishing the Muscat Airport Free Zone as a vibrant global business hub that can attract local and global investors

FAISAL AL BALUSHI

space, retail areas and a diverse selection of function rooms, boardrooms, meeting rooms, auditoriums and other event spaces that can be easily configured to meet various business needs and project requirements.

The latest undertaking will build a business-enabling environment that helps attract global and regional corporate headquarters, international financial

and consultancy institutions, trading companies and startups looking for prime locations to expand their businesses. By delivering an attractive value proposition, a strong business community will enhance the free zone's position as a global business hub that attracts foreign direct investment by offering world-class logistics support and facilities.

Floated by Asyad Group, the tender is a unique opportunity for the private sector to build a 25-year partnership with Oman's leading logistics powerhouse, ensuring stability and sustainability for all stakeholders. In addition, this engagement contributes to the development of high-value assets within a strategic free zone, advancing growth in the Sultanate's national economy and creating new jobs in key industries such as construction and logistics.

Faisal Ali al Balushi, Director - Muscat International Airport Free Zone at Asyad Group, said, "The launch of this tender represents a strategic step towards establishing the Muscat Airport

Free Zone as a vibrant global business hub that can attract local and global investors. We believe this project offers an opportunity to enhance the contribution of local enterprises in Oman's logistics sector by creating advanced business infrastructure and maximizing the private sector's overall contribution to the national economy in line with Oman Vision 2040."

The Muscat Airport Free Zone is the latest addition to Oman's free and economic zones lineup and one set to create a world-class, air-enabled integrated logistics hub that has the potential to transform regional air logistics. As the national developer and operator of Oman's latest free zone, Asyad is dedicated to fostering a business environment that stimulates local economy and complement its interconnected network of core logistics assets.

Leveraging Asyad's integrated logistics ecosystem and the strategic location of the free zone, the project offers attractive tax and customs exemptions and boasts top-tier facilities designed to attract foreign direct investments. These advantages will position the Muscat Airport Free Zone as a global business center at the heart of Muscat and one of the premier investment destinations in the MENA region.

Wood to deliver pre-FEED for Shell's blue hydrogen project in Oman

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman Shell has selected Wood to deliver pre-front-end engineering and design (FEED) services for its innovative Blue Horizons project in Duqm.

The Blue Horizons project will produce low carbon blue hydrogen and ammonia for local and international markets and will capture and store CO2 from production.

Wood will use its specialist CO2 and blue hydrogen expertise to design the integrated blue hydrogen and ammonia production facility, marine facilities including ammonia storage, 200km pipeline and CO2 injection facility.

In a press statement, Giuseppe Zuccaro, President of Process & Chemicals at Wood, said, "We are delighted to work with Shell to deliver this pre-FEED package, combining our in-country capability and global subject matter expertise to drive progress on this exciting initiative."

Saudi ports post 16% growth in container handling in July

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's ports recorded a 15.72% growth in container handling in July compared to the same month last year, official data showed.

According to Arab News, the latest statistics from the Saudi Ports Authority, known as Mawani, revealed that the kingdom's terminals received 271,465 standard containers in July, up from 234,592 in July 2023. The volume of handled tonnage also increased by 9.11% year on year, reaching 27.38mn tonnes.

The increase aligns with the National Transport and Logistics Strategy's goal to establish Saudi Arabia as a global logistics center and a hub connecting three continents.

It also reinforces Mawani's ef-

forts to enhance port operational efficiency and improve the kingdom's connectivity with global markets, thereby supporting national exports.

The data revealed that Saudi Arabia's general shipment volumes totaled 701,606 tonnes, with solid bulk cargo at 4.48mn tonnes and liquid bulk freight at 15.34mn tonnes.

Container handling operations reached 622,856 in July, marking a 14.4% decrease compared to the same month last year.

The ports saw a significant increase in livestock discharges, totaling 506,016, up 127.6% from July 2023.

However, maritime traffic dropped by 11.24%, with 908 ships arriving in July.

WAM



MoCIIP to announce procedures for conversion of LLCs into joint stock firms

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) on Sunday said that it will soon release the procedures and requirements for converting limited liability companies (LLCs) into closed joint stock companies. This move follows Royal Directives and new economic regulations.

H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, emphasised that the Royal Directives to initiate the conversion of LLCs into closed joint-stock companies aim to encourage family-owned businesses to transition to joint-stock companies. This effort is intended to ensure their sustainability, as these companies constitute a significant portion of Oman's economy. Additionally, the conversion is expected to enhance oversight, governance,

The Royal Directives to initiate the conversion of LLCs into closed joint-stock companies aim to encourage family-owned businesses to transition to joint-stock companies

H E QAIS AL YOUSEF

The conversion of LLCs into closed joint-stock companies presents opportunities for growth, and enhances oversight, governance, disclosure and transparency in transactions

H E DR SALEH BIN SAEED MASAN

disclosure, and transparency in business dealings.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, H E Yousef highlighted that the initiative offers greater management flexibility, faster performance, and ease in trading shares. It also increases the confidence of investors, creditors, and customers in the continuity of the company and the

strength of its financial position and social standing.

The ministry aims to facilitate the transformation of these companies into closed joint-stock companies by simplifying the necessary procedures.

H E Dr Saleh bin Saeed Masan, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion for

Commerce and Industry, affirmed that the Royal Directives for capital market development initiatives supports the growth of Oman's trade and industry sector.

He noted that encouraging the conversion of LLCs into closed joint-stock companies presents opportunities for growth, serves as an incentive for

transformation into public joint-stock companies, and enhances oversight, governance, disclosure, and transparency in transactions. This transformation also offers greater flexibility in decision-making and boosts the confidence of those dealing with these companies.

Furthermore, the conversion contributes to the sustainability of businesses, ensuring their continuity across generations and strengthening their role in the national economy.

Mubarak bin Mohammed al-Duhani, Director General of Commerce at MoCIIP, confirmed that for LLCs to be eligible for conversion into closed joint-stock companies, they must meet several requirements, including a minimum market capital of RO500,000 and having at least three partners.

Currently, the ministry's Commercial Registry has recorded 118,052 registered LLCs in Oman.

Saudi Arabia unveils updated investment law

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Building on previously announced reforms under Vision 2030 and the National Investment Strategy, Saudi Arabia's Cabinet has approved an updated investment law to attract foreign investors.

The updated law brings together several existing freedoms and rights and expressly applies them to investors under one unified framework, providing investors with greater transparency, flexibility and confidence.

The updated law is based on international investment principles. It enhances investor rights by guaranteeing the rule of law, fair treatment, property rights,

intellectual property protection, and the freedom to manage investments and seamless fund transfers. Additionally, the law ensures transparency and clarity by consolidating investor rights and duties within a unified legal framework that aligns with global best practices.

To facilitate investment, the law simplifies the regulatory landscape by replacing the previous international investor licensing with a streamlined registration process. Furthermore, dedicated service centers will expedite government transactions and streamline investment procedures, enhancing overall governance.



Khalid al-Falih

The law fosters a level playing field for both domestic and international investors, promoting fair competition and a dynamic business ecosystem.

To address potential disputes, investors will have access to world-class dispute resolution mechanisms

through affiliations with the Saudi Arbitration Center and other relevant institutions.

The update, in conjunction with Saudi Arabia's comprehensive reform agenda, offers investors unprecedented opportunities, demonstrating Saudi Arabia's commitment to being open for investment.

Saudi Minister of Investment Khalid al-Falih said, "The law reaffirms Saudi Arabia's commitment to creating a welcoming and secure environment for investors, driving economic growth, and enhancing the Kingdom's position as a premier global investment destination."

SPA

FSA announces incentives to boost capital market activity

Continued from Page 01

Salmi added that FSA is currently working with MSX to frame regulations for the Promising Companies Market and establish procedures for listing companies. The market is expected to launch before the end of this year, subject to regulatory approval.

Path 3 - Conversion of LLCs

The third path focuses on encouraging the conversion of limited liability companies (LLCs) into closed joint-stock companies. It targets companies with market value exceeding

RO500,000 and a workforce of at least 20 Omani employees.

Under this path, one-third of the income tax paid by companies benefiting from the programme will be refunded for two years following their conversion. These companies will also receive a 10% price preference in procurement contracts and tenders issued by Tender Board for two years in line with existing rules.

Additionally, LLCs converting into closed joint-stock companies will be given priority when submitting financing applications to Development Bank under the incentives programme.

Hindenburg alleges SEBI chief held stake in offshore funds used by Adani Group

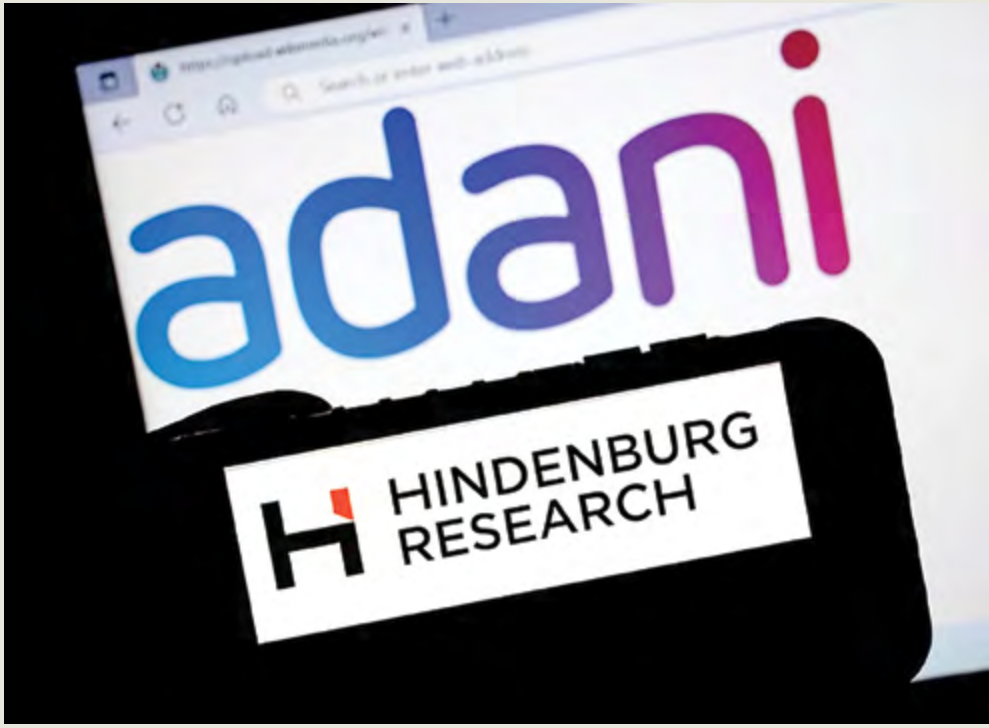
New Delhi, India - US-based short seller Hindenburg Research has alleged that Indian market regulator's chairperson Madhabi Buch and her husband had a stake in "both the obscure offshore entities used in the Adani money siphoning scandal."

After putting out a teaser on Saturday morning, hinting at a significant disclosure involving India, Hindenburg by the end of the day published a new report that stated, "We had previously noted Adani's total confidence in continuing to operate without the risk of serious regulatory intervention, suggesting that this may be explained through Adani's relationship with SEBI Chairperson, Madhabi Buch." SEBI is the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

"What we hadn't realised: the current SEBI Chairperson and her husband, Dhaval Buch, had hidden stakes in the exact same obscure offshore Bermuda and Mauritius funds, found in the same complex nested structure, used by Vinod Adani," the report by the US hedge firm said.

The link to the entire report was posted on the 'X' account of Hindenburg Research. "New from us," read the tweet adding

Adani Group, SEBI chief reject Hindenburg's fresh allegations



New Delhi, India - The latest allegations by Hindenburg Research are malicious, mischievous, and manipulative selections of publicly available information to arrive at pre-determined conclusions for "personal profiteering with wanton disregard for facts and the law", an Adani Group spokesperson said on Sunday.

"We completely reject these allegations against the Adani Group which are a recycling of discredited claims that have been thoroughly investigated, proven to be baseless and already dismissed by the Honorable Supreme Court in January 2024," the Adani Group spokesperson informed stock exchanges in a filing dated August 11.

The spokesperson said that Adani Group has "absolutely no commercial relationship with the individuals or matters mentioned in this calculated deliberate effort to malign our standing". "We remain steadfastly committed to transparency and compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements."

Earlier on Sunday, shortly after US-based short seller Hindenburg Research alleged that SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Buch and her husband had stakes in "both the obscure offshore entities used in the Adani money siphoning scandal," the SEBI Chairperson and her husband issued a joint statement rejecting the allegations.

Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband accused Hindenburg

Research, against whom SEBI has taken enforcement action, of character assassination.

In the joint statement released to the media they said, "Our life and finances are an open book. All disclosures as required have already been furnished to SEBI over the years. We have no hesitation in disclosing any and all financial documents, including those that relate to the period when we were strictly private citizens, to any and every authority that may seek them. It is unfortunate that Hindenburg Research against whom SEBI has taken an Enforcement action and issued a show cause notice has chosen to attempt character assassination in response to the same."

ANI

"Whistleblower Documents Reveal SEBI's Chairperson Had Stake In Obscure Offshore Entities Used In Adani Money Siphoning Scandal"

Hindenburg Research said it has made the new allegations

based on documents provided by a whistleblower and investigations carried out by other entities.

"Madhabi Buch and her husband Dhaval Buch first appear to have opened their account with

IPE Plus Fund 1 on June 5, 2015, in Singapore, as per whistleblower documents. A declaration of funds, signed by a principal at IIFL states that the source of the investment is "salary" and the couple's net worth is estimated

at \$10mn," the report stated.

In January 2023, Hindenburg published a report accusing the Adani Group of financial irregularities, leading to a significant drop in the company's stock price. The group at the time had

rubbed these claims.

The Hindenburg report alleged stock manipulation and fraud by the conglomerate. The case is related to the allegations (part of a report by Hindenburg Research) that Adani had in-

flated its share prices. After these allegations were published, there was a sharp fall in the shares of various Adani group companies stocks, reportedly to the tune of over \$100bn.

ANI

China posts current account surplus in H1

Beijing, China - China's current account surplus was \$94.1bn in the first half of this year, official data showed.

The current account surplus to GDP ratio stood at 1.1% from January to June, remaining within a reasonable range, according to Wang Chunying, deputy head of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

Of the total, the surplus under trade in goods amounted to \$288.4bn during the period, the second-highest level of all time, Wang said.

Wang attributed the growth

in goods trade to the country's steady economic performance, the development of new quality productive forces, and the recovery of external demand.

In terms of trade in services, the country saw a deficit of \$122.9bn during the period. Particularly, the tourism sector's deficit rose by 37% year on year to \$103.2bn.

The sector's incomes and expenditures increased by 43% and 37%, respectively, driven by a surge in both inbound and outbound travels, according to Wang.

Xinhua

India allocates \$10bn for semiconductor manufacturing

New Delhi, India - The Government of India has announced a substantial allocation of \$10bn under the Semicon India Program for the semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem, according to Invest India, the national investment promotion and facilitation agency of India.

This initiative underscores India's commitment to reinforcing the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) and enhancing resilience in global supply chains.

Invest India posted on X, "#NewIndia has allocated \$10 billion to develop the semiconductor and display manufactur-



ing ecosystem, reinforcing the vision of #AatmanirbharBharat."

The semiconductor market in India is projected to reach \$110bn by 2030, driven by the growing adoption of technologies like 5G, AI, IoT, and electric vehicles.

The display market is expected to reach \$15bn by 2025. This growth is anticipated to be propelled by increased semiconductor content per device due to emerging technologies and rising demand across various sectors.

The investment is designed to

foster a sustainable industry environment, promote self-reliance, and pave the way for technological leadership in this crucial sector.

The programme provides a 50% incentive on project costs for semiconductor and display fabrication facilities across various technology nodes. This support aims to attract significant investments in the development of high-tech fabrication.

Investors in compound semiconductor and OSAT (Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test) facilities will receive 50% support on capital expenditures. This initiative is intended to strengthen India's ca-

pabilities in advanced semiconductor technologies.

This scheme aims to nurture domestic semiconductor design companies and startups by offering up to 50% reimbursement on eligible expenditures and a deployment-linked incentive ranging from 6% to 4% of net sales turnover over five years. It includes additional support for design infrastructure, including access to prototyping and post-silicon validation facilities.

A specialised institution will be established to drive the Semicon India Programme, focusing on research, development, and talent cultivation.

ANI

UAE's DAMAC Capital generates strong return on its strategic investments in SpaceX, Stripe

Dubai, UAE - DAMAC Capital, the investment arm of the globally renowned DAMAC Group, has announced strong return on investment (ROI) on its strategic investments in SpaceX and Stripe.

The investments underscore DAMAC Capital's continued commitment to pioneering advancements in technology and innovation at a global scale, propelling its portfolio into sectors with significant growth potential.

DAMAC has been active in the space tech industry since the COVID-19 pandemic period. SpaceX founded by Elon Musk, is at the forefront of space exploration and technology, revolutionising space travel and connectivity.

Meanwhile the group welcomed a positive ROI on Stripe within a year into its investment. A leading online payment processing platform, Stripe enables businesses worldwide to conduct seamless online transactions.

These investments follow DAMAC Group's recent announcement of investing in the rapidly evolving Artificial Intelligence (AI) sector. Notable prior investments include \$50mn in



the AI startup Anthropic, making it one of the top investors from the cryptocurrency exchange, FTX. Additionally, the group has invested in xAI, an American AI startup founded by Elon Musk, and Mistral, a France-based AI company recognised for its European large-language model open-source capabilities.

DAMAC Group Founder, Hussain Sajwani, said, "Our investments in SpaceX and Stripe signify a strategic alignment with companies that are at the cutting edge of technological advance-

ment and innovation.

"These investments are a testament to DAMAC Capital's commitment to diversifying our portfolio and in supporting enterprises that have the potential to create transformative impacts on a global scale."

DAMAC Capital's investment in SpaceX aligns with its vision to support groundbreaking ventures that redefine industries. With projects like Starship and Starlink, SpaceX aims to make space more accessible and improve global internet coverage,

directly contributing to technological advancements and economic development.

Since 2015, over \$47bn of private capital has been invested in the global space sector, growing on average 21% per year. The space economy is expected to reach \$1.8tn by 2035 as space-enabled technologies advance.

DAMAC Capital's investment in Stripe reflects its strategic focus on fintech innovations that transform financial services. By investing in Stripe, DAMAC Capital supports the acceleration of digital commerce and financial inclusion, fostering a more connected and efficient global economy.

DAMAC Capital's investment strategies are driven by a vision to identify and support high-growth companies that are poised to lead in their respective industries ultimately contributing to a more dynamic and progressive global economy.

DAMAC Group is the multi-billion-dollar business conglomerate of UAE based Hussain Sajwani. The group's investments are divided into seven core areas; real estate, capital markets, hotels & resorts, manufacturing, catering, high-end fashion and data centres.

UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2024		
Particulars	As on 30-06-2024 Rials	As on 30-06-2023 Rials
ASSETS		
Property Plant & Equipment	1,065,988	1,840,963
Right of Use Assets	187,361	86,002
Deferred Tax Asset	68,757	68,757
Total non current assets	1,322,106	1,995,722
Current Assets	786,764	874,404
Less : Current Liabilities		
Short term maturity of		
Long term Loan	--	--
Other current Liabilities	484,771	1,215,634
Net Current Assets	301,993	(341,230)
Long Term Liabilities	708,428	256,842
TOTAL ASSETS	915,671	1,397,650
LIABILITIES		
Share Holders' Funds:		
Share Capital	1,000,000	1,000,000
Reserves & Retained Earnings	(84,329)	397,650
TOTAL LIABILITIES	915,671	1,397,650
UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDED 30 JUNE 2024		
Particulars	6 months ended 30-06-2024 Rials	6 months ended 30-06-2023 Rials
Sales	858,462	755,945
Gross Profit	158,659	154,730
Depreciation	(57,406)	(89,199)
Admin & General Expenses	(158,086)	(177,086)
Operating Profit / (Loss)	(57,472)	(111,555)
Finance Charges	(26,031)	(18,689)
Other Income	29,573	16,959
Balance	(53,930)	(113,285)
Prior year tax payment	--	--
Profit / (Loss) before taxation and minority interest	(53,930)	(113,285)
Provision for Taxation	--	--
NET PROFIT/(LOSS) AFTER TAX	(53,930)	(113,285)

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the unaudited results of Computer Stationery Industry SAOG and its subsidiary for the six-month period ending 30th June 2024.

During this period, the Group generated a turnover of Rial Omani 858K, reflecting a 13.55% increase from Rial Omani 756K in the previous year. The Group recorded a net loss of Rial Omani 54K, a significant improvement compared to a net loss of Rial Omani 113K in the same period last year.

Oman's improving economy benefits our business. However, disruptions in the Red Sea have increased shipping costs and caused container shortages. Despite these challenges, we are working to secure paper at competitive rates to maintain our competitiveness.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman, for his wisdom and guidance, which have brought peace, prosperity, and progress to our nation.

Ammar Maqbool Al Saleh
Chairman

Notes :-
1) Previous year figures have been regrouped wherever necessary.
2) Complete Accounts are available with Capital Market Authority. However the same will be sent by mail to any Share Holder who requests them, either in Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.
Request shall be forwarded to the following address:
P.O. Box: 13, Postal Code: 124, Rasail, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail : info@csips.com

Bank Muscat ‘Best Bank for SMEs’

Affirming the bank’s role in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by providing tailored banking solutions and contributing to their growth, Bank Muscat has been honoured as the Best Bank for SMEs 2024 by Euromoney.

The bank places a strong emphasis on supporting the SME sector through the ongoing enhancement of banking services that encourage a conducive environment for entrepreneurship, a press release said.

On this occasion, Ibrahim Khamis al Balushi, senior assistant general manager for SME at Bank Muscat, said, “We are delighted to receive this prestigious award, which recognises the efforts of Bank Muscat in developing this business sector and supporting the economy. We support Omani youth by financing various projects across industrial, service, and commercial sectors, including retail, hospitality, industry, tourism, mining, and agriculture. These achievements are a testament to the trust our customers place in our services and banking facilities. Surely we will continue to strive to meet the aspirations of our valued customers.”

Bank Muscat launched the Najahi Business Banking Unit in 2014, aiming to assist small, medium, and emerging enterprises by offering customised banking services and facilities



that help them grow and succeed. The online corporate banking platform for Najahi customers simplifies transactions in local and foreign currencies, bill payments, group payments, fund transfers, and salary disbursements under the

wage protection system. Najahi current account holders can also open fixed deposit accounts, request checkbooks, and block Najahi cards if lost or stolen. The platform serves as a digital control panel, providing intelligent insights for timely de-

cision-making. It features the latest technology with world-class security and is user-friendly.

As part of its strategic plans to support SMEs, Bank Muscat has launched several initiatives, including Al Wathbah Academy. This reflects the Bank’s commit-

ment to sustainable development and enhancing the role of SMEs in economic development in Oman.

Al Wathbah offers a full range of banking solutions and non-banking services, such as education, training, workshops, and

networking opportunities for entrepreneurs. Bank Muscat continuously strengthens partnerships with government and private sectors to promote entrepreneurship in line with the strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040.

ICAEW and UAE Banks Federation join forces

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) recently partnered with the UAE Banks Federation (UBF) to help companies navigate the rapidly evolving digital assets landscape, a market projected to reach US\$80mn by 2024.

This initiative coincides with the UAE’s advanced pilot of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs), positioning the nation at the forefront of financial innovation, a press release said. CBDCs are digital forms of a country’s sovereign currency, issued and regulated by the central bank. They are designed to work alongside traditional physical currencies, offering a secure and efficient method of digital transactions. The UAE is one of only 36 countries in the world currently piloting their use.

During a recent joint virtual event, ICAEW and UBF convened a panel of experts to explore the dynamic landscape of the UAE’s digital currencies. The discussion aimed to equip industry professionals with essential knowledge.



Kinglong delivers 15 buses to Al Sumri Transport

In a significant advancement for Oman’s public transport infrastructure, Towell Auto Centre (TAC), the official distributor for Kinglong buses in Oman has proudly completed the delivery of 15 cutting-edge buses to A1 Sumri Transport.

Kinglong is a premier global manufacturer of commercial vehicles. This pivotal event was marked by a significant handover ceremony attended by Mr Salim Mohamed al Harthy, chairman of A1 Sumri Transport, and distinguished senior management officials from Al Sumri Transport, Towell Auto Centre and King Long Buses – China, a press release said.

Kinglong, known for its dedication to innovation, quality, and sustainability, has reinforced its leadership in the industry with these advanced buses. The vehicles are fitted with sophisticated technologies that adhere to OPAL (Oman Society for Petroleum Services) standards, ensuring enhanced safety and comfort.

Features include a Lane Departure Warning System, Front Collision Braking System and Driver Fatigue Warning System integrated to elevate travel safety. Additionally, the buses boast a 360-degree Panoramic View System and Facial Recognition Detection System, further

augmenting security and operational efficiency.

Furthermore, these buses are equipped with ABS/EBS/ESC braking functions, a Wi-Fi device, and other innovative systems like Intelligent Vehicle Monitoring Systems (IVMS), and Driver Fatigue Monitoring Systems (DFMS). These features collectively set a new benchmark in the transportation sector ensuring that Kinglong buses meet the highest standards of safety and comfort.

The handover signifies Kinglong’s unwavering commitment to enhancing the travel experience in Oman and the broader GCC region.

Ooredoo Maktabi covers SME needs

Maktabi, Ooredoo’s one-stop business communication solution, has got the choice, internet speeds, connectivity and reliability that small and medium sized enterprises in Oman need.

Starting from just RO29.5 per month, the cost-effective Maktabi includes a wide range of integrated communication and security services and solutions for businesses, including high-speed Internet, mobile communications, fixed lines and security solutions for your PC, laptop and mobile device, a press release said.

The all-in-one Maktabi and Maktabi+ plans have a great range of integrated services too. Microsoft 365, to provide a range of Office desktop applica-



Saoud al Riyami

tions for efficient business management. TallyPrime, the easy-to-use, affordable, and integrated business management software, to digitise accounting and bookkeeping

The Maktabi package provides SMEs and SoHos with reliable high-speeds of up to 60 Mbps, as well as four Shahry (pre-paid) Digital Lines and Closed User Group (CUG) calls

processes. And even smart CCTV surveillance systems for monitoring 24x7 to give the ultimate in peace of mind.

Saoud al Riyami, Ooredoo’s chief business and wholesale of-

ficer, said, “We know that small, medium and home businesses are the backbone of our economy and having access to reliable connectivity and an awesome range of integrated solutions is essential to them and their customers. Our office-in-a-box solution and disruption-free connectivity help everything from the starting-out SoHo to the burgeoning SME meet their business goals.”

The Maktabi package provides SMEs and SoHos with reliable high-speeds of up to 60 Mbps, as well as four Shahry (prepaid) Digital Lines and unlimited Closed User Group (CUG) calls among employees, designed for every type of business and across all sectors.

NBO Muzn Islamic offers flexible travel finance

National Bank of Oman’s Muzn Islamic Banking’s Travel Finance is tailored to ensure that your dream vacation becomes a reality with flexible repayment plans and a range of exclusive travel benefits.

Designed to make the travel experience fun and stress-free, Travel Finance offers easy payment options and competitive rates reflecting NBO Muzn’s dedication to providing accessible and customer-focused finan-

cial solutions, a press release said.

Salima al Marzooqi, chief Islamic Banking officer at NBO Muzn Islamic Banking, said, “Our unique travel financing solution provides our customers with the financial support they need to explore the world. Whether you are travelling for leisure, business, medical treatment, or Umrah, Muzn is here to make your travel dreams come true.

“Muzn Travel Finance will help you get to your destination without worrying about the cost as it ensures all travel expenses—are covered comprehensively. We encourage everyone who is planning to travel this summer to make use of this financial solution.”

Customers can enjoy up to 100% financing value, covering airfare, hotel bookings, meals, airport transfers, excursions, and sightseeing. With the freedom

to choose your own travel agent for personalised travel planning, one can visit any travel agency of choice, request a quotation for a desired travel package, and submit the quotation to the nearest Muzn branch.

Available to both existing and new-to-bank customers aged 21 and above including pensioners, Muzn Travel Finance offers the flexibility to choose a repayment period that suits individual needs up to 10 years.

OAEP honours successful diploma holders for the year 2023-2024

Under the patronage of H H Hujaija bint Jaffer al Saeed, the Oman Academy Educational Platform (OAEP) honoured the first successful students for the Diploma of general education for the academic year 2023-2024.

The event was held in honour of the efforts of these outstanding students, who proved that distance education can be a quick path to excellence, a press release said.

The Oman academic platform, the leading platform in the field of e-learning in the sul-



tanate, which is the first specialised and targeted platform in providing educational lessons for distance school students, provided students with a rich and interactive learning environment, which enabled them to achieve these distinctive achievements. Live teaching, registration for classes, and specialised content offered by the platform have contributed to building a new generation of outstanding learners.

The students expressed their happiness with this honour,

stressing that the support of the Amman academic platform had a great impact in achieving this success. They stressed the importance of making use of technology in the development of the educational process, and that this honour is an incentive for them to continue to excel.

This celebration serves as a message to students that effort and perseverance are the keys to success, and that there are those who appreciate and support their efforts. It also emphasises the pivotal role that technology plays.

SeaOman instructors gain PADI certifications

Instructors from SeaOman, Oman's number one marine leisure provider and the commercial department of Oman Sail, have received qualifications from the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) to recognise the excellence of scuba and snorkelling experiences offered to customers.

This commitment to providing excellence was also recently recognised by Tripadvisor, the world's largest travel guidance platform, which named SeaOman as a winner of Tripadvisor's Travellers' Choice Awards for 2024, a press release said.

Senior dive instructor Azzan al Sinani was awarded the Professional Member Recognition for 25 years as a PADI certified dive instructor, Abdul Naser al Sinani earned his Emergency First Response (EFR) Elite Instructor Award and a Certificate of Excellence from PADI, and Faisal al Jahdhami also received a Certificate of Excellence from PADI.

Khamis Mohammed al Anbouri, Oman Sail's commercial director, said, "SeaOman is committed to offering visitors from within Oman and internationally a unique experience and sharing the natural beauty of Oman. Our instructors' new PADI certifica-



SeaOman is committed to offering visitors from within Oman and internationally a unique experience and sharing the natural beauty of Oman

KHAMIS AL ANBOURI

tions are recognition of their expertise, dedication, and a symbol of the quality SeaOman can offer, which sets the company apart within Oman."

The Tripadvisor's Travellers' Choice Awards honours businesses that consistently earn great reviews, placing the company among the top 10% of listings around the world on Tripadvisor.

"SeaOman would like to thank all the visitors and review-

ers who have kindly left us reviews this year, and of course our wonderful staff team who have helped make this a possibility. We are honoured to be included among travellers' favourites this year," Anbouri added.

"Congratulations to SeaOman on its recognition in Tripadvisor's Travellers' Choice Awards for 2024," said John Boris, chief growth officer at Tripadvisor."

ahlibank announces new batch of 'HIMAM'

As part of its goals to empower Omani youth through knowledge-intensive development programme, Ahlibank has opened its doors for the 10th batch of graduates in its flagship programme - HIMAM.

Through this unique programme, the bank aims to develop the skills of the participants and refine their abilities, empowering them to achieve professional success in the banking sector. The HIMAM development programme has been highly successful since its inception, as it has enabled Omani youth with the needed skills to begin professional careers in the prosperous banking sector of the Sultanate of Oman, a press release said.

Since its launch in 2015, the HIMAM programme at Ahlibank has successfully employed many of its graduates. It is worth mentioning that applicants for this programme undergo rigorous testing criteria and measures that qualify them for participation. The personality tests, leadership skills assessments, and employment interviews have been meticulously designed to ensure the selection of the most competent graduates in the job market. These tests and interviews aim to comprehensively and fairly evaluate the technical and

soft skills of the applicants.

The HIMAM programme aims to develop the administrative and leadership skills of young individuals. Through professional training courses and guidance, the HIMAM programme enhances the graduates' skills in banking, with the assistance of managers, trainers, and specialists in the field. The programme also boosts the graduates' self-confidence and focuses on the essential requirements for employment in the market.

Ahlibank launched the HIMAM programme in 2015, and since then, it has been able to train a large number of ambitious Omani youth. Graduates enrolled in the programme have been able to embark on successful professional careers, qualifying them for significant positions and roles in various banking sectors.

At the forefront of its operations, Ahlibank is committed to enhancing the capabilities of Omani youth. The HIMAM programme contributes to increasing the Omanisation rate by preparing a new generation of young individuals for a bright and prosperous future in the sultanate. It also aligns with the government's vision of promoting and improving the local economy.



ROHM new season to be announced

Following a triumphant 2023/24 season marked by stellar performances, Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) is poised to unveil its highly anticipated new season.

The official announcement is scheduled to take place on August 18 at 11:00 am, and broadcast live online via the ROHM YouTube channel. Following the announcement, tickets for the upcoming season will be available for purchase on the ROHM website, a press release said.

ROHM extends a warm invitation to all enthusiasts of the performing arts to join the virtual launch event and explore the unique lineup of performances awaiting audiences for the 2024/25 season. Reflecting on the forthcoming season, director general of the Royal Opera House Muscat, Umberto Fanni, expressed his anticipation, stat-

ing, "I look forward to presenting our new season to our loyal and dedicated audience. From enchanting operas to mesmerising ballets and world-renowned performers, this season promises to be a true highlight in ROHM's illustrious history".

The previous season saw ROHM captivate audiences with an array of world-class productions, including the iconic opera The Barber of Seville, the mesmerising Bolshoi Ballet's Raymonda, the family-show Symphony on Ice, a breathtaking co-production of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream with Teatro Carlo Felice di Genoa, sold out performances of the acrobatic Swan Lake and percussion show Stomp, and the unforgettable Muscat debut of world-renowned soprano Sonya Yoncheva in Homage to Maria Callas, among other shows.

GMC Hummer EV boasts super tech features

With GMC recently announcing the much-anticipated arrival of the GMC Hummer EV in the Middle East, both drivers and passengers in the region can now enjoy a range of cutting-edge technologies that redefine the driving experience.

The GMC Hummer EV, built on General Motors' Ultium Platform, seamlessly integrates advanced technologies to deliver optimal driving range and out of this world performance. This advanced platform enables capabilities beyond those of traditional vehicle architectures and propulsion systems, a press release said.

The GMC Hummer EV offers impressive range and performance, featuring fast-charging capabilities that add nearly 160km of range in just 10 minutes. The vehicle is equipped with smart, purposeful technology designed to enhance on-and off-road excursions, creating a sense of exhilaration and dra-



matic experience for drivers and passengers.

The features include Watts To Freedom which brings its own unique multisensory, interactive experience, with distinctive sound via the premium Bose audio system. The experience is felt through the haptic driver's

seat and line of sight, with custom screen displays showing the special performance mode is 'armed and ready'.

It also has a Power Station generator which enables customers to utilise up to 3 kW of power from the vehicle, turning the HUMMER EV into a power

source on the trail or a backup generator, besides One-Pedal Driving to slow the vehicle to a full stop using the accelerator pedal providing very fine control.

The vehicle is also equipped with a 13.4-inch-diagonal infotainment screen and 12.3-inch-diagonal driver information

center, in-vehicle Energy App that that monitors energy use, HD Surround Vision with up to 14 camera views and Off-Road Widgets that offer a myriad of information related to the HUMMER EV's selectable capabilities and performance readouts in off-road driving scenarios.

Viu launches Gift Box bundle with Omantel

Viu, PCCW's leading pan-regional OTT video streaming service operating in 16 markets, announced the launch of the Viu Gift Box bundle exclusively with Omantel.

Viu is a leading streaming service included with Omantel's comprehensive suite of plans for new post-paid customers, ensuring a seamless and unparalleled entertainment experience within the Sultanate of Oman. This tailor-made bundle allows Omantel's eligible customers to upgrade to Viu Premium, coupled with free streaming data to enjoy Viu's content, a press release said.

With the introduction of this bundle, Omantel's customers will gain three months of free access to Viu's extensive catalog of premium Arabic content, along with a unique selection of popular Turkish series and a vast slate of Korean dramas, all



dubbed in Arabic (subject to their subscription plan). Customers will also enjoy a Viu premium subscription in addition to 3GB of Viu streaming data

from Omantel.

This strategic arrangement underscores Viu's commitment to offering quality entertainment choices and broad access

to a diverse selection of content for users in Oman. It marks another milestone in the relationship between Viu and Omantel, building on the existing collaboration which also includes the option of direct carrier billing for Viu services.

Both, Viu and Omantel, are devoted to consistently presenting superior entertainment experiences for their customers. This alliance is set to meet the increasing demand for quality streaming content in the region and offer viewers in Oman the best of Korean, Turkish, and Arabic streaming content.

Rohit D'silva, chief business officer, MEA, Viu, said, "Our collaboration with Omantel is a thrilling development for Viu. It broadens our reach, allowing us to introduce our rich assortment of premium content to Omantel's customers. We are

dedicated to enriching the entertainment experience and offering an outstanding streaming service across various devices."

Ali Bait Fadhil, acting general manager of Core Telco at Omantel, shared the company's enthusiasm about the strategic alliance with Viu, affirming that Omantel is keen on reinforcing its leadership and expanding services in different segments through meaningful partnerships.

"Our customers' needs and preferences are our top priorities as we strive to earn and preserve their trust," Ali Bait Fadhil noted. "The launch will offer our customers a distinctive service that showcases the finest films and series. Our focus remains on the satisfaction of Omantel's customers. We pledge to provide top-tier services, including in the realm of entertainment."

SFD celebrates its 50th anniversary

The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) will host a Gala Dinner on September 1, under the theme Celebrating 50 Years of Global Impact, commemorating five decades of driving sustainable global development and progress.

Since its establishment in 1974, the SFD has been the main international development arm of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, supporting sustainable development initiatives across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe. Through collaboration and partnership, the SFD's work reaches those most in need around the globe. The SFD is also committed to supporting the Least Developed Countries and Small Developing Island States, recognising their

unique challenges and vulnerabilities.

"For 50 years, the SFD has worked hand-in-hand with communities and partners to drive transformative development change. Our programmes have touched nearly every aspect of society, from building essential social infrastructures like roads, hospitals, and schools to empowering communities through initiatives in education, healthcare, water and sanitation, renewable energy, agriculture, transportation and communication, industry and mining, and more," noted Sultan al Marshad, CEO of the SFD. "We now reaffirm our commitment to spurring global collaboration and unity, building inclusive frameworks for social, economic, and human development."

Growing US military presence spark protests in Southern Cyprus

Lefkosa - Opposition parties in the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) expressed discontent with the increased US military presence, citing reasons such as port visits by the military and the situation in the Gaza Strip.

An American warship that arrived on the island was protested on Friday.

A statement by the main opposition party, the far-left Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), highlighted growing US warship traffic to Southern Cyprus and accused the govern-

ment of dragging the island into heightened tensions by allowing foreign military forces to concentrate. "The tense war environment in the region poses enormous deadly risks to the security of all states and peoples in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Our entire region faces the danger of a widespread fire with incalculable and dramatic consequences.

"In this context, the continued concentration of American military forces on our island, both inside and outside the British bases, increases the risks and



concerns," it said.

Stressing that AKEL sees the island not as a base for foreign armies but as a bridge for peace and humanitarian aid, it urged the Greek Cypriot government to take steps in that direction. As part of the port visit programme, the US amphibious assault ship USS Wasp, which arrived on Friday at Limassol Port, and was protested by residents, including Palestinian activists.

Demonstrators claimed that the ship was supporting 'genocide' in Gaza and they argued that Southern Cyprus should not

support the US and Israel.

Government spokesperson Konstantinos Letimbiotis claimed, however, that the recent increase in ship and aircraft movements on the island is part of the island's humanitarian role in light of developments in the region.

Letimbiotis accused AKEL of exaggerating the issue, arguing that the increased activity observed in recent days, with the participation of ships and aircraft, falls under humanitarian responsibilities.

Anadolu Agency

Kamala Harris leads Donald Trump in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin

Harris has been leading Trump by four points, according to the new polls conducted

Washington, D.C., US - US Vice President Kamala Harris has been leading former US President Donald Trump by four points each in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin among likely voters, according to the new polls conducted by *The New York Times* and Siena College.

Kamala Harris has transformed the 2024 presidential elections as it shows a major shift from previous Times/Siena polls, which found Trump leading Harris and President Joe Biden by an average of one or two points each across the same three states. However, sometimes, it is hard to explain why polls shift from week to week or month to month.

The New York Times reported that it is hard to explain why voters shift at all in today's polarised politics.

Until now, the basic dynamic of the race was driven by US President Biden's unpopularity. It prevented Democrats from running their usual strategy against Trump and his MAGA allies, making an election a referendum on Trump by running a broadly acceptable candidate.

Notably, millions of voters were left with an agonising choice between two candidates they disliked.

In the poll, at least 49 per cent of likely voters in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin highlight that they have a favourable view of her, a level neither Harris nor Biden obtained in any previous Times/Siena poll this cycle,



Former US President Donald Trump and US Vice President Kamala Harris

According to a majority of people, Harris is honest and intelligent and she brings the right kind of change and has the temperament to be president, adding that she has a clear vision for the country

The *New York Times* reported.

Donald Trump's views haven't diminished, in fact, his favourability rating ticked up slightly, to 46 per cent across the three states, which is just enough to represent his highest rating in the history of Times/Siena polling.

According to a majority of

people, Harris is honest and intelligent and she brings the right kind of change and has the temperament to be president, adding that she has a clear vision for the country.

However, a majority doesn't think she's too far to the left, either, only 44 per cent of likely

voters say she's too liberal or progressive, compared with 44 per cent who say she's not too far either way and another six per cent who say she isn't progressive enough, as reported by *The New York Times*. Moreover, Kamala Harris may be polling like a generic Democrat, but she will now be subject to much more scrutiny and attack, *The New York Times* reported.

Until now, Harris has been benefitted of very favourable media coverage for a few weeks now, along with major endorsements and an outpouring of goodwill from voters who had

been yearning for an alternative to two disliked older candidates.

However, this period will not last forever, and the question is whether she will retain this kind of support when the going gets tough, *The New York Times* reported. Certainly, the poll doesn't offer an indication either way. But the huge swing in opinion on Harris in just the last few weeks is a reminder that the public doesn't necessarily have firmly held views about her.

If Trump's lead over Harris in earlier polling wasn't necessarily based on solid views of the vice president, it can't be assumed

that her lead over Trump stands on firm ground today.

Trump's campaign hacked?

Meanwhile, Trump's presidential campaign said on Saturday that it had been hacked, as reported by US-based news agency, Politico. The claim follows an anonymous email from an account using AOL, identifying itself as 'Robert', which included documents from within Trump's campaign, Politico reported.

The campaign pointed to a Microsoft report, released on Friday, which attributed the breach to 'foreign sources hostile to the United States', as reported by Politico. The report claimed that Iranian hackers 'sent a spear phishing email in June to a high-ranking official on a presidential campaign'. Microsoft, however, did not identify the campaign targeted by the email.

Politico further reported that it did not verify the hacker's identity and did not know the motivation behind the act.

"These documents were obtained illegally from foreign sources hostile to the United States, intended to interfere with the 2024 election and sow chaos throughout our Democratic process," Cheung said.

"On Friday, a new report from Microsoft found that Iranian hackers broke into the account of a 'high ranking official' on the US presidential campaign in June 2024."

ANI



Maria Corina Machado

Venezuelan opposition leader calls for protests

Bogota, Colombia - Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado urged citizens to participate in mass protests on August 17 to challenge the results of the July 28 presidential election.

Machado accused the National Electoral Council of fraud in statements to the media, claiming that her party's candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez, won with 67 per cent of the vote.

She vowed to continue the fight against what she described as an authoritarian regime, insisting that the opposition would not allow the election it believes it won to be stolen.

"This coming Saturday, August 17, Venezuelans will unite from all over the world to raise our voices for the truth: on July 28, #VenezuelaWon," she wrote on X. "Let the world see, with the records in hand, that we will not let them steal our victory."

Venezuela's National Electoral Council announced July 29 that President Nicolás Maduro had secured a third term with 51.2 per cent of the vote - a result rejected by González and Machado.

Anadolu Agency

BARK DAY FUN RUN



Dogs and their owners attend Bark Day Fun Run at Senayan Park in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Sunday. This event aims to call for more attention to the welfare of dogs and stop the dog meat trade (Xinhua)

'Friendly' nations interfering in Australia, says spy chief

Canberra, Australia - Australia's domestic spy chief has accused some friendly nations of running foreign interference operations in the country.

In an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on Sunday, Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) Director-General Mike Burgess said the people would be 'shocked to learn the identity of the countries his agency has caught actively interfering in diaspora communities'.

Without naming, he claimed that three to four countries have been caught 'actively' seeking to interfere in diaspora communities. "I can think of at least three or four that we have actually actively found involved in foreign interference in Australian diaspora communities," he told the ABC's *Insiders* programme.

"Some of them would surprise you, some of them are also our



friends."

He warned that he would name them if the threat posed a 'significant risk to Australians'.

The dramatic development came days after Prime Minister Anthony Albanese raised Australia's official terror alert level from 'possible' to 'probable' on the advice of ASIO.

Last month, Canberra unveiled plans to introduce a string of new measures, including the expansion of the Counter For-

eign Interference Taskforce, to fight the growing threat of foreign interference.

Australian national security agencies, according to the ABC, in recent months have discovered a local public servant and a doctor had been recruited to help track down a critic of a 'foreign regime', which then offered thousands of dollars to its agents to do 'whatever was necessary' to silence the dissident.

Anadolu Agency

Evacuation orders in Gaza's south

Israeli army ordered several evacuations in southern Gaza ahead of a new military operation

Gaza City, Palestine - The Israeli army on Sunday ordered several evacuations in southern Gaza ahead of a new military operation, with residents of a district in Khan Younis that was formerly part of an Israeli-declared 'humanitarian zone' among those urged to leave.

The Al-Jalaa neighbourhood in northern Khan Younis will no longer be considered part of a humanitarian zone due to 'significant terrorist activity' there, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said.

The evacuation orders come as most of the enclave's population of 2.3mn is living in temporary accommodation, with many people displaced by fighting between the Israeli military and Palestinian group Hamas and others.

What did the Israeli military say?

The IDF said civilians in Al-Jalaa, who it said were informed via SMS, telephone calls, flyers and other messages in Arabic, should move to a redrawn humanitarian



Thousands have already fled Khan Younis under evacuation orders (DW)

zone.

"The adjustment is being carried out in accordance with precise intelligence indicating that Hamas has embedded infrastructure in the area defined as a humanitarian area," the IDF said.

Israel regularly accuses Hamas and other groups of using civilian areas for launching attacks. The Norwegian Refugee Council has recently estimated that evacuation orders issued by

Israel in the past few weeks have reduced the total area of 'humanitarian zones' in Gaza from 20 per cent of the enclave to a little more than 14 per cent.

Previous evacuation order

Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, was the target of an air and ground offensive earlier this year that caused considerable destruction.

The evacuation orders come as most of enclave's population of 2.3mn is living in temporary accommodation, with many people displaced

Last week, tens of thousands of residents fled the area under a previous evacuation order.

Israel has repeatedly issued evacuation orders for areas to which its military has returned after previous operations aimed at eliminating fighters have failed to prevent them from coming back. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are now crammed into tent cities with few public services, as interna-

tional experts warn of famine in the territory.

Sunday's evacuation order comes on the heels of an Israeli strike on a Gaza City school where displaced Palestinians were sheltering, with Hamas-run media saying that scores of people were killed. Israel has called the death toll into doubt, while saying the attack targeted a Hamas and Islamic Jihad command post and

killed 19.

Four killed

Meanwhile, at least four Palestinians were killed on Sunday when an Israeli army shelling targeted Khan Younis.

Medical sources in the Nasser Medical Complex said that the attack occurred when an Israeli shelling targeted a gathering of civilians in central Khan Younis.

Despite appeals on Thursday from mediators, including Egypt, the US and Qatar, to stop hostilities and reach a ceasefire and a hostage exchange agreement, Israel persists with its deadly onslaught against Gaza.

The Israeli onslaught has killed nearly 39,800 victims since October following a cross-border attack by the Palestinian resistance group, Hamas.

More than 75,000 displaced

More than 75,000 Palestinians have been displaced in southwest Gaza in the past few days, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said on Sunday.

"Over the decades, Palestinian civilians have been caught up in wars and conflicts, far too many times," Philippe Lazzarini, the UNRWA commissioner-general, said on X.

"Just in the past few days, more than 75,000 people have been displaced in south west Gaza," he added.

Lazzarini noted that the Israeli authorities issued additional orders overnight forcing more people to flee, 'again and again'.

Agencies

Iran warned not to attack Israel

Washington, D.C./ Tehran - US President Joe Biden again warned Iran on Saturday about a possible retaliatory attack against Israel amid rising tensions in the Middle East.

"Don't," Biden responded to reporters before entering his vehicle, when he was asked: "What's your message to Iran?"

Biden issued the same warning in April, before Iran carried out a rocket and drone attack against Israel in retaliation for the April 1 airstrike on its diplomatic facility in the Syrian capital of Damascus, killing at least seven members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, including two top generals.

Tensions are running high in the Middle East following the July 31 assassination of Hamas' political chief Ismail Haniyeh in the Iranian capital of Tehran and Israel's assassination of senior Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut. Hamas and Iran have accused Israel of carrying



Banner of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's photo taken with Ismail Haniyeh at the inauguration ceremony, hung at Veliasr Street in Tehran

out Haniyeh's assassination, while Tel Aviv has not confirmed or denied responsibility.

Iran vowed 'harsh punishment' for Israel for Haniyeh's killing on Iranian soil.

Hezbollah, the Lebanese group, is also expected to retaliate after Israel assassinated Shukur in an airstrike on a southern suburb of Beirut on July 30.

Meanwhile, Iran on Saturday said it wanted to avoid negatively impacting Gaza ceasefire talks

with its anticipated retaliation against Israel over the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh.

Achieving a permanent ceasefire in Gaza remains a priority, Iran's permanent mission to the UN said in a statement following inquiries about whether Tehran would delay its retaliation plans for the planned ceasefire talks.

It also said that any agreement accepted by Hamas would be acceptable to Iran as well.

Anadolu Agency

Russia: Kursk governor calls for quicker evacuation of civilians

Moscow, Russia - The acting governor of Kursk oblast, Alexei Smirnov, said on Telegram on Saturday night that he had told local authorities to accelerate efforts to move civilians from areas at risk of fighting with Ukrainian troops.

Russian media quoted the regional Emergencies Ministry in the border region of Kursk as saying that more than 76,000 people have been relocated to safer areas in recent days since the surprise Ukrainian incursion.

Ukrainian forces opened up a new front in Russian oblast bordering northeastern Ukraine in recent days, seemingly vying for a foothold, or at least a disruptive presence, in Russian territory. Kursk has since declared a state of emergency.

Elsewhere, Kyiv's Mayor Vitali Klitschko warned online of an air raid alert overnight in the capital



A man looks at an apartment building damaged by a downed Ukrainian missile in the city of Kursk, Russia (DW)

and said air defences were in operation. It wasn't immediately clear if any damage was caused.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that Russian forces likely used a North Korean missile during an overnight airstrike near the

Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.

The strike on the district of Brovary, which lies immediately northeast of the city, killed a man and his 4-year-old son.

"According to preliminary information, the Russians used a North Korean missile in this at-

tack," the Ukrainian president said in a post on social media.

He said that pyrotechnic experts were still examining the missile.

Pyongyang and Moscow signed a comprehensive partnership treaty in June, which included a mutual defence pledge.

The US and its allies have accused North Korea of providing weaponry to Russia for use in Ukraine.

Zelensky reiterated calls to Ukraine's Western allies to boost assistance, saying 'a full-fledged air shield' was needed to protect cities, as well as 'strong decisions' from partners.

Besides, a senior Ukrainian security official has told the AFP news agency that a military incursion by Kyiv's forces into Russia's Kursk region aims to undermine Moscow's morale.

DW

Lithium mines in Serbia challenging balance of relations with Russia, West

Belgrade, Serbia - The lithium mines in Serbia challenge the balance of the country's relations with Russia and the Western nations.

Russia's closest ally in the Balkans, Serbia is trying to preserve its historical and cultural ties with Moscow while continuing to cooperate with Western countries to strengthen its economy. Lithium mine reserves discovered in western Loznica city by the British-Australian metal and mining company Rio Tinto in 2004 have been the cause of ongoing protests in the country for years.

'Environmental activists', supported by the opposition, have organised large-scale demonstrations as they do not want Rio

Tinto to carry out this project. The Serbian administration said the lithium mine is an opportunity for economic development.

Deal on electric vehicles

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Belgrade last month and signed a strategic memorandum of understanding on raw materials, electric vehicles and battery production.

Vucic said that the agreement was important for Europe and Germany.

"This is a turning point for us, a big change and important for us to be able to make a leap toward the future...We believe that our country will progress eco-



Environmental activists, supported by the opposition, have organised large-scale demonstrations

nomically. This will bring us at least US\$6.5bn of new investment. It will be the largest invest-

ment ever made in our country," he said.

Scholz said the agreement

brings a good economic development perspective for mining activities in the region.

"This agreement is also good for the whole country. We will follow two principles, environmental protection and compliance with the highest standards in biodiversity," he said.

Noting that this is a European project requiring European spirit, Scholz said he openly supported the integration of the Western Balkan countries into the EU.

No excavation at the moment

Vucic said in a press conference last week that there is no excavation process at the moment.

"No process will be carried out until we receive guarantees on our behalf, that is, in the next 12 to 18 months," he said, adding that they will call the best ex-

perts from abroad and Serbia.

On August 9, Vucic said that Russian intelligence warned him that a 'coup' could be carried out in the country with the support of Western powers.

"We have received official information from Russia. We are dealing with this... Serbia is developing and no one can stop it," he said.

Political experts in the region say that the EU wants to open the way for Serbia's resources to reduce its dependence on China, which is currently among the most powerful investors in Serbia. Meanwhile, over 20,000 people protested the lithium mining project and they closed train stations and roads to traffic.

Anadolu Agency

India releases 109 high-yielding crop varieties

The move marks a major step forward in India’s efforts to enhance agricultural productivity, resilience

New Delhi, India - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday released 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient, and biofortified varieties of crops at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) in New Delhi.

The move marks a major step forward in India’s efforts to enhance agricultural productivity and resilience in the face of climate change.

PM Modi interacted with farmers and scientists at IARI, highlighting the importance of these new crop varieties.

During the interaction, he emphasised the critical role of value addition in agriculture and discussed how these innovations would not only reduce farmers’ expenditures but also positively impact the environment.

PM Modi underscored the growing importance of millet and the shift towards more nutritious food choices.

He also underscored the benefits of natural farming and the increasing trust among the general public in organic farming practices.

Going forward, the PM noted that there is a rising demand for organic foods, reflecting a broader trend towards healthier and more sustainable agricultural practices.

Farmers at the event expressed their appreciation for the government’s efforts in promoting natural farming and lauded the contributions of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with farmers and scientists during the release of 109 high-yielding varieties of crops at India Agricultural Research Institute, in New Delhi on Sunday (ANI)

The crop varieties released by PM Narendra Modi at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) in New Delhi included 34 field crops and 27 horticultural crops

raising awareness. PM Modi urged KVKs to proactively inform farmers about the benefits of these new crop varieties on a monthly basis, ensuring that the advantages of these innovations reach as many

farmers as possible. He also praised the scientists for their role in developing these new crop varieties. The scientists shared that they had been working in line with the Prime Minister’s earlier suggestions to bring

underutilised crops into the mainstream. The 109 crop varieties released by the Prime Minister included 34 field crops and 27 horticultural crops. Among the field crops were seeds of various

cereals, including millets, forage crops, oilseeds, pulses, sugarcane, cotton, and other potential crops.

The horticultural varieties included different types of fruits, vegetables, plantation crops, tuber crops, spices, flowers, and medicinal plants.

This move by the government follows the recent Budget announcement, where the release of these high-yielding and climate-resilient crop varieties was highlighted.

As part of a broader strategy to promote natural farming, the government aims to initiate one crore farmers across the country into natural farming over the next two years, supported by certification and branding.

Additionally, 10,000 need-based bio-input resource centres will be established to facilitate this transition, as announced in the Union Budget 2024-25. To achieve self-sufficiency in pulses and oilseeds, the government plans to strengthen their production, storage, and marketing.

This strategy, aligned with the goal of ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ (self-reliant India), focuses on increasing the production of oilseeds such as mustard, groundnut, sesame, soybean, and sunflower.

The government is already promoting green agriculture by way of green and sustainable agricultural and good agriculture practices with environmental concerns.

ANI

SET TO CELEBRATE INDEPENDENCE DAY



A woman shops for the national flag ahead of India’s Independence Day celebrations on August 15, at a market in Prayagraj, in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday (ANI)

President Murmu says India will open embassy in Timor-Leste soon

Dili, Timor-Leste - Indian President Droupadi Murmu announced during her address in Timor-Leste on Saturday that India will soon open an embassy in the country as part of the growing India-Timor-Leste friendship.

President Murmu arrived in Timor-Leste on Saturday, after concluding her visits to Fiji and New Zealand, in the third leg of her three-nation tour.

President Murmu said that this new embassy will facilitate consular services for Indians living in Timor-Leste and enhance communication between the two governments.

“As a part of our friendship, we will soon open an embassy in Timor-Leste. This will help in streamlining of consular and



President Droupadi Murmu attends the ‘Horta Show’ hosted by the President of Timor-Leste, José Ramos-Horta, on Saturday (ANI)

other services for Indians living in the country. This will also help in improving communication between the governments of both countries,” Murmu said while speaking at a State Banquet hosted by President Jose Ramos-

Horta of Timor-Leste at Palacio Nobre De Lohane.

President emphasised upon enhancing India and Timor-Leste ties, and giving the ‘Delhi - Dili’ connection a boost. She added that India remains committed to

partnering with Timor-Leste in its journey towards progress and development.

“India and Timor-Leste’s friendship is based on the same views on pluralism and sovereignty. Timor-Leste achieved independence recently. It is demographically young. The challenges faced by this nation are similar to India’s,” she said.

She added that Timor-Leste is one of the most vibrant democracies of Southeast Asia.

“Today, Timor-Leste is carving out its own destiny. It is considered one of the most vibrant democracies of Southeast Asia, and this is a testimony to the courage, resilience and bravery of the Timorese people who have achieved this,” Murmu said.

ANI

No deal: Sudan ends consultations with US

Khartoum, Sudan - The Sudanese government on Sunday announced the end of consultations with the US government on the upcoming peace talks in Geneva without a deal.

“I announce the end of the consultations without agreement on the participation of the Sudanese delegation in the Geneva negotiations,” said Mohamed Bashir Abdullah Abu Nammu, the Sudanese minister of minerals and head of the government delegation to the consultations held in the Saudi city of Jeddah during the weekend.

“The matter is ultimately left to the leadership’s decision based on its assessments,” the minister said in a Facebook post.

There were many details

that led to this decision, the Sudanese minister said without giving further information.

The United States had earlier invited the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) for a new round of peace talks on August 14 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The forthcoming talks aim to reach a nationwide cessation of violence, enabling humanitarian access to all those in need, and develop a robust monitoring and verification mechanism to ensure implementation of any agreement.

Sudan has been witnessing a deadly conflict between the SAF and the RSF since April 15, 2023, resulting in the loss of at least 16,650 lives.

Xinhua

Fleeing Rohingya forced to return to hometowns

Ankara, Turkey - A drone attack that killed over 200 fleeing Rohingya Muslims near the Bangladesh border on Monday has forced hundreds to return to their hometowns, while thousands are still taking shelter in paddy fields awaiting to cross into neighbouring Bangladesh, a rights group said on Sunday.

Risking their lives, a few hundred have moved toward areas held by the rebel group, which is accused of carrying out the deadly drone attack near the Naf River that makes a natural boundary between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

“Rohingya in Maungdaw (town) are still trying to flee to Bangladesh. Some are fleeing to areas controlled by the Arakan Army as they don’t see any other alternative, Nay San Lwin, the co-founder of Free Rohingya Coalition, told Anadolu.

Free Rohingya Coalition is a



global network of Rohingya activists. Monday’s deadly attack took place in Maungdaw township of Myanmar’s Rakhine state, which borders Bangladesh.

Videos posted on social media showed piles of bodies strewn across muddy ground,

with their luggage scattered around them.

The latest attack, viewed as part of an ongoing onslaught by the rebel group on Rohingya, has raised fears of further escalation in violence against the fleeing people, who have already been reeling from a systemic cleansing

operation by Myanmar’s military junta.

Thousands of Rohingya had fled to Maungdaw township following the capture of adjoining Buthidaung town by rebels in May this year.

Buthidaung has the largest Rohingya population since the

massive wave of violence against the Rohingya in 2017 by the Myanmar army.

‘Forceful’ conscription

The Arakan Army is ‘forcibly’ conscripting Rohingya youth in Buthidaung, aside from committing ‘numerous’ other abuses, according to Nay.

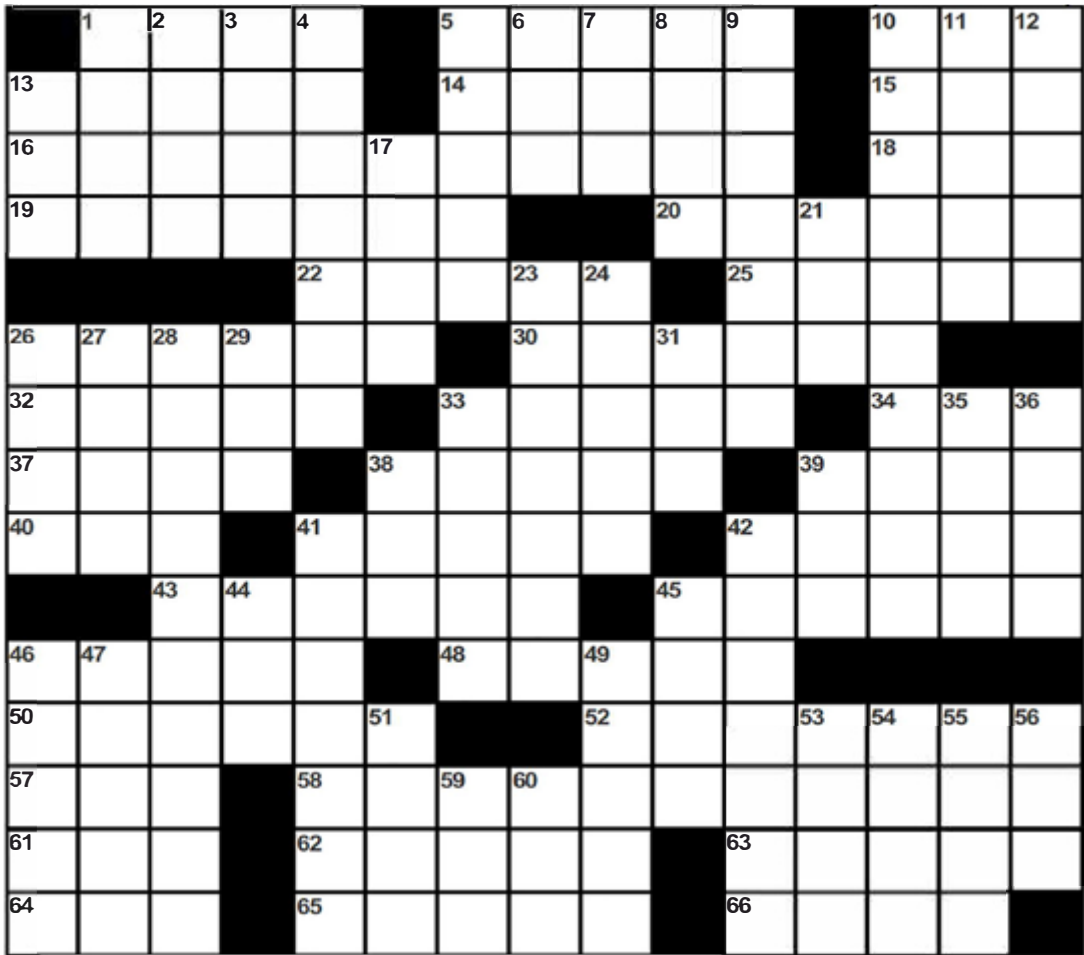
“In recent days, the Arakan Army has ordered two villages - Sein Hynin Pyar and Hpon Nyo Leik - to provide them with at least 100 Rohingya youth,” he said.

The rebel group, according to him, threatened that the Rohingya’s villages would be burned down if the youth were not provided for its force.

Families are being forced to pay huge amounts to avoid forced conscription, he further said.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) France's Cote d'...
5) "... to bury Caesar ..."
10) Ltr. add-ons
13) Striker's cry
14) "Fat chance!"
15) Soccer fan's cry
16) Basketball strategy
18) Bit of frat jewelry
19) Give a pep talk to
20) Added zip to
22) Shown on TV
25) Olfactory offenses
26) Verbally abuse
30) Accepted, as a job
32) Thruway signs
33) "Alfie" star Michael
34) Bay State fish
37) Bratty talk
38) Goes belly up
39) Silver State city
40) Texter's "didn't need to know that"
41) Fastener for drywall
42) Marx Brothers specialty
43) Camden Yards player
45) Like hoppy ale
46) Added wing
48) Firebug's offense
50) Makers of Barbie
52) Cried 15-Across

DOWN

- 1) In a short time
2) Some California wines, for short
3) Lone Star state sch.
4) Calls again
5) Derive by reasoning
6) Cedar Rapids college
7) Hold title to
8) Church event
9) Assault from Moe
10) Selena Gomez show, e.g.
11) Harder to outwit
12) FedExes, say
13) Action movie gun
17) "HOMES" part
21) Altar affirmation
23) Amazon.com, notably
24) Embroidered orna-
ment
26) Veg out
27) Event with proctors
28) Driver's license pre-requisite
29) "... alive!"
31) Come-... (lures)
33) Showy lily
35) Story opener
36) Take-charge sort
38) Rock's ... Fighters
39) Maze scurrier
41) Added to the recipe
42) Deft touch
44) AARP part (Abbr.)
45) Physicist Niels
46) Excited, with "up"
47) "Diana" star Watts
49) Near-miss, perhaps
51) Off one's rocker
53) Caesarean rebuke
54) Leonine outburst
55) Logician's "therefore"
56) Balmoral Castle river
59) Lucy of "Elementary"
60) "... Girls" (Kelly movie)

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You have a calling, and signs are emerging around you that reinforce that fact. People are giving you feedback that is genuine. They're not just praising you for the heck of it. Have faith in yourself and understand that you're capable of amazing things. The worst mistake you can make today is to limit yourself. This applies to new relationships, career challenges, and even business opportunities. Act on your ideas and climb out of your shell.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

No one has better instincts than you, as you will so handily prove today when you whip off the mask of someone who's all talk and no action. Be generous when you reveal their true identity. Chances are they were just trying to impress you anyway. There are many mixed signals coming from a friendship you thought was solid. Again, trust your instincts on this and consider that this person isn't always the best at communicating. Ask them what's up and get to the truth.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Few things feel as good as a renewed sense of confidence, and you're enjoying a strong energy in that area today. Things are picking up in your romantic life, so you're in the perfect position to build something bigger out of this momentum. Build a partnership that will last. A surprising boost to your ego will result if you spend more time around the people who stimulate your mind, so pick up the phone and get something going with them.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which of these historical figures is most associated with the year 1558?

- A. Marie Antoinette
B. Robert the Bruce
C. Elizabeth I
D. Charles I

2. Which of these establishments is based in Langley, Virginia?

- A. CIA
B. The Pentagon
C. Harvard University
D. FBI

3. A baby's first teeth are called what?

- A. Milk teeth
B. Vodka teeth
C. Water teeth
D. Tea teeth

Answers: 1. C 2. A 3. D



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Everything you need will be right at your fingertips today: the perfect answer, the sassiest comeback, the energy to go the last mile. In fact, you'll be so on top of things that you'll find yourself with plenty of free time on your hands. Use this spare time any way you see fit. Let your mood guide you. If you want to make some headway on a side project, this is the perfect opportunity. Or if you just want to vegetate with your favourite mindless TV for a while, don't feel guilty



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your relationships are going through a shift right now. You will find yourself drawn to certain people more than others. This is natural, so don't feel guilty if you suddenly want to spend more time with a new person. Just be sure to honour all your current commitments. Rescheduling or cancelling a date at the last minute sends the wrong message. You're not choosing one person over another; you're just exploring new ways of being with people.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You've been dispensing excellent advice lately, and you should admit to yourself that you have played a key role in other people's success. You've also been doing a wonderful job of walking the line between helping people find their own answers and telling them what the answers are. Everyone must arrive at conclusions on their own schedule, as slow as it may seem. You could arrive at quite an important conclusion today, and it might greatly affect your future earning potential.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Why are you being so modest? Today, it's essential for you to reach down inside and wake up your snoozing ego. You have some ideas that people should know about. At work, send an email to someone in control who has always been supportive. Let them know you're ready to roll up your sleeves and get deeper into the action. Your timing will help you edge ahead of your competition. In your personal life, splurge a little to dive deeper into a new love interest.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You have so many wonderful things in your life already, so avoid taking on any more responsibilities today. Many of the opportunities being dangled in front of you are not doable, so don't let your ambition put you in a position where success is all but impossible. Let these challenges pass on to someone who isn't quite as wise as you. Let them deal with an unrewarding situation while you stick with what you know. Enjoy the certainty of where you are now.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

It's a great time to initiate a new project at work or school as long as you choose the right partner for it. Pay close attention to the chemistry between the two of you. Can you keep your mind focused on the task at hand when they're around? Make sure that you make a good combination. Their strengths should make up for your weaknesses, and vice versa. Move forward with making exciting things happen, and make sure you have a specific agenda in mind.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

The sun is shining just a bit more brightly today and your heart is just a bit lighter. Do you feel the tide turning? Hope is a powerful thing, and you've been able to hold on to enough of it to make a real difference. Blue periods can be tough, but they always result in more self-awareness and contentment. Slowly, you're entering a positive phase of strength, confidence, and knowing what you want. People are ready for the new you to shine!



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Looks like you've sprung a leak today, a financial leak, that is. There's some money going out and you don't know where it's going. Check through recent billing statements. There's a chance that something has been overlooked. While you're in editing mode, look for areas in your life where you can cut back, and not just monetarily. Spread out your attention and make an effort to catch up with someone outside of your main circle of friends



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Despite what anyone says, you've still got plenty of time to reach the goal you've given yourself. Don't give up just because you think you won't make it. Most of what you need to do is already done, so pace yourself and keep things at an easy, controlled tempo. There's no telling what other people are up to, so if you're dying to find out, ask. You have a healthy curiosity and a witty way of feeding it. Charm the answers out of everyone!

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

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

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

ELSEWHERE



Manchester City players celebrate their win

Man City win Community Shield

London, England - Premier League champions Manchester City beat FA Cup winners Manchester United 7-6 on penalties to win the Community Shield at Wembley on Saturday after the traditional season curtain-raiser finished level at 1-1.

Erik ten Hag's side looked on course to repeat their shock victory over City in the FA Cup final when Alejandro Garnacho put United ahead after 82 minutes, but City midfielder Bernardo Silva netted a minute from time to send the match to penalties.

City defender Manuel Akanji scored the decisive spot-kick after Silva had earlier missed in the shootout. United centre back Jonny Evans and winger Jadon Sancho failed to convert their penalties in the shootout. United thought they had taken the lead soon after halftime when captain Bruno Fernandes beat goalkeeper Ederson with a stunning finish from distance, but the effort was disallowed for offside.

Substitute Garnacho ran through the City defence to slide the ball into the bottom corner of the net before Silva scored from close range to send the game to a shootout.



Pedro Neto

Chelsea sign Neto from Wolves

London, England - Chelsea signed Portuguese winger Pedro Neto from Wolverhampton Wanderers on a seven-year contract, the club said on Sunday.

Financial details were not disclosed by either club, but British media reported that Chelsea had paid 54 million pounds (\$69 million) including add-ons for the 24-year-old.

Neto made 135 appearances for Wolves, scoring 14 goals and providing 24 assists since joining from Portuguese side Braga in 2019. He also had a loan spell at Serie A club Lazio.

He has earned 10 caps for Portugal and featured in all three of their group-stage matches at the European Championship in Germany. "I feel really grateful to have joined this club. I have worked really hard in my career to be here and I'm looking forward to getting on the pitch with this shirt," Neto said.

MARATHON THRILLER

Netherlands' Hassan wins gold in sprint finish

Paris, France - The Netherlands' Sifan Hassan deployed her famous late kick to win the women's marathon at the Paris Olympics on Sunday, adding the gold to her bronze medals in the 5,000 and 10,000 metres earlier in the week.

Hassan battled with Tigst Assefa of Ethiopia and managed to shake her off in the last stretch, crossing the finish line in an Olympic record time of two hours, 22 minutes and 55 seconds. Assefa, three seconds behind her, took silver and Kenya's Hellen Obiri claimed the bronze in 2:23:10.

Hassan's victory capped a gruelling Olympics schedule as the 31-year-old became the first athlete to medal in all three distance events at a single Olympics since Czech Emil Zatopek in 1952.

"I feel like I am dreaming," Hassan said. "At the end I thought, 'This is just a 100m sprint. Come on, Sifan. One more. Just feel it, like someone who sprints 200m'."

Hassan had initially signed up for the Olympic 1,500 metres as well before deciding that three



Sifan Hassan of the Netherlands celebrates after winning gold in the women's marathon on Sunday

events would be enough of a challenge.

Earlier this week Hassan said that finishing the marathon is "a kind of hell", and on Sunday she collapsed after the finish line before picking herself up, beaming and waving as the crowd cheered.

"Every step I challenged myself, and now I am so grateful I didn't push myself too much on the track. I was scared of this race," she said afterwards.

The race had been impossible to call with all the favourites among a leading pack up until the last 10km.

Defending champion Kenya's Peres Jepchirchir then dropped back as Assefa ploughed ahead with a handful of challengers. Hassan hung onto the back of the pack in much the same way she does on the track, biding her time

I feel like I am dreaming. At the end I thought, 'This is just a 100m sprint. Come on, Sifan. One more. Just feel it, like someone who sprints 200m'.

SIFAN HASSAN

before pouncing.

She delivered her devastating turn of pace on the last turn, sneaking past Assefa on the inside and briefly knocking elbows with the Ethiopian, who tried to

rally but could not catch up.

Ethiopia filed a request to disqualify Hassan for obstruction after she collided with Assefa in the final sprint, but the request was rejected.

Assefa, 27, had looked likely to make it an Ethiopian sweep of the Olympic marathons after Tamirat Tola won the men's race on Saturday, as she surged up the course's steep hills looking calm and collected throughout.

Assefa has two of the fastest-ever marathon times and took more than two minutes off the world record in a mixed race to win last year's Berlin marathon.

She had to settle for silver on Sunday, though, in a repeat of her second-place finish at the London marathon in April when Jepchirchir prevailed.

Obiri, 34, ran a masterful race to clinch bronze, powering on de-

United States beat France to emerge as basketball champions

Paris, France - There was no "Miracle on the Seine" at the Paris Olympics on Saturday as the United States men's basketball team did as expected by grinding out a 98-87 win over France to claim a fifth consecutive gold medal.

With the French sporting spotlight locked on the Bercy Arena, the American showmen crushed Gallic hearts led by Stephen Curry and a fired up LeBron James, the "King" wearing shiny golden sneakers to mark the occasion.

"I'm just living in the moment," said 39-year-old James, the NBA's all-time leading

I'm just living in the moment. I'm super humbled that I can still play this game. Play it at a high level.

LEBRON JAMES

scorer.

"I'm super humbled that I can still play this game.

"Play it at a high level.

"Play with 11 other great players with a great coaching staff and then and go out and do it for



United States basketball players celebrate with their medals

our country.

"It was a great moment."

The result was the same as three years ago in the Tokyo Olympic gold medal game but for the French this loss cut a little deeper coming on home hardwood in front of a captivated nation.

"It's their incredible talent that ended up marking the difference," said France coach Vincent Collet.

"It's a final against the Americans, in Paris, you can say it as much as you want, each player has his emotions, we tried to use them but it wasn't possible here."

Japan's Kitaguchi wins javelin gold

Paris, France - Haruka Kitaguchi won the women's javelin on Saturday with her first throw of 65.80 metres to earn Japan's first gold medal in the event.

South Africa's Jo-Anne van Dyk and Czech Republic's Nikola Ogrodnikova made valiant efforts to overhaul her but never came close as they took silver and bronze with throws of 63.93 and 63.68.



Haruka Kitaguchi

Last year Kitaguchi needed her final throw to take the world gold in Budapest, but there was little suspense at the Stade de France as she started with her best throw of the season.

"I cannot believe this. This wasn't easy for me. Before, I couldn't train well, but my physio and my team believed in me. Without their help, I cannot get gold today," she told reporters.

"Actually, my training throw wasn't good. It was too much. But this time, I can throw 65.80, so for me, really good."

Kitaguchi smiled broadly after her opening throw but was left frustrated as her second attempt was 62.39 and she fouled on her third. Ogrodnikova briefly had control of second place with her third throw but Van Dyk overtook her immediately.



United States players celebrate their win

US women break Brazil hearts to win football gold

Paris, France - The United States claimed a record-extending fifth Olympic gold medal in women's soccer after Mallory Swanson earned them a 1-0 win over Brazil in the final at Parc des Princes on Saturday.

Following a goalless first half, Swanson broke the deadlock 12 minutes after the break to earn the U.S. their first Olympic title since London 2012 after a perfect run in the tournament.

U.S. coach Emma Hayes enjoyed almost instant success as

she secured the title only two months after taking the job.

"I'm very emotional, it's a dream of mine to be in this position," a tearful Hayes told Eurosport.

"I have to thank my dad for pushing me to this point, to be able to come and coach an incredible group of players that have received me so well.

"(They have) taken on everything I asked, they are tremendous people, players and role models. I love them."

Lin 'shut myself off from social media' en route to gold

Paris, France - Lin Yu-ting, one of two boxers at the centre of a gender dispute at the Paris Olympics, said staying off social media and focusing on her sport had helped her cope with nearly two weeks of international headlines over her eligibility for the Games.

Lin, who beat Polish opponent Julia Szeremeta to claim the women's featherweight gold on Saturday, and Algerian Imane Khelif were both caught up in a storm that has domi-

nated headlines and been the subject of heated debate on social media platforms.

The two boxers were disqualified by the International Boxing Association (IBA) from the 2023 World Championships, which said a sex chromosome test had ruled both of them ineligible.

They competed in Paris after



Lin Yu-ting

the International Olympic Committee (IOC) stripped the IBA of its status as the sport's governing body in 2023 and took control of organising the boxing itself.

The IOC used boxing eligibility rules that were applied at the 2016 and 2021 Olympics and do not include gender testing.

"As an elite athlete during the competition, it's important to shut myself off from social media and to focus. That is extremely important," Lin told reporters after the win.

"Of course I heard some of the information through my coach, but I didn't pay too much attention to it. I was invited by the IOC to participate at the Games, this is what I focused on." "As for the other news, I relied on my coach to answer the questions."



Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen wins gold in 5,000 metres

Ingebrigtsen bounces back with 5,000m gold

Paris, France - Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen bounced back from defeat in the 1,500 metres to win the Olympic 5,000 metres gold with a fierce final lap on Saturday, just as he did in the last two world championships.

Ingebrigtsen was the defending Olympic champion over 1,500 but was run out of the medals and was determined to make amends in the longer distance, having taking gold over 5,000 in the last two world championships after also losing in his favourite event.

His rivals played into his hands on Saturday by running most of the race at pedestrian pace, keeping the huge field of 22 together until the last few laps.

Ethiopian Hagos Gebrhiwet, who became the second-

fastest man ever over the distance this year, finally put his foot down with 600 metres to go and the race was on.

Ingebrigtsen was initially caught in the pack, but did not panic, easing his way through and onto the leader's shoulder and then forging ahead with 250 to go to come home well clear in 13 minutes 13.66.

Kenya's Ronald Kwemoi got ahead in a charge for the line to take silver with American Grant Fisher adding a brilliant bronze to the one he picked up in the 10,000.

"For me the 5,000m is over triple my usual distance, so it was a very tough race," Ingebrigtsen told reporters.

"With the level being so high, people are running so fast this year, I knew I had to be at my very best to be able to fight for medals.

FAITH TRUMPS ALL

Kenya's Kipyegon continues her reign in 1,500m

Paris, France - Kenya's Faith Kipyegon was over the moon after winning her third straight Olympic 1,500 metres gold on Saturday, surging through the final lap to finish more than a second ahead of the field.

Kipyegon cemented her status as one of the all-time great middle-distance runners, becoming the first athlete to claim three successive Olympic 1,500m titles. Australia's Jessica Hull took silver and Britain's Georgia Bell won bronze.

Kipyegon's time of three minutes 51.29 seconds broke the Olympic record, and she collapsed to the track, hands on her head in disbelief, after crossing the finish line.

"I was really looking forward to defending my title, and I had a dream. Amazing to me, I completed it. I'm so, so happy," she told reporters. "I managed to make history. I've done it."

Kipyegon's illustrious career belies her humble beginnings.

The eighth of nine children growing up on a farm in Kenya's Rift Valley, Kipyegon competed barefoot in her first world cross country championships as a 16-year-old, finishing fourth.



Kenya's Faith Kipyegon wins gold in 1,500 metres on Saturday

I was really looking forward to defending my title, and I had a dream. Amazing to me, I completed it.

FAITH KIPYEGON

Realising she had a talent for running and that athletics could provide her a career, she threw herself into competition and the 30-year-old has now amassed six world championship and four Olympic medals.

Saturday's win was redemption for the athlete after she nearly lost her silver medal in the 5,000m on Monday. She was initially disqualified after the race saw her get into an altercation with Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay, but that was overturned. "I didn't know I would come out strong today, after what I went through over the 5,000," Kipyegon said. "I didn't sleep until yesterday."

Kipyegon and Tsegay met again on Saturday.

Kipyegon, who broke her own 1,500m world record a month ago, spent much of the race in second place behind Tsegay but powered ahead with a lap to go and built an untouchable lead.

Tsegay, world champion over 10,000m, faded suddenly and fell back to cross the line last.

Both Hull and Bell dug deep on the home straight, finding the strength to overtake Ethiopia's Diribe Welteji. Hull clocked 3:52.56 and Bell crossed in

3:52.61, a national record and four seconds quicker than her previous best time.

Hull, who has the fifth-fastest time ever over the distance, said she envisioned the race as a battle. "I was like, 'I'm not going to be the one going home without a medal,'" she said.

Bell, 30, delivered a stunning Olympic debut to win bronze after her training partner Keely Hodgkinson took 800m gold earlier in the week.



New Zealand's Hamish Kerr celebrates his gold

New Zealand's Kerr wins high jump gold

Paris, France - New Zealand's Hamish Kerr won gold in the men's Olympic high jump on Saturday by beating American Shelby McEwen in a jump-off in contrast to the last Games when the gold was shared.

His best effort in "normal time" was 2.36 metres but he secured his country's first medal in the event by clearing 2.34 as both men flagged after a long and gruelling competition.

Mutaz Barshim of Qatar - who shared the gold with Italy's Gianmarco Tamberi in Tokyo - got the bronze with a season's best 2.34.

Kerr and McEwen cleared 2.36 at the first attempt but both had three failures at 2.38.

Kenya's Wanyonyi holds off strong field to win 800m gold

Paris, France - Kenya's Emmanuel Wanyonyi held off one of the strongest fields in history to win the Olympic gold medal in the men's 800 metres on Saturday, securing his country's fifth consecutive Olympic title in the event.

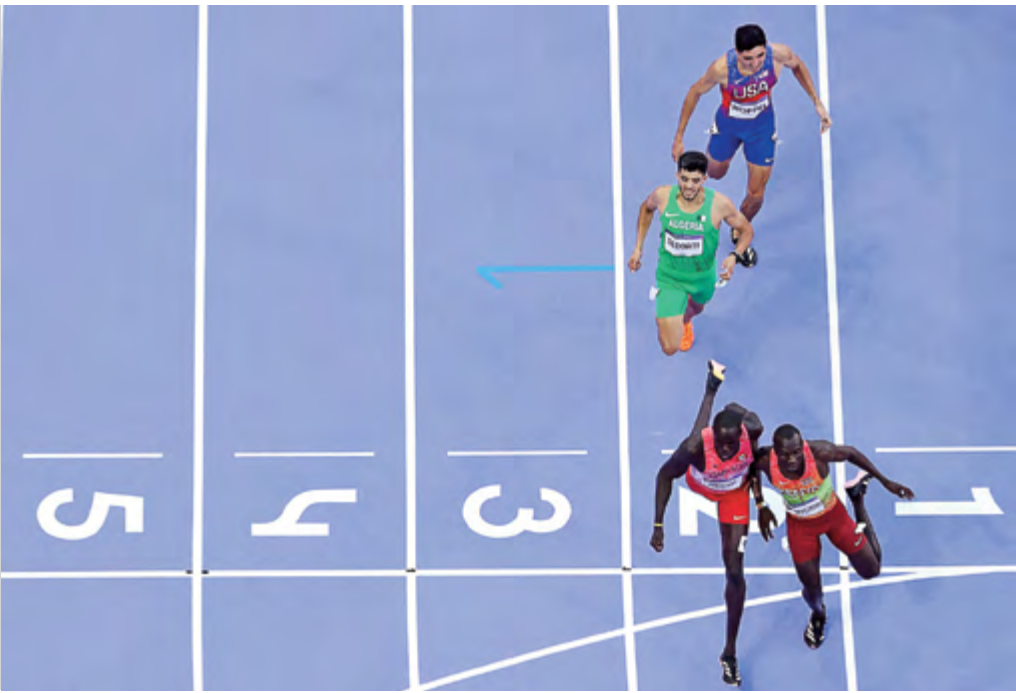
The 20-year-old Wanyonyi blazed to a time of one minute 41.19 seconds, making him the third fastest man ever over the distance. The world silver medalist narrowly missed the world record of 1:40.91 set by Kenya's David Rudisha at the 2012 London Olympics, in laying down the fifth fastest time ever run.

Canada's world champion Marco Arop furiously tried to overtake the Kenyan over the final 100m, but finished one-hundredth of a second behind in 1:41.20.

"I thought (Arop) would repeat last year because of experience," Wanyonyi told reporters.

"You come from the back, then you beat me the last 200 metres. So this time I told Arop, 'Nobody can beat me twice. You need to work hard if you feel to beat me.'"

Algeria's Djamel Sedjati, the



Kenya's Emmanuel Wanyonyi holds off Canada's Marco Arop to win the men's 800 metres on Saturday

favourite after going unbeaten all season and setting four world-leading times, made a tactical error in sitting near the back of the pack for too long and crossed the line in 1:41.50 for bronze.

"This race was tough," said Wanyonyi, who turned 20 just nine days ago. "I felt more pressure because I knew it's not easy.

Sedjati is not easy (to beat), he's a tough guy."

Wanyonyi boldly led from gun to tape as the first seven across the line were separated by about a second and a half.

"Rudisha told me yesterday, 'You need to run your race, to run from the start to the finish in front. (Beating) the world

record's not easy. Maybe you can do it in the future, not now.'"

Wanyonyi, one of 11 children, was a cattle herder from a young age to help feed his family. He always loved running, which led to a meeting with world champion Janeth Jepkosgei who was passionate about coaching young talents.



Masai Russell of the US wins gold in the 100 metres hurdles

Russell blazes away to 100m hurdles gold

Paris, France - American Masai Russell produced a stunning run to win the Olympic 100 metres hurdles title in a blanket finish on Saturday, edging out home hope Cyrena Samba-Mayela and Tokyo champion Jasmine Camacho-Quinn.

Russell clocked 12.33 seconds as French President Emmanuel Macron watched Samba-Mayela (12.34) deliver France's first track medal of the Paris Games with silver and Puerto Rico's Camacho-Quinn (12.36) took bronze.

Russell said she had barely slept the night before but she got the finish of her dreams as she dug deep and leaned over the line before wrapping the American flag over her shoulders.

"I was tossing and turning because I kept dreaming about my name coming up number one. When it actually came up, I was like, 'stop playing me, stop playing me'," she told reporters.

"I just proceeded to shut out the noise, focused on what I could control. And I was literally - I don't want to say a shock, but it was truly a dream come true."

Russell was in superb shape after setting a world lead of 12.25 at the U.S. trials in June and she exploded out of the blocks before gliding over the hurdles.

She held on by her fingernails as Samba-Mayela gained ground with every step and Camacho-Quinn gave everything she had to make up for a poor start.

Pakistan's Nadeem receives hero's welcome at home

Lahore, Pakistan - Javelin gold medallist Arshad Nadeem arrived to a water canon salute and chants from thousands of supporters as he brought Pakistan's first Olympic medal home early on Sunday.

Nadeem was met by his family, including his father who placed a garland around his neck to thousands chanting "Long Live Arshad Nadeem! Long Live Pakistan!", as he touched down in

the eastern city of Lahore.

The 27-year old father of two beat defending champion Neeraj Chopra of neighbouring arch-rivals India in the men's javelin on Thursday in Paris with an Olympic record 92.97-metre throw, the sixth best ever.

His triumph is seen by Pakistanis, struggling with an economic crisis and rising militancy, as all the more impressive since Nadeem was born and raised in

The 27-year old father of two beat defending champion Neeraj Chopra of neighbouring arch-rivals India in the men's javelin on Thursday in Paris with an Olympic record 92.97-metre throw, the sixth best ever

a mud brick house in an impoverished corner of rural Punjab. As a young man, he trained in wheat fields with homemade javelins.

Mohammad Farooq travelled hours from the city of Sargodha to join the welcome celebrations.

"I have come here... to wel-

come our hero. Pakistan has gained this happy moment after 40 years. It has become a double pleasure with Aug. 14," he said, referring to Pakistan's Independence Day celebrations on Wednesday.

President Asif Ali Zardari announced on Saturday that Arshad Nadeem would be awarded Pakistan's second-highest civilian award, the Hilal-i-Imtiaz, for his achievement.



Arshad Nadeem

GLOSS ON MAT

Motoki beats Koliadenko to win gold as Japan dominate wrestling

Paris, France - Sakura Motoki won Japan's sixth wrestling gold of the Paris Olympics on Saturday, underlining her country's domination of the mat at the Champ de Mars Arena.

Her victory against Ukrainian Iryna Koliadenko in the 62kg final extended Japan's big lead in the wrestling medal table and improved on the five golds the Japanese won at their home Olympics three years ago.

Koliadenko scored an activity clock point but Motoki hit a low single followed by a two-point leg lace to lead 4-1 at the break.

In the second period, Motoki picked up a second turn for an 8-1 lead and followed it with another takedown and a leg lace to go 12-1 up and seal her victory by technical superiority.

Aisuluu Tynybekova of Kyrgyzstan and Grace Bullen of Norway took bronze.

Uzbekistan's Razambek Jamalov won the men's 74kg, two years after contemplating retirement following a slew of surgeries that left him with a battered body.

Jamalov got an early takedown against Daichi Takatani and pinned the Japanese with 48



Sakura Motoki of Japan celebrates after winning gold

seconds left in the period to clinch the contest.

"I had some six or seven surgeries, including some major ones, throughout my career," said the 26-year-old with bruises on his forehead and cuts on his nose and ear.

"About two years ago, I thought of finishing my career but here I am.

"Inside the operation theatre, I was thinking 'Can I continue?' I was not sure. But my coach motivated me and my family supported me."

"I will soon undergo another operation for my shoulder. Maybe I will stop training for a while and come back, as I have always done."

Chermen Valiev's bronze was Albania's first Olympic medal. Kyle Dake of the United States

Uzbekistan's Razambek Jamalov won the men's 74kg, two years after contemplating retirement following a slew of surgeries

claimed the other bronze.

Geno Petriashvili of Georgia staged off a late comeback by Iran's Amir Hossein Zare to win the men's 125kg gold to go with his silver in Tokyo and bronze in Rio.

Petriashvili led 10-1 at the break, but Zare refused to throw in the towel and cut down the lead to 10-9 even though it was not enough in the end.

"It was very tense and in the final seconds, I was telling myself 'Geno, please don't give up, please don't give up'," Petriashvili said.

Rio champion Taha Akgul of Turkey goes into retirement after winning a bronze medal. Giorgi Meshvildishvili of Azerbaijan took the other bronze.



Italian volleyball players celebrate their triumph on Sunday

Italy win gold in women's volleyball

Paris, France - Top-ranked Italy dominated the United States to win the Olympic women's volleyball final on Sunday, crushing the defending champions in straight sets to claim their first gold medal on the final day of the Games.

Italy came into the Olympics as the Volleyball Nations League champions and did not lose a match en route to gold, dropping one set in the pool stage and none in the knockouts.

As Italy sealed a 25-18 25-20 25-17 victory, Paola Egonu was the star of the show after the 25-year-old, one of the top scorers in the tournament in Paris, finished with 22 points and four blocks.

"I am so happy, so proud, I can't describe the joy for this group of girls... This year has been very beautiful," Egonu said.

The Americans had won a medal at the last five Olympics and the silver was their seventh overall - more than any other country in women's volleyball - but they were no match for Italy

on Sunday.

Egonu gave Italy a blistering start, with the 6-foot 5-inch opposite heavily involved in every rally on both defence at the net and in attack, forcing the Americans into an early timeout as they fell behind.

Although the US staged a comeback, Egonu sealed the opening set with a spike that gave American Chiaka Ogbogu no chance of recovering.

The second set was neck-and-neck at the start before a kill from Myriam Sylla and monster blocks from Anna Danesi and Sarah Fahr gave Italy a lead to build on.

The U.S. fought their way back again, but Egonu made no mistake on set point to make it 2-0, dealing a huge psychological blow to the Americans, who made errors in the third set.

Italy, meanwhile, continued to impress at the net with 11 blocks in total while the Americans failed to make a single block in the match.

United States edge China to finish on top of medals table

Paris, France - The United States topped the medals table at the Paris Olympics with 40 golds after the final title was decided on Sunday, finishing above China only by virtue of their 44 silvers.

China, who were the last team apart from the US to top the standings when they did it on home soil at the 2008 Beijing Games, also won 40 golds but managed only 27 silvers.

The U.S. women's basketball team secured their country's pre-eminence by edging host nation France in a breathless finish to win the final gold of the Games. The U.S. also won most total medals with 126 to China's 91. France won 16 golds to finish fifth on the table.

Dutch disqualified in Madison

The Netherlands were disqualified

fied from the Olympic track cycling Madison after an incident which left British rider Oliver Wood saying he felt like a "crash test dummy" on Saturday.

Judges ruled late on Saturday that Jan-Willem van Schip had endangered another rider and therefore the Dutch, who finished outside the medals, were excluded. Van Schip was also fined 1,000 Swiss francs.

Wood and team mate Mark

Stewart were struggling to make much impression on the 200-lap race but any hopes they had of a late charge were all but wiped out when Wood, who was the inactive rider at the time in the relay-style race, hit the deck.

Television replays showed Van Schip coming alongside Wood and then appearing to thrust his head to one side to make contact with the British

rider's helmet, sending him crashing down.

Wood was allowed to continue after being checked over by medics but their race was already run.

"I have no clue, absolutely no clue," Woods told British media when asked how the incident had happened.

"All I know is I got hit really hard from behind by literally the biggest rider on the track."

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Bringing back sad memories of an unsuccessful voyage launched by Oman in September 2005, a nearly 60-foot replica of a 4,000-year-old reed boat - complete with a sail made from goat hair - recently launched off the coast of Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

According to a statement issued by Zayed University, the vessel passed numerous trials over two days at sea. It journeyed 50 nautical miles in the Arabian Gulf, reaching speeds of up to 5.6 knots (6.4 miles per hour).

Oman's historic voyage with a Magan boat, skippered by Tom Vosmer, an American, in 2005, had been intended to recreate the ancient trade route between Sur and Mandvi, in Gujarat state of India. The Magan boat (made of reeds, fastened with choir ropes and plastered with bitumen) had developed leaks and sank hours after it set sail from Sur, though the eight member crew were swiftly rescued by a trailing Omani ship (Fulk al Salama).

A similar Magan boat, launched off Abu Dhabi in mid-July, had been designed by a team of archaeologists and engineers as part of a partnership between Zayed University, New York University Abu Dhabi and the Zayed National Museum. The replica was modelled after the same 'Magan Boat' which once facilitated trade with destinations such as Mesopotamia and South Asia.

In the past, fragments of Magan boats have surfaced on the island of Umm an-Nar, off the coast of Abu Dhabi. Now, researchers want to use the replica vessel to shed new light on the lifestyle and craftsmanship of the Bronze Age people who lived in the region.

"I felt as though we were breathing life into history, bridging the gap between the distant past and the present," says project manager Tayla Clelland in a statement. "Seeing the Magan boat sail on the water for the first time actually took my breath away and brought tears to my eyes."

Thousands of years ago, 'Magan' was the name of a region located in what is now the United Arab Emirates and parts of Oman. To reconstruct the boat, experts relied on a clay tablet from 2100 BC that detailed the necessary building materials.

"The clay tablet was discovered in the ancient site of Tello, southern Iraq," Peter Magee, director of the Zayed National Museum disclosed. "Written in Sumerian, one

of the earliest known written languages, it depicts a shopping list of materials including four different types of wood, palm reeds, hides, goat hair, fish oil and bitumen."

The researchers constructed the boat using traditional Bronze Age tools and techniques. To create the outer hull, they gathered 15 tonnes of locally sourced reeds. They then soaked the reeds,

stripped away their leaves, and crushed and tied them together with date palm fibre ropes. Finally, the builders attached the reed bundles to the internal wooden frames and coated them in bitumen, a viscous liquid made from crude oil that helped waterproof the vessel.

"We gained a much deeper knowledge of the materials used to build such boats to better understand the strengths and weak-

nesses of these revolutionary craft," says Eric Staples, a maritime historian at Zayed University, as per CNN. "We also gained a much deeper appreciation for the ingenuity and courage of the ancient shipbuilders and seafarers of the Bronze Age."

Once the ship was complete, there was no guarantee that it would stay afloat at sea. CNN reports that 20 people worked to lift the sail and rigging - they, like the Bronze Age builders, did not use pulleys.

"When we first towed the boat out from the jetty, we were very careful," says champion Emirati sailor Marwan Abdullah al Marzouqi, who was one of the boat's captains, in the statement. "I was very aware it was made from only reeds, ropes and wood - there are no nails, no screws, no metal at all - and I was afraid of damaging her."

However, once the crew got out on the water, those fears were put to rest. "I soon realised that this was a strong boat," he says. "I was surprised by how this big boat, weighed down with a heavy ballast, moved so smoothly on the sea."

According to the researchers, the project is the largest replica of its kind ever attempted.

"Appreciating the maritime history of the Arabian Gulf is key to understanding the importance of Abu Dhabi in the ancient world," said Mohamed Khalifa al Mubarak, chairman of Abu Dhabi's culture and tourism department, in the statement. "From ancient shipbuilders to today's archaeologists, the launch of this impressive Magan boat reconstruction represents thousands of years of Emirati innovation and exploration, and a long legacy of forging regional and international connections."

The replica Magan boat will eventually travel to the Zayed National Museum on Saadiyat Island, where it will be on public display. The museum is currently under construction and is scheduled to open in 2025.

(With inputs from: smithsonianmag.com)

MAGAN BOAT SAILS

Bronze-age Beauty

A replica of a bronze-age reed boat successfully sails 50 nautical miles off the Abu Dhabi coast. Researchers constructed the vessel using a list of materials found on a 4,000-year-old clay tablet

The reconstructed Magan boat floating off the coast of Abu Dhabi



Oman's ill-fated Magan Boat had set sail in September 2005



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Where waltz meets whimsy

AUSTRIA'S CAPITAL VIENNA IS A CITY THAT OFFERS A BLEND OF IMPERIAL TRADITIONS AS WELL AS MODERN LIFESTYLES - A WARM FEEL OF THE OLD AND THE NEW ALIKE

The centre of Austria, Vienna is a city rich in history, culture, and unquestionable appeal. From the grandeur of its palaces to the intimacy of its coffee shops, Vienna asks you to let yourself fall in line with its beautiful pace.

This city screams history from every corner - the waltzes of Strauss resound down cobblestone streets, and the perfume of freshly made strudels mingles with Viennese coffee.

A cultural symphony

Architectural, artistic, and musical strands entwine Vienna's cultural tapestry. One must-see is the masterwork of neo-Renaissance architecture, the Vienna State Opera. See the wonder of opera or ballet in its grandiose setting, where great artists have graced the stage for more than 150 years.

See the famous St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna to have a taste of the religious legacy of the city. Its amazing display comes from its soaring twin towers and complex interior covered with stained glass and frescoes. Originally the winter quarters of the Habsburg monarchs, the Hofburg Palace is a vast complex today housing museums including the Treasury and the Imperial Apartments. Imagine the life of the monarchs who used to stroll its elaborate halls.

Vienna cuisine

With its gastronomic treasures, Vienna appeals to the senses. Savour the classic Wiener Schnitzel, a crispy, thin-breaded cutlet, ideal eaten over potato salad on a side. Taste the delicate sweetness of Sachertorte, a Viennese classic since 1832 - a rich chocolate cake filled with apricot jam. Don't miss the chance to taste Apfelstrudel - a delightful flaky pastry packed with apples, raisins, and cinnamon, eaten warm or cold.

See one of Vienna's many coffee houses for a flavour of the regional coffee scene. These old businesses are ideal for savouring a classic Wiener Kaffee, a strong espresso presented with a glass of water, or a typical Melange, a frothy mix of coffee and steamed milk, with their cosy interiors and relaxed atmosphere.

Markets and retail spaces

The energetic markets of Vienna provide a window into the soul of the city. The Naschmarkt, a vast outdoor market, a sensory feast. Sample cheeses, meats, fresh vegetables, spices, and cheeses or indulge in the mouthwatering street food on hand. See the Christmas Market open before City Hall during the festive season for a sample of Viennese custom. Warm spiced brews and Christmas food can be enjoyed in the

magnificent world of dazzling lights, festive decorations, and traditional crafts that is the market.

From opulent boutiques to indie stores, Vienna is a shopper's heaven. Vienna's best shopping street, Kärntner Strasse runs along designer retailers and high-end fashion houses. See the little boutiques and independent retailers in the Neustift am Walde area for a local experience.

An odyssey across time

Think about a romantic trip in a horse-drawn carriage if you want to really sink yourself into Vienna's intriguing past. These graceful carriages provide a different view of the city, letting you glide among its ancient streets and appreciate the architectural wonders lining them. From a quick afternoon ride to a longer, more thorough excursion, choose a trip that fits your interests and time restrictions.

Vienna is a city you remember long after you've left. Its harmonic blending of charm, history, and culture produces an unforgettable encounter.

(Contributed by: Maitha Ritchie)



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