

HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE
MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Carlos Vila Nova of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President Carlos Vila Nova and the people of his country. **-ONA**



HM SENDS GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT OF UZBEKISTAN
MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Dr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan on being re-elected for a new presidential term. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Dr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev in leading the Uzbek people towards further progress and prosperity. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations further development and growth. **-ONA**



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MEETING

On behalf of HM the Sultan, Sayyid Shihab receives Austrian ambassador

HM SENDS MESSAGE TO RUSSIAN PRESIDENT



MUSCAT : On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs received Christian Brunmayr, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to the Sultanate of Oman to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty as his country's ambassador to Oman, at Al Murtafa'a Garrison yesterday.

HH Sayyid Shihab thanked the ambassador for the efforts he exerted to enhance relations between Oman and Austria, wishing him success in his future assignments.

In his turn, the Austrian ambassador lauded the advanced relations bidding the two countries. He valued the cooperation he witnessed during his mission in Oman. **-ONA**

MOSCOW: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation. The message deals with the bilateral relations between Oman and Russia and means of promoting them.

It was handed over by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi when his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov received him in Moscow on Tuesday. Sayyid Badr also met Vyacheslav Viktorovich Volodin, Chairman of the State Duma of Russian Federation. The meeting underlined the two countries' keenness on enhancing relations, particularly in the parliamentary field.



The meeting was attended by Hamoud Salim Al Tuwaih, Ambassador of Oman to Russia and a number of officials from both sides. **-ONA**

21,980 OMANIS IN PRIVATE SECTOR EARN OVER OMR2,000 PER MONTH

The total number of Omani workers in the private sector and those who are insured reached 277,189 by the end of May 2023

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A total of 21,980 Omanis working in the private sector earn more than OMR2,000 per month, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) data.

The number of Omanis working in the private sector who receive a monthly salary of OMR2,500 or more has increased by 9 percent to reach 14,726 at the end of May 2023 while those re-



74,560	38,290	37,008
citizens get monthly wage between OMR325 and OMR400	Omanis get monthly salary between OMR500 and OMR600	citizens get monthly pay between OMR1,000 and OMR2,000

ceiving between OMR2,000 and OMR2,500 rose by 6.4 percent to reach 7,254 workers.

The NCSI data says that the number of Omani workers who receive a monthly wage between

OMR1,000 and OMR2,000 has seen a jump of 6.1 percent to reach 37,008 and those getting a monthly pay between OMR500 to OMR600 rose by 10.6 percent to reach 38,290 workers.

The data further reveals that citizens who receive a monthly wage between OMR325 and OMR400 decreased by 13.2 percent to reach 74,560 workers.

The total number of Omani workers in the private sector and those who are insured reached 277,189 at the end of May 2023, registering a decline of 1.1 percent compared to the same month of last year, according to data from the NCSI.

The data further reveals that most of the Omani citizens working in the private sector in construction-related activities stood at 51,933, wholesale and retail trade 40,049, mining and quarrying 34,858, manufacturing industries 33,841 workers, administrative services activities 22,888 and transportation and storage 21,852 workers.

On the other hand, the number of expatriate labour workers in the Sultanate of Oman reached 1.784 million at the end of May 2023, of which 1.406 million workers were in the private sector, 44,236 in the government sector, 326,685 are working in the family sector.

Most of the expatriate workforce is concentrated in engineering professions totalling 738,710, service professionals 556,529, 112,254 are in industrial, chemical processes and food industries and 101,124 are in sales professions.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Female guides learn life lessons

1 The Oman Challenge programme started in the Wilayat of Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar with the participation of 17 girl guides from various governorates. The activities for the advanced female guides stage began on Tuesday in the Wilayat of Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar and will continue until 13 July. **>A3**

OMAN Oman-Syria forum plans to boost trade

2 OCCI organised on Tuesday the Oman-Syria Business Forum, which aims to develop economic relations and boost trade exchange and investments between Oman and Syria. **>A4**

SPORTS Alcaraz into first Wimbledon quarters

3 Top seed Carlos Alcaraz underlined his status as the man likeliest to stop Novak Djokovic winning another Wimbledon after beating 2021 finalist Matteo Berrettini in the 4th round. **>B6**

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MUSCAT

CREDIT RATING AGENCY

Fitch upgrades OQ's rating

MUSCAT: Fitch Ratings, the international credit rating agency, has upgraded OQ's stand alone credit profile (SCP) from 'b+' to 'bbb-' and reaffirmed the Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BB', with a positive outlook.

This represents a significant improvement as OQ is now rated at an investment grade. It attributed the new rating to OQ's ability to meet its long-term financial obligations.

Fitch highlighted the exceptional achievements of the OQ Group, including reducing its debt as part of the Balance Sheet Optimisation programme, which demonstrated a committed approach to financial discipline. The credit



rating agency shed light on the improved EBITDA net leverage ratios, establishment of financial policy and increased hydrocarbon production which are among the significant achievements that contributed to the improved SCP.

OQ's rating is further bolstered by its diverse operations across exploration, production, refining,

marketing, petrochemical segments, with focus on energy transition going forward, as well as the key role of the company as a national champion for clean energy.

The positive recognition reflects the unwavering commitment to excellence and positions OQ as a strong player in the industry. The agency also emphasised OQ's proactive management of its balance sheet, leveraging strong cash flow generation and proceeds from asset sales to prepay debt. This positive shift in financial performance is largely attributed to the successful execution of the Group's projects and robust financial performance due to higher oil and gas prices. **-ONA**



Oman affirms firm support for all rights of Palestinian people

A2

PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:17pm
Asr.....	3:37pm
Maghrib.....	7:02pm
Isha.....	8:23pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:02am

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Oman backed Palestinian people's entitlement to gain their full rights in accordance with approved international legitimacy

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman has affirmed its firm position on the need to end the Israeli occupation. It voiced strong support for all the rights of the Palestinian people and its recognition of their independent, sovereign state based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Oman backed Palestinian people's entitlement to gain their full rights in accordance with approved international legitimacy

lands, including the Syrian Golan Heights and Lebanese territories. This was expressed in a statement delivered by the Sultanate of Oman at the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva as part of interactive dialogue on the report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights' situation in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories since 1967 (Item Seven). The statement was read out by Ambassador Idris bin Abdurrahman Al Khanjari, Oman's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and international organisations in Geneva.

Oman commended the position of the Special Rapporteur, who, in her report, described the occupation regime as incorrigible and called for an end to the occupation, which, she said, was the cause of all tragedies in the occupied Arab lands, particularly Palestine.

The Sultanate of Oman supported what was stated in the Special Rapporteur's report and her call on the international community to undertake punitive measures against the occupying power, in addition to all legal, diplomatic and economic means authorized by international law, without prejudice or double standards.

In its statement before the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Oman reiterated its condemnation and denunciation of the crimes committed in Jenin, which, it observed, constitute a persistence of the Israeli occupation and repeated crimes in the Palestinian territories.

The statement emphasised the fact that the Omani point of view was compatible with the conclusions reached by the Special Rapporteur. It hailed the Special Rapporteur's "courage and her stand siding with truth". -ONA

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MEETING

Sayyid Badr meets Lavrov, discusses bilateral realtions

MOSCOW: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a session of talks on Tuesday with Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation. This came within the framework of Sayyid Badr's visit to Russia. During the session, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and explored areas of cooperation and means of enhancing them. The two sides underscored their keenness to activate partnership opportunities in areas of transport, communications, renewable energy and converting industries, as well as encouraging tourism between the two countries.

The two ministers called forth companies of the private sector to utilize the existing friendship relations, agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) that regulate economic, business and investment cooperation. On the political forefront, the two ministers exchanged views on several regional and international issues.

Promoting dialogue
Sayyid Badr and Sergey Lavrov underscored the importance of promoting dialogue and backing all means that lead to peaceful settlement of disputes.



This, the two ministers, affirmed, is achieved on the basis of good neighborliness, the rule of international law and non-interference in internal affairs, as well as respecting the sovereignty of states in a manner that bolsters pillars of peace and stability in the world. The session was attended by Munthir Mahfoudh Al Mantheri, Head of the Europe Department and Hamoud Salim Al Tuwaih, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation and several officials from both sides. -ONA

SAYYID BADR MEETS CHAIRMAN OF RUSSIAN STATE DUMA
Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister met in Moscow yesterday Vyacheslav Viktorovich Volodin, Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. -ONA

Girl guides learn life skill lesson



The activities of the Oman Challenge programme for the advanced female guides stage began on Tuesday in the Wilayat of Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman Challenge programme started in the Wilayat of Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar, with the participation of 17 girl guides from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The activities of the Oman Challenge programme for the advanced female guides stage began on Tuesday in the Wilayat of Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar and it will continue until 13 July. The programme, which is organised by the Directorate General of Scouts and Girl Guides in cooperation with the Oman Challenge Corporation, includes many activities and events such as: mountain walks, expeditions and various skills aimed at solving problems, in addition to panel discussions and dialogues with participants about the health and safety of the environment. The programme aims to provide participants with teamwork skills, the basics of planning and time management, as well as developing life skills, leadership, problem-solving, planning, communication, self-confidence and managing available resources. It is worth noting that the Oman Challenge Programme has been activated between the Directorate General of Scouts and Girl Guides and the Oman Challenge Corporation.

CONDOLENCE

We deeply mourn the sad and untimely demise of

Mr. Amrish Surendra Dhirajlal

We offer our sincere condolences to the bereaved family and may god give them enough strength to bear this irreparable loss

Family members of al Hubaishi Company

Alhubaishi For Import and Foods Marketing - Yemen

COOPERATION PROGRAMMES

Agreement signed for on-the-job training for Omani jobseekers



MUSCAT: A number of joint cooperation programmes of employment-related training initiatives and the Employment Support Programme were signed at the Ministry of Labour on Tuesday. The programmes were inked by the Ministry of Defence, military and security units and the Ministry of Labour.

The programmes offer on-the-

job training for Omani jobseekers and highlight the contribution of military and security units to the service of the country.

The programmes were signed by Dr. Mohammed Nasser Al Za'abi, Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence, Dr. Mahad Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour, Maj. Gen Salim Ali Al Hosni, Commander of the Royal Guard

of Oman, and Sheikh Nasr Amer Al Hosni, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour for Labour.

The programmes demonstrate the integration of national efforts, the ongoing partnership between military units and the Ministry of Labour and a keenness to offer Omani youth opportunities to contribute to domestic development. -ONA

OPAZ INITIATIVE

Electronic window launched to report law violations in economic, free zones

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) has established an electronic window through which all parties with an interest can provide information or data to reveal an incident that violates laws and regulations, including Opaz employees, members of the Board of Directors, consultants, contractors, suppliers who have contracts with Opaz, former Opaz employees, and consultants.

The window enables creating a line of communication with officials in charge to maintain confidentiality and offer the necessary assurances to finish the reporting procedure, and safeguard the individual submitting the report.

The new electronic window, which is accessible through the Authority's website (opaz.gov.om), aims to strengthen the Authority's efforts toward preserving its positive image, enhancing its reputation, and improving the quality of its services.

The electronic window also adheres to the fundamental principles of transparency, integrity, neutrality, and fairness, while following the best practices in asset preservation and efficiency enhancement. Any individual work-



ing or dealing with the Authority can report any wrongful practices that violate the laws, regulations, and systems currently in place.

The electronic window ensures the protection of the whistleblower's identity while providing a high level of confidence in the reporting process.

It is worth noting that this policy applies to a wide range of individuals, including employees, board members, consultants, contractors, suppliers contracted with the Authority, and former employees.

The scope of reporting covered by this policy includes acts, violations, improper behaviors, and actions that violate the laws, regulations, and rules in force in the Authority and committed by employees, whether inside or outside the Authority. Last June,

the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones has unveiled its new policy of reporting violations and protecting whistleblowers.

The policy emphasises the Authority's commitment to the highest standards of integrity and ethical practice in performing its tasks and duties, which are the foundation of building a good reputation and achieving success.

The policy also highlights that the employees' shared values and rules of professional conduct govern the work procedures in the Authority.

According to the policy, it is the employee's legal, professional, and ethical obligation to disclose any malfunction while reporting unethical or illegal work practices.

Oman-Syria Business Forum explores ways to boosting trade



Al Saqri pointed out that the forum provides several economic opportunities between Oman and Syria. It is also a chance, he added, to explore areas of joint cooperation

MUSCAT: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) organised on Tuesday the Oman-Syria Business Forum which aims to develop economic relations and boost trade exchange and investments between the Sultanate of Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic.

The event was held under the patronage of Dr. Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy.

In his speech, Al Saqri pointed out that the forum provides several economic opportunities between Oman and Syria. It is also a chance, he added, to explore areas of joint cooperation.

The forum, Al Saqri affirmed, facilitates connecting Omani and Syrian businesspeople through B2B meetings which will be held on the sidelines of the event.

In his turn, Dr. Mohammad Samer Al Khalil, Syria's Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade said that economic relations between Oman and Syria are historic and continuous. He affirmed that Oman represents an important regional trade centre for re-exporting Syrian products to east African countries, India and China.

Meanwhile, Faisal Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI indicated that the forum is an opportunity for businesspeople to familiarize with facilities and incentives offered by the two countries.

Al Rawas pointed out that the event focuses on several economic

“
Faisal Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI indicated that the forum is an opportunity for businesspeople to familiarise with facilities and incentives offered by the two countries

sectors, such as food industries, exporting and importing, construction, manufacturing clothes and cotton products, textiles, tourism, veterinary medicine, fodder and fertilizers, chemicals and plastics industry.

Moreover, the forum comprises two workshops that highlight incentives offered to investors in Oman and Syria, in addition to available investment opportunities in various economic sectors. -ONA





MILITARY DRILL



Commanders of SAF, military, security units visit 'Al Hazm' exercise site

MUSCAT: Several commanders and high ranking officials yesterday visited the site of the annual military exercise 'Al Hazm' of the Joint Command and Staff College.

High ranking officers

The visit was paid by Air Vice Marshal Khamis Hamad Al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), Maj.Gen Musallam Mohammed Jaboo, Commander of the Sultan's Special Force (SSF), Maj.Gen Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, Rear Admiral Ali Abdullah Al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College.



(NDC) and several high ranking officers.

Upon their arrival at the college, they were greeted by Air Commodore Ahmed Mohammed Al Mashaikhi, Commandant of

the Joint Command and Staff College.

The commanders and high ranking officers were briefed on the progress of the exercise and its various stages. -DPA

DHO FAR GOVERNORATE

Discussion on importance and key benefits of Luban trees

Times News Service

Muscat: The Food and Water Security Committee of the Shura Council discussed the benefits of Luban trees in commercial and economic terms.

Shura Council on Tuesday hosted the event that was attended by a number of specialists from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

They discussed the desire to study the future of Luban trees in Dhofar Governorate and expressed desire to implement a project to produce intravenous fluids from the wet solution in the Sultanate of Oman. This came during the third periodic meeting of the fourth annual session (2022-2023) of the ninth term of the Council.

The meeting was chaired by Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Malik, Chairman of the Committee, in the presence of the members of the committee.



The study of the future of Luban trees in the Dhofar Governorate comes due to its historical importance since ancient times.

Optimally utilised

It is important that the tree be optimally utilised, as well as the legislation that protects it and the studies and research that maximise returns from the Luban tree and benefit from it in a commercial and economic manner, especially as it is used in various industries like medical, cosmetic,

and perfume among others.

In this aspect, the members inquired about the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in preserving the quality of Luban trees and its wide area in the governorate, as well as identifying the most important challenges facing the tree.

It was also discussed with the Ministry's specialists the possibility of implementing a project to produce intravenous fluids from its solution in the Sultanate of Oman.

GCC STATES

Israeli action denounced

GENEVA: The GCC states have affirmed their solidarity with the Palestinian people and their condemnation of all aspects of the Israeli aggression against Palestinians.

They stressed the need to protect civilians and called for rapid intervention to stop the violations staged therein.

GCC's collective stance

This was the core essence of the GCC's collective stance expressed in a statement at the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva that was held within the context of interactive dialogue on the report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights situation in Palestine and Arab territories occupied since 1967 (Item VII). — **ONA**

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TENDER NOTICE

S.No.	Description
1.	Design, Supply and Installation of equipment for Kindergarten Play Area (8 m x 9 m = 72 sq.m).
2.	Supply & Installation of 41 computers for Computer lab

- ❖ Sealed quotations are invited from the service providers.
- ❖ Scope of work will be provided & Interested parties shall submit sealed quote at the Principal's office on working days between 9 am and 1.30 pm from 12th July 2023 to 19th July 2023.
- ❖ A nominal charge of R.O 10/- will be collected with each tender.
- ❖ Last date of tender submission - 19/07/2023 by 1:30 PM
- ❖ The school reserves the right to reject any tender without providing any reason and does not find itself to accept the lowest or any tender.



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السلطنة العمانية للاحتفالات الوطنية

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Secretariat General for National Celebration announces to the following Tenders for 53 National day :

Tender no	Tender name	Degree	Last date of submission	Tender fee (OR)
2/2023	Fireworks	Second	14/8/2023	25
3/2023	Drown show	Second	14/8/2023	25
4/2023	Illumination tender	Second	26/7/2023	25
5/2023	Tree Decoration – Muscat sector (1)	Second	26/7/2023	25
6/2023	Tree Decoration – Muscat sector (2)	Second	26/7/2023	25
7/2023	Tree Decoration – Muscat sector (3)	Second	26/7/2023	25

Those who are and registered with Tender Board and qualified in these fields carryout the project perfectly, may collect the tender documents from the Office of Secretariat General for National Celebration at madinat alAalam Near Oman news papar , during the working hours, on working days from Tuesday 11 of July 2023.

Tenderer should submit their documents stating Grade. Registration Certificates and relevant papers permit, issued by the concerned authorities when collecting Tender Documents

Tender should be submitted in a red sealed wax envelope, addressed to H.M. Secretariat General for National Celebration. Tenderer should enclose approved Bank Guarantee or certified cheque for value of 1% of tender sum valid for 90 days and to be addressed to Secretariat General for National Celebration Madinat alAalam. For any information contact to (24601271),(24696934;

Scan for location



The Secretariat is not bound to accept the lowest offer or any offer.

NEPAL

6 die after helicopter crashes near Mount Everest

KATHMANDU: A helicopter has crashed near Mount Everest in Nepal, killing all six people on board, aviation authorities confirmed on Tuesday.

Reports said earlier that contact with the Manang Air helicopter, which took off from Surki in the Solukhumbu district bound for the capital Kathmandu, was lost

15 minutes after its departure on Tuesday morning.

The helicopter was carrying five Mexican tourists and a Nepali pilot, government officials told news agencies.

Locals reported that the chopper was found crashed at Chihan-danda in Lamjura of Bhakanje vil-lage, the Kathmandu Post cited a

rural municipal official as saying.

The authorities said that all the six bodies have been retrieved.

“The bodies have broken into pieces,” said Sita Adhikari, a regional official in the Solukhumbu district. “More police have been sent to the location. Only then will we know the details,” she added.

The cause of the crash was not

yet known, Nepal’s civil aviation regulator said, adding that the government would set up a committee to investigate. “The helicopter took off... in good weather. The weather was not bad. Now we can’t say what caused the crash. It will have to be investigated,” Raju Neu-pane, a spokesperson for Manang Air said. —**rw**



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UN praises ‘remarkable’ India as 415mn exit poverty in 15 years

Besides India, China lifted 69 million out of poverty between 2010-2014, and Indonesia 8 million between 2012-2017

NEW DELHI: A total of 415 million people in India came out of poverty within a span of just 15 years from 2005/2006 to 2019/2021, the United Nations said on Tuesday highlighting the remarkable improvement in human development parameters by the world’s most populous country.

The latest update of the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) with estimates for 110 countries was released on Tuesday by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) at the University of Oxford. Poverty entails more than the lack of



income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. People living on less than \$1.90 a day typically is considered to be in poverty. Besides India, China lifted 69 million out of poverty be-

tween 2010-2014, and Indonesia 8 million between 2012-2017.

In neighbouring Bangladesh and Pakistan, 19 million and 7 million individuals came out of poverty during 2015-2019 and 2012-2018,

respectively, the UN report said.

The report asserted that poverty reduction is achievable. The analysis of trends from 2000 to 2022, focused on 81 countries, according to the report, revealed

that 25 countries successfully halved their global MPI values within 15 years. Many countries have halved their MPI in as short as four to 12 years.

Among those countries include India, Cambodia, China, Congo, Honduras, Indonesia, Morocco, Serbia, and Viet Nam, it said, reiterating rapid progress is attainable.

The poverty levels in Cambodia, Peru, and Nigeria have shown significant reductions recently. For Cambodia, the most encouraging case among these according to the report is the incidence of poverty falling from 36.7 per cent to 16.6 per cent, and the number of poor people halved, from 5.6 million to 2.8 million, all within 7.5 years, including pandemic years.

Despite the encouraging trends in many countries, the lack of post-pandemic data for most of the 110 countries covered by the global MPI restricts analysis of the pandemic’s effects on poverty, the report pointed out.

“As we reach the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we can clearly see that there was steady progress in multidimensional poverty reduction before the pandemic. However, the negative impacts of the pandemic

in dimensions such as education are significant and can have long-lasting consequences,” said Conceicao, Director of the Human Development Report Office.

“It is imperative that we intensify efforts to comprehend the dimensions most negatively affected, necessitating strengthened data collection and policy efforts to get poverty reduction back on track.”

According to the report, 1.1 billion out of 6.1 billion people (over 18 per cent) globally live in acute multidimensional poverty across 110 countries. Sub-Saharan Africa (534 million) and South Asia (389 million) are home to approximately five out of every six poor people.

Nearly two-thirds of all poor people (730 million people) live in middle-income countries, making “action in these countries vital for reducing global poverty”.

Although low-income countries constitute only 10 per cent of the population included in the MPI, they are, however, where 35 per cent of all poor people reside.

Among those living in poverty, children under 18 years old account for half (566 million). The poverty rate among children is 27.7 per cent, while among adults it is 13.4 per cent. —**ANI**

MASSIVE EXPLOSION

Tourists received no safety warnings before New Zealand volcano eruption

AUCKLAND: A trial opened on Tuesday over a volcanic eruption in New Zealand that killed 22 people in 2019.

Dozens more were left terribly burned after a “massive explosion” on White Island — also known as Whakkari. The island was owned by the brothers Andrew, James and Peter Buttle under Whakaari Management Limited (WML).

Six parties, including two tour companies and the WML, have been charged with breaching health and safety regulations in the lead-up to the disaster.

What prosecutors said at White Island criminal trial

The tourists on the island received no health and safety warning before they landed on New Zealand’s most active volcano, prosecutor Kristy McDonald said in her opening comments.

“The business of tourism on Whakaari was a risky business. It involved tours to an active volcano, taking people to the heart of the crater in circumstances where no one could predict when an eruption might occur,” she added.

There were 47 tourists on White Island when the volcanic eruption happened.

“No one is suggesting that the timing of this eruption could have been predicted... but it was foreseeable that it may erupt at some point,” McDonald told the Auckland District court.

McDonald argued that the company that owned the volcano failed to understand the risk.

Despite the “heightened state of volcanic unrest,” McDonald said several operators continued taking tourists to the crater.

What happened on White Island?

White Island is an active volcanic island in New Zealand’s northeastern Bay of Plenty region.

On December 9, 2019, a volcano on the tourist island erupted, releasing rock and ash in the air.

In total, 14 Australians, five Americans, two New Zealanders and one German were killed. Many



more people suffered horrific injuries, prompting a massive medical operation that saw victims treated in burns units across New Zealand and Australia.

Tourists are no longer able to visit the island.

Six companies, including White Island Tours, which ferried 21 of those killed to the volcanic site by boat, have already pleaded guilty.

Now each of the companies on trial faces a maximum fine of NZ\$ 1.5 million (\$920,000, €840,000). Each of the brothers charged faces a maximum fine of NZ \$300,000. —**rw**



BRIEFS

Biden meets UK’s Rishi Sunak, King Charles III

LONDON: United States President Joe Biden began his trip to Europe on Monday with a visit to London where he met with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and King Charles-III. The US President described the relationship between the two nations as “rock solid.” The meeting between Biden and Sunak comes ahead of a key NATO meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania’s capital



Germany sees sharp rise in domestic abuse cases

FRANKFURT: The number of recorded domestic violence cases for 2022 had soared by about 9.4% compared with the previous year, the German government said on Tuesday. About 80% of victims were women in cases involving two partners, with some 78% of perpetrators being men. In 40% of cases, the abuse was committed by an ex-partner while in 60% it was a current one. According to the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), the number of rape, coercion, and sexual assault cases also saw a sharp rise. There were 8.5% more victims compared with the previous year — the number rising to 240,547.

I’m on road to recovery, Madonna shares health update

NEW YORK: Madonna postponed her tour after developing a serious bacterial infection on Saturday which led to a several-day stay in the ICU, her manager informed. “At this time we will need to pause all commitments, which includes the tour. We will share more details with you soon as we have them, including a new start date for the tour and for rescheduled shows,” he said. Soon after she shared the note, her fans flooded the comment section with red heart emoticons and get well soon messages. “We love you so much you have never disappointed us,” a user wrote.

UN warns of ‘full-scale civil war’ in Sudan

NEW YORK: The United Nations has warned that Sudan could be on the verge of an all-out war after a weekend airstrike killed dozens in a residential area in the Sudanese city of Omdurman, CNN reported. At least 22 people were killed and many injured in a shelling attack early on Saturday, the country’s health ministry said, as months of infighting between Sudan’s rival military forces continue to rage on across the country. —**Agencies**



WORLD MUSLIM LEAGUE

India can send message of peace to world: MWL chief



NEW DELHI: Saudi Arabia's former Minister for Justice, considered a leading global voice on moderate Islam on Tuesday said that India with its diversity, is "a great model for coexistence" and that the country can send a message of peace to the world.

"We have talked just moments ago about the different components in the Indian society and we have been in the past days engaging with them. And I know that the Muslim component of the Indian society, they are, as I said, proud of their Constitution and proud of their nation and they are proud of the brotherhood that they share with the rest of the components of the Indian society" al-Issa said in the national capital on Tuesday.

Aal-Issa who is the current Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL), an organisation based in Saudi Arabia and

representing Muslims worldwide, was delivering an address at an event at the India Islamic Cultural Centre in the national capital organised by the Khushro Foundation. The Saudi leader is on a five-day visit to India that began on July 10.

Indian wisdom

Appreciating "Indian wisdom", al-Issa said, "We reach out with the different components and diversity for the common objectives that we share. We have heard a lot about Indian wisdom and we know that it has contributed a lot to humanity..."

"We know that here coexistence is very important... we also work on promoting stability and harmony all over the world. We know that the Indian component, with all its diversity, is a great model for coexistence not only in just mere words but also on the ground."

The visiting Saudi delegate said that his organisation is working across the world to promote religious awareness.

"There is this pessimist theory in the world that says that the clash between civilizations is unavoidable, and thus such a clash depends on two factors. There are religions and also civilizations. That's why the United Nations has been aware of such theories, and they have established an organization, an organ within the United Nations called the Alliance of Civilizations," al-Issa said.

He further stated that the Muslim World League in cooperation with the United Nations and their leadership have launched an initiative titled "Building Bridges between the East and the West" from the platform of the United Nations.

"Yes, we can cooperate together,

and yes, we can live in peace together," he said.

Al-Issa arrived in India on Monday and is expected to meet External Affairs, S Jaishankar, and Minister for Minority Affairs Smriti Irani, and according to sources he is likely to call on President Droupadi Murmu.

He will also meet the leadership of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and interact with a gathering of distinguished faith leaders at the Vivekanand International Foundation, sources said, adding that he is scheduled to visit Agra to see the Taj Mahal. As per sources, he might visit Akshardham Temple and meet with some prominent personalities.

During his stay in the national capital, an important part of his engagement will be a visit to Jama Masjid Delhi for Friday prayers, they said. —ANI

US backs Turkey's move to purchase 40 F-16 fighter jets



The decision was taken after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed to send Sweden's accession protocol for joining NATO to parliament for approval



WASHINGTON: United States Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has discussed support for Turkey's military modernisation in a phone call with Turkish Defence Minister Yasar Guler, the Pentagon said late on Monday.

It comes after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed to send Sweden's accession protocol for joining NATO to parliament for approval.

The US stance on Turkey's military modernisation

US President Joe Biden's administration has backed Turkey's desire to purchase 40 new Lockheed Martin Corp F-16 fighter jets along with modernisation kits for its existing warplanes from the US.

"I stand ready to work with President Erdogan and Turkey on enhancing defense and deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic area," Biden said on Monday.

However, some in Congress, mainly Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Me-

nendez, have opposed the move over Turkey blocking NATO membership for Sweden, its human rights record and its relations with Greece, among other concerns.

Mendez, a Democrat, said that he was "continuing to have reservations" on providing the fighter aircraft to Turkey.

"If they (Biden administration) can find a way to ensure that Turkey's aggression against its neighbors ceases, which there has been a lull the last several months, that's great but there has to be a permanent reality."

Menendez added that there needs to be a way to "beef up Greece's security" and obtain "assurances about future actions."

What Turkey said about F-16 jets from the US

Meanwhile, Turkish President Erdogan said on Monday that

his country's ratification of Sweden's NATO membership bid and the sale of F-16 jets are not to be linked to each other.

He made the comments before leaving for the NATO summit in Vilnius.

Erdogan is expected to hold further talks with Biden at the meeting on the purchase of F-16 fighters.

Earlier, in Brussels, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Tuesday announced that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has agreed to forward Sweden NATO bid to the Grand National Assembly and ensure ratification.

Stoltenberg tweeted, "Glad to announce that after the meeting I hosted with @RTErdogan & @SwedishPM, President Erdogan has agreed to forward #Sweden's accession protocol to the Grand

National Assembly ASAP & ensure ratification. This is an historic step which makes all #NATO Allies stronger & safer." On Monday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Brussels should clear the way for Turkey's accession to the European Union before his country gives approval to Sweden's bid for NATO membership, CNN reported.

Erdogan's statement comes ahead of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit in Lithuania, which has Sweden's membership on its agenda.

Addressing a news conference, Erdogan said, "First, let's clear Turkey's way in the European Union, then let's clear the way for Sweden, just as we paved the way for Finland," according to CNN.

Erdogan stressed it was time to act on Turkey's bid to become part of the EU, adding, "Turkey

has been waiting at the gate of the European Union for over 50 years now" and "almost all NATO member countries are European member countries."

Turkey has said Sweden allows members of recognized Kurdish terror groups, including the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) to operate in Sweden, according to CNN.

NATO intends to admit Sweden to the alliance before this week's summit, which is set to be held in Lithuania. However, Turkey blocked Sweden's accession due to disagreements between two nations.

Earlier, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Monday said it is "still possible to have a positive decision on Swedish membership" at the military alliance's summit in Vilnius, according to CNN. —Agencies

SOUTH AFRICA

Johannesburg revels in snowy surprise

JOHANNESBURG: People in South Africa's largest city, Johannesburg, were delighted on Monday by rare snowfall.

The South African Weather Service said Johannesburg last saw snow in August 2012.

More snow was expected in the city Monday overnight.

Cold weather conditions were expected to continue in other parts of the country for the rest of the week.

Johannesburg's winter wonderland

While other parts of South Africa regularly receive snowfall during winter, the once-in-a-decade dusting captured Johannesburg residents' imaginations.

They took to social media to share videos and photos of them playing in the snow.

After taking her picture on Nelson Mandela Square in the financial district, Jennifer Banda said she was pregnant the last time it snowed. "Eleven years down the line, it's exciting that we have snow," she said.

"It's been such a long time, I feel so happy," another resident Lerato Matepese, said.

Warnings of more cold weather

Despite the fun, authorities warned people to stay warm across the country as the cold spell continues.

In Johannesburg, residents who rely on fires for heating were told not to leave them unattended.

Humanitarian organisation Gift of the Givers told South Africa's News24 that it responded to four fires caused by unattended heaters and fires elsewhere in the country.

Snow has been reported in several provinces, including the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal.

—DW

VESSEL FROM SENEGAL

Spain rescues 86 in search for missing migrant vessels

CANARY ISLANDS: Spain's Maritime Rescue Service on Monday reported it had rescued 86 people — 80 men and six women — sailing in a 20-metre (65-foot), multi-coloured pirogue, a canoe-like vessel popular in Senegal.

Spanish authorities would not, however, confirm if it was one of three vessels said to be carrying roughly 300 people from Senegal to the Spanish Canary Islands before being reported missing last week.

Those rescued were expected to arrive in Spain later on Monday evening.

Spain spots possible missing vessel

Authorities alerted boats sailing in the Atlantic between the Canary Islands and West Africa to remain on the lookout for other migrant boats still missing.

Earlier on Monday, Spain's coast guard said one of its reconnaissance planes has spotted what could be a vessel from Senegal carrying hundreds of migrants which has been missing for two weeks.

Several news outlets cited the Spanish agency as having spotted



a large boat with some 200 people on board near the island of Gran Canaria.

"We do not yet know for sure if it is one of the missing boats. But the size and number of people on board is consistent with the information we have," a Sea Rescue spokeswoman said.

Earlier on Sunday, migrant aid group Caminando Fronteras

(Walking Borders) said three boats with at least 300 migrants on board had disappeared off Spain's Canary Islands.

What do we know about the missing boats?

It is reported that the boats carrying African migrants, which took off from Senegal to reach Spain, have been missing for 15 days.

All three boats sailed from Kafountine in the south of Senegal, about 1,700 kilometers (1,057 miles) from Tenerife, one of the Canary Islands.

Helena Maleno from Walking Borders said one boat was carrying about 65 people and the other between 50 and 60.

A third boat departed on June 27 with about 200 people on board.

Migrants seek refuge on Spain's southern islands

Maleno said the families of those on board have not heard from them since they left.

"The families are very worried. There are about 300 people from the same area of Senegal. They have left because of the instability in Senegal," she added.

According to the data from the

United Nations International Organisation for Migration, at least 559 people — including 22 children — died last year in attempts to reach the Canary Islands.

The islands have become the main destination for migrants trying to reach Spain and summer is the busiest period for all attempted crossings.

How dangerous is the migrant crossing to Spain?

The Atlantic migration passage, one of the deadliest in the world, is typically used by migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

At least 951 migrants have died trying to reach Spain by sea in the first half of 2023, migrant rights group Caminando Fronteras said last week.

The total includes 112 women and 49 children. Spanish figures show fewer boats arrived in the first six months, but the number of deaths is a little higher when compared to last year.

According to Spain's Interior Ministry, 12,192 people arrived by boat in the first half of 2023, 4% fewer than in the same period last year. —sw

SPORTS

EIGHT-NATION TOURNAMENT IN SRI LANKA

Aqib Ilyas to lead Oman A at Emerging Teams Asia Cup

MUSCAT: Following a top-six place in the recently concluded ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe, Oman cricketers are all set to compete in the 2023 Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Emerging Teams Asia Cup in Sri Lanka from July 13-23.

The Oman A squad reached Sri Lankan capital Colombo on Monday evening for the fifth edition of the eight-nation continental tournament. The tournament will feature U23 sides of defending champions Pakistan A alongside four other full member ACC nations – India, Bangladesh, hosts Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. They will be joined by the top-three teams

from the inaugural edition of the ACC Men's Premier Cup [Nepal, UAE and Oman], which was held in Nepal in April-May 2023.

Oman chief coach Duleep Mendis announced the 15-member squad for the Emerging Teams Asia Cup and retained ten of the players that played in Zimbabwe while picking three new faces among the five called up. Aqib Ilyas, who led Oman in the final two Super Six matches in the Qualifier, has been retained as skipper of the Oman A side.

All-rounder Rafiullah, who was a member of the provisional squad of 17 for the World Cup Qualifier before being dropped, has been re-



called. The 26-year-old has already represented the national team in T20Is. Another player recalled into the team is 24-year-old all-rounder Wasim Ali, who made his ODI debut against Namibia in March 2022.

The three new faces are 34-year-old keeper Abdul Rauf, 30-year-old batter Shubo Pal and 25-year-old pacer Muhammad Bilal Shah. Regular skipper Zeeshan Maqsood, who is recovering from

a hamstring injury that kept him out of the last two matches at the Qualifier has been rested along with pacer Bilal Khan, all-rounder Sandeep Goud, wicketkeeper Naseem Khushi and experienced all-rounder Mohammed Nadeem. All five returned from Zimbabwe recently.

Mendis said: "This is another great opportunity for our players to showcase their talent at a big stage. It will be a good test to play against A teams from Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan."

Oman A are clubbed in Group A with hosts Sri Lanka A, Afghanistan A and Bangladesh A. Group B comprises Pakistan A, India A, Nepal and UAE A.

Oman A begin their campaign with a match against Afghanistan A on July 13 and then meet Bangladesh A two days later on July 15. They conclude their group engagements with a match against the hosts Sri Lanka A on July 18.

Squad: Aqib Ilyas (captain), Jatin Singh, Kashyap Prajapati, Ayaan Khan, Shoaib Khan, Suraj Kumar (wicketkeeper), Jay Odedra, Kaleemullah, Fayyaz Butt, Samay Shrivastav, Wasim Ali, Rafiullah, Abdul Rauf (wk), Shubo Pal, Muhammed Bilal Shah. **Officials:** Head coach: Duleep Mendis, asst coach: Evert Laubscher, coach co-ordinator: Mazher Khan, analyst: Zeeshan Siddiqui, physio: Sean Nowak.

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Stead reappointed as NZ head coach till mid-2025

WELLINGTON: Gary Stead will continue as New Zealand's head coach till mid-2025, with the upcoming ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 and ICC World Test Championship (WTC) in focus, the New Zealand Cricket (NZC) announced on Tuesday.

"First appointed for a two-year term in late 2018, Stead had his contract renewed in 2020 until the end of the upcoming ICC Cricket World Cup in India, and will now stay on until the conclusion of the current World Test Championship cycle, in June 2025," said a NZC statement.

The decision follows a long and thorough consultative process during which Stead, arguably New Zealand's most successful men's coach, received unanimous support for continuing in the role.

New Zealand Cricket's High-Performance general manager Bryan Stronach said the case for retaining Stead was compelling. "The support for Gary was overwhelmingly positive - from the players, the Blackcaps support staff, Major Association coaches and support staff, as well as the New Zealand Cricket Players Association and NZC High-Performance Unit staff," said Bryan.

"Gary's results have been very



impressive and we are confident that he still has a lot to offer the team. Of course, a big part of this decision came down to whether Gary wanted to continue and he made it clear his appetite to take this team forward was as keen as ever," he added.

Stead's reappointment period will include the T20 World Cup in June/July 2024, the ODI Champions Trophy in February/March 2025 and, if applicable, the WTC Final, in June 2025.

Test captain Tim Southee said the players were pleased on Stead's reappointment. He said: "Gary's had great success leading us into finals in all three formats and, of course, that World Test Championship win. It has been great the way that he has come in and built on what was previously achieved."

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by September 2023 reaching \$78.80, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 51 cents from the price of Monday, which was \$78.29. - ONA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,801.88 points, up by 0.54 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.96 per cent at 483.22 points. National Finance, up 9.85 per cent, was the top gainer while, Al Madina Investments, down 5.77 per cent, was the top loser.

Trade volume between Oman and Iran reaches OMR2 billion

During the meeting, the two sides explored means of enhancing economic relations, boosting trade exchange and highlighting promising sectors in Oman

TEHRAN: Hossein Selahvarzi, Head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture received here yesterday Ibrahim Ahmed Al Mu'aini, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

During the meeting, the two sides explored means of enhancing economic relations, boosting trade exchange and highlighting promising sectors in Oman. They also reviewed areas of joint business cooperation in the fields of industry, banking, food, tourism, health and mining. Investment opportunities in the Iranian market were also explored during the meeting.

Al Mu'aini said that special incentives are offered for foreign businesspeople in general and Iranian businesspeople, in particular, to invest in Oman. He pointed out that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries reached OMR2 billion.

He also underscored the importance of developing business and economic relations between Oman and Iran.

On his turn, Selahvarzi said that the trade exchange between the two countries recorded a 40 per cent growth this year, compared to the corresponding period in 2022. He also affirmed the readiness of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture to expand economic cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to supporting the private sector of the two countries.

Selahvarzi announced that the 20th session of the joint Oman-Iran committee will be held in Tehran during the coming period. -ONA



BOOSTS INVESTMENT

Why EU-New Zealand free trade deal is important

BRUSSELS: On Sunday, the European Union signed a free trade deal with New Zealand after more than five years of negotiations.

Brussels said the agreement will pave the way for EU states to boost investment in the South Pacific nation by up to 80 per cent and increase bilateral trade by nearly a third.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the deal would bring "major opportunities for our companies, our farmers and our consumers, on both sides" and would help drive "just and green growth."

New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said the agreement with the country's fourth-largest trading partner would "generate substantial new economic opportunities."

What are the key points of the deal?

The deal eliminates all tariffs on EU exports to New Zealand, cutting some €140 million (\$154 million) a year in duties.

Tariffs will be eliminated on key EU exports such as chocolate, sugar confectionary and biscuits.

The New Zealand services market, including financial services, telecommunications, maritime transport and delivery services, will be opened up further to EU players. New Zealand exporters will benefit from significantly improved access to the EU market and some 91% of New Zealand's current trade into the EU will enter duty-free from day one.

When fully implemented after seven years, 97 per cent of current



New Zealand trade will enter the EU duty-free.

A New Zealand government statement said the country would gain up to €1 billion in exports to the 27-nation bloc every year.

Within a decade, bilateral trade could grow up to 30 per cent from the current €12.6 billion in goods and services, according to the European Commission.

Annual EU exports to New Zealand have the potential to grow by up to €4.5 billion in the same period, Brussels said.

Net zero ambitions written into pact

In a first for an EU trade deal, the agreement contains ambitious outcomes to tackle climate change and makes these commitments enforceable. The Commission statement said the text has a dedicated sustainable food systems chapter, a dedicated trade and gender equality article and a specific provision on trade and fossil fuel

subsidies reform.

The deal has a specific list of green goods and services — such as renewable energy and energy-saving products — that will be free of tariffs from the first day.

The EU has made it a priority that future trade agreements include targets for sustainable development.

New Zealand-Australian farmers cry foul

New Zealand farmers have complained about the lack of improved access to the EU market for their products, blaming protectionist lobbying by the bloc's agriculture sector.

Under the new deal, Brussels will retain the use of quotas for some Kiwi dairy products, including beef and sheep meat, ethanol and sweetcorn.

New Zealand will be allowed to export just 10,000 tonnes of beef to serve the EU market of over 450 million people who between them consume some 6.5 million tonnes of beef products a year. However, there is a small quota increase for New Zealand lamb exports.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that Australian farmers had urged their trade minister to walk away from negotiations with Brussels if the bloc offers a deal akin to the one signed with New Zealand.

"We'd say walk away, thanks but no thanks," Tony Mahar, chief executive of the National Farmers Federation, was cited as saying. "If it doesn't mean commercial dollars then we're not interested."

Brussels has so far ruled out giving Australia increased market access to its sheep, beef, dairy and sugar markets.

Negotiations between Australia and the EU for a free trade deal began around the same time as New Zealand.

What happens now?

The New Zealand deal must now be approved by the European and New Zealand parliaments before it can enter into force.

Brussels says it could take effect in the first half of 2024. -DW

BILATERAL TRADE

Vietnam becomes largest ASEAN trading partner of Cambodia

PHNOM PENH: Vietnam became the largest trading partner of Cambodia among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the first five months of 2023 as bilateral trade made up nearly 50 per cent of the total between Cambodia and ASEAN members during the period, state news agency (VNA) reported.

During the five months, trade between the two countries topped \$2.8 billion, rising nearly 3 per cent from a year earlier. Cambodia exported about \$1.3 billion worth of goods to and imported commodities totalling over \$1.5 billion from Vietnam, said the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce as cited by sbm.news.

With such positive trade growth, Vietnam was not only the biggest in ASEAN but also ranked third among all trading partners of Cambodia, after China and the US, during the period.

The growth in Cambodia's exports to Vietnam was mainly driven by the higher shipments of farm produce thanks to increased harvests. Its main exports include rice, rubber, cashew nut, cassava, corn, banana, mango, tobacco, and natural resources.

Meanwhile, the main imports from Vietnam include construction materials, machinery, fuels, electrical and electronic devices, fertiliser, seasonings, vegetables, and fruits. -WAM

CURRENCY

Dollar falls to 2-month low, sterling hits 15-month high on strong wage growth



LONDON: The dollar weakened to a two-month low on Tuesday after Federal Reserve officials signalled that the central bank was nearing the end of its tightening cycle, while the pound hit a 15-month high after pay growth exceeded expectations.

Several Fed officials said that the central bank would likely need to raise interest rates further to bring down inflation but the end to its current monetary policy tightening cycle was getting close, Reuters reported.

The comments knocked the

greenback to a two-month low of 101.67 against a basket of currencies, as traders pared back their expectations about how much further US rates may have to rise.

US interest rate expectations have been a key driver of the dollar since the Fed began its tightening cycle last year.

Markets are now focusing their attention on US consumer prices data due out on Wednesday, which will provide more clarity on the progress the Fed has made in its fight against stubbornly high inflation. -BNA

GLOBAL SHARES

Stocks rise, dollar retreats ahead of inflation data

LONDON: Global shares rose and the dollar eased on Tuesday ahead of US inflation data that could support a quicker end to Federal Reserve rate hikes, while the prospect of China propping up economic growth helped lift commodities like oil and copper.

According to Reuters, markets are awaiting US inflation data on Wednesday to see if price pressures are continuing to moderate, which could provide clues on the interest rate outlook.

The MSCI All-World index rose 0.3 per cent, lifted by gains in European shares, as the STOXX 600 rose 0.35 per cent in early trading, and by Chinese equities in Asia, following the extension of support to the property sector.

US stock index futures, rose 0.1-0.2 per cent, suggesting a modest rise at the opening bell.

Investors were digesting comments from several Federal Reserve officials on Monday who said the level of inflation warranted additional rate hikes but the central bank is nearing the end of its current monetary policy tightening cycle.

Economists polled by Reuters expect the consumer price index to have risen by 3.1 per cent



in June, after May's 4 per cent increase. This would be the lowest reading since March 2021. The core rate is expected to have dropped for a third month to 5 per cent from 5.3 per cent, but this is still more than double the Fed's 2 per cent target.

Last week's employment report showed far fewer workers than expected had been added to non-farm payrolls last month unleashing a wave of selling of the US dollar, but did little to shift the needle in terms of rate expectations.

The dollar index, which measures the performance of the US currency against six others, was

last down 0.2 per cent on the day and around its lowest in two months, in line with a retreat in US Treasury yields.

The yield on the benchmark 10-year note was last down 4 basis points at 3.964 per cent, having broken below 4% the day before.

"While there is increasing evidence of near-term disinflationary trends, questions remain as to whether inflation will persist at uncomfortably high levels in the medium-term," Deutsche Bank strategist Jim Reid said.

The Japanese yen rose to one-month highs against the dollar, leaving the US currency down

0.6 per cent on the day at 140.51, tracking the drop in Treasury yields. Meanwhile, the prospect of a boost to the broader Chinese economy helped push up the price of crude oil and other industrial commodities such as copper and iron ore.

Chinese regulators on Monday extended some policies in a rescue package introduced in November to shore up liquidity in the embattled real estate sector.

Brent crude, which has struggled to pull clear of 18-month lows, was up 0.4 per cent at \$78 a barrel, while US futures were up 0.5 per cent at \$73.35.

Copper gained 0.5 per cent on the London Metal Exchange to trade at around \$8,400 a tonne. The price is heading for its first annual loss since 2018, in large part because of patchy demand from China.

Second-quarter earnings come out this week, with results due from some of Wall Street's biggest institutions, including JPMorgan, Citigroup, and Wells Fargo.

Analysts expect earnings to have shrunk 6.4 per cent in the second quarter year-on-year, according to IBES data from Refinitiv. -BNA

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

National Finance, up 9.85 per cent, was the top gainer while, Al Madina Investments, down 5.77 per cent, was the top loser.



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,801.88 points, up by 0.54 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.96 per cent at 483.22 points. National Finance, up 9.85 per cent, was the top gainer while, Al Madina Investments, down 5.77 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 510 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR2.63 million, with more than 10.71 million shares changing hands.

Out of 38 traded securities, 16 advanced, 8 declined, and 14 remained unchanged.

At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for OMR411,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR261,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR150,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at

7,870.21 points, up 0.33 per cent. Prices of National Finance, Muscat Finance, Al Madina Takaful, Bank Dhofar, and Bank Muscat were up by 9.85 per cent, 3.51 per cent, 1.18 per cent, 1.16 per cent, and 0.72 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments and Al Omaniya Financial Services were up by 5.77 per cent, and 1.34 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,264.19 points, up 0.27 per cent. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics, and Voltamp Energy were up by 9.06 per cent, and 1.82 per cent respectively. Prices of Raysut Cement, Construction Materials, and Oman Cables Industry were up by 3.76 per cent, 3.33 per cent, and 1.67 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.8 per cent before closing at 1,702.44 points. Prices of Al Batinah Power, Sembcorp Salalah, Ooredoo, National Gas, and Barka Water & Power Company were up by 3.57 per cent, 3.23 per cent, 2.45 per cent, 2.02 per cent, 1.89 per cent respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,803.19	4,776.15	4,801.88	4,776.15	25.73	0.54
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,873.03	7,843.94	7,870.21	7,843.94	26.27	0.33
Industry Index	6,272.96	6,244.91	6,264.19	6,247.02	17.17	0.27
Services Index	1,702.98	1,689.84	1,702.44	1,688.94	13.50	0.80
MSX Shariah Index	483.33	478.10	483.22	478.62	4.60	0.96
MSX TR INDEX	6,316.83	6,281.27	6,315.11	6,281.27	33.84	0.54
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,590.92	8,559.18	8,587.85	8,559.18	28.67	0.33
SERVICES TR IDX	1,872.12	1,857.68	1,871.53	1,856.69	14.84	0.80
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,701.08	6,671.11	6,691.72	6,673.37	18.35	0.27

Trading Summary

Volume	.....	Turnover	.....	Trades	.....	Market Cap	.....	Up	.....	Down	.....	Equal	.....	Sec. Traded
10,710,864	.....	2,626,860	.....	510	.....	23,912,598,138	.....	16	.....	8	.....	14	.....	38

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JULY 11

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	500	175	1	0.349	0.349	0.349	0.349	0.320	0.029	9.063	0.349	0.300	0.349	0.100	19,195,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	1,007,652	376,929	54	0.368	0.376	0.368	0.376	0.367	0.009	2.452	0.376	0.376	0.376	0.100	244,755,030
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	34,405	13,074	4	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.375	0.005	1.333	0.380	0.352	0.380	0.100	89,835,800
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	10,209	878	2	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.085	0.001	1.176	0.086	0.086	0.090	0.100	15,050,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	1,539,000	269,325	8	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.173	0.002	1.156	0.175	0.173	0.175	0.100	524,361,501
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	3,228,233	904,042	72	0.278	0.281	0.278	0.280	0.278	0.002	0.719	0.280	0.280	0.282	0.100	2,101,791,717
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	131,300	129,984	7	0.988	0.990	0.988	0.990	0.988	0.002	0.202	0.990	0.990	1.000	0.100	742,500,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	1,000	286	1	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.000	0.000	0.286	0.286	0.289	0.100	465,020,058
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	13,300	7,329	3	0.378	0.380	0.378	0.380	0.380	0.000	0.000	0.380	0.378	0.380	0.100	253,978,862
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	26,460	9,526	6	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.000	0.000	0.360	0.344	0.370	0.100	119,114,176
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	9,500	2,461	1	0.259	0.259	0.259	0.259	0.259	0.000	0.000	0.259	0.259	0.280	0.100	56,980,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	128,600	7,973	7	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.000	0.000	0.062	0.062	0.064	0.100	22,079,892
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	55,000	3,410	4	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.000	0.000	0.062	0.062	0.065	0.100	12,400,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	66,029	7,065	4	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.107	0.108	0.100	491,491,366.65
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	55,830	4,750	3	0.085	0.086	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.000	0.000	0.085	0.083	0.087	0.100	16,969,028
Total	15	6,313,018	1,737,206	179												
Parallel Market																
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	658,539	93,138	74	0.134	0.145	0.134	0.145	0.132	0.013	9.848	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.100	83,187,121
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	129,000	3,741	9	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.028	0.001	3.571	0.029	0.028	0.028	0.100	19,571,735
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	38,900	2,295	5	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.057	0.002	3.509	0.059	0.055	0.059	0.100	18,121,633
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	19,000	1,828	4	0.096	0.097	0.096	0.096	0.093	0.003	3.226	0.096	0.093	0.096	0.100	91,638,967
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	74,279	7,478	12	0.100	0.102	0.100	0.101	0.099	0.002	2.020	0.101	0.101	0.102	0.100	8,585,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	780,070	43,205	37	0.057	0.057	0.054	0.054	0.053	0.001	1.887	0.054	0.051	0.052	0.100	8,640,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	99,035	10,954	8	0.110	0.112	0.110	0.112	0.110	0.002	1.818	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.100	9,117,108
OM0000000834	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	1,467,693	458,322	76	0.312	0.316	0.312	0.314	0.312	0.002	0.641	0.314	0.314	0.317	0.100	241,842,800
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	43,471	8,694	5	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.000	0.000	0.200	0.000	0.200	0.100	21,832,973
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	100	12	1	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.108	0.120	0.100	3,600,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	44,000	3,652	4	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.082	0.083	0.100	17,098,000
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	59,000	19,794	12	0.344	0.344	0.335	0.335	0.335	0.000	0.000	0.335	0.330	0.336	0.100	40,200,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	126,005	12,096	10	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.091	0.096	0.100	214,747,491
OM0000005903	PHOENIX POWER	126,006	8,206	17	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.000	0.000	0.065	0.064	0.065	0.100	95,069,095
OM0000008869	THE PEARL REEF	8,000	963	5	0.121	0.121	0.120	0.120	0.121	-0.001	-0.826	0.120	0.120	0.128	0.100	50,475,425
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	16,000	1,475	3	0.093	0.093	0.092	0.092	0.093	-0.001	-1.075	0.092	0.092	0.093	0.100	14,310,637
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	20,639	3,046	2	0.149	0.149	0.147	0.147	0.149	-0.002	-1.342	0.147	0.138	0.148	0.100	45,228,137
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	601	1,242	2	2.075	2.075	2.065	2.065	2.100	-0.035	-1.667	2.065	0.000	2.070	0.100	185,230,500
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	20,000	1,160	1	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.060	-0.002	-3.333	0.058	0.055	0.058	0.100	3,625,000
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	288,640	51,927	16	0.181	0.185	0.179	0.179	0.186	-0.007	-3.763	0.179	0.180	0.179	0.100	35,800,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	200,334	9,814	15	0.050	0.050	0.048	0.049	0.052	-0.003	-5.769	0.049	0.049	0.050	0.100	4,165,000
Total	21	4,220,102	743,043	318												

REPORT

Global personal computer shipments declined 13.4% in second quarter of 2023

NEW DELHI: Personal computer (PC) shipments during the second quarter of 2023 declined 13.4 per cent globally on a yearly basis, according to International Data Corporation (IDC) data tracker.

International Data Corporation (IDC) is a global market intelligence and advisory services provider.

According to IDC, this was the sixth consecutive quarter of contraction brought on by macroeconomic headwinds, weak demand from both the consumer and commercial sectors, and a shift in IT budgets away from device purchases.

"Despite the poor showing, the market performed better than forecast for the quarter," it, however, noted.

Meanwhile, the overall weak demand for PCs has caused inventory levels to remain above normal for longer than expected.

"So far, no PC market has been immune to the challenges present-



ed by the market. Except for Apple and HP Inc., all the leading companies experienced double-digit declines during the quarter. But Apple benefited from a favorable year-over-year comparison as the company suffered supply issues

during 2Q22 due to COVID-related shutdowns within the supply chain."

For HP, IDC said it has faced an oversupply of inventory in the past year which is finally normalising, allowing it to grow amid the down-

turn in the market.

"Elevated channel and component inventory are once again dragging down the market," said Jitesh Ubrani, research manager for IDC's Mobility and Consumer Device Trackers.

According to Ryan Reith, group vice president for IDC's Client Device Trackers, "The roller coaster of supply and demand the PC industry has faced over the past five years has been extremely challenging."

"On the consumer side, we're seeing a return to pre-pandemic habits where computing needs are shared across multiple devices, and we firmly believe the consumer wallet will favor smartphones over the PC."

On the commercial side, Reith noted workforce reductions (for many big companies) as well as the introduction of generative Artificial Intelligence "only add more confusion as to where to place an already reduced budget". —ANI

UK-US TIES

What's happened to UK-US free trade deal?

NEW YORK: US President Joe Biden's upcoming European trip, where he will be popping in to see UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, will no doubt reinforce the optics of the "special relationship" between the two countries. At the same time, it will also conceal the underlying fact that London needs Washington far more than vice versa.

Sunak was, of course, polite and diplomatic when signing the "Atlantic Declaration" with Biden in June, a watered-down version of a full-fledged free trade deal with the United States. But the unilateral recalibration of UK-US ties wasn't hard to miss.

Sunak said a free trade agreement was no longer "a priority" for either side, and his officials said the declaration marked a "less sentimental and more pragmatic" approach to the UK-US "special relationship."

For many, it was a watershed moment — the moment when Brexit's dreams of unfettered UK global trade came crashing down to earth. For others, it was simply a reminder that the UK outside the European Union is weaker and less attractive to the US.

For Brexiters in the UK, a free trade deal with the US was one of several promises made before and after the 2016 referendum that have failed to come to fruition. A potential deal with Washington was widely seen as partly compensating for the loss of free access to the EU, the UK's largest trading partner.



Why is UK unable to get US to sign a free trade deal?

"Policy priorities in the US have changed [...] The US has moved away from the concept of traditional free trade agreements," said Emanuel Adam, executive director of trans-Atlantic trade association BritishAmerican Business.

While the UK struggled to get former US President Donald Trump to walk the talk on his promise of a "massive" trade deal during his time in the White House, it hasn't been any easier with Biden at the helm. Protectionist pro-American trade policies remain the order of the day. Biden's irritation with London's inability to solve its "Irish question" after Brexit has also played a role.

"US trade policies have become fairly unsentimental, self-interested and protectionist in

tendency. And if they negotiate trade agreements at all they prefer larger partners with bigger markets, such as the EU," said former EU diplomat Albrecher. What about US companies?

US businesses are losing confidence in the UK as a place to invest in as a result of Brexit, rising corporate taxes and a year of political turmoil in London, according to a recent survey by BritishAmerican Business and consultant firm Bain & Company.

The survey of 56 US companies operating in Britain showed confidence in the UK falling for a third consecutive year.

Responding to the survey, the UK Department for Business and Trade said it was "not supported by the facts," noting that the US had been the UK's largest single investor for the last two decades.

What's the 'Atlantic Declaration'?

The declaration pledges to ease some trade barriers, strengthen defense industry links and set up a data protection deal. It also includes an agreement to collaborate on key industries — AI, 5G and 6G telecoms, quantum computing, semiconductors and engineering biology — and work on a trade pact on critical minerals, those used to make electric vehicles, solar panels, flatscreen TVs and so on.

The two nations also pledged to negotiate an agreement that would allow some British firms to access tax credits available under the US Inflation Reduction Act, a major climate and health care law passed in 2022.

Why does it matter?

Size and optics. For the UK, the declaration matters far more than for the US, though. About 12% of goods exports from the UK are shipped to the US, making it the country's largest export destination. The UK is the single largest European investor in the US, worth half a trillion dollars in 2019. UK firms employ 1.3 million Americans. A PwC survey last July ranked the UK as the most important market for US business leaders, overtaking China.

US foreign direct investments in the UK were valued at roughly \$860 billion (€789 billion) in 2022. The UK was the seventh-largest goods export market for the US in 2022. —nw

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MALE BIRDS

WHO CAN REPEAT SONG NOTES ATTRACT FEMALE MATES: STUDY



Male birds who can accurately repeat song notes have the highest chances of luring a female partner, according to recent Lancaster University research.

The research was published in the journal 'Nature Communications.' Male birds must have a diverse repertoire of songs if they are to keep a female bird's attention and keep her from becoming bored.

The researchers recorded and analysed 7,000 songs of wild blue tits breeding in nest boxes near Lancaster University over the course of two years.

They devised an experiment in which they played song recordings to receptive females and discovered that male vocal consistency - the ability to repeat the same pattern of notes with high precision - was the key song feature that elicited sexual excitement in females.

While singing exact duplicates of the same note was sexy, it became 'boring' for females. Their response gradually faded (habituated) until it was rekindled when males switched to a different type of song.

The results may explain why birdsong in most species is not hypervariable and constantly changing but shows some moderate variation - balancing the reliable signal of quality against the need to avoid the female ha-

bituating and losing interest.

The researchers believe that a male bird's ability to consistently hit the same note in a song is a signal to females and competitors that they have strong motor skills, which carry over to other essential qualities in a good mate.

Lead author Dr Javier Sierro, whose PhD thesis at Lancaster University included this work, said, "In songbirds, singing requires the execution of complex motor patterns within the bird. Precisely hitting those repetitive notes is the way a male bird can demonstrate to potential mates these qualities, which also cut across social status, reproductive output, longevity, attractiveness and ability to defend territories."

"Many bird species produce trilled songs where the same note is repeated in quick succession. A song may also be repeated during a singing bout. Repetition is needed by the male to perfect his singing skills, however, this repetition may carry a cost where the female loses interest over time."

"We found that when males sing different song types or introduce silent pauses between songs, it reduces female habituation and helps retain her interest," said Dr Javier. The study also showed that male blue tits with higher vocal consistency had higher reproductive success

as measured by the number of eggs in their nest - further adding to the evidence that vocal consistency is a skill found in good quality individuals - those who will contribute genes to future populations. Other song features, such as diversity, were not correlated with clutch size.

Vocal consistency increased over the breeding season and it peaked during the 7 to 10-day period when his female partner was at her most fertile when she laid an egg daily.

The researchers suggest that a balance between the two crucial aspects of birdsong, consistency and diversity, may resolve a long-standing paradox in studies of bird communication, and explain the level of variability in singing styles between species.

Dr Selvino de Kort from Manchester Metropolitan University and co-author of the study said, "Our results explain why most birds repeat song structures and do not sing in a way that advertises song diversity, by continuously producing novel notes or song types."

Dr Ian Hartley, from the Lancaster Environment Centre at Lancaster University, said: "Birdsong seems to have evolved under opposing selective effects, which may result in a balance between repetition to achieve the diversity between songs to reduce the psychological effect of habituation." -ANI



LIFESTYLE

SPORTS

Alcaraz in Wimbledon quarters for first time

Top seed Spaniard underlined his credentials as a strong contender for the title with win over Berrettini

LONDON: Top seed Carlos Alcaraz underlined his status as the man likeliest to stop Novak Djokovic winning another Wimbledon after beating 2021 finalist Matteo Berrettini in the fourth round on Monday night. The 20-year-old Spaniard fought back to win 3-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 and reach the SW19 quarter-finals for the first time. Alcaraz will next face Denmark's Holger Rune, who won 3-6, 7-6 (8-6) 7-6 (7-4) 6-3 against Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov. "I knew it was going to be really tough - Matteo is a great player," said Alcaraz. "It is not easy to come back after losing the first set, but I knew I would have my chances. I had to stay focused, that's something I am working on, to not lose my mind." Asked about his reaction to reaching the last eight, Alcaraz said: "It is something I really wanted. I came in with that goal to get into the quarter-finals. Now I'm looking for more. It is my dream to win this title one day. I hope to reach that dream this year." Also reaching the last eight was America's Christopher Eubanks. Ranked only 43rd in the world, he continued his red-hot run on grass with an upset win over fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas 3-6, 7-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 to reach his maiden major quarterfinals. "I feel like I'm living a dream right now. This is absolutely insane," Eubanks said.

Jabeur beats former winner Kvitova
Meanwhile, in the women's sin-



gles, a rematch of last year's final was set up at Wimbledon on Monday, as defending champion Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan will play Tunisia's Ons Jabeur in the quarter-finals. Rybakina's opponent and No.13 seed Beatriz Haddad Maia retired in their fourth-round clash, while last year's runner-up Jabeur defeated former winner Petra Kvitova to progress. Rybakina became the first women defending champion to reach the quarterfinals at Wimbledon since Serena Williams in 2016. No.6 seed Jabeur claimed her second consecutive win over a

former Grand Slam winner to secure a berth in the last eight. After dismissing Bianca Andreescu in the third round, Jabeur cruised past two-time Wimbledon winner Kvitova 6-0, 6-3 on Monday, and is now looking to avenge her heartbreaking loss to Rybakina in 2022. "Winning also 6-0 against someone like Petra, you can expect to be beaten 6-0 the next set, so I tried to tell myself that the match is starting in the second set. I kept going. Tried to play point by point. Honestly, it was going very well for me," Jabeur said. - Agencies

Vondrousova stuns Pegula to reach semis

LONDON: Unseeded Marketa Vondrousova of Czech Republic upset fourth seed Jessica Pegula in the women's quarter-finals at Wimbledon on Tuesday. Vondrousova survived a comeback from the American to win 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 on Court One. Vondrousova, 24, had never made it further than the second round at SW19 while Pegula has lost all six of her Grand Slam quarter-finals. Vondrousova will face top seed Iga Swiatek or Ukrainian Elina Svitolina. Vondrousova, ranked 42nd in the world, enjoyed a rapid rise through the ranks as a teenager when she reached the 2019 French Open final but this was her first quarter-final since that run.

FIRST TEST: INDIA VS WEST INDIES



Still got a lot of cricket left in me, says Rahane

ROSEAU: Ahead of the first Test against West Indies, which begins on Wednesday, Indian vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane said that his side is not going to take the hosts West Indies lightly. Windies have been struggling recently, with the latest setback being failing to secure a spot for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023, missing out on the global cricketing extravaganza for the first time ever. India will kick off its ICC World Test Championship (WTC) 2023-25 campaign with a two-Test series against Windies, with the first Test in Dominica. "We have had good preparation. We played a nice practice match. We as a team respect the West Indies. They are not the ones to be taken lightly. West Indies has performed well at home during the last couple of years or so, especially in Tests. We are looking to give our 100 percent and back our game plan and strengths," said Rahane in a pre-match press conference. In the absence of Cheteshwar Pujara, Rahane said that there is an opportunity present for players to bat at No.3. Rahane expressed happiness on his return to the team and his role as vice-captain in the new WTC 2023-25 cycle. "I am used to this role. I was vice-captain for 4-5 years. I am really happy to be back in the team, really happy to be back as vice-captain. "I am still young, still a lot of cricket left in me. My IPL was good, so was my domestic cricket season. Currently, I am really enjoying my cricket. I do not want to think much about the future. Now, every match is important, be it for me or from the team's point of view. I am focusing on that," he said. Rahane said playing under Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in the IPL gave him freedom. "I was given a role. I was earlier playing as an anchor. CSK told me to play my natural game. My natural game involves a lot of stroke play and looking out for runs. Here, I will fulfill whatever role Rohit (Sharma) gives me," said Rahane. Rahane had a solid IPL 2023, where he unleashed a never seen avatar of him which took attack to the bowlers from ball one. In 11 innings, he scored 326 runs at an average of 32.60 and a strike rate of 172.48. He had two half-centuries, including a knock of 71* in just 29 balls. The vice-captain said that he likes playing under Rohit, someone with who he has played a lot of domestic cricket. "I like playing under Rohit. The WTC final was my first match under Rohit. He gives everyone freedom and backs them. This is a good sign of a captain. My equation with him is really nice," he added. **India's squad:** Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Virat Kohli, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ajinkya Rahane (vice-captain), KS Bharat (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Axar Patel, Mohammed Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat, Navdeep Saini. - ANI

THE ASHES

England name unchanged squad for fourth Test at Old Trafford

LONDON: England have named an unchanged 14-player squad for the fourth Ashes Test at Old Trafford, beginning on July 19. It means there is no place for Surrey wicketkeeper Ben Foakes, with Jonny Bairstow set to retain the gloves. Ollie Pope is absent after suffering a shoulder injury during the second Test at Lord's that has ruled him out for the rest of the summer. England won the third Test by three wickets to leave the series 2-1 to Australia with two Tests to play. Seam bowler James Anderson was rested for the third Test but could be recalled for the match at his home ground. The 41-year-old could come in for Ollie Robinson, who suffered a back spasm during Australia's first innings and did not bowl for the rest of the match. Josh Tongue is also pushing for a recall after impressing during the second Test at Lord's, though Mark Wood and Chris Woakes both made match-winning contributions at Headingley on their first Test appearances of the summer,



Wood was named player-of-the-match after taking seven wickets and is confident he will be fit for the remainder for the series, while Woakes took six wickets and scored a crucial unbeaten 32 in England's second innings to see them over the line.

England squad: Ben Stokes (captain), Moeen Ali, James Anderson, Jonathan Bairstow (wicketkeeper), Stuart Broad, Harry Brook, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Dan Lawrence, Ollie Robinson, Joe Root, Josh Tongue, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood. - Agencies

CHELSEA STRIKER ON LOAN

Inter Milan looking to sign Lukaku on permanent deal

LONDON: Inter Milan are keen to bring Chelsea striker Romelu Lukaku back to the club this summer, *BBC Sport* reported on Tuesday. Lukaku, 30, spent last season on loan with Inter from Chelsea. The Belgian scored 14 goals in 37 appearances, helping Inter to finish third in Serie A and reach the Champions League final. Ongoing negotiations with Manchester United over goalkeeper Andre Onana could help Inter raise the finance to bring Lukaku back to the San Siro on a permanent basis. Chelsea are thought to want US\$51.6m for Lukaku, with Inter looking for US\$64.5m from United for Onana, which the Old Trafford club believe is too much. With David de Gea gone, Erik ten Hag would ideally like to sign the Cameroon international before they go on a four-match tour of the United States next week. Chelsea are also travelling to the United States next week, although it is not known if Lukaku will be in Mauricio Pochettino's travelling squad. Inter Milan initially signed



Lukaku from Manchester United in the summer of 2019 for a club record US\$87.8m on a five-year contract. After scoring 64 goals in 95 appearances across two seasons, Chelsea signed him for US\$125.8m in August 2021 - hoping he could hit a higher level

than his previous stint at Stamford Bridge between 2011 and 2014 when he failed to score in 15 games. He started just 16 Premier League games for the Blues in 2021-22 under Thomas Tuchel and returned to Inter on loan last term. - Agencies

DISPUTE WITH WORLD ATHLETICS

Semenya wins appeal at European Court of Human Rights



LONDON: Double Olympic 800m champion Caster Semenya was discriminated against by rules which forced her to lower her testosterone levels in order to continue competing, the European Court of Human Rights has found, *BBC Sport* reported on Tuesday. The 32-year-old South African was born with differences of sexual development (DSD) and is not allowed to compete in events between 400m and a mile without taking testosterone-reducing drugs.

On Thursday the ECHR ruled in favour of Semenya in a case involving testosterone levels in female athletes. Semenya, a three-time 800m world champion and 800m and 1500m Commonwealth champion, has been in a long-running dispute with governing body World Athletics since regulations requiring her to have hormone treatment were introduced in 2018. She has twice failed in legal battles to overturn the decision. The case at the ECHR was

against the government of Switzerland for not protecting Semenya's rights and dates back to a Swiss Supreme Court ruling three years ago. In the lengthy judgement published on Tuesday, the ECHR found the Swiss government did not protect Semenya from being discriminated against when its Supreme Court refused to overturn a decision by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas) which upheld World Athletics rules governing the participation of athletes with DSD.

The decision, made by a panel of seven people at the ECHR, was split 4-3 in favour of Semenya. World Athletics described the ECHR chamber as "deeply divided". In a statement, it said: "We remain of the view that the DSD regulations are a necessary, reasonable and proportionate means of protecting fair competition in the female category as the Court of Arbitration for Sport and Swiss Federal Tribunal both found, after a detailed and expert assessment

of the evidence. The case was filed against the state of Switzerland, rather than World Athletics. "We will liaise with the Swiss government on the next steps and, given the strong dissenting views in the decision, we will be encouraging them to seek referral of the case to the ECHR Grand Chamber for a final and definitive decision. "In the meantime, the current DSD regulations, approved by the World Athletics Council in March 2023, will remain in place."

Isuzu truck owners toast brand’s continuing success at customer meet

As owners and operators of goods transportation and retail distribution companies, they have come to rely on their Isuzu trucks, universally acclaimed for their dependability, versatility and fuel efficiency, to meet demanding delivery and distribution schedules on behalf of their clients

MUSCAT: Trucking operators and retail distributors, united by their longstanding affinity with Isuzu trucks, attended a celebratory get-together hosted by OTE Group, exclusive distributors of the globally iconic truck brand in the Sultanate of Oman. Gathering on the lawns of Crowne Plaza Muscat Hotel recently, the guests toasted their ongoing association with an automotive brand that remains a cornerstone of their operational success and business growth. As owners and operators of goods transportation and retail distribution companies, they have come to rely on their Isuzu trucks, universally acclaimed for their de-



pendability, versatility and fuel efficiency, to meet demanding delivery and distribution schedules on behalf of their clients. The outdoor venue, adorned with the striking brand colours of the Isuzu label, made for a perfect setting as the roughly 100-plus patrons

shared their personal experiences about the distinctive value that ownership of Isuzu trucks brings to their respective businesses. They also engaged with members of OTE Group’s executive team who were in attendance as well. Earlier, the formal part of the

event began with brief welcome remarks by Satyen Salkar, Assistant GM, and Nasser Al Saidi, Assistant GM. They were followed by Girish Bhide, General Manager – Isuzu, who underscored in his address the fruitful and rewarding relationship upon which the Isuzu

brand continues to thrive in Oman. Further details about Isuzu’s evolution as the commercial trucking solution of choice in Oman and the brand’s current product line were shared by Sreejith Sreekumar, Manager – Sales. Unquestionably, the world’s Number One commercial truck brand, Isuzu trucks continue to dominate Oman’s consumer goods distribution space. Preferred by the majority of cargo distribution companies, Isuzu trucks are known for providing efficient, dependable and cost-competitive transport solutions. Available in a range of models and sizes, the Isuzu line-up comes with various engines, transmissions and wheelbases to suit all kinds of applications. Isuzu’s N-Series trucks in particular come with an impressive combination of clean yet powerful and fuel-efficient engines, outstanding safety features and intelligent design all delivered in an inspired package. With an unequalled number of variants available including crew cabs, tippers and 4x4s, the N-Series represents the smart choice in light trucks.

Another key hallmark of the Isuzu brand’s overall durability is its outstanding axle capacity with a high-tensile steel frame. Additionally, the highly rigid cab with reinforced cabin doors and ELR-3-point system seatbelts enhance driver safety. Anti-lock brake systems (ABS) account for active safety, while multi-reflector halogen headlamps enhance the motoring experience for drivers. Showcased at the venue of the Isuzu Truck Customer Meet was the chassis of Isuzu’s NPR 81H, a relatively new bestselling model that bristles with features and capabilities emblematic of the brand’s enduring appeal. The NPR 81H, with a gross vehicle weight (GVW) of 6.5 tons, comes with a powerful turbocharged 4778cc engine capable of delivering 130 hp power and 38 kgm of torque. OTE Group, well-known for its industry-leading sales and after-sales service support, is the official distributor of Isuzu Trucks in Oman. Post-sales services are backed by a nationwide service network run by highly trained and well-motivated staff.

PROMOTION

Enticing benefits on Toyota’s ‘Festival of Joy’ campaign



MUSCAT: Owning a Toyota is now even more attractive with exclusive benefits. The benefits include service from 2 Years/20,000 km up to 5 Years / 50,000 km (whichever is earlier), insurance for 1 year, scratch and win fuel card raffle with prizes of up to 100 litres of fuel and attractive instalments. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details.) In Oman, Toyota’s range includes the Corolla, Hilux, Land Cruiser, all-new Urban Cruiser and Camry. The Toyota Corolla is available in monthly instalments from OMR108. The Corolla is equipped with a 2.0-litre four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine which produces 168 hp and 20.39 kg-m of torque. For more immersive driving experiences, the engine is paired with a Direct Shift CVT transmission. Customers looking for a more fuel-efficient option can choose the 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine Corolla that produces 121 hp and 15.7 kg-m of torque. This is paired with a CVT transmission. The Toyota Hilux is available in monthly instalments from OMR127. In Oman, customers have a choice of two versions of

the Hilux. The rugged Hilux with J-Deck and the sporty 4.0 Litre V6 Hilux Adventure with the A Deck. The 4.0 Litre V6 Toyota Hilux Adventure is a truly exciting mean machine that’s been developed by Toyota to get your pulse racing. The powerful Hilux Adventure is equipped with a mighty 4.0 Litre V6 Engine packing a mighty punch with 235 HP & 38.3 Kg-m Torque. It has an Auto Disconnect Differential to keep the tempo going. Similarly, the Hilux 4X4 is equipped with a 2.7 Litre Petrol Engine that is available in 5-speed Manual Transmission and 6 Speed Automatic Transmission, outputting 164 HP. The Toyota Land Cruiser is available in monthly instalments from OMR239. Powering the Land Cruiser is a choice of two powertrain options. The V6 twin-turbo 3.5-litre petrol engine achieves class-leading performance that surpasses that of a conventional V8, producing 409 hp and up to 650 nm. This is paired with a 10-speed automatic transmission. Also available is a naturally aspirated 4.0-litre V6 petrol engine that produces 271 hp and up to 385 nm paired with a 6-speed automatic transmission. The all-new Toyota Urban Cruiser is available in monthly instalments from OMR116. The 2023 Toyota Urban Cruiser is a

five-seater vehicle which features a 1.5-litre gasoline engine and Integrated Starter Generator (ISG) that functions as both an electrified generator and motor. Combined with a compact Lithium-Ion battery, the powertrain delivers 102 hp and 135 Nm of torque, with an average fuel consumption of 19.8 km/l and is paired with six-speed automatic transmission. The Toyota Camry is available in monthly instalments from OMR145. The Toyota Camry takes style and performance to high levels with a stylish exterior, an advanced range of features and technology. The Camry is available with a choice of three powertrain options. They include a 2.5-litre four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine that produces 204 hp and 24.8 kg.m of torque which is paired with an eight-speed Direct-Shift Multi-mode automatic transmission. A 3.5-litre V6 engine with a D-4S fuel injection system that produces 298 hp and 36.3 kg.m of torque and which is mated to an eight-speed multi-mode automatic transmission. And an electrified hybrid system, which combines a petrol engine and two electric motors. The combined power of the two power sources is 208 hp. It is also paired with an Electrically Controlled Continuously Variable Transmission (ECVT), delivering heightened driving pleasure.

FINANCIAL AND RETAIL WEALTH PLANNING



Bank Muscat holds special event for customers in Batinah

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, organised special meetings for customers in the wilayats of Musannah and Sohar in Al Batinah Governorate titled ‘Financial and Retail Wealth Planning’. These events come in the translation of the bank’s customer-centric vision and to strengthen relationship and partnership ties with the bank’s valued customers from various governorates. It also came as a part of a series of meetings organised recently by the bank in several wilayats to introduce customers to various updates and developments related to the distinctive and exclusive benefits and offers offered by the bank. In his opening speech, Saleh Mohammed Al Maaini, Deputy General Manager - Capital Regions, Bank Muscat, said: “We are pleased today to meet with our valued customers in Al Batinah Governorate and to connect with them aiming to exchange views and ideas that will contribute to the development of banking services and facilities provided to suit their aspirations. “Over the past years, the bank has been keen to provide services up to the latest modern developments in the sector by focusing

on innovation and adapting to accelerated changes. The bank will continue to provide the best banking services, solutions, offers and benefits that provide added value to customers. I would like to extend thanks and gratitude to all the bank customers for their trust and constant support.” Expressing her happiness with this ongoing partnership between the bank and customers, Khadija Khalfan Al Rashdi, Head of Asalah Priority Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “Such events are important to meet with our customers. They represent a motivation for us to continue hard work and maintain the bank’s leading role in the sector. I would like to thank our valued customers for their valuable participation to make the bank’s various events and activities a success.” These events are an opportunity to introduce customers to the wide range of services provided by the bank, which have been developed to achieve the bank’s goals in terms of enhancing financial inclusion, like the “Baituna” financing option for house loans and “Sayyarati” for car loans. It is a chance as well to highlight the advantages of personal financing and exclusive offers offered by the bank to Asalah and Al Jawhar

customers. The bank has set its customers’ various needs as a foundation to identify developments, innovation opportunities, and challenges, thus, giving them back the best possible services based on its vision “to serve you better every day.” The bank is proud today to continue the development of its services and launch innovations in line with the latest global trends in the sector and in line with the aspirations of its customers, especially at a time when banking services are witnessing accelerated development following the current era. Bank Muscat’s ongoing efforts and the continuous development of its services and products have been well recognised by local and international institutions with the bank winning multiple awards across its different lines of business regularly. It has been ranked by Forbes Middle East amongst its “Top 50 Banks in the Middle East” and the “Top 100 institutions in the region”. It also has won several prestigious awards including the Best Retail Bank in Oman from MEED as well as the Best Corporate/Institutional Digital Bank (Oman) and the Best Consumer Digital Bank (Oman) awards from Global Finance.

ROUND-UP

Al Mouj Golf announces launch of Oman’s first corporate golf league



The Oman Golf League presents Omani businesses with a prestigious opportunity to network and drive the business forward on a world’s top 100 course

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Golf, the world’s top 100 oceanfront course, announced the launch of the Oman Golf League, the Sultanate of Oman’s first-ever corporate golf tournament which presents com-

panies with a unique opportunity to network, connect and talk business over a friendly game of golf. Registration is now open for the ground-breaking tournament which will tee off on October 12, 2023, and run for five months with teams from around 25 leading Omani businesses coming together to compete over 18 holes each month. The magnificent 72-par Greg Norman-designed course is ranked in the top two in the region and has won multiple international awards for its playing attributes. Organisers of the new corporate

competition are confident Al Mouj Golf provides a world-class setting for elite teams, with its clubhouse, international restaurant and driving range the ideal environment for companies to network away from traditional office or conference spaces. Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, comments: “At Al Mouj we excel at developing a strong sense of community and this applies to business communities too. We have created a world-class golf course and this league is the perfect platform for

businesses from every sector to share in their enjoyment of golf whilst building relationships. “It is an excellent example of a pioneering initiative that will foster connections, support business growth and impact positively the country’s economy. This is healthy competition in a healthy outdoor setting at its very best and I am sure golfers from across the Sultanate will be asking their CEOs to enter a team and be part of the first-ever league of its kind in Oman.” Situated within the premier

lifestyle and leisure destination, Al Mouj Muscat, Al Mouj Golf was the country’s first links-style course which opened in 2012 and, set along 2km of coastline, offers a challenging and rewarding game for players of all standards. It was the first in the Sultanate of Oman to achieve PGA status and has hosted the Oman Open (European Tour) Championship on three occasions, and it was the first in the region to host the Oman Stage of the Asian Tour, the pan-Asian competition supported by LIV Golf.

PRIORITY BANKING

BankDhofar’s Al Riadah is a premium priority banking experience



MUSCAT: Al Riadah Priority Banking, offered by BankDhofar, is a premium banking service tailored to the financial needs and goals of affluent individuals. It provides personalised services and exclusive benefits to enhance our affluent customer’s banking experience. The key advantage of the Al Riadah programme is its customer-centric beyond banking service. Apart from a dedicated Relationship Manager, customers benefit from preferential rates and priority processing of their day-to-day banking transactions across BankDhofar’s growing distribution network. Customers can also benefit from a dedicated Al Riadah priority banking branch at the Royal Opera and take advantage of Locker Service for safekeeping their valuable items. In addition to personalised financial solutions, Al Riadah members enjoy a range of exclusive privileges and benefits. These include preferential interest rates on deposits and loans, premium credit cards with enhanced fea-

tures and rewards, access to exclusive lounges at select airports, and special discounts and offers from partner merchants. Al Riadah emphasizes convenience and accessibility. Members can access their accounts and conduct various banking transactions anytime, anywhere through a dedicated online banking platform and a feature-rich mobile banking app. These digital channels offer a seamless and secure banking experience, empowering members to effortlessly manage their finances. **Personalised solutions** Hind Abdul Malik Al Sabbagh, AGM & Head of Priority Banking at BankDhofar, stated, “Al Riadah is an extension of the bank’s commitment to delivering exceptional banking services and building lasting relationships with its customers. By combining personalised financial solutions, priority services, and exclusive privileges, we aim to exceed the expectations of our affluent clientele and provide them with an unmatched banking experience.”

BankDhofar reaffirms its dedication to exceptional banking services through the introduction of the Al Riadah Referral Scheme. This exciting initiative offers customers enticing incentives, allowing them to win up to OMR 4,000 by referring friends and family members to join Al Riadah Priority Banking Services. The Al Riadah Referral Scheme, valid until the end of March 2024, is exclusively available to existing Al Riadah Priority Banking customers. Participants have the chance to earn OMR 50 for each successful referral, with the potential to receive up to OMR 1,000 for 20 valid referrals per quarter. To qualify for the referral program, individuals must meet specific criteria, including a salary credit of OMR 3,000, a savings deposit of OMR 30,000, or a fixed deposit of OMR 250,000. Rewards will be credited quarterly. BankDhofar welcomes customers to join the Al Riadah program and embark on a journey of superior banking services tailored to their unique financial aspirations.



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EER: 11.60

GS26GMAX60
24000 BTU
EER: 12.00

GS30GMAX60
27500 BTU
EER: 11.96



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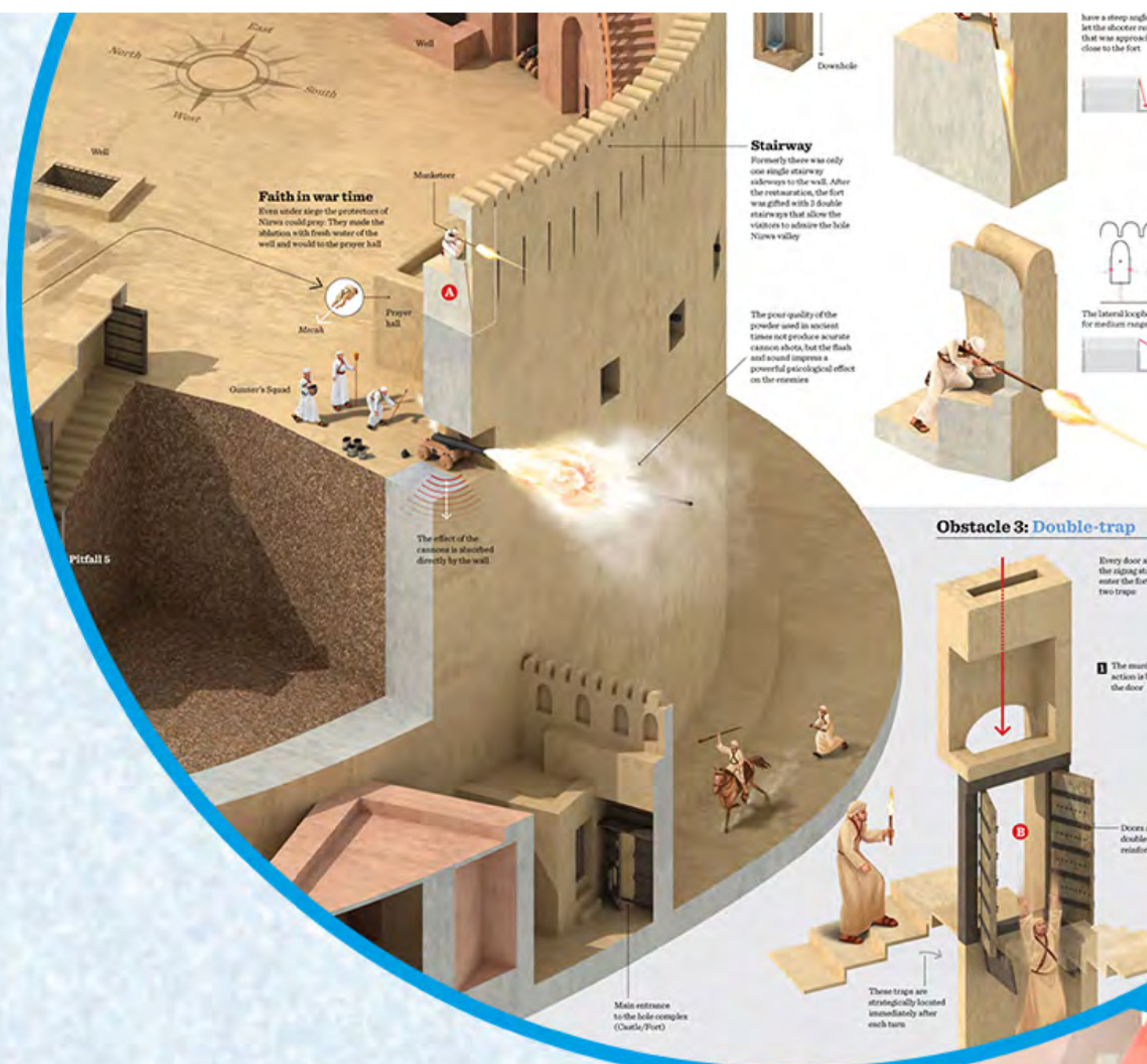
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